

“T-thank you for the gift, Mr. Shelver!” said Bea as she received yet another gift from another big shot.

Mae and the other girls were simultaneously feeling stunned and jealous of Bea as they looked at all the gifts she was receiving.

“Could these be your best friends, Miss Yalerman? All of them are such beauties! It’s a shame that we don’t have enough presents to go around! Do wait for a moment as I order someone to send more gifts over! Consider them to be acquaintance gifts!” said Mrs. Jagger as she smiled.

“...Huh? We get gifts too?” replied the girls, surprised.

“But of course! Haha!”

“Alright! Thank you, Chairman Jagger! Mrs. Jagger!” shouted Mae and her friends, unable to contain their excitement and gratitude. After all, since all these people were extremely influential, any gifts they gave would most definitely be extraordinary!

“Hurry up and serve the presidents their drinks, Bea!” squealed Mae and the others excitedly.

“Will do!”

“There’s no need for that, we can help ourselves!” said Chairman Jagger and a few others.

Meanwhile, Gerald was playing with a little girl who seemed to be only a few years old.

“Come on, call me uncle and I’ll let you have some cake,” said Gerald with a smile on his face.

“Hello, uncle!” said the little girl as she blinked her large eyes.

“What a good girl!” replied Gerald as he fed her a spoonful of cake.

“We want some too, uncle!” shouted a few other children who instantly ran toward him when they saw the other girl getting cake.

“Of course you can!” said Gerald, beaming.

“What a loser!”

“I know right? The rich young ladies and masters have been pampered from birth! How could he just decide to feed them something like that?”

“How humiliating!”

Mae and the others murmured anxiously among themselves as they glared sternly at Gerald before pulling Bea to the side.

“Bea, tell your cousin to leave already! We’re enough to keep these big shots company!” said Mae who was so anxious that she was stomping her foot on the ground.

“Why should I? Why should he leave?” replied Bea, her expression turning sour.

“What do you mean why? Aren’t you embarrassed to have him here?”

“That’s right! If he stays here any longer we’ll eventually be laughed at!”

The other beauties were now chiming in to get Gerald out of the picture as well.

“I refuse! He can’t leave! Speaking of him, there’s something I need to ask him about...”

After saying that, Bea walked toward Gerald before whispering, “...Cousin? Why exactly did these big shots come over to celebrate my birthday today?”

She was well aware that the only person capable of doing all this was Gerald. After all, Gerald knew an astonishing amount of people. That made him extremely mysterious to her.

"I told you that you were in for a surprise, didn't I? Happy birthday! Do you like your gift?" replied Gerald with a soft smile.

Hearing that, Bea's eyes widened. So it was his doing!

"How... How did you even get so many big shots to come over to celebrate with me?" asked Bea excitedly. Forget asking if she liked the gift, she couldn't even put a value to it since the gift was so outrageously good!

"Get them to come? Bea, they came on their own initiatives. Weren't you listening? They wanted to cooperate more with you in the business field in future!" replied Gerald with a smile.

"In the business field? But I-"

Chapter 852

"You silly girl, here you are! I was looking all over for you! I've even called you but you didn't even pick up! You know, your grandma's so anxious in there yet you-"

Though Catherine was already angry when she stomped over, the moment she saw that her daughter had arranged a table in the backyard, she became even more infuriated.

"Could you please be a little more sensible, Bea? Haven't I told you that we'll celebrate your birthday tonight? How badly do you want to celebrate it for you to host it in the backyard? It's almost as if you want Rose and her family to hold something against us!" scolded Catherine in a rage.

She was just about to drag her daughter away when she recognized who was sitting at the table.

In her shock, Catherine let out a squeak before covering her mouth with her hands. It was evident that she knew who everyone at the table was.

"You're Miss Yalerman's mother, correct? It's a pleasure to meet you! We've come over to celebrate Miss Yalerman's birthday!" said a few of the distinguished guests with smiles on their faces.

Though she thought that she had heard wrong, the moment she saw Sheldon there serving them drinks, she soon realized that they were telling the truth.

“My... My daughter’s birthday? You... came here to celebrate that...?”

Catherine was so excited that she was honestly at a loss for words. Unable to express herself properly, she was now intensely rubbing her hands together!

However, the second she noticed that Gerald was present as well, her expression turned stern as she tugged him by the ear before shouting, “Stand up already! Don’t you see that I’m here? Get me a seat!”

“Good god!” shouted one of the big shots as everyone important at the scene became stupefied by what they were witnessing.

Clattering and crashes followed next as Chairman Jagger and a few others couldn’t even hold their teacups properly in their shock. Recovering moments later, all the guests at the table stood up in unison, their faces filled with utter fear.

“I-I’m sorry for scaring all of you! P-please sit down!” said Catherine as she blushed nervously.

As Gerald rubbed on his swollen ear, he nodded at Chairman Jagger and the others. It was only after Gerald did that, that the other important people dared to return seated.

Bea, on the other hand, immediately tugged at her mother’s sleeve before whispering something into her ear.

“...W-what did you say?” said Catherine, an expression of utter shock on her face.

When she finally snapped out of it, she immediately turned to look at Gerald before dragging a chair over to him.

“P-please have a seat, Gerald!”

With a sigh, Gerald then sat down.

Back inside the living room, Yura—who had been keeping his grandmother company this entire time—was standing beside Lady Yaleman as a few people waited in line to serve her tea.

Lady Yaleman herself had been delighted for most of the day. After all, it had been so long since the Yaleman family had experienced such liveliness and prosperity.

Once the tea serving ceremony was over, however, Lady Yaleman's face turned slightly dull.

"Is the party not going to commence soon? Where is Bea? Why hasn't her mother brought her back yet? Sheldon!" shouted the grandmother.

"The butler isn't here, grandma," said Yura.

"Humph! Imprudent! How unruly!" said Lady Yaleman angrily as she sent a teacup flying off the table. The sound of shattering was quick to follow.

"I've already told you that Bea was only lucky back then, mom... She simply isn't that capable. However, you refused to believe me, thinking that I was only jealous of her contributions. Yet look at how things are going now... Wasn't I right?" said Rose.

"Indeed! You know, I saw that she had invited a few of her ex-classmates earlier. That was also the last I ever saw of them. Since she hasn't shown up since then, at this point, it wouldn't be far-fetched to say that she's gone out with them to have fun somewhere. She barely even cares about the major affairs of the family! We're lucky that all the distinguished guests here today aren't too bothered about her absence. Think about it. If a rumor stating that the Yaleman family treats our guests with cold shoulders comes to be, then everything we've done today would've been for naught!" added Yura.

"Well, since she's now the head of the Yaleman family after gaining us all those projects, I say it's fine that she acts recklessly every once in a while. Still, to think that we'll be relying on her in the future!" said Ysabel, clearly adding fuel to the fire.

"Humph! And who was it that gave her the position of family head? I'm not dead yet! That girl is truly too unruly to be left in charge of our family's future! Like mother, like daughter! Once this party's over, she'll no longer be in charge of any of the projects! She'll just have to work at the company!" said Lady Yaleman angrily.

Hearing that, both Rose and Yura exchanged glances with each other as they smiled wickedly.

Chapter 853

"Well isn't this a lively party!" shouted a particularly unwelcoming voice which came from the main entrance.

As everyone turned to look, a group of people—led by a rich, young heir—could be seen entering the house.

“You can’t enter since you weren’t invited!” shouted a servant who had been trying to block them from proceeding the moment they entered the building.

“Out of our way!” growled one of the men being led by the heir as he shoved the servant aside.

Seeing that, everyone fell silent.

“...Shane Long?” said Lady Yalaman as she stood up with a frown on her face.

One by one, the other Yalemans stood up as well, and all of them bore equally cold expressions on their face as they glared at Shane.

Shane was the eldest young master of the Long family, and though he was young, he was known for being quite shrewd. The Yalemans were well aware that behind that kind face lay a vicious personality.

Within the Long family, Shane himself was second only to Master Long. His high position granted him the role of the Long family’s vanguard in Yanken. After all, the Longs were the ones who kept the other families there suppressed.

He had only returned to the country around four years ago, yet that was all the time he needed to help the Long family acquire at least a hundred groups and corporations, both large and small, from all over the place.

His aid was the reason why the Longs could get to where they were today. It was also why none of the present families could ever dream of threatening their position at the top any time soon.

“Humph! You can’t blame me for being a little rough! After all, how couldn’t you invite the Long family over to such a lively party? This is essentially your own doing, Lady Yalaman!” said Shane with a placid smile on his face as he squinted his eyes slightly.

“But of course we didn’t invite you! After all, the Yalaman family is insignificantly small to the influential and powerful Longs! Why, we wouldn’t even dream about inviting such big shots like you! Regardless, why did you come here today, Mr. Long? If I remember correctly, my son’s had some disputes with you regarding the loan. Haven’t those issues been resolved?” retorted Lady Yalaman.

“Ah, but of course that issue has been resolved! Though Mr. Yaleman was a few days late, the Longs are fine with that since we have, after all, had a good relationship with the Yalemans for generations! We wouldn’t be that bothered by such a small loan! However, we’ve come here today to discuss a different loan. Now this loan is far from small!” replied Shane with a smile.

“Elaborate,” said Lady Yaleman, frowning.

Meanwhile, after hearing what Shane had to say, several of her children and many other members of the Yaleman family began shivering nervously.

“What do you mean by that, Mr. Long? While we have made some loans, we made them through Chairman Jameston, Chairman Mill, and also Chairman Leeke!” replied Yuma angrily.

“Humph! While that was previously the case, the presidents you earlier mentioned reached an agreement with me a few days ago! Essentially, any cooperation and loans you’ve made with them have now been transferred to the Long family!”

“After doing a bit of calculating, I’ve found that those from the Yaleman family—who’ve been placed in charge of companies—have each borrowed no small sum of money from over thirty presidents! At a rough estimation, the grand total amounts to a billion and five hundred million dollars! And that estimation doesn’t even include the bank loans they’ve made yet!” declared Shane, his smile wider than ever.

“...You... You’re spouting nonsense! Our family has so many major properties... How could we possibly have amounted such a high loan?!” replied Lady Yaleman as her face turned paler by the second.

Shane’s intention of being here today was clear as day.

If he were to use that loan to suppress the Yaleman family within a short amount of time, the Yalemans wouldn’t have the means to gather that much money so quickly. At best, the Yalemans could only mortgage the properties they owned on a massive scale.

By the time they did that, the bank would surely suppress the Yalemans since moving even a small part would definitely affect the whole. Once that situation occurred, it would no longer be as simple as going bankrupt for their family.

“Hah! Am I now? Why don’t you confirm it with your children!” sneered Shane coldly.

“You... What? What is the meaning of this?!” roared Lady Yaleman as she began loudly tapping the tip of her walking stick against the floor.

Seeing her reaction, Yuma, Rose, and the others present couldn't even find the courage to speak as they took turns gulping.

“Haha! So nobody dares to fess up? Fine then, I'll do the explaining myself!” announced Shane as he shook his head with a bitter smile on his face.

“When it comes to the Yaleman family, they have one particularly interesting trait. The children within your family each hold different amounts of power. From what I've heard, the child that brings the most profit to the family gains the right to inherit the role of the Yaleman family head, am I not correct? Hah! Now let's do a bit of calculating, shall we? From your eldest son onward, none of your children have been willing to use their own money to do anything! I hope you're aware that all of them have used the Yaleman family's name to get their loans! Do correct me if I'm wrong!” explained Shane as Lady Yaleman turned red in anger.

Thinking back, it was no wonder why Yuma had said all that during her birthday party. To think that he had claimed that he would immediately contact the ones issuing the loan to resolve the capital chain issue. As it turned out, they had all been using the same tactic all these years.

“Why didn't you inform us that you transferred your rights to the Long family when it happened, Chairman Mill and Chairman Leeke?” growled Yuma who was so angry that his face was as red as a tomato.

Chapter 854

Since several other presidents who had cooperated with them were also present, Yuma quickly added, “Don't you realize that what you've done has ruined the Yaleman family?!”

“That's quite enough, Yuma. Are you blind? It's quite obvious that Chairman Mill and the others have conspired with the Longs long beforehand!” said Lady Yaleman as she glared at Yuma.

Hearing his question, the presidents involved simply looked at each other before shrugging and sneering at Yuma.

“I'll say it now, even if we suffer a massive loss, we'll still be better off than most ordinary people! All we have to do is give up a few of our properties and by the time we're done, we won't owe the Longs a single penny! You don't need to worry about that!” declared Lady Yaleman.

Though she had said that, her hands were already trembling as she spoke. After all, she knew very well that the Yalemans would suffer terribly this time around.

The Long family had been meticulous with their planning, and now the Yalemans were cornered without a fighting chance. After all, Lady Yalaman had already distributed her power.

While she had initially thought that the power was in good hands, as it turned out, everyone only cared about the benefit of their individual families.

All of them had used the Yalaman family's name whenever they took loans. By doing that, even if they suffered any losses after investing in projects, it wouldn't influence them that much since it wasn't their own money in the first place.

Everyone had simply felt that there wasn't a need to save any money for the Yalaman family's sake since nobody knew for sure who would inherit the family properties in the future.

"Oh? Is that so, Lady Yalaman? Then I'll rest assured!" replied Shane with a loud laugh.

Hearing that, Lady Yalaman was so infuriated that she became light-headed and had to sit down.

"What a great misfortune to our family!" cried out Lady Yalaman in a remorseful tone.

Just as she said that, the sound of fireworks being lit could suddenly be heard coming from the backyard.

As if the blow Lady Yalaman had just received wasn't enough, it was apparent that someone in the family still had the audacity to be playing with fireworks now!

"Oh my, how strong the Yalaman family must be! After all, even after losing that much money, some people in your family still seem to be celebrating!" commented Shane with a smug smile.

"S-Sheldon?! Sheldon!" roared Lady Yalaman, her eyes bloodshot with anxiety.

"Sheldon isn't here, grandma!" replied Yura.

In response, Lady Yalaman immediately got up and slapped him hard on the face!

“Then... Go... Get him! Head to the backyard immediately! Tell me who on earth lit those fireworks!” roared Lady Yaleman as two servants immediately ran to do her bidding.

When they got there, they saw that the culprits were a few children who were having fun.

“Sheldon! Miss Yaleman! So here you are! The chairman’s been looking all over for you!”

“What’s wrong?” asked Bea as soon as she saw how agitated the servant looked.

“Something terrible has happened! From what I could understand, those from the Long family have come to ask for a debt!” said one of the servants as the other ran back inside.

“What?” said Bea and Sheldon in unison as a wave of nervousness swept through both of them. Not knowing how to react, the duo turned to look at Gerald.

In turn, Gerald nodded before saying, “I see. Then let’s head there and have a look, shall we? Of course the Long family brings trouble again...”

As the group began making their way inside, back in the living room, the other servant had just returned and was now standing before Lady Yaleman.

“How was the situation? Also, did you see Bea and Sheldon?” growled Lady Yaleman, her expression solemn.

“Yes I did, Chairman. Mr. Gerald Crawford was together with them as well, along with a few other people dressed up like presidents. They seemed to be celebrating Miss Bea’s birthday in the back yard!” explained the servant.

The moment his sentence ended, a Lady Yaleman flung her second teacup of the day to the floor, sending it shattering.

“How devastating! It’s a family rebellion!”

Chapter 855

“All she ever thinks about is that birthday of hers! What birthday could ever be more important than a Yaleman family celebration?!” shouted Lady Yaleman, feeling extremely faint now.

“Grandma!” shouted Bea—who had just arrived—as she ran over to her, the other presidents from Bea’s birthday party following closely behind.

“You! Where have you-”

Just as Lady Yalaman was about to unleash all her pent up rage, her gaze fell upon those standing behind Bea. It took what seemed like an eternity for her to finally realize who the people grouped behind Bea were.

When she finally snapped out of it, however, she—along with the two hundred people in the living room—instantly created a massive uproar.

“Isn’t that Chairman Jagger?! The richest person in Jacksonville?!”

“D*mn! That really is him! And that over there! That’s Chairman Yarbury, right? What’s a big shot like him even doing here?”

“Chairman Goldwell is here too! He’s the richest and most powerful man from the North!”

By now, several of the guests had already stood up, and they were shouting out the names of all the big shots present. Those who weren’t were simply too stupefied to even say a word.

Lady Yalaman herself already knew who everyone there was. After all, she had tried and failed to curry favor with each and every one of them before this.

‘Why...? Why have they all come here just to celebrate Bea’s birthday?’

“Chairman! Chairman Jagger and the rest have attended to celebrate Miss Bea’s birthday! I apologize for being gone for so long, but it was because I was worried that the ordinary servants wouldn’t know how to serve them properly! I’ve been serving them this entire time!” said Sheldon excitedly as he finally made his way back to Lady Yalaman’s side.

“What?” said Lady Yalaman as Rose, Yura, and a few other Yalamans widened their eyes in disbelief.

Though their arrival had definitely caught Lady Yalaman by surprise, she was quick to recover and quickly said, “Do take a seat, presidents! All of you!”

Her tone no longer sounded as dispirited as she had been just minutes ago.

“Haha! There’s no need to be that cordial, Lady Yalaman! We had honestly not planned to intrude on your party in the first place! However, since Miss Yalaman led us in, I suppose it wouldn’t hurt to be part of the distinguished guests here! I do hope that the present guests respect us though!” said Elijah—one of the big shots—with a faint smile on his face.

“But of course!” said Chairman Mill and many others as they immediately stood up and nodded.

Seeing that, Shane could only fix his gaze upon the distinguished guests who had just made their appearances. Those who had just entered were as high ranked as his grandfather. In other words, he was only a small fry before them.

“Today’s a happy day for the Yalaman family, Shane! If there’s nothing else, what are you still doing here?” asked Bea coldly.

“Don’t mind me, I was just about to give a toast to Mr. Jagger and Mr. Yarbury...” said Shane with a faint smile on his face.

Just as he was about to walk toward them, however, Brody said, “She’s right you know. If there isn’t anything else, why aren’t you leaving yet?”

Hearing Brody’s frigid tone, Shane immediately said in an awkward tone, “...Huh? I... I see! I’ll be taking my leave now!”

Sensing that even Brody didn’t want him around, he was filled with cold sweat. He had planned everything so meticulously... Yet it had never occurred to him that the biggest problem would be Bea! A complete nobody in the family!

Regardless, he no longer dared to linger there for any longer. With a swift gesture, the embarrassed Shane silently ordered his subordinates to leave together with him.

“Bea you were so awesome just now! To think that that was the mighty Mr. Long!” said Mae as she and her other friends held on to her arms.

“Since my cousin disliked the Longs, I found no reason not to hate them as well!” replied Bea, smiling.

“Huh? That was the reason why you ordered Mr. Long to leave? Speaking of him, what was it that both of you secretly talked about earlier?” asked Mae. She and the other girls were now finding Gerald to be much more mysterious than he ought to be.

Before Bea could even answer, however, Catherine immediately explained, “You see, mom, all these presidents came over today to celebrate Bea’s birthday since my nephew, Gerald, invited them! But that’s not all! That was apparently only the first present! Gerald said that he had prepared a total of three gifts for her! Isn’t that right, Gerald?”

Halfway through her explanation, Catherine was already holding on to Gerald’s arm in an intimate manner. After all, she had found herself liking her nephew a lot more that day.

Hearing what Catherine had to say, Lady Yalaman looked at Gerald in astonishment.

Though she was initially still rather doubtful of whether he truly was an extraordinary person, seeing him so powerful today made her feel like he was a completely different person.

Yura and Rose themselves were feeling extremely humiliated as they watched the scene play out from the side-lines.

“Indeed! There are two more gifts that I haven’t shown!”

Chapter 856

There was a rather bitter smile on Gerald’s face as he said that.

“Hmm? Why’s Shane back inside?”

Before anyone could even react to that statement, a scream of shock echoed through the hall.

It wasn’t long after before everyone saw Shane and his subordinates retreating back into the living room, and for good reason too.

A powerful-looking woman made her appearance seconds later, and following behind her, was a group of extremely intimidating men who all appeared to be equally strong.

‘Who... Who could this possibly be...?’ Lady Yalaman thought to herself as the corners of her lips twitched.

Bea, on the other hand, was full of awe and astonishment as she looked at the young and beautiful woman. After all, she had witnessed with her very own eyes how Shane had retreated in fear within that woman's presence.

"What an absolute coincidence, Shane! We meet again!" said the woman as she chewed on her gum while looking at the terrified man.

"I-It has, miss! It's truly been forever!" stuttered Shane, his face dripping with cold sweat.

"President Crawford!" greeted Chairman Jagger and the others as they bowed respectfully toward her.

"P-President Crawford...?"

Seeing that all the big shots were bowing toward the young lady, Lady Yalaman bowed slightly herself. She wasn't against doing so since the new woman truly felt extraordinarily powerful and imposing.

"Grandma!" shouted Bea as she began moving toward her. However, Gerald stuck an arm out, a sign for her to remain standing by his side.

"W-who is she, cousin?" asked Bea nervously as her adorable face blushed.

Smiling, he then patted her on the head before looking toward the woman and saying, "Sister, this here is our cousin! She goes by the name of Bea!"

"...Sister? ...Huh? She's my other cousin... Jessica?" said Bea as she covered her mouth in excitement. After all, she had never known what either of her cousins looked like for the longest time. Today, she was finally able to see what Jessica looked like as well!

"Well hello there, Bea! What a pretty little dear you are!" said Jessica as she walked toward Bea and held on to her hands.

"Jessica?" said Lady Yalaman, her eyes opened wider than ever.

'Could... Could she truly be my granddaughter...?'

“While it’s our first time meeting today, I’m afraid that my gift isn’t anything special, Bea... I do hope that my humble present will be to your liking...” said Jessica.

As soon as her sentence ended, one of her subordinates immediately walked toward Bea and held out a box.

The moment Bea opened the box, an extremely valuable object was revealed, and its resplendence sent waves of awe among those who saw it.

“That... That’s the legendary moonstone, isn’t it?! Oh my god!” shouted someone from within the crowd, unable to hold their astonishment.

While many of the guests were astonished, many others—like Mae and the girls—were left extremely jealous.

So it turned out that Gerald and his family were this powerful! To think that they hadn’t even asked for his Line contact information! Thinking about it now, Mae and the others were filled with remorse.

“Go on Bea! It’s a gift from your cousin! Take it already!” squealed Catherine in sheer delight.

Rose, Yura, Ysabel, and many others were left absolutely stupefied by the turn of events.

Once the moonstone was taken, Jessica looked toward Lady Yalaman before greeting her in a soft voice.

“T-the pleasure is mine!” said Lady Yalaman excitedly as she nodded toward Jessica.

It took her a while to notice, but she realized at that moment how different Jessica and Gerald were.

After all, though she had already seen much at her age, she was surprised at how nervous she could still get when facing somebody like Jessica.

Upon hearing what Lady Yalaman had to say, Jessica turned around and scanned through the crowd. Nobody dared to even look into her eyes, and all of the guests found themselves lowering their gazes.

At long last, her gaze fell on Bea once more.

She then smiled before saying, “Bea, if you haven’t heard, Gerald and I prepared three gifts for you! Since both of us have already given one each, we’ll now present the third and final gift!”

Chapter 857

“Another gift?” said several of the guests as they awaited eagerly for it. After all, one would surely wonder what else the two powerful Crawford siblings had to offer after seeing the moonstone and all the presidents Gerald had invited.

“Since Gerald and I have each already presented a gift, the third gift will be given to you by our sister-in-law!” said Jessica as she turned to look back.

As the others followed her gaze, they saw that a group of servants—led by an extremely graceful-looking woman—were now walking down the hall toward them.

Even from afar, everyone could tell how gentle the beautiful woman’s disposition was. That made the atmosphere even tenser than it already was.

“What a beautiful woman!” shouted several of the people as they watched her make her way into the living room.

“Sister-in-law?” said Bea, shocked.

The sister-in-law in question, was none other than Lyra.

As she turned to look at Gerald, he simply lowered his head and said nothing. After all, he was well aware that he wouldn’t be able to explain the affair properly in such a short amount of time.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Grandma,” said Lyra as she stood beside Gerald while bowing slightly toward Lady Yalaman with a smile on her face.

Lady Yalaman herself was smiling broadly as she nodded back at her.

“What an astounding woman my granddaughter-in-law is! Absolutely wonderful!” said Lady Yalaman between nods.

Though she had lived a long life, this was honestly the first time she had ever felt this much glory and pride from her family members.

“You must be Bea, right? Here! This is a gift from your cousin and I!” said Lyra as she smiled while looking at Bea.

As soon as she said that, one of her subordinates walked up to her and presented Bea with a contract.

Blinking, she then looked at the contract before her as Lyra explained, “From today onward, you’re the president of the Trustdeck Group in Yanaken, Bea. Aside from that, you’ll also be the one in charge of all the properties belonging to the Crawford family up North!”

“...Huh?”

It was the only reply Bea could process in her stupefied state as she looked at the smiling Lyra.

Even Lady Yaleman was stunned speechless.

“The Trustdeck Group belonged to the Crawford family...? And now Bea’s the president of the Trustdeck group?!”

All of the people present had bulging eyes as they realized what that meant.

After all, even if they completely disregarded the fact that all the properties up North—that the Crawfords owned—now belonged to Bea, with her new position as the Trustdeck Group’s president, the other three large families in Yanken would’ve already suffered a terrible loss!

As a surge of emotions filled Rose, making her feel faint, Mae and the other girls immediately began hopping in excitement as they cheered while holding on to Bea’s hands.

No wonder Chairman Jagger and the other big shots had taken the initiative to celebrate Bea’s birthday! It explained why they had asked her for future guidance regarding their businesses as well!

As it turned out, Mr. Crawford had been looking for the perfect opportunity to hand the group and properties over to Bea for a while now.

Lady Yaleman was now filled with ecstasy. Not only had the Crawford siblings help resolve her issues with the Long family, but they had also given Bea so many priceless gifts!

While Lady Yaleman was feeling both grateful and excited, simultaneously, she was also feeling another emotion.

After the situation calmed down a bit, Jessica turned to look at Shane who hadn't even dared to move from his earlier spot.

"I'm in a rather good mood today, so I won't torture you, Shane! Speaking of which, I trust that you remember how your father looked like that year in Mayberry, correct?" said Jessica coldly.

"I-I haven't forgotten, Miss!" replied Shane as he rapidly nodded.

Back then, Jessica had kicked both Shane and his father out of Mayberry after discovering their direct involvement with a certain incident.

"I'm glad you haven't forgotten! Now listen closely. If you ever come face to face with another Yaleman in the future, avoid them. If you don't, you only have yourself to blame for what I do to you next! Now get out of my sight!" ordered Jessica.

"R-right away, Miss!" said Shane as he bolted from his spot.

"Come back here! Who do you think you are to leave like that! Return and roll all the way out!" growled Jessica.

Shane could feel his lips twitch slightly. After all, he had done the same thing that year when he and his father were kicked out of Mayberry. Though it was a moment of *déjà vu*, he didn't even dare to sigh as he lay down on the floor and began rolling toward the entrance.

'F*cking hell! To think that Bea would have such powerful people on her side!'

Chapter 858

After the party ended, Rose, Second aunt, and many others could barely even recover from everything that they had just witnessed.

Though they had the idea of fawning over Jessica a little earlier, all they received were frigid glares from her. They were so intimidated by Jessica that in the end, none of them could even say a word to her, let alone please her!

Bea had shot to stardom in just a single day.

“So it turns out that Dylan had such great influence and power! What a surprise!” said Lady Yalaman sadly after hearing a summarization of what had happened from Gerald.

It was now night time and including Lady Yalaman herself, a few others were standing inside her bedroom.

“The grudges of old have no reason to continue existing, grandma... It’s time to let go of them and have our families reunite!” said Gerald.

“Are they though? I was so cruel to Yulia that year... I even made Bea’s father suffer so terribly! Since Yulia’s so close to her fifth brother, she definitely still hates me... Who wouldn’t hate a mother like me!” wailed Lady Yalaman as she cried vehemently.

“That simply isn’t the case! In fact, mom has missed you this entire time! While you probably weren’t aware of it, mom’s tried to visit you on numerous occasions! Though she never made it past the front gates, I’m sure that’ll change in the following year!” added Jessica.

Hearing that, Lady Yalaman raised her head, feeling tremendously moved. She was now filled with deep remorse as she recalled how her younger self had held on to those stubborn old-fashioned principles.

If it wasn’t for her, her family would’ve continued living in peace... Now that was a nice thought...

What more, if none of that had happened, then the Long family wouldn’t have ever found a reason to bring trouble to her family in the first place!

“That’s not all, grandma. My aunt’s always been thinking about my dad! She’s even found several doctors for him! As if that wasn’t enough, she was the one who had sponsored me so that I could complete my studies!” said Bea next.

“She... She sponsored your studies as well...?” replied Lady Yalaman as she began crying even louder.

That's right... Bea was also a young lady of the Yaleman family... Yet she was placed in such a difficult position that she wasn't even capable of completing her studies without the aid of her daughter... To think that she was left unaware of all this...

In the end, even wild beasts looked after their offspring.

Reminiscing her life, Lady Yaleman realized how much time she had spent on pursuing wealth and fame. As a result, she had completely neglected the importance of familial affection.

"I... I'm so sorry... To Yulia and your father... To Bea... And to you and your sister as well..." said Lady Yaleman with a heavy sigh as she looked at both Gerald and Jessica.

As the four chatted late into the night, at the same time, a few others were feeling upset beyond words.

The shattering sound of a wine bottle could be heard as an extremely drunk man shouted, "Wine! Give me more wine!"

"You've already drunk a lot, Mr. Yaleman! Please stop and just go home for now!" advised the bar's manageress.

In response, Yura slapped her right in the cheek!

"You mother*cker! So even you're looking down on me now, huh?! Well that's just great! Just absolutely fantastic! Just pour me my god d*mned wine already!" roared the gloomy-looking Yura as the manageress—who was now cupping her swollen cheek—ran off to get more wine.

When she finally returned, a few people stood in her way, preventing her from getting any closer to Yura.

"You're... Could you be Mr. Long...?" said the manageress in surprise when she realized who was leading all those men.

"Hand that over to me. And if you know what's good for you, let nobody enter this place without my permission!" said Mr. Long as he took the bottle of wine from her hands.

The moment his sentence ended, one of his subordinates took out a large wad of cash and flung it toward the manageress.

Seeing that, she immediately nodded before saying, “I-I understand!”

“Mr. Yaleman! Here’s your wine!” said Shane as he placed the bottle before the drunk man.

Just as Yura was about to grab the bottle, he narrowed his eyes at the familiar person before finally realizing who was there with him.

“Why are you here?”

“Hah! Under such circumstances, who else would be able to come over to meet you? Just look at you. To think that the once almighty Mr. Yaleman has now been reduced to such a pathetic state!” sneered Shane.

“Humph! As if the position you’re in is any better! Didn’t you have to roll all the way out to the entrance earlier! Haha!” replied Yura before bursting into a fit of laughter.

Hearing that, Shane’s eyes immediately turned stern as he said, “It seems like we really need to knock some sense back into you, Mr. Yaleman!”

As soon as he said that, the door was kicked open and over ten men rushed in!

Chapter 859

One of the men immediately yanked Yura by his hair before slapping him several times.

It was only when Yura saw one of Shane’s other subordinates brandishing a knife at him when he finally returned to his senses.

“L-let’s not act recklessly now, Mr. Long! If anything, let’s just talk it out!” stuttered Yura as his fear grew by the second.

“Hah! If you were a bit more aware of how to properly behave, then I wouldn’t have needed to treat you like this in the first place! Regardless, why are you speaking as though I’ve come after you looking for trouble? I’m here for your own good! After all, nobody would’ve ever been able to guess that Bea had the Crawford siblings on her side. As a result, she’s now the most influential big shot in all of Yanken! While the Long family will surely suffer a lot from that, I’m sure the one suffering the greatest loss is you, Mr. Yaleman! Don’t you agree? Once the future heir of your family, now reduced to a nobody, am I not right?”

Hearing that, Yura clenched his fists hard before asking, “What exactly do you wish to say, Mr. Long?”

“Me? Oh, I’m not saying anything! Speaking of which, I heard that Lady Yalaman has announced that Bea will be the Yalaman family’s heir! Such a pitiful position you’re in... Not only did you not gain anything at the end, but Bea could very well already be plotting to have her revenge against you and your family!”

Shane watched as Yura’s gloomy expression turned worse with every word he said. Once he was sure Yura couldn’t get any gloomier, Shane then added, “Well, since you’ve pretty much already hit a dead end, why don’t you cooperate with the Long family? If we’re going down anyway, we may as well fight till our very last breaths. If all goes well, the Long family may end up not suffering that massive a loss and you may still be able to take control over the Yalaman family! In fact, you could even end up becoming the family’s master if you join us!”

“You... What...? What’s your plan...?” asked Yura after thinking about Shane’s words for a while.

“Interested, are we? Let’s discuss it then!” replied Shane, a wicked smile on his face as he nodded.

It was a little before dawn some three days later when a team of cars left the Yalaman family house.

“Since your family is both powerful and influential, it doesn’t surprise me that you know about the Moldells in Yanken... While the last I’ve contacted them was a good few years ago, I distinctly remember that their family owes me a single favor. However, as I’ve said, it’s been years since we last met and I’m not sure whether they’ll still be willing to bother with families like us...” said Lady Yalaman as she held onto Gerald’s right hand in the car.

After getting to know Gerald a little more in the past few days, Lady Yalaman found herself adoring her gentle grandson more and more.

As a result, upon learning about the details of Mila’s and Dylan’s younger brother’s disappearances, she readily agreed to confront the Moldell family together with Gerald.

Since they had time to spare before actually arriving at the Moldell family’s house, Lady Yalaman told Gerald the gist of how she got acquainted with the Moldells in the first place.

In short, it was mostly coincidental.

Back then, a junior member of the Moldell family was carrying out a mission. Unfortunately, his mission was thwarted and his enemies immediately began hunting him down. It just so happened that the garden he managed to escape into belonged to the Yalamans.

At the time, Lady Yaleman was still in her forties and, as she said herself, she wasn't a stubborn bigot like how she eventually came to be.

The seriously injured child she saw in the garden was aged around sixteen, and being as compassionate as she was back then, she took him in and saved his life. Days later, the child left yet she didn't think much about it.

It was years later—when Lady Yaleman had become the master of the Yaleman family—when the two finally crossed paths again. Back then, she was bringing her son and daughter out to attend an occasion of sorts. Halfway through, however, the Yaleman family's business rivals blocked their path! It was a planned assault!

During their most perilous moment, a person stepped forward and saved Lady Yaleman and her children. Though it took her a while, she soon came to realize that her savior was the child she had saved years ago. He had returned to repay her kindness!

Before he left, he gave her an address and told her that he would lend her a hand once more if she needed his aid in the future.

It had been almost twenty years since she last had any contact with him. She was honestly unsure whether the child even remembered the promise anymore.

That was about the gist of the situation.

Eventually, the car arrived at a mountainous area.

The entire area seemed to be filled with an unnerving miasma. The fact that the trees grew so spacious only served to increase the feeling of unease.

"What a large mountain... Are you sure this is the place, grandma? We haven't passed by a single person in a while..." said Gerald as he got out of the parked car to have a look around, feeling puzzled.

As he helped Lady Yaleman out, she firmly replied, "That child wouldn't lie to me... This is the exact address he gave to me, so I'm definitely sure he'll be here."

After scanning through the area once more, Gerald realized that there was a wooden house a little higher up. It seemed to still be inhabited by someone.

“...Wait for me here, grandma. I’m just heading up there for a bit to see if I can find anyone. If there is, I’ll ask them if we’re at the exact location...”

Chapter 860

Gerald was honestly feeling slightly disappointed as he made his way toward the house.

‘Would a large family even be able to live in such a secluded place...?’

Just as he was a few steps away from the wooden house’s door, Gerald watched as an old man—who looked to be over sixty—exited the house.

Though the old man was dressed like a villager, his clothes were rather clean.

The second he noticed Gerald, he was momentarily stunned though he quickly hid his shock with a smile before asking, “Well hello there, mister! Can I help you with anything?”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, sir! I’d just like to ask whether you know of any large families living up here on this mountain,” replied Gerald.

“Large families? Haha! Take a good look around, mister! There’s nothing but mountains and trees all around! I’m only living here since I guard the forests! Nobody else here but me!” explained the man as he continued to smile.

“I trust my friend who told me to look for him here. Are you absolutely sure that there aren’t any other families living atop this mountain?” said Lady Yalerman as she slowly inched closer to the two under the support of a subordinate.

Hearing that, the old man squinted his eyes slightly as he scanned both Lady Yalerman and Gerald from head to toe.

“...Friend? Pray tell, what kind of friend could you possibly mean? I do wonder if that friend of yours left a token of sorts with you...?” asked the old man rather casually.

When she heard that, Lady Yalerman seemed to realize something.

“...Yes... Yes, he did give a token to me. A wooden one!” said Lady Yalaman as she fished around her purse before finally taking out a small wooden token.

Upon giving the wooden token a good look, the old man found himself raising an eyebrow.

“What exactly is your relationship with the Yallemans in Yanken?”

“I’m the master of the Yalaman family. It’s been a good many years since I’ve last met with the person who handed this token to me...”

“I see. Well, that’s all I need to know. Follow me, though only the two of you are allowed to come. Any others will have to remain here,” said the old man.

It hadn’t occurred to Gerald earlier that the forest was merely a distraction to allow the Moldells to continue living in seclusion. So they really were living here!

After helping his grandmother get atop the old man’s bullock cart, Gerald got on as well as the old man began transporting them down a small path that went deeper into the forest.

Meanwhile, Sheldon was standing beside Bea back inside the Yalaman family house.

“Here are all the foreign loans of the Yalaman family from the past few years. I’ve summarized most of them, Miss Yalaman. Do have a look,” said the butler.

“I appreciate it, Sheldon,” replied Bea with a smile.

She had been given special orders from Lady Yalaman before she left together with Gerald. Until she returned, all affairs of the Yalaman family, both major and minor, would be left under Bea’s care.

As Bea was looking through the loans, Yura burst into the room before shouting, “S-something’s gone terribly wrong, Sheldon!”

“Young master! What happened?” asked Sheldon immediately.

“It’s my parents and that piece of land! Since they couldn’t reconcile with the fact that they had been tricked by Shane, my mom got into an argument with him when they were handing over the land! As a result, Shane has now captured both of my parents!” explained Yura.

“How could such a thing happen...? Shane is getting increasingly daring! And to think that he’s still doing such things even after receiving that warning from Miss Crawford!” said Sheldon resentfully.

“Regardless, matters regarding the Yalaman family all fall under Miss Yalaman now. Why don’t you ask her about it?” added Sheldon.

Hearing that, Yura’s left eye twitched slightly before he turned to look at Bea.

“Bea... Though it’s true that my mom’s acted rashly toward you in the past, she’s still your aunt! Please help your uncle and aunt... We can’t allow the Longs to do this!” pleaded Sheldon in an apologetic tone.

Hearing that, Bea took in a deep breath before remaining silent for a brief moment.

“Cousin... Please... If you don’t do something now, something bad could happen to my parents... Believe me when I say that Shane truly wants to vent all his anger out on my parents!”

“...Fine. Sheldon, make some arrangements and get us some subordinates. I’m heading over to have a look at the situation myself.”

Regardless of how terribly he and his family had treated her in the past, Bea felt that it would simply be too cruel not to lend him a hand.

Once all the preparations were made, she headed out with Yura.

Chapter 861

“Didn’t you say that your aunt was here? The construction zone is completely devoid of life!” said Bea within a parked car.

The site itself was connected to their family. After all, it was initially her uncle’s project. However, due to a very serious issue with her uncle’s loan, any further development of the construction zone was completely terminated.

While that was so, since the handover ceremony was held just the other day, a few people should still be present. The fact that nobody was there was honestly what surprised Bea the most.

“Humph! Your aunt’s waiting for you inside there!” shouted Yura in a cold tone, a stark contrast to his desperate voice just minutes ago.

“...What do you mean by that, Yura?” said Bea, realizing now that something was terribly off with him.

“Oh, nothing really! Since we’re already here anyway, why not just follow me in after a little chat!” replied Yura with a wicked grin before locking the car doors.

Frowning, Bea then casually said, “I’m not sure what you’re up to, but if it truly is nothing, then I’m calling Sheldon now to tell him that everything’s fine.”

The moment her cell phone was in sight, however, Yura snatched it away from her! As soon as he did that, several people rushed out from the building, surrounding the car in seconds!

“Call? Now why would you do that? After all, as I’ve said, you’re getting out of the car together with me later, cousin!” growled Yura intimidatingly.

“So you did deceive me! Did you conspire with my uncle and the others to lead me to your trap? Do you have any idea what you’re doing now?” said Bea.

“Any idea? Haha! Under these circumstances?! Cousin, I really couldn’t be bothered about things like that at this point! The only thing I know is that the family’s properties must never fall into a b*tch’s hands such as yourself! Never, I say!” roared Yura.

“Do you have any idea how long I’ve been planning to become the family heir? Or how much I’ve had to fawn on grandma to please her? After countless hours of dedication—even from when I was young—I was so close to getting my hands on the family’s properties together with my dad! And the day finally came! Yet what the f*ck happened at the most crucial moments? You did! You, Bea! You ruined all my efforts and fantasies, you b*tch!” hollered Yura almost maniacally.

Yura was honestly well aware of how crazy his current actions were. However, he knew that both he and his parents had run out of options. He needed to take such drastic measures for the sake of his future prospects.

He also knew that simply trying to force his way back into becoming the Yaleman family's head wasn't going to happen since his family had already personally offended the powerful and influential Crawfords. It wasn't hard for him to imagine how his family would continue living in the future. Knowing that fuelled him to continue his current plans till the very end.

"Bea, I won't allow you to even start planning your revenge on me! You'll never get it!" screeched Yura.

By now, Bea was already in tears. However, she wasn't crying out of fright. Rather, it was because she now knew that internal familial fights like these were still happening.

While it had been her top priority to solve such issues from the moment Lady Yaleman had left her in charge, to think that the first instance of her finding out that such conflicts still existed would be so extreme.

"When did I ever say that I wanted to take revenge on you?" said Bea between tears.

"There's no need to play dumb, Bea! You now own everything whereas my family owns nothing! Isn't the first phase of your revenge already in action?! After I'm done dealing with you, my family and I will return in charge of the Yaleman family! My family will only rest easy once you're completely out of the picture!" replied Yura before unlocking the car's doors and dragging her out.

"Time to switch locations! Be sure to guard her properly!" ordered Yura.

"Don't be too happy too soon, Yura! You won't be able to just inherit the family after capturing me! After all, grandma and Gerald aren't even back yet! Once they return, you'll regret it! Besides, Sheldon is probably rushing over now, so you better think about what you're doing while you can!" said Bea.

"Hah! I've already considered him while planning all of this! He won't come, trust me! Tell me Bea, did you know that he has a granddaughter whom he absolutely adores? She's studying in a kindergarten in one of the Yaleman family's buildings you know? If there aren't any issues, my mom should be talking to him about this now! Haha! That old fart will be sure to remain silent for good! So just give up already, Bea!" shouted Yura with a monstrous expression befitting his evil nature.

Chapter 862

It was at that moment when a phone belonging to one of Yura's subordinates began to ring.

"It's Mr. Long, Mr. Yaleman," said the subordinate.

“So you’ve actually sided with the Long family now! You’ve truly gone insane, Yura! And not just you, aunt and uncle must have lost their minds as well!” said Bea in disbelief.

“Just take her away already!” ordered Yura as he waved a hand impatiently before answering the call.

“Everything’s going smoothly, Mr. Long. You better not forget the promise you’ve made me.”

“But of course I haven’t! I’d never forget such a promise, Mr. Yaleman!”

It was nearing night at the Yaleman family house and nobody seemed to have noticed anything particularly abnormal.

However, many family members did notice that Bea had been missing for the entire day, particularly Second aunt and her family who had been waiting to treat Bea and Catherine to a meal. Due to her absence for most of the day, they simply assumed that Bea was extremely busy.

When they enquired both Catherine and Sheldon about her whereabouts, neither knew where she was.

Eventually, Second aunt walked out of Bea’s office in resignation as she shook her head and sighed.

“If only I knew she was going to end up becoming the family head, I would’ve treated her much better! With how tense our current relationship is, I wonder if treating her to a meal will even change anything...”

The day soon passed and on the morning of the second day, Second aunt and her family waited in front of Bea’s office once more. However, even as noon approached, there wasn’t any sign of Bea anywhere.

“Mom, let’s just leave... There’s probably no point in us waiting here like this... After all, Bea’s different now! She’s the most powerful big shot there is in the North! Why would she still be willing to even attend to us?” said Ysabel, dissatisfaction in her tone.

After all, Bea had risen the ranks so quickly that it made Ysabel extremely upset. She couldn’t even categorize the feeling as simply feeling envious anymore.

As a woman, Ysabel knew that Bea would’ve already done the family proud if she had gotten married into a rich family. If she had just stuck to that, Ysabel wouldn’t be feeling such complex emotions right now!

But of course, she had to go out of her way to become a powerful big shot! She was now truly a strong and independent boss.

After thinking about it for a moment, Ysabel realized that she couldn't be envious anymore since there was literally zero chance she would be able to ever top Bea ever again. In fact, if she pleased Bea, there was a chance that she would still be able to become the second most important female boss in the area. Now that would be a good feeling...

"Be patient, Ysabel... After all, as you said, Bea is now different from before..." said Second aunt.

Just as she said that, Catherine came rushing over.

"Good morning, Catherine! Why isn't Bea here with you?" asked Second aunt.

"I wanted to ask you the same thing! Hasn't Bea arrived at work?" replied Catherine in an anxious tone.

"We've already been here for at least three hours! We haven't seen her at all!" explained Ysabel.

"How odd... I've failed to contact her on the phone since yesterday and Sheldon hasn't seen her either... Where could she have gone? Knowing her, it's unlikely that she ever switches her phone off, even if she's busy!" said Catherine.

Hearing that, Second aunt and Ysabel looked at each other. After a brief moment, Second aunt then asked, "Could... something have happened to her? Is her phone still off even now?"

Helplessly, Catherine nodded, "Yes... It's not been on this entire time!"

"What should we do?" asked Second aunt, unsure of how to even process the sudden turn of events.

Though it took her a while, she soon snapped out of it and began consoling Catherine.

"Worry not, Catherine... After all, Bea's both influential and powerful now! I'm sure she's fine! Let's just wait a little longer... If she isn't back soon after, we'll come up with something else..."

With motherly concern reflected in Catherine's eyes, she could only nod slightly at her suggestion.

With that, even the second day soon came to pass... Then the third... and the fourth...

"What did the police say?" asked Yuma—the eldest son—hurriedly.

It had now been seven days since Bea's disappearance and the rest of the Yalemans were now having a family meeting.

"Up till this point, we haven't even found any clues! What on earth could have happened to Bea...?"

Chapter 863

Bea's disappearance had caused a massive uproar among those living in Yanken, and that included several big shots from Jacksonville. Since they were aware that Mr. Crawford wasn't around, they had personally sent their own subordinates out to search for Bea in the meantime.

While they did suspect a few people to be involved, in the end, there simply weren't enough clues to go with. Bea just seemed to have vanished into thin air!

Though Catherine herself wanted to contact the Crawfords from Northbay, only Bea had the means to contact them! Nobody else knew how to even get to them!

They weren't even sure if Bea was still alive. After all, it had already been seven days since anyone had seen her. From the day she realized that her daughter could very well already be dead, Catherine had had an extremely haggard expression etched on her face.

Today, the Yaleman family's members were all gathered to discuss how to progress with Bea's disappearance. Though everyone at the meeting was solemn, Catherine herself was wailing her eyes out.

Nobody spoke a word and everyone simply lowered their heads as they faced the distressed mother.

Among the Yalemans, however, Yura and Rose secretly smiled as they exchanged gazes with each other.

The plan had worked flawlessly. After all, with the help of the Longs, of course they wouldn't be able to find any clues from their investigations! Even if the others were to somehow doubt them, with the Longs on their side, nobody would be able to touch both mother and son.

“Mrs. Yaleman! Both Mr. Crawford and the chairman have returned!” announced a servant excitedly.

“What? Gerald’s finally come back?” said Catherine as she jolted up and rushed outside.

Several of the other Yalemans followed them out as well, everyone but Yura and his mother.

“...M-mom... Gerald’s back!” said Yura as he gulped while trembling.

“Fear not! There’s nothing to be afraid of! So what if they’ve returned?” soothed Rose calmly.

Hearing that, Yura became much more assured that their plan would still work out in the end.

Gerald himself was helping Lady Yaleman out of the car. Despite being at her age, she had accompanied Gerald for the past eight days. It was natural for her to be this exhausted.

When he saw the other Yalemans coming out to welcome their return, he was about to greet them when Catherine staggered toward him before grabbing his arm and pleading, “G-Gerald! Thank god you’re finally back! Please! We have to save Bea!”

“...Save? What do you mean ‘save her’? What happened?” asked Gerald.

“Calm yourself, Catherine. Now explain slowly to us... What’s wrong?” added Lady Yaleman.

“Bea... She’s... She’s gone missing for a week now! We haven’t been able to locate her at all!”

“What?!” replied Gerald, stunned.

To think that something would actually happen to Bea during his eight-day absence!

“Elaborate. What led to her disappearance?” asked Gerald rather anxiously.

Gerald was this anxious since Bea and her family were particularly important to him. It was natural for him to feel concerned if anything were to happen to any of them.

Hearing that, Catherine then told them the gist of what she knew.

“Bea’s such a nice girl... She hardly offends anyone! Who would anyone even want to harm her?” said Catherine.

“Let’s not be so pessimistic first, aunt. I’ll send some of my men to begin investigating the matter right this instant! Worry not, for whoever the culprits are, I’ll make sure each and every one of them come to regret ever being born into this world should they have laid their fingers on her!” declared Gerald as he continued supporting Lady Yalaman all the way back into the house.

“W-what should we do now, mom?” said Yura as he began trembling violently.

While the mother and child had first assumed that Gerald was a soft-hearted person, his bloodshot eyes that stemmed from his anxiety to find the culprits honestly frightened both of them. His reaction was not even close to what they had envisioned!

They had thought that he would be dispirited and nervous after finding out about Bea’s disappearance! Never would they have imagined that he could express such viciousness and cruelty!

Rose herself was now feeling intimidated, wondering what would happen if Gerald ever found out that they were involved. Would he end up ruining their entire family...?

Chapter 864

Though the thought of it alone was terrifying, Rose kept her cool.

“Worry not, we’ll just act accordingly. Though the Longs aren’t as powerful as Gerald, their family still wins in terms of size and history. I’m sure it won’t be that easy for Gerald to sniff us out!”

Soon after, Gerald issued a command for all the members of the Yalaman family to remain inside the Yalaman family house unless he permitted them to leave.

“There’s something I’m not sure whether I should tell you, Mr. Crawford,” said Philip to Gerald in a private room within the Yalaman family house a little later.

“Go on!” replied Gerald as he nodded.

“In all honesty, I find Yura and his family to be rather suspicious. After all, they clearly have a motive to do something like this,” said Philip.

At that, Gerald nodded before replying, “Indeed. I suspect them to be the culprits as well. I’ve already ordered a few people to investigate more about them. After all, his family is being a little too quiet this time around, contrary to how they usually behave. It simply feels off. While that’s the vibe I’m getting from them, I truly hope they aren’t involved this time around.”

At that moment, Sheldon knocked on the door before entering.

“You haven’t had any rest since you returned, sir. You must be exhausted. I’ve ordered a servant to brew you some soup,” said the butler.

“Thank you, Sheldon. How’s my grandmother? Is she doing alright?” asked Gerald.

“Lady Yalaman has been extremely depressed... She’s been crying for the longest time, sir. However, she’s now taking a rest...” explained Sheldon as he placed the bowl of soup before Gerald.

Just as Gerald was about to taste some of the soup, Sheldon opened his mouth though no words came out. In the end, he refrained from saying anything.

“Speaking of which, Sheldon... I remember Bea telling me something before I left about a week ago... If I remember correctly, she said that she wanted to help the Yalamans resolve the issue with the foreign loans... Did she manage to resolve them with the Long family? Or did something happen to her before she even managed to do anything?” asked Gerald as he lowered his bowl of soup at that moment.

“...Huh? Oh... No, Mr. Crawford... She... Wasn’t able to resolve it in time... The incident happened before she... managed to do so,” replied Sheldon.

“I see. Go ahead and take a rest for now,” said Gerald as he smiled faintly.

“I will, Mr. Crawford. Do enjoy your soup while it’s hot...”

“Definitely!” replied Gerald as he watched Sheldon leave the room.

"I'll investigate that old man immediately," said Philip in a cold voice the moment Sheldon left.

Gerald himself looked at the soup before shaking his head.

"From what I've heard, that man's always been honest and loyal his entire life... He's quite diligent too, though he's a terrible, terrible liar... He must have done something extremely embarrassing for him not to be able to even bring it up," said Gerald as he dumped the bowl of soup into a nearby dustbin.

After experiencing so many things, Gerald was no longer the gullible and naïve person whom he used to be. After all, he had already met so many wicked and vicious people who had put him in the most perilous of situations.

Despite that, he was still slightly reluctant to believe that those from the Yalman family had a part in all this. While he didn't particularly have a good relationship with Rose and her family, in the end, they were still his elders.

It was the reason why he refused to take the first step until concrete evidence was found. In a perfect scenario, he would very much have preferred the culprits to admit to their mistakes and consequently, correct them.

However, he knew that the possibility simply didn't exist. After all, there were now clearly people who had gone so far over the edge that they were willing to harm their own family members! It was almost as if they were forcing Gerald to use vicious tactics on them on purpose for the sake of resolving the issue.

"There's no need to investigate any further... Just force the truth out of them!" ordered Gerald.

Since they were now willing to directly harm him, Gerald was getting more and more worried about Bea's safety.

Gerald had previously assumed that they wouldn't harm Bea since they would still be able to gain the same benefits by getting close to her. What more, they were still family in the end. Surely they wouldn't do anything to actually harm Bea, right?

As it turned out, harming her was a very possible scenario. In fact, there was now even a possibility that she was already dead!

His assumption this time had fallen way too far off mark. The culprits definitely still had the drive to ruin both him and Bea.

“Right away!” shouted Philip as he turned to look at the corner of the room with a stern gaze.

A few intimidating-looking subordinates of his had been standing there the entire time.

“Follow me!” growled Philip as he led them out of the room.

Chapter 865

“Mom... Aren’t we being a bit too cruel...? Gerald’s not to be trifled with! If the truth ever gets out and Jessica realizes that we were involved...”

Within their own room, Yura was now talking in an extremely worried manner to his mother.

In response, Rose sneered, “In for a penny, in for a pound! It’s not like we can help it! We were already running out of options from the moment we decided to snatch the right to inherit the Yalman family from Bea. With Gerald dead, we won’t have any more enemies! If we’re lucky, the properties up North—that Gerald gave Bea—may even eventually fall into our hands!” assured Rose.

“For now, we can only pray that Sheldon doesn’t mess up. After all, I’m aware of how much Gerald trusts that butler!” added the villainous mother.

“But... But what if someone finds out about the poison?”

“Worry not, the poison I picked was both colorless and odorless. Besides, even if someone does manage to detect the poison, Sheldon’s the one who technically killed Mr. Crawford! If the moment ever comes, he’ll definitely be unable to defend himself!” explained Rose in a vicious manner as her eyes narrowed.

“I understand, mom...”

As soon as his sentence ended, however, the door to their room instantly burst open! Immediately after, a group of people dressed fully in black rushed in!

“What are all of you doing?!” shouted Rose as both she and her son started growing nervous.

Instead of replying, the men immediately covered their heads with black hoods which muffled any screams they attempted to make.

When they finally came to a halt, Philip was standing before them.

Though the duo had initially thought that they could hang on long enough for Philip and his men to give up, all it took was half an hour for him and his subordinates to make them spit out everything that had happened.

After all, Philip and his men were proficient in torturing people.

Both now tremendously terrified, neither of them dared to lie before Gerald's face any longer.

"P-please Gerald! The one who wants to harm you is Shane! He's the one who gave us the idea! Besides, Bea's with him now! We're out of options too! You know, if we hadn't followed his orders, he would've killed us by now! We weren't involved in the planning process of the kidnapping, Gerald!" said Rose, now so anxious that she was quivering almost uncontrollably.

In her mind, she now admitted that she had looked down upon how ruthless Gerald could actually get. Rose had simply assumed before this that as long as he didn't have enough evidence, he wouldn't act recklessly.

How wrong she was. After all, Gerald had suspected them from the very beginning.

"I do hope you don't assume that you'll be let off the bat just by putting all the blame on Shane. Regardless, grandma will hear about all this tomorrow. She'll know how to punish you. As for the Longs! I won't let them off this time!" growled Gerald coldly.

"Now... Be honest. Where did Shane hide Bea?"

It was a little while later in a dimly lit room within a secluded factory when Shane shouted, "B*tch! Just sign the d*mned thing already!"

At the moment, Shane was tying Bea to a chair as several of his subordinates stood guard over the place.

"Just give up already!" growled Bea angrily.

In response, Shane slapped her directly on the cheek!

“Bea, Bea, Bea... There’s a limit to my patience, you know? If it gets to a point where I think you’re too much of a hassle to be useful, I’ll just kill you right here and right now!” warned Shane viciously.

“Please, I’m no fool, Shane! As if you’d ever let me go after I sign it!” sneered Bea.

Shane’s eyes turned bloodshot the moment he heard that.

Once the contract before her was signed, he would be able to retrieve a few of the properties that Bea owned. Just as she said, once that happened, there was absolutely no way he would ever let her out alive.

“Hah! It seems I need to teach you a lesson! Call Second brother and the others over! They can act now! Humph! Still, before they do it, perhaps I should let them enjoy themselves first! After all, you’re quite the beauty, Bea!” said Shane maliciously.

“Right away, Mr. Long!” said his subordinates as they all laughed.

With that, one of the subordinates activated his walkie-talkie before saying, “Come up now.”

However, even after a few seconds had passed, there was no reply. Finding it odd, he called out to the few people who had been stationed to stand guard downstairs.

No reply either.

“What’s happening here? Head downstairs and have a look!” ordered Shane.

Chapter 866

Obedying his orders, a few subordinates then descended the stairs.

However, even after they went down, no noise followed. Everything was quiet. Too quiet.

It was at that moment when Shane realized that something was terribly wrong.

“You there, you stay guard here. The rest of you follow me downstairs!” ordered Shane as a lone subordinate stood at attention in the room while the rest of them descended the stairs together with Shane.

The moment Shane arrived at the last step, however, he stopped. The room was pitch black and not a sound could be heard.

Before he could even proceed any further, he felt a sharp pain against the back of his head! He could only assume that someone had smashed his head with a bat before he eventually passed out.

It was late that night when Gerald and a very exhausted Bea finally made it back to Bea’s room. As she fell asleep almost instantaneously, Gerald covered her with a blanket before leaving the room.

Standing right outside her room was a group of bodyguards dressed in black suits.

“Humph! The Longs will surely find it difficult to sleep peacefully tonight, Mr. Crawford! After all, they’ve just lost one of their most capable people! As to be expected, they’re searching all over for Shane as we speak!” said Philip with a smile.

“Indeed! Why don’t we let them look for him for seven days as well! Imagine their reactions after a week without their precious grandson!” added another subordinate.

“I really don’t have the time to mess with the Longs for a week. Speaking of the Longs, they’re celebrating some kind of occasion tomorrow, right? Perfect. Since Shane gave us such a large gift by threatening Bea for seven days straight, we’ll head to that occasion tomorrow with a gift of our own!” said Gerald with a cold gaze in his eyes.

“Get him ready!”

“Roger, Mr. Crawford!”

It was the next day in the Long family’s manor when Master Long asked, “How’s the situation? Did any of you manage to find Shane?”

Master Long himself was wearing a formal suit. After all, they were celebrating a special occasion today. Several of their family members were coming over alongside many more distinguished guests. While the atmosphere was somewhat festive, all those from the Long family were honestly filled with worry and anxiety.

“We haven’t, master. However, from what we can tell, the Yalemans should be behind this. After all, Miss Bea was saved last night. However, when we headed over to the Yalaman family to investigate, we couldn’t find a single trace of him!” said Master Long’s butler.

“Hah! The Yalaman family isn’t that capable. Besides, they would never dream of even trying to stand up against the Long family. The one who did it was most probably Jessica’s brother, Gerald!” replied Master long as he squinted his eyes.

“Gerald?” said the butler, stunned.

“It’s not the first time I’ve heard his name... From what I can recall, he seemed to have grudges against Mr. Yunus back in Mayberry... What more, Gerald seemed to be there when Mr. Yunus went missing in the Salford Province,” added the butler.

Hearing that, Master Long clenched his walking stick tightly.

“The Crawford siblings truly are deliberately standing against the Longs! How pitiful Yunus is... Up till recently, I had no idea who had caused Yunus’s disappearance... As it turned out, it was the Crawford siblings yet again!” growled Master Long as his gaze went frigid.

“It seems that I need to meet them in person sometime. If they really are the perpetrators who caused both Yunus and Shane to disappear, I don’t care what kind of influential supporters they have! They’ll have to pay the heavy price of a terrible death!”

“Master! Those from the Quarrington family have arrived!” announced a servant as he approached the man who was still deep in resentment.

However, his mood instantly shifted the moment he realized who was here. With a delighted nod, he then said, “Well, hurry up and welcome them in!”

At their current strength, the Longs were still much too weak to go against the Crawford siblings. If the Longs truly wanted to take the siblings down, then their best bet to achieve that would be by cooperating with powerful people from all walks of life.

“Can’t we refuse to participate, Giya...?”

Outside the Long family’s manor, a few women were nervously suggesting against joining the Long family’s special occasion.

“What’s there to be afraid of? While I’m equally unwilling to be here, I have to come on my father’s behalf since the Longs invited my entire family over. Besides, I’m the one who bears grudges against them yet I’m hardly scared at all! Why are you the ones scared?” said Giya as she looked at Marilyn and her other friends.

“Well, the Longs are the most powerful family in Yanken... Of course I’d be nervous coming to a place like this... Besides, look around us! Everyone in there is probably a big shot!” replied Marilyn in a quivering voice.

“Well I’m here, aren’t I? I’ve always kept you company in the past, so you’ll have to keep me company this time around!” said Giya in a playful tone.

“Fine... We’ll enter with you!” replied Marilyn as she stuck her tongue out.

“...Huh? Hey Marilyn, Giya! Look over there! There’s a team of luxurious cars coming this way!” squealed one of Giya’s friends in surprise as she pointed toward the cars that were driving toward the manor’s gates.

Chapter 867

“How truly luxurious!” added the other women in surprise.

Curious to know what kinds of big shots drove such expensive-looking cars, Marilyn and the others chose to wait near the door to see who got out.

A few of them even got their compact mirrors out and started touching up their makeup! After all, if the ones who got out of the car were rich, young heirs, who’s to say that they wouldn’t end up falling for one of them? Haha!

Eventually, a group of black-suited bodyguards got out of the cars before finally opening the door to the most expensive-looking car. Out stepped a rather familiar-looking rich heir...

“...Hey. Isn’t... Isn’t that Gerald?” asked Marilyn, stupefied by what she was seeing.

“Giya, that’s... That’s Gerald, isn’t it?” repeated Marilyn as she started hopping excitedly in place.

In response, Giya nodded before saying, “It is!”

“My god! Gerald... To think that he actually has a team of cars... What exactly is going on here...?”

Her shock was warranted since previously, Marilyn had only found out that Gerald was rich. What she was seeing now was on a whole other level. She hadn't expected Gerald to have this side to him.

Gerald himself was clearly unaware that Giya and the others were spying on him.

The girls then watched as Gerald led his subordinates all the way to the Long family manor's entrance, filled with vigor.

"Did the Long family personally invite Gerald or something?" squealed Marilyn excitedly.

"There's no way they could have... Something feels off... Come one, let's get closer and have a look!" said Giya.

With that, Giya tugged Marilyn—who still looked baffled—by the hand, and together, they silently made their way into the manor as well. Upon entering, they saw both parties seemingly confronting each other.

"You're Gerald, aren't you? From what I can recall, my family didn't invite you over!" said those from the Long family with hostile tones.

"Humph! How ballsy of you to come over! Fess up! Where's Mr. Shane Long? And Mr. Yunus as well! Did you kidnap them both?" shouted another Long who couldn't help but sneer coldly at Gerald and his men.

"Now, now, there's no need to be rude. How could any of you say that without any evidence? What if Mr. Crawford isn't involved at all?" said Master Long as he made his appearance, gesturing to his family members to back down.

He then looked at Gerald with a coy smile on his face before saying "Now isn't that right, Mr. Crawford?"

"I'm afraid they're right, Master Long! I was actively involved in both Yunus's and Shane's cases!" replied Gerald as he shook his head with a bitter smile on his face.

"...Hmm?" said Master Long as he felt his eyelids twitch rapidly.

Shane's father's eyes turned bloodshot the moment he heard Gerald's confession.

“You b*stard! So it really was you Crawford siblings in both cases! What the hell did you do to both Yunus and Shane?!” growled Shane’s father coldly.

“Humph! Before that, I’d like to talk about some unresolved issues which I believe need to be handled today. You Longs have done plenty of wicked deeds throughout the years and it’s about time you paid your debt!” sneered Gerald.

“A debt? What do you mean by that?”

As several people began discussing what Gerald had meant among themselves, Marilyn herself was watching the scene unfold together with the other girls. Watching him now, Gerald looked almost foreign to her.

As it turned out, Gerald had come here today to deal with the Longs.

‘D*mn! Who the hell even is Gerald? How is he possibly standing up against the Longs?’

“Oh it’s all written down here!” said Gerald as one of his subordinates walked forward with an agreement in his hands.

‘This is an agreement signed by the first young master of the Long family, Shane. He deeply offended the Crawford family, and has therefore decided to compensate the Crawford family. All of the Long family’s properties that are under his supervision will now officially belong to the Crawford family.’

After reading through the agreement, Master Long could feel his lips twitching so quickly that it started to hurt.

Shane was in charge of at least a third of the Long family’s properties.

“This... This is clearly blackmail!” shouted Master Long.

“Hold on, I’m not done yet. That contract alone isn’t enough to settle everything,” replied Gerald calmly.

“Not enough?”

“Indeed. After all, Shane still needs to pay a compensation of fifteen billion dollars!”

Upon hearing that, many of the Long family members began looking at each other helplessly. Many others, including Master Long himself, simply glared angrily at Gerald.

“Now bring him in!” ordered Gerald as a few bodyguards carried a sack into the room and tossed it onto the floor.

Chapter 868

The moment the sack was opened, the others saw an unconscious young man who had been beaten up terribly.

“S-Shane!” shouted Master Long nervously when he saw how badly beaten up the boy was.

“Now, now, let’s not be impatient! There’s still more!” said Philip as he, too, stepped forward.

With a swift gesture, one of Philip’s men tossed a bag over to Master Long. As it landed at his feet, its contents spilled out.

“...What’s this?”

“I... I recognize whose clothes these are! They’re the kind of clothes that Mr. Yunus usually wears!” shouted someone from within the crowd.

“I’m sure you’ve been looking everywhere for him, right? The truth is, Yunus drove off a cliff and these tattered clothes were the only remains we could find,” explained Philip.

“W-what...?” Master Long was assaulted by both immense anger and grief as he heard those words.

“G-Gerald... How arrogant of you and your sister! Bullying us this way... Do you honestly think that there’s nobody capable of standing against you within the Long family?!” growled Master Long, his eyes bloodshot with rage.

At that, Gerald could only smile faintly.

Gerald wasn’t the kind of person to be easily infuriated. Honestly, if he could, he wouldn’t even use vicious means to achieve his goals. After all, he didn’t really enjoy creating unnecessary trouble for others.

However, Yunus had tried to harm him on multiple occasions before. He had almost killed Queta as well. And now Shane was involved with Bea's kidnapping...

They had messed with the people he cared about most.

To think that they still bore grudges against his sister for what she had done over ten years ago. While his sister no longer had the time to even bother about a tiny family such as the Longs, Gerald had all the time in the world.

It was high time he got things over with.

Just as Master Long was prepared to fight Gerald to the death, his butler ran over to him while holding on to a wireless phone.

"M-master! There's a call!"

"Get lost! I'm in no mood to answer a d*mned call!" roared Master Long.

"I-it's not just any regular call, master! It's from... that party," added the butler with a gulp.

"...Hmm?"

As soon as he heard that, Master Long was stunned and his expression instantly changed. Clearing his throat, he then respectfully took the phone from his servant's hand before answering the call.

"Yes...Yes. Y-yes!"

After the three consecutive 'yesses,' Master Long hung up the phone. However, his entire demeanor seemed to have switched from that single phone call.

Far from his initial stance, he now seemed to have become feeble, and he barely looked like he had the energy to even stand. Moments later, his grasp loosened and the phone fell to the floor as his butler immediately rushed over to support him.

When his gaze fell upon Gerald again, his expression changed once more.

The call had come from the party which had served as the backbone of the Long family. The contents of the call itself, however, revealed that the backbone that the Long family relied on so much had now collapsed.

In other words, there was nothing the Long family could do to Gerald anymore.

“Now then, if there isn’t anything else, please sign the agreement. Speaking of which, there’s another condition in the supplementary agreement. I want all the properties belonging to the Long family!” said Gerald.

“Don’t even bother with him anymore, dad! Let’s just beat him up already!”

“Indeed! We’re such a huge family with so many properties! Why should we be afraid of them?”

“What utter nonsense! Saying that he wants all our properties... Preposterous! You should first be thinking about whether you’ll be able to make it out of here alive!”

While shout after shout of anger came from those within the Long family, Master Long simply raised a hand, a sign for the others to silence themselves.

His face now deathly pale, he turned to slowly look at Gerald before saying, “...Fine. I’ll sign it. I’ll sign it, Mr. Crawford!”

Hearing that, everyone from the Long family was instantly stupefied.

While it was true that the Crawford family was both powerful and influential, the Longs certainly had the means and power to at least try to stand up against them.

Though the others remained puzzled, only Master Long currently understood the importance of his actions.

Upon signing the agreement, the Long family would cease to exist within Yanken. In exchange, the Long bloodline would still be allowed to continue existing elsewhere.

In other words, if the contract wasn't signed, the Long family's name could easily be wiped off the planet for good.

Chapter 869

"Appreciate the cooperation. We'll come over to take the properties from you in seven days," said Philip.

With that, Gerald began leaving and his subordinates followed behind him.

The other guests didn't dare remain there either after witnessing the terrible incident that had just befallen the Long family. They, too, hurried out after Gerald's men were gone.

"Dad... Why? Why did you sign it?! What's the big deal? We could've just fought against them! After all, we're not afraid to die!" cried out one of the middle-aged men.

A harsh slap from Master Long was his immediate response!

"You b*stard! Do you truly want our entire family to be ruined beyond the point of no return? Do you wish for the Longs to have no descendants to leave behind?!" roared Master Long glaring at him fiercely as his lips continued twitching furiously.

"We've been completely defeated by the Crawford siblings this time! While we've continuously plotted against them in secret all these years, their background is simply too powerful!" added Master Long as he clenched his fists tightly.

"But... But dad! We're left with nothing now!"

"That's true. We no longer own anything!" replied Master Long with a nod.

"However, we still have our history spanning centuries! We won't disappear from Weston that easily! After all, we still have a last resort!"

"A... last resort?"

Master Long nodded in response before saying, "Have you heard... of the Moldell family in Yanken?"

"The Moldells...?"

As the other Longs took turns shaking their heads, Master Long added, "That's right. They're the most secretive family in all of Weston. I believe that they're our only shot at going against the Crawfords."

He then squinted his eyes before continuing, "A dozen or so years ago, the Long family still had contact with that family. However, after a certain incident happened, we ceased all contact with them"

"What exactly happened, dad?" asked one of the Longs.

"Humph! It all happened the year the son of the Moldell's Second Master came over as a guest! Since the Moldells preferred living in seclusion, its family members tended to stay out of affairs outside their own. The only exception was the Second Master's son. He went by the name of KortMoldell, and contrary to the rest of his family, he simply couldn't stay away from all the sensual pleasures he could experience in the outside world!"

"Kort was an ambitious man, he was! In fact, he was so ambitious that on the day he came as a guest, he actually threatened us right off the bat! Putting it simply, he wanted to be the backbone of our family. If we had agreed back then, he would've secretly helped us become an internationally renowned and wealthy family! However, had we chosen to go down that route, the Longs would've essentially sealed their fate to be nothing more than his lackeys!" explained Master Long.

"What wishful thinking he had! Even if we would've become internationally renowned, we'd still only be his puppets in the end, unable to act against his bidding!" sneered the Long family's eldest son.

"And that's exactly why I rejected that offer! The Longs would've had to drop our surname if we had agreed, taking up the surname of Moldell instead! Even if riches and prestige were on the line, I couldn't just abandon our family surname that our ancestors had carried on for so long!"

"Then... What happened after that? Since Kort had such great ambitions, surely he wouldn't have allowed you to refuse that easily, right?" asked another Long.

"But of course not! Some twenty-five years ago, Kort finally had his revenge on our family. Do you still remember the incident where Shaw was attacked by others just moments after being born, Joel? As a result, Shaw grew up to be a fool who barely had any sanity!"

"Of course I do! Though I wanted to investigate it, you wouldn't let me! It's still a mystery to me now!"

“Yes, well... That was Kort’s doing. If we had investigated it, our family would’ve eventually fallen into ruin. It was his way of sending us a reminder!” replied Master Long.

Shaw was the second young master of the Long family who never made any appearances regardless of the occasion. After all, he truly was a person who bore no semblance of sanity.

“Speaking of which, where is Shaw?” asked Master Long.

“The Second young lady’s brought him out to have some fun!”

Chapter 870

In response, Master Long simply sighed.

“Well, that’s good too. It’s better to just let Shaw live happily...”

“However, even though we haven’t contacted Kort for so many years, our family’s still continued prospering!” said Joel.

“Humph! But of course! I assume Kort never launched another attack on us since his father died not too long after. Due to him passing on, Kort was involved in a fight for the post of the Moldell family’s second master. That naturally meant that he wouldn’t have had the time to bother us for a good, long while. While I’m not sure what became of him, based on the fact that he’s a natural schemer, it wouldn’t be far-fetched to assume that he truly did end up becoming the Moldell family’s second master.”

“I see... Do you plan to get help from Kort to deal with the Crawfords?” asked Joel who was starting to see the bigger picture now.

“Well, your guess is half right. I’m not directly asking him for help. After all, if I do that, then as I’ve said before, the Long family’s fame and name will be as good as ruined! Humph! However, even that’s better than having the Crawford siblings acquire our family! Be aware that once we lead Kort out, a great mess will be sure to follow! However, the messier it gets, the better it’ll be for us! I’m positive that even the influential and powerful Crawfords won’t have an easy time dealing with him!” declared Master Long sternly.

After taking in a deep breath, he added, “Joel, come with me. We’re inviting Kort Mordell off the mountain...”

It was around three days later when a mysterious party was held by the Crawfords living in Northbay.

The party itself was so mysterious that most of the Crawfords themselves were prohibited from attending it.

Sometime during the party, two beautiful ladies took the chance to have a stroll outside the manor.

“I’m afraid I haven’t even had the chance to thank you properly after you donated your blood to save my sister a few days ago... Thanks to you, she’s now regained full consciousness,” said one of the ladies walking beside Gerald with a smile on her face.

“You’re certainly most welcome, Miss Yselle. After all, compared to the help us Crawfords are about to receive from the Moldell family, what I did was akin to nothing!” replied Gerald who smiled back.

It was truly a coincidence that on the day Gerald and Lady Yalaman went to pay the Moldells a visit, they found that Winnie Moldell, the youngest lady of the Moldell family, was so terribly injured that she was already unconscious.

The Moldells had been searching high and low in secret to look for a person who had a suitable blood type to save her life. While it wasn’t hard for them to find somewhat similar blood types, the Moldells were extremely strict in everything, even when it came to blood.

Fortunately, Gerald’s blood met all their standards.

After donating his blood to save Winnie’s life, Gerald’s body became rather weak. It was the reason why he and Lady Yalaman had stayed with the Moldell family for about a week.

“Well, the party is still going on inside, Miss Winnie and Miss Yselle... I’ll be heading back inside to serve the guests first,” said Gerald as he turned around to leave.

As he walked away, Winnie—the other lady who hadn’t looked at him at all throughout his entire conversation with Yselle—took a peek at him.

“Why are you like this, sister? Though Gerald is from the outside world, he still saved your life,” reminded Yselle as she looked at Winnie.

“And who was it that said I wanted his lowly blood inside me? If it wasn’t for him, my blood would have remained pure and prestigious!” said Winnie coldly.

“Now why would you say that? Gerald’s a rather nice person!”

Hearing that, Winnie frowned slightly before looking at Yselle.

“I’ve been meaning to ask you, sister... From the moment I’ve regained consciousness, you’ve kept mentioning him in front of me. Could it be that you have a crush on him?”

“I... I don’t! I’m just grateful to him for saving you... Besides, since we’ve been sent here to help him and his family anyway, I thought it’d be nice if the two of you built a good rapport!” answered Yselle who’s cute face was now blushing slightly.

“Please, sister. I’ve had my fair share of experiences so I can see right through you. It’s obvious why you’d be so curious about him. After all, you probably haven’t met such a person even from when you were young! However, I’ll be frank and tell you now that it’s impossible! It’d do you good to rid yourself of all such thoughts before it’s too late. The truth is, no man on this entire planet is a good person! All of them are equally lowly and vicious! The utmost scum!”

Chapter 871

“Hey sis, I know you were hurt by Narc once but take a look at his wife. She’s such a materialistic person!” Yselle said.

Winnie glared at her angrily. “Shut up! How many times did I tell you not to remind me of him! Don’t even get me started with that woman!”

“Y-yes...I know, sis. I know how much you hate that dreaded woman. I swear I won’t repeat this again!” Yselle's eyes were tearing up as she spoke.

Realizing that she had been too harsh, Winnie caressed Yselle’s head and said, “I’m just trying to look out for you. That Gerald guy reeks of money. He only has what all materialistic people want. Money. He doesn’t deserve to have any ties with our family. We are only here to help him on behalf of our master’s son, to keep our promise with them. We, the Moldells’ unlike the rest of the world, take our promises seriously!”

“So, even if you have the slightest feelings for Gerald, there is no way the both of you could be together. I’ll definitely stand against it!” There was a glimpse of disdain peeking through Winnie’s eyes.

“Oh...I understand!” Yselle lowered her head.

“But, it’s not impossible to let you stay by Gerald’s side. There is a way.” Winnie said.

“Huh? What way?” Yselle asked.

Ten days ago when Gerald first arrived, Yselle found herself developing feelings for the young and lively man.

After getting to know him and listening to the stories of his adventures, Yselle was even more eager to find out more about that young man.

A girl’s emotion can be really hard to comprehend sometimes. Falling for someone without rhyme or reason, and then hating the person in the same exact manner.

If asked at that moment whether Gerald was really that great or not, she’d answer ‘No’, but Yselle liked him regardless of that fact!

Yselle had always felt like that. She grew up behind the walls of Moldell and she never had the chance to fulfill her fantasies.

“That’s a pretty simple job. Make him one of your servants and let him follow you around!” Winnie said.

“In fact, he’d live a longer life after becoming one of our servants and this is something that can hardly be bought by money!”

“I don’t want him to be my servant, sis. Why, why do you look down on him so much? After all, he is...”

“That’s enough! Other than this, there are no other alternatives. Don’t blame me for not telling you about it!” Winnie left after she finished.

Dylan was talking to the third master of Moldell and the assistant of the Moldell family at the ball.

“This time, I’ll be counting on all of you then!” Dylan said with a smile.

“You’re most welcome, Master Crawford. We will do our best. We sure hope that the Crawfords and the Moldells would be pleased with the result of our collaboration this time!” Moldell’s third master, Parker Moldell said.

"I suppose it won't be as pleasing as it seems huh?"

Suddenly, a 60-year-old man entered the hall with a group of people.

"Who are you? How did you come in?" Dylan was stunned when he saw the old man.

"Did you expect those useless brats to stop me?" The man sneered.

"Kort, what do you think you're doing? Now that we are working with the Crawfords, how dare you disrespect them?" Parker shot up from his seat with a deep frown on his face.

"Collaborating with them? No way!" Kort responded coldly.

Chapter 872

He was a man in his sixties but he looked as if he was only 50. He had a pair of sharp and bright eyes that would create a sense of unease in the person who stood before his gaze.

"Why can't we collaborate?" Parker asked.

"Master Parker, I understand that your son was rescued by the Yalemans and that you owe them the favor. However, you broke the rules when you made a promise with them to help out the Crawfords!"

"But you must know that Crawford's eldest heir, Gerald, has offended one of my good friends, the Long family. Hence, I demand an explanation from you folks on behalf of the Long family!"

"Do you think you'll still be able to help them now?" Kort said.

Even though Kort addressed the 90-year-old Parker as 'Master', he was just the third master of the family and Kort was one step above him. Kort, being the Second Master, had a position that was higher than that of Parker in the family.

"Long family?" Gerald started pondering what the Long family had to do with the Moldells.

Jessica and himself had been at odds with the Long family for quite some time now, so what kind of explanation was Kort demanding?

“Nice to meet you, Master Kort. forgive me but, what sort of explanation are you demanding?” Dylan asked with a smile.

“Hah, that’s simple. I demand half of Crawfords’ assets be transferred to the Long family. As long as this is done, I shall not ask for anything more!” Kort sneered.

“How arrogant!”

The Crawfords looked at each other. They were stunned by Kort’s request.

Crawford’s assets? Half was too much, even a millesimal of that amount would be more than enough for the entire Long family. Kort was out of his mind! He was definitely not seeking an explanation but trying to rob the Crawford family!”

Gerald frowned.

“Master Crawford, please consider this offer. If my friends aren’t pleased, I’m not sure what I will be forced to do in order to make the Crawfords pay for their wrongs. I believe you wouldn’t question my powers right?” Kort smiled as he said.

He came in without registering because he wanted to deter the Crawfords.

If only the Crawfords knew that he was coming to exact his revenge, they would have tried to stop him at all cost!

“Master Kort, isn’t demanding half of their assets slightly too much? They’re the Long family we’re talking about. They’re nothing! How dare they demand half of Crawford’s assets?” Yselle stood up.

The Moldell family was actually divided into a few branches and Kort was a leader of one of the branches.

Everyone in the Moldell family knew that Kort was a man of the world. If we looked at the number of women he had around him, he had at least a handful of them at all times. That was why Yselle and Winnie despise Kort.

Including Parker, everyone in the Moldell family knew that Kort was not trying to appease the Long family. No, instead, he was trying to stir up a conflict with the Crawfords, with this as merely his excuse to do so.

Kort has taken over a few family businesses with this method. Even though he would never admit to such acts, rumor has it that the large family that Kort has secretly established came about exactly like that!

“Yselle, is that how you talk to your elders? Master Parker, I believe you would not interfere in this matter, yes? Even if you wish to, you have to think about the consequences. Is it worth exposing the Crawfords to such risks?” Kort hinted at Parker.

Parker was furious but he remained silent nonetheless.

Kort was too powerful for Parker to fend against.

“Master Crawford, I’ll give you thirty minutes to consider my offer. I want an answer half an hour later! No more, and no less!” Kort then left with his people...

Chapter 873

“It’s all my fault, dad. This happened because of me!” Gerald started to apologize when Dylan and the family arrived at the study to discuss their plan.

Dylan was caught off guard by this matter. He totally did not anticipate this to happen.

“No, Gerald. That’s not the crux of the matter. I’ve heard about Kort from your grandfather and I’ve always known that he’s a very greedy man. Your grandfather had business with him and that was why we moved away from Weston to Northbay. We’ve all been trying to stay away from KortMoldell, but the day has finally come, when we can run from him no longer!” said Dylan.

“Even if it wasn’t for the Long family, he would still come after us, in the name of the Zabel or Letts families!” Dylan continued while frowning.

“Dad, the concerns that you had for the Moldells, was it because of this?”

Gerald remembered that his father had mentioned that if it was not for their current situation, he would never have sought help from the Moldells and he’d never conduct any business with those folks.

Dylan nodded his head with a worried expression.

“Gerald, do you know about the family that was once equally as powerful as us? I probably haven’t told you this before but 40 years ago, there were three extremely wealthy families. One of them was our family and the other family was the Morningstars. But the Morningstars have changed over time into the Moldell family. Do you understand what I’m trying to tell you?” Gerald’s mother said.

Gerald nodded his head.

“Sigh, without the help of the Moldells we wouldn’t have been able to stand up against the League, nor would we have found your uncle Peter. That means nobody would ever know about the secret your uncle Peter is carrying!” Dylan slammed his fist onto the table.

“Dad, I never understood the curse that you keep talking about. Our family is so powerful. How is it possible that we would just perish?”

“Even if Kort is trying to seek his revenge, he can’t do anything to us. How could we end up like the Morningstars and get swallowed up by the Moldells?”

“I don’t believe this!” said Jessica.

Daryl waved his hand and said, “That’s right, even if he was seeking revenge, he can’t destroy us like how he did the Morningstars. But we sure as hell are in for a rough time!”

“I’m not worried about how tough it is going to be. As long as we could find your uncle Peter, we would be much stronger than before and even if we were destroyed, the Crawfords will always be the biggest tycoons. Do you understand what I’m trying to say? If we can’t find him, I’m afraid we might be gone in less than 10 years!”

Dylan shook his head. “That is why we must look for your uncle Peter and we have to ask for help from the Moldells!”

Gerald knew that no matter how hard he tried asking about the curse, his father would never give him an exact answer.

“Dad, are you really going to give him half of your assets? Does he even deserve it?”

Jessica was upset. "I'm going to take him up on the challenge. I don't believe I can't defeat Kort with the powers I have in North Africa!"

"Sis, didn't dad just mentioned that it's not about challenging Kort but instead, working with the Moldells to come up with a solution? I don't think there are any alternatives here!" Gerald said.

"But what choice do we have? Do you really think the Moldells would still work with us?" Jessica was worried.

"There must be a way!" Gerald smiled bitterly.

Suddenly, he turned to his parents and sister. He smiled at them and said, "I have an idea!"

"Gerald? What...what do you mean?" Dylan could tell what Gerald was up to, which made him all the more anxious.

"Don't worry about it, dad. I'll handle this matter!" Gerald left after saying that.

"Kort, Master Crawford, and the Yalemans are all my friends. Don't you cross the line!"

Outside, Parker and Kort were having a fight.

"Do you even think that you could take down the wealthiest family, the Crawfords? I don't want to stick my nose into this matter but have you ever thought about their position globally? If the Crawfords are being threatened, the consequences are far beyond our imagination. The Crawfords aren't the Morningstars! When news gets out, our grandmaster will surely take matters into his own hands, and by then, do you think you can actually take over half of their assets when it was you who instigated the squabble?" Parker waved his hand and sat down.

Kort frowned slightly. He had never given it that much thought. Kort had always wanted to take over the Crawfords but after a few rounds of exchanging punches, he realized that it was harder than climbing the stairs to heaven.

Chapter 874

Kort only shifted his target to the wealthiest family in Weston after the Crawfords' move to Northbay but Parker's words finally knocked some sense into him.

If this matter gets out of hand, Moldells' grandmaster surely would never forgive him. But he was already on the brink of success. Kort was not ready to give it all up. Even if he wasn't going to get half of their assets, he must take at least a quarter of it!

Kort was not ready to give up yet! He kept his cool and remained silent.

Meanwhile, Gerald walked out into the hall.

"Gerald, we are good friends, I'll help you, and I'm sure Master Parker will too!" Yselle walked over and grabbed Gerald's arm.

"I know, thanks Yselle!"

Gerald looked at Parker and said, "Uncle Parker, if the conflict between me and the Long family is settled, does that mean that you would continue to stay and help us?"

Parker was unsure what Gerald meant by that but he nodded and said, "You don't have to worry about that. Your grandmother has saved my son years ago and as long as it's you folks, I'd be willing to help. The Moldells never went back on their word!"

"That's great!" Gerald smiled and nodded.

Gerald then looked at Kort. "Master Kort, you said you're here to seek revenge on behalf of the Long family and you did admit that their conflict is between just me and their family. If that's so, then don't drag my family into this! If you really want an explanation, just come after me. There's no reason for you to pester the Crawfords!"

Kort sneered. "Hah! You're the heir of the family, so it is only natural that the Crawfords have to pay for your misbehavior!"

"You're wrong, Master Kort. From now on, I'm no longer the heir of Crawfords and you have no business with my family anymore!" Gerald smiled.

"What did you just say?" Kort squinted his eyes and then open them widely.

"Gerald, what the hell are you saying!" Dylan immediately walked out of the room and yelled at him.

Gerald smiled. "I mean what I just said. From now onwards, I'll be leaving the Crawfords and I'll no longer be Young Master Crawford! Master Kort, if you have any issues, please just come after me!"

"Master Parker, you promised you'd stay and help the Crawfords. Now that I am leaving the family, I take it that conflict with the Long family is no longer a problem the Crawfords have to deal with anymore?"

Parker was stunned. He never thought that Gerald would simply give up his title just like that.

He nodded his head. "Of course. Since you're no longer part of the Crawfords, nobody could seek trouble from them anymore!" Parker glanced at Kort. He was giving him a warning not to cross the line!

Kort's eyes were red from rage. "Hah, leaving the family? Do you really think your bratty ass can survive without your family backing you up? Even if I don't do anything, your enemies will be coming after you and if the Crawfords decide to intervene, your work would have been in vain! That is because I'll still come after the Crawfords!"

"Don't worry about that. No one is going to help me. Of course, after I leave the house of the Crawfords, you're welcome to look for me!" Gerald said.

"Brother!" Jessica was worried-sick upon hearing Gerald's declaration.

She looked at Dylan. "Dad, say something!"

Dylan frowned slightly and his eyes were filled with tears.

His lips twitched slightly. "Since my son is going to take the responsibility and leave Crawfords for good, I, as your father, guarantee that whoever touches you in Northbay shall be facing the wrath of the entire Crawford family!"

"Bang!"

Dylan smashed a wine glass to pieces.

Kort was shocked.

“What are you talking about, dad?”

“Dylan, are you out of your mind?! That’s our son!”

Jessica and Yulia were panicking!

Chapter 875

Dylan was upset.

If Gerald has stayed, Kort would surely find an excuse to challenge the Crawfords.

Even though the Crawfords had the power to fight Kort’s repeated attacks, it was unavoidable that they’d be injured as well.

If their inheritance process was not stable enough it would be impossible for them to continue their search for the Sun League.

How long can the Crawfords survive if there was no peace?

Gerald’s departure could buy the Crawfords some time and Dylan was perfectly aware of this.

However, by leaving the protection which his family offered him, Gerald’s path would only grow harsher and more difficult to traverse. Both Kort and the Long family would never allow Gerald to slip off so easily.

Dylan held his fist tightly. He was struggling in his heart when he said those words.

“Wow! Never knew that Dylan Crawford would abandon his own son so readily when push comes to shove!” Kort frowned.

He sneered, “There is more to come! Master Parker, I shall save you some face today. I’ll remember the Crawfords from now on!” He waved his hand and left.

Dylan gave up his own son to protect their family’s assets. If things continued going downhill, he might be forced to do something even more insane.

If the Crawfords were to fight them with all of their power, Kort would never stand a chance.

Hence, it was not a good idea for him to linger around.

Even though Gerald's farewell gave him no excuse to attack, Kort knew that he would still be the key to swallowing the entire Crawford family and he wasn't at all fazed.

He left at the right time...

"Master Kort, are we really going to give up the Crawfords like that? They hold the most assets and it could be ten times more than what you have established at Logan Province!" One of Kort's subordinates said after they left the island.

"Do you think I'm that dumb? It's just not the right time to take them head-on now. We have too many enemies in our own family now. Even if we really conquered the Crawfords, we'd be left defenseless against the rest of the branches of our family."

"We have to think of a plan that could kill two birds with one stone and it must be used on Gerald!" Kort squinted.

"Then we will have Gerald in our hands no matter where he is and he won't be able to run away!" His subordinates smiled and nodded.

That night at the harbor of Hong Kong, Gerald brought along his luggage and walked down from the ship.

Gerald was emotional when he reminisced about the past 6 months. Everything felt like a dream to him. He transformed from a poor, disgusting student who was worth less than a pile of dirt to a rich and wealthy heir.

Now, he was far poorer than before this all even started. He knew that sacrifices would have to be made in order to secure peace for his family in the long term.

Gerald was not afraid of being poor but he was afraid that he might not see the sun of tomorrow.

Even though it was late, there were still many people at the harbor. As Gerald walked further out, he glanced backward. There were at least ten people following him.

'Am I going to die here tonight?'

Gerald held his fist tightly. He was not afraid, but feeling his impending doom, Gerald still felt the urge to keep on fighting. He wanted to live on no matter what.

Gerald hastened his pace.

The people following him were not ordinary men, as they immediately chased after him.

Suddenly, the blinding headlights of a car and the sound of tires skidding filled the air at one of Hong Kong's many harbors.

Chapter 876

Gerald, who had attempted to escape was blocked from all sides.

After that, the car door was opened.

A group of bodyguards dressed in black walked out of the car.

Their leader was none other than Joel.

He was the father of the three young masters of the Long family.

"Hahaha! Why if it isn't Mr. Crawford? Why the hurry? You going somewhere?"

A vicious look flashed across Joel's face.

"I heard that you've announced your self-imposed exile from the Crawford family today. I couldn't believe it at first but looking at you right now, Mr. Crawford, it seems like the rumors are true!" Joel said.

"You've been waiting for this moment for a very long time now, aren't you Joel? Instead of blabbering on and on about this, why don't you take me away, as you've always wanted to!"

Gerald replied with a frown.

“Mr. Crawford, if it weren’t for the fact that I had been given strict orders not to take any action against you, I would have started hacking away the moment our eyes met. I would have cut off your flesh piece by piece so that it can serve as a tribute to Yunus!”

Joel roared with a grim expression on his face and his eyes, bloodshot.

“Men, come! Take him away!”

Joel commanded as he waved his hand.

His subordinates approached Gerald immediately.

“Vroom! Vroom! Vroom!”

Out of nowhere came the roaring sound of a mighty engine.

A modified off-road vehicle suddenly rushed towards them from the side of the road.

It was heading straight for Gerald, who had been surrounded.

Krash!

The off-road vehicle crushed all of the cars in its way as it rushed directly towards Gerald. After that, a pair of hands reached out and pulled Gerald into the passenger compartment.

“After them! Don’t let them escape!” Joel roared.

The attack came and went as quick as lightning.

The headlights of the vehicle caught them completely off-guard, blinding Joel’s men as Gerald was rescued.

“Mr. Crawford, are you okay? Sorry, we’re late!”

At this moment, the brothers, Drake and Tyson spoke up.

“I’m fine. Thank God, the both of you came in time!” Gerald nodded.

“By the way, why are you here? Did my elder sister tell you to come here?” Gerald asked.

“Yeah, Miss Crawford knew that somebody would spring an attack on you as soon as you left Northbay. She sent us over to pick you up!”

“Mr. Crawford, what are your plans for the future?” Drake asked.

There were no other alternatives. If it was possible, the two brothers would be more than willing to continue helping Gerald. They were glad to remain by Gerald’s side to protect him.

But there were many eyes keeping tabs on the Crawford family right now.

They could not allow Kort to have anything to use against them.

So, it was okay for them to help Gerald once. But helping him for the rest of his life was not going to happen.

“I am no longer Mr. Crawford. The both of you can just call me Gerald. I don’t know what is going to happen in the future but I’m going to Salford Province. I’d like to look for someone there!” Gerald replied after a brief moment of deliberation.

A specific someone had come up in his memories.

“Okay then, Mr. Crawford! We will escort you to Salford Province!”

Drake and Tyson replied.

“Vroom! Vroom! Vroom!”

Then came the sound of engines roaring.

Several modified off-road vehicles came rushing straight towards Drake and Tyson’s vehicle.

It was evident that these vehicles were being handled by the most skilled drivers around.

“F*ck!”

Drake hurriedly grabbed the steering wheel.

But it was too little too late. Simultaneously, these vehicles slammed into Drake’s vehicle, shaking the passengers up as if they were in a tin can

Chapter 877

“Boom!”

The sound of a violent explosion rocked the city.

There was a cloud of smoke at the scene and there was debris everywhere.

The light from the fire illuminated the night sky.

Several cars exploded simultaneously and started a huge fire within seconds.

“Mr. Crawford, are you okay?”

Drake protected Gerald as they rolled down the small slope.

Drake and Tyson brought Gerald with them as they jumped out of the car during the car crash just now.

Whoever that was after them was bat-sh*t insane.

“I’m fine, I think!”

Gerald shook his head and he felt as though the sky was spinning.

“They’re still hot on our asses!” Tyson yelled out at this time.

Many bodyguards dressed in black were brandished weapons as they rushed down the small slope from the main road.

“There are still sixteen of ‘em left, brother. Let’s deal with eight of them each. Mr. Crawford, start running north of our position! Mr. Lyle is already waiting for you under the hillside in the north. You can leave everything here to us!”

Zack was here too!

Gerald felt moved.

At the same time, he also knew that he would only cause more trouble for Drake and Tyson if he continued sticking with them.

Thus, he didn’t waste his time saying needless goodbyes. Instead, he gave them a single nod before running towards the north.

Ever since Finnley taught him some simple breathing techniques and the five fighting moves, Gerald’s physique became much greater than before.

Gerald exhausted all of his energy and strength as he desperately ran northwards.

“I am almost there!”

Gerald gritted his teeth as he reminded himself.

However, the more he ran, the darker it was. At one point, everything in front of him became pitch black.

Gerald suddenly missed a step.

He tripped forward and fell flat on his face.

After falling like a heavy sack of potatoes, he was caught up in a mental daze.

Suddenly, a burst of dazzling car lights blinded him.

Several bodyguards dressed in black came over and grabbed Gerald by the neck.

Gerald looked at the license plates of these cars.

These cars belonged to the Long family from Yanken!

“It’s all over! I have nowhere else to go now!”

Gerald closed his eyes, knowing that he had come to the end of his journey.

“Let go of him!”

Desperation was at an all-time high when he suddenly heard a familiar female voice.

Gerald’s eyelids peeled open to confirm his suspicion.

“Xavia?”

Gerald said in surprise.

Xavia marched right up to Gerald with her hands crossed over her chest.

“Hmph! Gerald, you would never have expected to fall right into my hands, right?” Xavia asked coldly.

“No, I did not,” Gerald replied with a wry smile on his face.

“Gerald, oh how amazing you are. To be the Young Master of the Crawford family, have you any idea how much people envied you? One word from you and the entire Long family would be annihilated. What a surprise to see your pathetic little face here!” said Xavia.

“Since I’m here, why don’t you just bring me back to your home, so you can get all the credit for capturing me? There’s no need for you to waste your time, saying all that. Finally, the chance has come for you to exact revenge!” Gerald responded with a bitter laugh.

Slap!

Xavia raised her hand and gave Gerald a slap across his face.

“Are you telling me to shut up? Listen here, I’ll keep talking whenever I feel like talking! I’m the one calling the shots here! Gerald, do you know how long I have been waiting for this moment? I’ve been waiting a long, long time for the day where you would stand before me with your head hung low!”

Slap!

Xavia gave Gerald another slap using the back of her hand.

Chapter 878

“Hahaha! I gave up everything when we were back in Salford Province. I asked for a clean slate with you but how did you respond? Arrogantly, haughtily, up on your high horse, you ignored me completely. You’ve hurt me so many times, but do you remember who was the one who remained by your side when you were still considered a pauper back in university? Who was the girl who held your hand stubbornly when you were walking through the campus, being ridiculed by everyone around you? Who was the only person who did not despise your existence back then!?”

Slap!

Xavia's eyes were red with tears as she said, "It was me! But what about you? How did you treat me as soon as you gained some wealth and glory? You made me live in such a miserable state like a dog who had to go around begging for food! Even though Felicity was a bitch who had always despised you and looked down on you, you chose to help her when she asked for help! What about me? What happened when I needed help!?"

"You were the one who let me down!" Xavia said.

"Everything is simply perfect now. You have already left the Crawford family. Finally, I am no longer afraid to tell you this. Even if you really want to escape, will you really be able to do so? Even if you can really escape from the Long family's clutches, there is still the Moldell family, and the Lynwood family. The entire world's going for your throat! You are just a miserable outcast, the same as you were back then!"

"I have already said so much. So, why don't you say something? Answer me!"

Slap! Slap! Slap!

Xavia was so furious that she slapped Gerald three more times, consecutively.

All this while, Gerald had always been a looming shadow that haunted Xavia's heart.

Being buried deep within her heart for a very long time, it contorted Xavia's perspective on the world negatively.

Since all of her anger and frustrations were released in one single go, Xavia started to get a little hysterical!

"What else can I say? You can insult and humiliate me now and you can even kill me if it eases your soul!" Gerald replied as he shook his head.

"Hahaha! You still are clueless about what kind of girl I am, even after all this time!"

Xavia replied as she shoved Gerald.

After that, Xavia took a deep breath.

“Gerald, to tell you the truth, I do not have the intention of dragging you back with me to gain recognition from my family for capturing you!”

“I can give you a way out. As long as you are willing to bow before me, admit your mistakes apologize for your wrongs, I will let you go!” Xavia replied as she clenched her fists tightly.

The time she spent in the Long family was spent on gaining the loyalty of these men around her.

Over time, they had grown to become obedient and submissive to her.

“You...you will let me go?”

Gerald was surprised when he heard those words.

Indeed, he hated Xavia because of certain things and there was no denying that he hurt her on multiple occasions.

After falling into her hands, Gerald thought it was no better than being captured by Joel and his men.

However, Xavia was proposing to let him go.

As for Xavia, although she absolutely hated Gerald and wanted him to suffer, she did not want to see Gerald lose his life.

She had mixed and complicated feelings. She did not want Gerald to live a good life, but she also could not bear to see Gerald getting hurt.

“Yes. As long as you are willing to apologize to me, and as long as you can touch the depths of my heart, then I will let you go!” Xavia replied.

Gerald started to self-reflect. In comparison to how heartless and cruel he had been towards her back then, it was surprising how Xavia was still actually able to say such things.

Gerald was paralyzed by guilt as realization set in.

“Alright, Xavia. If you really are going to let me go, then I, Gerald Crawford would like to apologize for mistreating you and for all the wrongs I did to you in the past. I will never forget the kindness and benevolence you have shown me today!”

“Hmph! How cheesy! Now get lost!”

Xavia turned her head around to look the other way as she crossed her arms in front of her chest.

Her subordinates began making way for Gerald to leave.

Gerald nodded as he looked at Xavia before he started running away.

“Wait a minute!”

Xavia suddenly yelled out to stop Gerald.

“What’s wrong?” Gerald asked.

“Gerald, I am not sure whether we will meet again in the future, so, I would like to remind you how powerful the Moldell family is. Moreover, it is not the first or second day that the Moldell family has been planning to bring the Crawford family down. They won’t let you slip away that easily. You’ve got to be more careful from now on. The Long family is now reduced to a dog working for the Moldell family. You can run all you want, but they’ll hunt you down eventually. If you manage to escape, I’d advise you to live anonymously. It’d be better if you don’t show up at the Crawford family from now on, no matter what happens!” said Xavia.

“I understand! Thank you, Xavia.”

“And one last thing. Do you know why I am choosing to let you go?” Xavia asked.

“Why?”

“Because after experiencing so many things, I finally realized that you really loved me with all your heart back then. However, it was me who failed to cherish your affection till the very end!”

Xavia said, with misty red eyes.

“Alright. You take good care of yourself, okay? I am leaving now!”

After he was done speaking, Gerald turned around and dashed into the darkness of the night...

Chapter 879

Seven days later.

At a construction site in a typical small county located in Salford Province.

“It is time for the wages to be distributed! You, twenty three dollars! Keep it well!”

“You, fourteen dollars!”

An overweight foreman with a perfectly-round belly was handing out the daily wages to a few men and women who were in their fifties.

Among them stood a young man, who stuck out like a sore thumb.

The others received twenty three dollars as their daily wage.

However, when it came to the young man’s turn, he only received fourteen dollars.

The foreman spat on his fingers as he counted the cash to make sure the amount was right.

“Hold on. Haven’t we already agreed on this matter before coming here? You don’t need to pay me twenty three dollars a day, but didn’t we settle on sixteen dollars a day instead?” The young man asked.

“Damn it! Didja forget the meal you ate earlier this afternoon!? Two dollars is taken off your pay for yer meal!”

“But the lunch we had just now was just two pieces of biscuits, and you’re deducting two dollars from me!?”

“Damn it! I only gave you some work to do because I thought that you looked like an honest and decent young man. I am only going to give you fourteen dollars. It is up to you whether you want to take it or not. Ain’tnuthin’ you can do even if I don’t pay you a single cent!”

It was around this moment.

“Huh? Why does that worker look so familiar?”

A couple holding hands were accompanied by several other people as they walked past this area.

“Familiar? Raquel, is something wrong with your eyes? Would you know a worker like this?”

The man who was richly bedecked asked contemptuously.

“No! No, he really looks very familiar. He’s a good buddy of my bankrupt ex-boyfriend. He used to be really awesome in the past. There’s no mistaking it! It’s him!”

“Are you serious?” The boy asked.

The girl walked over to the worker.

“Gerald, it’s really you!”

The girl recognized who the young man was in an instant.

There were hints of ridicule and mockery on the girl’s face.

That's right. This young man was none other than Gerald.

On that night, seven days ago, Xavia decided to let him go. After Zack picked him up, he faced many risks along the way but he finally arrived at Salford Province.

The first thing that Gerald did was to head to the countryside to look for Uncle Quick.

After all, Gerald knew where Uncle Quick's house was.

However, his fellow villagers told him that it had been a few days since Uncle Quick left the village.

Gerald had no other place to go to and he could only wait patiently.

As he was embarrassingly short of money, he had no choice but to come here to take on a part time job.

Gerald had also thought about finding a secure job.

However, when he arrived at Merry City, he was surrounded by his enemies, which was when he lost his identity card and everything else he had on him.

Furthermore, Kort had sent various business tycoons out to sniff out about his whereabouts.

So, Gerald was forced to avoid places that were too formal and proper. Gerald had no other choice but to come to such places to hunker down.

He was given a taste of being a miserable and distressed homeless outcast.

"Raquel?"

Gerald also recognized this girl.

She was Marven's girlfriend who practiced taekwondo.

A couple days ago, Gerald found out through the internet that following his downfall, Marven's travel company came crashing down as well.

A perfect demonstration of a rippling effect.

"Hahaha! I really did not expect to bump into you here. Oh, why? I heard that the company that you share with that fatty has already closed down. I heard he's working as a pathetic little tour guide now. Haha! Look at you! You're even worse compared to him! To think that you're working at a construction site owned by my hubby's family!"

Raquel laughed with her hand over her mouth.

"Oh! Mr. Brown, Miss Raquel, do you know this young man?"

The foreman bowed as he asked respectfully.

"This has nothing to do with you! Move aside!" Raquel replied coldly.

The foreman hurriedly shuffled away.

After that, Raquel crossed her arms in front of her chest and sneered as she looked Gerald up and down.

"Man, I really didn't expect to see you here. You used to be so cool back then. Too bad you had to end up in such a state. Or perhaps, you're just putting on an act? Is this your twisted little hobby? To experience life as a penniless nobody?"

Raquel asked with a worried tone.

After all, Gerald had slapped her across the face once.

"If you've nothing else to say, I'm leaving."

Chapter 880

When Gerald saw their employees staring in his direction, he was afraid that his identity would be discovered.

So, he wanted to leave.

“Why are you leaving? Don’t leave! After all, no matter what happened in the past, we’re at least acquaintances!”

Raquel grabbed Gerald by his collar.

More likely than not, Gerald had really turned into a pauper this time.

Hahaha! Raquel felt overjoyed and relieved to see him in such a pathetic state.

“Come! Come! I want all of you to take a good look at him! Let me introduce you to this young man, Mr. Gerald Crawford!”

Raquel said as she waved her hand at the employees working in the project department.

They were all sharply-dressed folks, with all of them sporting creaseless business suits.

They had obviously graduated from university not too long ago.

They covered their mouths as they giggled at Gerald.

“Oh my god! I would kill myself if I was forced to live like this!”

“That’s right! But isn’t he being really self-reliant? To think that he came out to look for a job for himself!”

However, as executives high up the pecking order, all of them obviously despised and looked down on Gerald.

“Don’t you look down on him! Have you any idea who he is? He used to be one of the ultra-rich, Mr. Crawford! He drove a luxury car that none of you will ever be able to afford in your lifetime!” said Raquel as she cackled away.

“Ahhh? Is that true? He was actually a rich man?”

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. How impressive!”

“I wasn’t able to tell though!”

The girls said as they laughed.

“Gerald, we do not have any other intentions but seeing the state you’re in right now, I believe that you do not even have a girlfriend anymore, right? Why don’t I introduce a few girls in our company to you then? Who knows, maybe one of them would be interested in you? What about you girls? What do you think?”

“What do all of you think about Gerald? Anyone who is interested in becoming his girlfriend?”

“Hahaha! Why don’t you go?”

The girls started laughing amongst themselves as they pushed one of the girls forward.

The girl who got singled-out started to sound rather anxious, “Why don’t you girls go instead? God, I hate you people sometimes!”

“Thanks but no thanks. Now, if you’ll excuse me!”

Gerald lowered his head as he turned around.

“Wait a minute! You haven’t resolved the issue about your wage yet, have you? I heard everything just now. You were arguing with Mr. Stone over your wage. I mean, it’s just two dollars anyway! We’re such a huge business, ain’t no way we’re underpaying you. Am I right, Mr. Brown?” Raquel said coquettishly.

“Of course! That is only natural!”

“So, I will settle your daily wage for you! I want you lot to cough up some change right now!”

Raquel spoke as she glanced at the few girls from the project department.

They responded in a blink of an eye.

It didn't take them long to come up with a large bag of five-cent coins.

“Here, sixteen dollars and not a single cent less. This is your wage for today!”

“Oops!”

Just as Raquel was about to hand the money over to Gerald, she dropped it all onto the ground.

The coins poured out of the bag immediately upon hitting the ground.

“So sorry Gerald, guess I wasn't holding the bag properly.”

Raquel said apologetically.

“You know what? Why don't you pick up the coins? You can calculate the amount at the same time! As they say, ‘killing two birds with one stone’.”

After that, Raquel took a deep breath before she gulped down the bottled water that she was holding in her hand. She then threw the empty bottle at Gerald before she walked away.

Gerald knelt down before he carefully picked up the coins, one by one.

He placed it all back into the bag before he left the place. His lonesome, desolate figure receded into the distance.

As dusk arrived.

Gerald bought some food to eat.

He walked back to the village.

He kept walking and did not stop until he finally arrived in front of Finnley's house.

Gerald would come here after work every day to see if Finnley was back. But every time, he'd leave disappointed.

However, this time was different.

The door to Finnley's house was open and the lights inside were on.

Chapter 881

Gerald visited Finnley's house once in the past.

It was embarrassing to mention it but back then, Gerald felt that it was a little cumbersome to have Finnley by his side.

He wanted Finnley to be able to settle down at home.

However, Queta felt that it would be pitiful for Finnley to be left at home alone. Not to mention how fond Finnley was of Gerald, as reflected by how eager he was to follow him around all the time.

So, he brought Finnley back to live in the villa with him.

What a twist. The only person he could rely on now was Finnley.

Gerald ran into the house.

He saw a table full of delicacies on the table in the middle of the room.

“Uncle Quick? Are you here?” Gerald asked.

“Who is it?”

At this moment, a middle-aged woman wearing an apron came out from the room next door, holding a steaming-hot dish in her hands.

Gerald was taken aback.

“I...I am looking for Uncle Quick! Finnley Quick!”

The woman looked at Gerald, who reeked of sweat after toiling away the entire day and a look of disgust appeared on her face as she responded, Finnley has already gone up the mountain! He ain't back yet! Why are you looking for him?”

“Well, I have my reasons. I will wait for him to come back first. Since it looks like you're expecting guests, I'll be waiting outside the door!”

Gerald suddenly noticed that Finnley had gotten a pretty sweet deal for himself. Looks like he was able to get a wife for himself. If his memory served him right, before he left, Gerald left him a pretty big sum of money as pension.

However, Gerald felt too ashamed and embarrassed to ask about it. He stumbled out of the door and was about to wait by the doorway until Finnley came back.

“Hey, wait a minute! What is your name?”

The woman asked as if she had suddenly thought of something.

“Gerald Crawford!” Gerald replied.

“Oh! So you're Gerald? We've been waiting for you for a few days now! He said that you'd come looking for him, so he asked me to welcome you and get you settled down. Still, why haven't I seen you even though I come here everyday?”

“Uncle Quick knew that I was coming?”

“That’s right! He’d given me the instructions about a week ago. After that, he headed straight into the mountains! He told me that you are a rich young man! But you sure don’t look like one...hahaha!”

Gerald looked at his own clothes and he could not help but smiled wryly.

‘Was Finnley a psychic or something? How did he predict that I’d be in trouble?’ Gerald pondered.

But this was not the right time to be bothered with this now.

“You came at the right time. Finnley is coming back today. I’ve whipped up a table-full of dishes for him. Now that you’re here, hurry up and take a seat! You can have some tea first!” The woman said enthusiastically.

After chatting with the woman briefly, Gerald finally got the gist of things.

The woman came from the same village as Finnley. She requested for Gerald to refer to her as Aunt Maria. However, things weren’t as Gerald deduced. To be specific, Aunt Maria was not Finnley’s wife.

She was Finnley’s godsister.

Aunt Maria was a chatterbox.

She talked a lot.

As they spoke, he was told that something had really happened between Finnley and Aunt Maria.

This occurred around the time when Finnley first came back to the village.

Aunt Maria was a widow who was down with a severe illness and it was Finnley who saved her and got her ailment sorted out.

She could not understand how Finnley, who used to live such a carefree life suddenly became rich.

Saved by the hero, coupled with the fact that Finnley was actually a pretty decent man with above average qualities, Aunt Maria wanted to start a romantic relationship with him.

However, Finnley simply turned down her advances.

After that, Aunt Maria started treating him as her elder brother.

This was why she came to cook for the man today.

“Maria! Come and help me store these herbs I picked!”

A strong and loud voice came from outside the door.

As soon as Gerald heard the voice, he immediately knew who it was.

He stood up hastily.

“Uncle Quick?”

“My grandson? You are really here! How many days have you been here?”

Finnley was still the same as he had always been.

However, he looked a little neater compared to before.

Gerald assumed that it was Aunt Maria who forced him to dress up.

Chapter 882

Finnley’s face looked rosier than compared to when Queta was taking care of him before this.

He was carrying a bag of herbs.

“I just arrived!” Gerald replied.

“Why, grandson? Things sure went tits-up didn’t they?” Finnley asked as he chuckled.

“You can say that again!” Gerald replied, “I have nowhere else to go now, so I guess I’ll be relying on you from now on!”

“Hahaha! I’ve already asked Maria to wait for you for a few days now! Judging by how you look, you must have suffered a lot in the past few days. Come, let’s go. Maria has already prepared a table full of dishes. She’s prepared it for you! Come in and have a little drink with your gramps!”

Finnley said as he patted Gerald on his shoulder.

“So, it turns out that the Moldell family had forced you into a dead end. What is wrong with the Crawford family anyway? Don’t they have a lot of money? Did their balls drop off when facing the Moldell family?”

The two men started talking over wine and food.

Finnley was smoking a cigarette as he spoke in a light-hearted manner.

“Uncle Quick, how long have you known about the Moldells?”

The more Gerald interacted with Finnley, the more mysterious the man appeared to him.

No doubt, he knew a lot of things.

Finnley was very straightforward this time and he nodded slightly.

“I know a little about them, but as you young folks say nowadays, I can’t be bothered to know all the details about these second-rate noobs!”

“Second-rate?”

Gerald was startled.

“They’re a family made up exclusively by second-rate people. They are even referring to themselves as a hidden clan? Hmph! Clan my ass! Like hell they’re worthy enough to be considered a hidden clan, judging by how poorly they deal with matters.”

Finnley shook his head silently.

“I have seen how they operated. The Crawford family has a very tight-knitted defense and a long line of outstanding young masters. Which was why I was surprised to learn that KortMoldell was able to break down the resistance completely while remaining largely unopposed with just a handful of his men!”

“Okay, okay, I get what you mean. Are the masters you mentioned similar to the brothers, Drake and Tyson? Hahaha! Could Drake and Tyson even be considered as masters? You ask them that and take a good look at their reactions!”

Finnley said as he waved his hand helplessly.

Gerald remained silent.

After a moment of deliberation, Gerald raised his head and asked, “Uncle Quick, do know about the Sun League?”

“The Sun League? Why are you asking me about this?”

Finnley was evidently surprised to hear Gerald mention the name.

So, Gerald proceeded to explain the ins and outs of the situation to Finnley again.

“I know a little about them. Listen, it’s not like I’m looking down on you, or underestimating the Crawford or Moldell families, but something tells me that you should dispel these ideas and thoughts for now!”

“Why?” Gerald asked.

“At this point in time, the less you know, the better it is for you. Grandson, did you practice the five moves and the breathing technique that I taught you before this?”

Finnley asked with a smile on his face.

“Sure did!”

Finnley nodded and said, “What are your plans in the future then?”

Gerald sighed as he said, “I am penniless now and Kort’s men are searching all over for me. There is nowhere that I can go so I’m seeking refuge at your place now!”

“Hahaha! You did the right thing, grandson! To be honest, even if you didn’t come looking for me, I would have come searching for you sooner or later. This is our fate. So, you should just stay with me from now on. Sooner or later, you will understand why I said that the Moldells are just second-rate folks!”

Finnley patted Gerald on his head.

“Uncle Quick, I have another question!”

“Fire away!”

“Why did you find me in the first place back then? It could not have been because you felt like it, right?”

Gerald had always wanted to ask him this question.

“As I said, don’t ask me such questions for the time being. When the time is right, I will tell you everything! For now, you can just stay at my place with peace of mind and learn from me then!”

“Learn? What is there to learn?” Gerald asked.

“Learn to be skillful! My silly grandson! Haven’t you figured out the reason why you ended up in this state? If you had the appropriate skills, would you have allowed Kort to chase you around like a dog? I have already reminded you about this matter when I left back then!”

Finnley replied.

That’s right. When Finnley left back then, he already told Gerald that money wasn’t going to solve everything. He would have to be capable in other aspects as well.

However, Gerald did not have the time to pick up these “other” skills. He thought it was unnecessary.

It was only when Kort was hunting him down did he realize that aside from money, he had nothing significant that made up his identity in the past...

Chapter 883

“Uncle Quick, what do I need to learn?” Gerald asked.

“You have to learn everything that I know. You can slowly take your time. Gerald, your physique is actually not that bad. For the past seven days, I have been picking specific medicinal herbs for you to take a bath in so that you can recoup your strength and vitality. Besides that, I will also perform acupuncture on you. Don’t worry! Under my guidance, it won’t be long before you become a master!”

“You’ve been doing that for me for the past seven days?”

Gerald was really touched when he heard this sentence.

After all, his attitude back when he first met Finnley was not great. To think that the old man was willing to go to such great lengths just to help him. The man was actually concerned about his well being.

Finnley was not his biological grandfather, but Gerald felt that he was much closer to him compared to his own grandfather.

At this moment, there was nothing Gerald wished for more than to live up to Finnley’s expectations.

So, Gerald continued staying in the village, learning all sorts of skills from Finnley.

In a blink of an eye, half a year had already passed...

In a secret room in the Crawford family mansion in Northbay.

“How is it? Still nothing about Gerald?”

In the past six months, Dylan seemed to have grown a lot older.

His hair was already turning gray.

Yulia’s face continued to be soaked in tears everyday.

“Master, I escorted the young master all the way to Salford Province back then. However, we came under attack in Salford Province. I stayed behind to cover Mr. Crawford and shield him from our enemies. All that I know is that he had already gone to a village to look for an old man whose last name is Quick. Miss Queta told me the old man’s address. I have already visited the place a few times but the house had already been vacant a long time ago and there were no signs that Gerald had ever been there before!”

Zack had not been idle in the past six months, instead, he had been scouring the continent in search of Gerald while remaining undercover.

Unfortunately, for the past six months, Gerald seemed to have completely vanished from the face of the earth.

“This is all your fault! If you were just a little stronger and more powerful back then, there wouldn’t have been the need for him to leave our family! We don’t even know if Gerald is dead or alive now!” Yulia said anxiously.

Jessica was also crying as she comforted her mother.

“Gerald has lost everything, including his identity card. Not to mention the fact that that bastard, KortMoldell is searching all over for him! How do you expect him to hide then? Who knows, maybe he had fallen into his hands a long time ago?!”

The more she spoke, the more upset Yulia became.

“No! If Gerald had really fallen into Kort’s hands, then that bastard would have issued a threat already. He had been coming up with all sorts of excuses in the past six months but they’re nothing but excuses, right? Gerald would have become his bargaining chip because he knows that we would compromise and give in for his sake! In other words, it’s unlikely that Gerald has actually been captured yet,” said Jessica.

“Jessica is right. Don’t worry. I believe in our son. He will be fine. Queta, help your aunt back to her room! Let her get some rest,” Dylan said.

Tears were also streaming down Queta’s face. She nodded and said, “Yes, uncle!”

“Alright then. Resume your duties. I’d like to have some time alone!” Dylan said.

After they left, Dylan clasped his hands together and a worried expression surfaced on his face.

“Gerald, my child, where are you hiding? If I knew that this would happen, dad would rather go all out to fight against Kort than allow you to risk your life out there!”

Dylan’s original plan was to send the strongest masters from the Crawford family to guard Gerald as long as he was out there. He would deny Kort any chance to strike out against his child.

That would not have been very difficult.

However, he had overestimated the strength and power of the masters that he had cultivated over the years, and he had greatly underestimated the strength and power of Kort’s subordinates.

That night, six months ago in Merry City, if it weren’t because of his subordinates risking their lives to save Gerald, his child would not have made it out alive.

Dylan clenched both of his fists tightly.

Despite how much money he had, he still found himself powerless against such an elusive foe.

'Why can't there be a way out of this!? Why!?'

"Master!"

At this moment, Dylan's butler, Fynn walked in.

"What's wrong?"

"Jett from the Moldell family is interested in the Mountain Top Villa that the young master bought in Mayberry City. He asks how much would you be willing to sell it for."

Chapter 884

"Kort's third son, Jett?"

Dylan clenched his fists.

"Yes sir, that's him!"

"Hahaha! For the past 6 months, has there been anything that he did not want? Sell? Could he have been any more disrespectful? Tell him that we are not selling it!"

Dylan slammed his hands heavily on the table.

Although Kort could not come up with a valid justification to stop the Moldell family from assisting the Crawford family to track the Sun League, six months ago, he had asked his third son, Jett to join Parker's team under the excuse that he should be gaining more experience.

However, upon Jett's arrival, he had been trying to seize everything that he wanted by force and Dylan had been very tolerant of him all this while.

But this was the final straw.

"But master, KortMoldell has had his eyes on the Crawford family for a long time now. If Jett is not satisfied and tries to cause trouble for us, it might end up in a disaster for us!"

The butler also replied helplessly.

“Okay, fine! Fine! Give it to them! He can have it if he wants it!

Dylan waved his hand impatiently.

Something that was worth \$123,000,000.00 was nothing in Dylan’s eyes.

Be that as it may, he was still infuriated by Jett’s blatant show of disrespect.

But he had no choice, did he?

“How about it? Has Dylan agreed to it?”

A fancy-looking young man with his legs crossed was sipping his tea outside.

“Greetings, Mr. Moldell. The master said that since you’re interested in it, he will give Mountain Top Villa to you as a gift. If you don’t mind me asking, why did you even ask about buying it in the first place?”

Despite the butler’s respectful tone, he felt the urge to eat the bastard alive.

“Okay! Very well! You know, credit where credit is due. Dylan Crawford is a man who understands the reality of things! I’ve got to give him that!”

“Brothers, let’s go! Let’s leave this boring place, and go to Mayberry City for a few days!”

Jett said as he walked away in an ostentatious manner in front of his men.

In a restaurant in a small town in Salford Province.

This was a restaurant that was similar to a farmhouse-converted-diner.

This was because it was located right next to a vast mountain.

There was a big river passing through the other side of the mountain.

It was indeed a beautiful mountain with crystal-clear waters.

So, many people from the so-called upper-class would often come here to travel and explore the area.

“No matter what it is, you have got to give me an explanation today! Do you know how expensive my clothes are?”

“That’s right! Ask your boss to come here! Wipe it? Maybe you’re sick and tired of living? Is that it?”

A woman in her thirties with heavy makeup on her face was holding onto a youth’s collar and she refused to let go.

She yelled loudly into his ear.

This was what happened. There were about seven to eight people in their group.

One glance was enough to tell that these weren’t your average law-abiding citizens.

When they came in to eat, a young waiter who was in charge of serving them accidentally splashed some of the vegetable soup on the woman’s body.

And things only went downhill from that point.

The main reason why there was such a huge ruckus was that they thought it would be easy and entertaining to bully the owner of this restaurant.

“I’m terribly sorry, please, let me wipe it off you!”

The youth apologized profusely as he came forward to wipe the soup off her dress.

Slap!

Unexpectedly, the woman slapped the boy across his face. “Damn it! Take your dirty hands off me! How dare you touch me! Berthold, look at how terrible his attitude is!”

The woman said in a rude, provocative tone.

She glanced at a burly man beside her, who had a dragon tattoo and a buzz cut.

Boom!

The burly man slammed his foot into the poor waiter’s stomach. The youth flew backward and smashed into the tables behind him.

There were many patrons at the restaurant, and they were all staring indifferently at the scene before them...

Chapter 885

“Brother!”

Suddenly, a girl with a ponytail ran out of the kitchen while still holding onto some vegetables.

She had seen the young man getting abused by their customers.

So, she hurriedly set aside what she was doing before running over to save her brother.

“Why did you hit my brother?”

The girl lunged over with tear-filled red eyes.

“Why did we hit him? Hmph! Look at this! He dirtied my clothes! What is wrong with your restaurant? How can you hire such a clueless waiter like him? He’s just asking for a beating at this point! Damn it! Tell me, what are you going to do now? If you don’t cough up some money as compensation, prepare to see your restaurant all smashed up!”

The woman said coldly.

“Don’t smash the shop! Please! I beg of you!”

The youth burst into tears as he groveled at their feet.

“Brother, don’t do that!”

The girl said anxiously.

The girl looked like she was just in her early twenties.

She was a hardworking and sensible girl.

That made it all the easier to bully this pathetic little family. The group of thugs got even more aggressive when they realized this.

The men behind Bertold started loosening their joints and cracking their knuckles, as they prepared themselves for a fight.

The people seated around them were also starting to get nervous. It was clear that these poor siblings were not going away without a beating. How pitiful.

“What’s wrong? Why is there a fight?”

At that moment.

A young man wearing a peaked cap arrived outside on an electric tricycle with a woman. They had obviously gone out to buy some supplies for the kitchen.

When the woman saw the fight that was going on inside, she hurriedly jumped off the electric tricycle and stormed into the restaurant.

On the other hand, the young man outside was still relatively calm and composed. He stole a glance at the folks inside the restaurant as he unloaded the supplies with a cigarette dangling between his lips. .

“Mom, they attacked him!”

The girl hurriedly said.

“Mom, they hit me!” said the young man as he continued sobbing away on the floor.

“Hunter, don’t be afraid! Mom’s here!”

“Who gave you the right to hit him?”

The woman felt very anxious at this time.

“Who gave me the right? Your imbecile son soiled my clothes for crying out loud!”

The woman replied with her arms crossed before her chest.

“They’re just clothes! I will compensate you! Tell me how much you want! Do you think you will get away with hitting my son!? Never! Why didn’t you ask around first? I, Maria, maybe a widow, but I’m not someone you’d dare to mess with!” yelled the young man’s mother.

“Fine! Optimistic aren’t you? I’ll tell you what this is! This is a Hermes product. A brand new one at that! I am wearing it for the first time today and it costs fourteen thousand dollars!”

The woman replied.

When Maria heard this, her arrogance faded away.

“How...how much is it? Fourteen thousand dollars? There are clothes that expensive?”

The annual profit for this farmhouse was only about eight or nine thousand dollars. Now they had to cough up fourteen thousand dollars just because somebody's clothes had some vegetable soup on it? Preposterous!

“Hahaha! A country bumpkin will always be so ignorant! I doubt that you'd even heard of the brand before!” The woman replied arrogantly.

Maria was left speechless.

After all, these people had a Land Rover G500 and a variety of fancy cars parked outside and they did not seem like any ordinary people.

She was caught between a rock and a hard place.

The onlookers all wore sympathetic expressions when they looked at the restaurant owner.

There was no other way around it. This was just pure bad luck.

As both parties were confronting one another, the young man wearing a peaked cap, who had been unloading goods outside walked into the restaurant.

He walked right up to the woman's side. She was wearing a long one-piece dress.

He then grabbed the dress where her thigh was and started feeling the material of the fabric.

“Ahhh!”

The woman was so frightened that she screamed out in fright.

“You...what are you doing?”

Bertold was also pissed off. Cracking his neck, it was obvious that he was about to get into a fight.

“It’s a fake!”

The young man with the peaked cap said as he shook his head, “You’ve been cheated, m’lady!”

Chapter 886

The young man took off his peaked cap before placing it aside. After that, he flicked his burning cigarette butt out of the restaurant.

As soon as he took off his cap, everyone inside the restaurant could clearly see that despite his skinny physique, he gave people an intimidating aura, and also how handsome and delicate his face was.

When the woman heard this, she started acting more anxiously.

“You must be blind! This is a genuine product! No way in hell will a person like you be able to distinguish between a genuine and a fake product! Why don’t you admit that you guys aren’t going to compensate me! Looks like I’ll have to teach you a lesson today lest you forget how powerful I am!”

The woman glanced at Bertold as she motioned for him to go ahead.

Bertold and his men started advancing on the young man.

“Alright, that’s enough. I know that all of you are great people. However, it’s really a knock-off! Why would I possibly lie to you?”

As he spoke, the young man grabbed the woman’s dress and tore it open.

“Ahhh!”

The woman started screaming out loud again.

“Take a look if you believe me. An authentic Hermes product is made out of raw materials that are treated with special care. But look at your dress. It is clearly made out of industrial cotton. You must have bought a counterfeit good somewhere, right? It costs three hundred and ten dollars at most!”

The young man said.

The woman wanted to scream into his ears.

However, she was stunned when she heard this.

Bertold, who was about to close in on him, was also stunned.

The both of them exchanged glances with one another.

This was because everything that the young man had said was right. This was indeed a counterfeit product that they had bought for three hundred and eight dollars at a discount sale.

“So, we can only compensate you three hundred and ten dollars at most!”

The young man said with a triumphant smile.

“Aunt Maria, bring three hundred and ten dollars here!”

“Aye!”

Maria nodded.

The young man handed the money over to Bertold.

Bertold felt embarrassed for being publicly humiliated by this young man in front of so many pairs of eyes. What ticked him off was the fact that he even took the opportunity to tear apart the dress of his woman.

How dare he point out so loudly that his woman was wearing a cheap knock-off dress!

If he were to leave without doing anything, then he, Bertold, would rather just be dead!

“Okay, young man. You have a good eye, I gotta give you that. However, even if it really was a knock-off, why did you have to tear my woman’s dress apart? I’ll turn you into a darned cripple for doing that!”

Bertold was fuming from the ears.

Without warning, he sent his fist straight into the young man’s face.

Boom!

There was a sound.

The young man grabbed hold of Bertold’s fist directly.

And then, he tightened his grip on the fist.

“Ouch! That hurts! Let go of my fist damn it!”

Bertold yelled out in pain.

He was shocked.

He could easily lift this man off the ground but how could he possibly exert so much strength using his fingers alone?

“You want to fight? Then you should have just said so!”

The young man replied with a subtle smile.

After shaking his wrist slightly, Bertold's arms started clicking and bending upwards at a bizarre angle.

After that, the young man gave Bertold a slight kick and he was flipped onto his back effortlessly.

"Ouch! My arm!"

Bertold yelped in pain.

His subordinates were all dumbfounded.

Hearing all the painful cracks when the young man was grappling Bertold's fist made them realize how powerful this seemingly harmless man was.

Seeing how Bertold's body moved, they knew instantly that his arm had become dislocated.

None of them dared to move a muscle.

"It's okay. It will not hurt anymore after a while!"

The young man said as he squatted next to the big guy.

Bertold, who was yelling incessantly, looked at his horribly deformed arm before realizing that he wasn't feeling any pain anymore.

However, the awkward position his arm was bent into looked really frightening.

At the same time, he saw the young man smiling indifferently at him. Chills crept up his spine when he started realizing how creepy the man's smile appeared.

He started sweating profusely as he said, "You...what are you going to do to me?"

The young man smiled as he patted Bertold's shoulder. "Bertold, with so many customers around, there's nothing I can do to you. Weren't you asking for compensation? Come! Why don't we step outside and talk about it?"

Chapter 887

Bertold gulped in fear.

The woman was starting to feel fearful as well.

She was afraid that this young man would also break her arm just like how he did to Bertold's.

She followed behind the young man as they walked into the backyard.

They finally arrived in a shack in their backyard.

Thud!

The young man shut the heavy door behind them loudly.

The both of them shivered in fright.

But they had no other choice. After all, Bertold could not allow his arm to remain the way that it was.

"You better fix my arm for me. Or I'll not let you go. Why don't you go around and ask..."

Bertold wasn't going to lose his pride that easily. So, he continued speaking with a hostile look in his eyes.

"Okay, that's enough. I already told you that I know how powerful both of you are. So, let's talk things over!"

The young man interrupted him before he could finish speaking.

“Heh heh. As long as you fix my man’s arm, we won’t be asking for any compensation!”

The woman said.

Slap!

The young man slapped the woman across her face.

The woman collapsed onto the ground after receiving the slap.

It came so suddenly that it momentarily stunned her. She was in such a disoriented state that she remained on the ground, staring up with a baffled look on her face.

Without waiting for her man to retaliate, the young man proceeded to break Bertold’s other arm.

In the end, both of Bertold’s arms were completely deformed and he could only lay on the ground as he squealed in pain.

He had fear written all over his face at the moment.

“How would you like to talk things over?”

The young man asked with a hint of hostility in his tone.

“No...we are not discussing anything anymore! Just let us go! We do not want to discuss anything anymore!”

Bertold replied out of fear.

“What about the three hundred and ten dollars?” The young man asked.

“I will give it back to you. We...we do not want it anymore!”

There was nothing they could do to intimidate this young man at all!

This was not the first time that Bertold had come looking for trouble but he knew that this time was different. This time, he had actually dug his own grave.

“Alright then. Remember clearly that you are giving it up voluntarily. I did not force the both of you to do so!” The young man said.

“Yes, it is voluntary! We did it voluntarily!”

At this time, the young man pulled out the three hundred and ten dollars that he had given to Bertold just now, from his pocket.

“Besides that, the both of you hit Hunter outside just now. I don’t care what you’re gonnasay, you should at least give us three hundred and ten dollars to cover for his medical expenses, right? We will have to bring him to the hospital to get a scan and so forth. As you can already see, the small clinic in our town is not that well-equipped. We will have to bring him to the county hospital and I’m afraid, it’ll cost a lot more than that!” The young man said.

“We will compensate you. Three hundred and ten dollars! Just take it!”

“And also...”

The young man said.

“There is still more?”

Bertold who was struggling for his breath due to the pain asked.

Slap!

The young man slapped him across the face “How dare you interrupt me when I’m speaking.”

“I’m so sorry, please go ahead!”

“And also, when you were beating Hunter up just now, you broke our tables, chairs, benches, pots and pans. You’ll have to pay up a hundred dollars for that, but I’ll make it easier by rounding it up to one hundred and fifty dollars! Now, pay up!”

“We will pay! We will pay! Mate, please help me. I cannot stand it anymore. My arms feel like there are thousands of bugs gnawing at it!”

Bertold’s face was pale from all the pain he was experiencing.

“Alright then. You should have had this kind of attitude from the very beginning and we would not have needed to waste our time like this! Just because you have money doesn’t mean sh*t, alright?”

The young man said.

After that, he held Bertold down as he fixed his arms.

Miraculously, Bertold felt his arms recover and the pain fade away.

“I remember now! Big brother, I will remember that!”

Bertold replied as he broke out in cold sweat.

“We will go out and make up for the balance we owe you. Not a single cent less, I swear on my mother!”

Bertold helped the woman, who had barely regained her senses to get on her feet before they hurriedly got back into the restaurant.

“Bertold, are we really leaving just like that? I am not satisfied at all!”

The woman complained while sobbing.

Her expression was as if she was the aggrieved party here.

Chapter 888

Bertold grabbed hold of the woman's arm and got her to shut up.

After that, he thought to himself:

'Am I going to leave like this? Hahaha! He should ask around and see what kind of a person I am. I may leave today but come tomorrow, I'll be here with more of my men! When night falls, I will raze this place to the ground. After that, I will capture the young brat and I will cut the tendons in his arms and legs! Like hell I'm gonna let this slide so easily! Being impulsive will bring us nowhere. I can't fight the kid head-on, not right now at least. After all, I don't have enough men with me!'

"Bertold, wait a minute!"

At this time, the young man walked out of the room where they were tortured.

He waved his hand at Bertold.

"Ahh? Big brother, what's wrong?" Bertold said.

"Come back here. I forgot something!" The young man said.

Bertold walked back to him.

"I forgot something just now. I don't think I'll be relieved if I let you just leave like that, would I?"

"Big brother, what are you worried about? I have already gotten a taste of how powerful you are. I will not dare to mess with you, I swear!" Bertold replied.

Although the young man looked like he was around twenty-two years old, Bertold had no choice but to refer to him as his big brother out of respect and fear.

“You might not dare to mess with me now but what if you go back and mobilize more of your men? What should I do if you decide to come back and destroy our shop in the middle of the night? Will you let me go when that happens? Who knows? Maybe you’ll end up severing the tendons in my limbs. I will end up being cripple for the rest of my life when that happens!” The young man said.

Bertold’s eyes were wide open in disbelief as he stared at the young man with a dumbfounded look on his face.

F*ck! He can read minds now?

Otherwise, how would he be able to repeat the same exact thing that he had been thinking of in his mind?

Bertold felt even more petrified. He looked at the young man as if he was staring at the devil himself!

“Big brother, why would I do that? I would not dare to do so!” Bertold replied nervously.

“I will have to get some insurance, just to be on the safe sides!”

After he was done speaking, the young man grabbed both Bertold and the woman’s cheeks before pinching their mouths open.

After that, he placed his index finger right inside their orifices.

“This...what is this? What did you feed the both of us?”

They were terrified.

“Twas a poisonous worm! Try feeling it now. Is there a slight pain in your stomach?”

“Ahhh?”

Their faces had already turned green.

They tried to feel it, as instructed by the young man. As he had said, they really felt a slight pain in their stomach!

“Big brother, please spare our lives! Please spare our lives!”

At this moment, Bertold and the woman began panicking.

“It’s fine. It will not take your life for the time being. On the contrary, it will actually be of great benefit to your body. For example, your kidney issue will return to normal in less than a month!”

The young man patted Bertold on his shoulder before he asked, “Do you feel a warm feeling in your kidneys now?”

Bertold took a moment to feel his kidneys before he started nodding, “Yes! Yes! I can really feel it!”

“Alright then. However, I have to warn you beforehand. Water can float a boat, as much as it can flood a boat. If both of you decide to retaliate, then this thing can also kill you at any time. It can gnaw away at your internal organs, and any type of medical procedure would not be able to save you at all!”

The young man’s face tensed up in seconds.

The both of them were so scared that their legs were already trembling in fear.

“Big brother, I understand now! I understand!”

The both of them nodded in unison.

“Alright then. Let’s go!” The young man said.

After that, the both of them walked to the front desk in panic as they put down eight hundred dollars on the table before they left with their men in a hurry.

“Don’t leave! Didn’t you say how impressive you were? Why leave now!?”

Maria yelled as she stood at the door with her hands on her waist.

She was laughing heartily as she counted the fat wad of bills.

“Gerald, this is all thanks to you! Hahaha! I made an extra eight hundred dollars today! I really have to depend on you when it comes to such unruly folks!”

Maria said with a smile on her face as she looked at the young man.

“Gerald, please tell us how you scared Bertold this time?”

That’s right. This young man was none other than Mr. Crawford from the past...Gerald!

Gerald smiled wryly before he told them the entire story.

“Hahaha! Did you really feed them a poisonous worm?” The girl asked.

“Of course, not. I simply pressed on a few of their meridian points before fooling them!”

Gerald replied in a hushed tone.

“Ahh! There is no other way to deal with people like this! Otherwise, they’d definitely come back at us in the future.

Gerald shook his head with a helpless expression. After that, it seemed as though a new idea had popped into his mind when he told them, “That’s right. I almost forgot something. I’ll be right back with you guys!”

As soon as he was done speaking, Gerald ran out and left on his electric tricycle...

Chapter 889

The girl had a different look in her eyes when she looked at Gerald’s back as he left.

“Ivy, what are you looking at?”

Maria could not help but ask when she noticed how distracted her daughter was.

“Ahhh? I was not looking at anything!”

Ivy pouted as she responded while shaking her head.

Maria was an expert in love and relationship matters when she was young. So, how could she possibly not know what her daughter was thinking about?

That’s right. Gerald was a dashing young man after all.

He had lots of incredible skills, and he treated everyone kindly too.

Indeed, not many girls would be able to resist a man like him.

Therefore, it was inevitable that her daughter would start having feelings for him.

However, Maria sighed as she said, “Ivy, a word of advice. You will never be able to be together with Gerald.”

Ivy was initially planning to deny and refute her mother’s words.

But when she saw her mother’s resolute attitude, she immediately replied, “Why? Gerald does not have a girlfriend anyway!”

“Who said so? It is just that something happened to his girlfriend. I don’t really know about the details of what happened exactly. However, Gerald used to be a very powerful man and he loved his girlfriend very much. I am only telling you this because I do not want to see you getting hurt!” Aunt Maria said.

When Ivy heard those words, a gloomy and desolate expression appeared on her face. After that, she turned around and went into the kitchen wordlessly.

Gerald was outside, apparently trying to fetch something.

For the past six months, Gerald had been staying by Finnley's side.

He was constantly soaking in medicinal herbs, practicing and improving his physical fitness all day long. He had also undergone several training regimes under Finnley's instructions.

Gerald had also gone on several missions as specified by his master.

A lot has changed in the six months Gerald spent under Finnley's guidance.

As for their relocation, Finnley wanted to facilitate Gerald's training in the mountains. So, that was the reason why they moved to the small town.

And since Aunt Maria did not have any relatives in the village, she used the pension that Gerald had given to Finnley in the past to open the farmhouse restaurant.

Aunt Maria was the one who usually ran the restaurant.

In the past six months, Gerald's skills and strength had improved significantly. He had thought countless times about going back home to see his friends and family.

It would not be an easy task for Kort to try and kill Gerald now, and it could even be said to be a very difficult task.

However, Gerald was now running solo. He was all alone and he'd be hopelessly outnumbered if he were to go up against the big and powerful Moldell family now.

Therefore, Gerald had been holding back his urges all this while.

The most important thing now was for him to improve his strength.

As for Finnley, aside from giving detailed instructions to Gerald in the first three months, he'd always be away from home. This also meant that Gerald would always be practicing by himself.

Three days ago, Finnley suddenly left without even saying anything after receiving a token.

Gerald was already used to it though.

After getting to know Finnley and spending more time with him, Gerald realized that Finnley was indeed a very mysterious person. The people he knew were all surprisingly influential, and weren't the type of people you'd expect the old man to be so well-acquainted with!

Shriek!

Gerald's bike rolled to a halt before a fellow young man.

"Fatty, where are the items?" Gerald asked.

"Fear not, Gerald! Marven Wadley always gets things done! It is all inside the bag!"

The chubby fellow was none other than Marven.

When Gerald bumped into him earlier, he was being bullied by a ruthless bunch of strangers, so as a friend, he had to step in and save his ass.

It just so happened that whenever Gerald was out to perform his tasks, he would try to fish for some extra profits. And Marven was the exact type of person who you'd look for when it comes to fishing for profits.

Marven patted his bag as he jumped onto the electric tricycle.

"We will have to get it done as soon as possible!" Gerald said.

After that, he headed directly towards the street where they sold antique items.

There was a foreign antique inside the bag. Gerald snatched it from a wealthy foreign businessman's personal collection.

Of course, the businessman himself was also not a good person.

Gerald's training largely consisted of such activities, which was to obtain through illegal means, items that were obtained in the same unlawful manner.

Gerald had no other options but to do what he did. He could not contact the Crawford family now, and since he desperately needed money, this was the next best thing he could do.

Chapter 890

The both of them entered the antique shop.

There was a tall girl with a head of long hair standing at the counter.

"Take a look at this. How much is this jade bracelet worth?" The girl asked.

Gerald raised his brows slightly when he heard the girl's voice.

No way she's here, right?

Furthermore, the girl's back was facing the both of them.

Therefore, Gerald remained silent. Instead, he simply sat down at the waiting area next to the wall.

The shopkeeper was an overweight man in his fifties. He had a small beard and also a wretched look permanently etched onto his face.

He held the jade bracelet in his hand as he looked at it for a while.

After that, he shook his head and said, "The jade is actually pretty good. However, this type of jade is very common and its circulation rate on the market is very low. If you really are looking to sell it, then I can offer you five hundred dollars for it." The boss replied.

"What? Only five hundred dollars? But...but I looked it up on the internet and I saw that this kind of jade actually went for more than fifty thousand dollars! This is our family's heirloom that has been passed down from our ancestors!" The girl replied anxiously.

"Hahaha! What are you talking about? Over fifty thousand dollars? Miss, you looked like a reasonable person at first but your claim is downright ridiculous! Five hundred dollars is actually a very good offer already! You can't just believe what you see online!"

"Just take a look at your jade bracelet! See the polished spots? I don't think it's worth that much now that I've mentioned it. If you don't believe me, I happen to have a jade bracelet that is made out of the same exact material as your jade bracelet. I am selling it for one thousand and five hundred dollars but compared to yours, that jade bracelet has a much better color!"

The girl took the jade bracelet and examined it carefully. It was as he said, the material looked identical!

At this time, she said anxiously, "But boss, I need the money urgently. My mother is seriously ill and I am in urgent need of money right now! Can you give me one thousand and two hundred dollars for it at least?"

"Based on your accent, I can tell that you are not from Salford Province. You must be from the south, right? Why? Are you here to beg Master Jenkinson to treat your mother's illness?"

The girl nodded.

"Sigh. As much as I sympathize with you, if I give you one thousand and two hundred dollars for it, I'd be suffering a huge loss. Why don't we do this instead? I will give you another three hundred dollars for it. I will pay you eight hundred dollars for the jade bracelet. If that's not enough, I don't think how else I can help you!" The boss replied.

The girl thought for a moment. After that, she gritted her teeth and said, "Alright then. If you can give me eight hundred dollars, I'll take it!"

"Hey!"

At this time, the girl who was feeling very disconcerted and upset suddenly felt someone patting her shoulder.

She turned around to see who it was that called out to her.

When she saw the boy standing behind her, the girl's eyes lit up in delight.

She was surprised and overjoyed at the same time.

"Gerald?"

"Is it really you...Gerald!?"

The girl started jumping excitedly.

"Naomi! I almost didn't recognize you!"

Gerald started patting Naomi's head gently.

This girl was Naomi Milton.

Naomi's hair was obviously much longer compared to how it was before.

And she seemed to have grown a little taller.

No wonder she sounded so familiar when he first stepped into the shop.

But before seeing her face and confirming his suspicion, Gerald refrained from exposing his identity.

Speaking of it, he had not seen Naomi ever since he left Mayberry City.

Six months flew by in the blink of an eye.

Naomi was his best friend when they were still back in university.

In fact, she was still his best friend now.

“I have not seen you in such a long time!”

Gerald said with a smile.

“That’s right, Gerald. I heard Felicity saying that something happened to you and that your whereabouts are unknown. What a surprise to see you here in Salford Province!”

Naomi said with misty eyes.

She then stepped forward and wrapped her arms around Gerald.

Gerald patted Naomi gently on her shoulder as he said, “I’m doing fine. Look at me, there’s nothing wrong with me, right? By the way, didn’t Felicity and you start a company together? Why are you...”

Gerald asked curiously.

Naomi wiped the tears off her face.

After that, she choked up and said, “Gerald, you might not know this but Felicity, she...something happened to Felicity!”

Chapter 891

“...What? What’s wrong with Felicity? What happened?” asked Gerald hurriedly as soon as he saw Naomi’s expression.

Tears flowing down her cheeks again, Naomi cupped her mouth with a hand as she slowly began explaining what had taken place about half a year ago sometime after Gerald’s disappearance.

While the Crawfords had easily prevented the first flow of news—about Gerald’s disappearance—from getting out to the public, eventually, people still managed to catch on.

From there on out, rumor after rumor began popping up and spreading around like wildfire. Some of the rumors claimed that Gerald was kidnapped. Bolder rumors even stated that he had been murdered!

With the rumors spreading around so quickly, it was only a matter of time before Felicity and a few other acquaintances of Gerald caught wind of it. Felicity and Naomi themselves had particularly been more anxious compared to the others.

Because of that, Felicity wasted no time declaring that she would get to the bottom of the incident. Since she had once fallen for him, it really was no mystery why she was this determined to look for him.

Still, what had truly happened to Gerald? And why did it have to happen to him?

Though the two girls remained in a panicked state for quite a while, in the end, Felicity decided to head to Northbay with Naomi.

They were well aware that they first needed a clearer picture of the whole incident before they could even begin investigating, and who better to ask than Chairman Lyle? After all, they both knew that he had returned to Northbay right after Gerald went missing. Because of that, Mr. Lyle was simply the obvious go-to.

Upon arriving there, the two girls quickly headed over to Zack’s company. To their dismay, however, they found that Chairman Lyle had already left for a business trip by then.

Seeing no other options, Felicity finally decided to make use of her best connections to aid with their investigation.

It took her a while, but she eventually managed to secure some help from a senior executive who worked for Zack. After agreeing to meet at a hotel’s lobby, the two girls headed over and waited for him.

Unfortunately for them, a young man happened to cross paths with them that day. Seeing how beautiful the two girls were, the cunning youth immediately tried hitting on both of them.

When that failed, he ordered his men to forcefully drag them out of the hotel instead! From the lustful gaze in his eyes, it was clear that r*pe was the only thing on his mind!

However, the two girls held their ground. They weren't going down that easily. Felicity eventually got so nervous that she bit down hard on the youth's arm!

The youth was so infuriated by this that he dragged her all the way to the top of the building—with his badly injured arm—before tossing her off from the roof!

The chain of events was so alarming that even the Crawfords were made aware of it, and though Chairman Lyle had rushed back as soon as he heard the news, in the end, he wasn't really able to help with much.

As it turned out, the youth in question held immense power and influence. Because of that, he didn't even receive punishment for his evil deeds!

Though she had selflessly planned to locate Gerald in any way she could, in the end, Felicity ended up in a position arguably as pitiful as Gerald's.

While Felicity's lifeline was stabilized after several nights of doctors tirelessly working to save her, she had simply suffered too many injuries. As a result, though she wasn't in danger of losing her life anymore, she could only exist in a vegetative state now, and she would remain in this state for the rest of her life.

As if things weren't bad enough, Felicity's company was disbanded soon after.

"Who exactly is this person?" asked Gerald, his tone frigid as he raised his head. While he was now filled with anger, he was also filled with grief.

After all, upon becoming Mr. Crawford, Gerald was well aware that he had both ignored and let a lot of people down.

Felicity was definitely one of them.

To his surprise, the two girls had actually been worried about him from the moment they had heard that he had gone missing. What more, the only reason why Felicity was in her current state was because she wanted to help him.

Wiping her tears away, Naomi replied, "I've heard others address him as Mr. Jett Moldell... Even when I asked Chairman Lyle why Jett didn't have to take responsibility for his actions, Mr. Lyle completely ignored the question, telling me to quickly return to Mayberry instead."

"Jett Moldell?" repeated Gerald as he felt his right eyelid twitch.

When he had previously enquired about it, Gerald learned that Kort had three sons. One of them was Jett.

"So it's Kort and the Moldells again!" growled Gerald, clenching his fists tight.

Felicity wouldn't have ended up this way if Gerald hadn't been forced out of his own home in the first place.

Knowing that filled Gerald with immense resentment.

Chapter 892

However, upon seeing how sad and lonely Naomi looked, he instantly felt sorry for her. As a result, he was able to momentarily suppress his resentment.

"...Well... What about you, Naomi? What kind of illness is your mother suffering from?" asked Gerald.

"Well, after returning to Mayberry under Chairman Lyle's protection, it didn't take long for me to realize that my mom had contracted some sort of weird illness. Even after meeting countless doctors, nobody's been able to cure her. As you can imagine, however, hiring doctors isn't cheap... As a result, I ended up having to sell all of my family's properties! It was about a month ago when all my resources finally ran dry. Having no other options, I came to the Salford Province to seek help from an uncle. During my time here, I found out that a famous doctor lives nearby! He goes by Master Jenkinson! However, since I barely have enough money to survive now, I can't really meet up with him..." explained Naomi in an embarrassed tone.

Sighing, Gerald then replied, "To think that a single incident could cause such a massive ripple effect... Now even people acquainted with me have to share my burden..."

Guilt-ridden, Gerald then added, "It'll be fine. Speaking of which, don't pawn off this jade bracelet. After all, this person's a liar! Such a bracelet is worth at least fifty-four thousand dollars! Regardless, I'm going to help find out what's wrong with your mother and cure her."

While Naomi was slightly confused to hear that, she believed that Gerald wouldn't ever lie to her.

The boss himself seemed to give up after hearing Gerald say that.

“F*cking hell! You do realize you’ve ruined my business, don’t you?” said the boss angrily.

In response, Marven sneered before whispering something into the boss’s ear. Seconds later, the boss’s face turned pale as he immediately shut up. For the rest of his duration there, he simply stood respectfully in place.

Knowing that Marven would know how to handle the rest, Gerald held Naomi by her hand and led her out of the place.

“Where’s your mother at?” asked Gerald.

“She’s currently staying up north at a hotel at the foot of Yorknorth Mountain... Do you know Master Jenkinson, Gerald?” asked Naomi in return.

“I do!” replied Gerald with a slightly bitter laugh.

“Speaking of which, what exactly happened to you in the past half year? Do you have any idea how worried all of us were for you?” said Naomi.

“Come, get in the car first. Your mother is our top priority now. I’ll tell you about it on the way there...”

Gerald didn’t really have any qualms when dealing with Naomi, so he found no reason not to tell her what truly happened.

Upon arriving up north, Gerald rented an electric tricycle and told Naomi to hop on. With Naomi sitting behind Gerald, both of them then rushed toward Yorknorth Mountain.

Since Gerald was quite close to Naomi, it was impossible for Gerald to just ignore her when he knew that she was in trouble.

Reaching the hotel shortly after, Gerald and Naomi were just about to get off the electric tricycle when they heard, “Hey! Isn’t that Naomi? Haha! She’s riding an electric tricycle!”

Turning to look at who had said that, the duo saw a few young men and women laughing at them as the group stood beside an Audi A6. Since the car's doors were open, Gerald could only assume that they were about to leave before they spotted him and Naomi.

"They're from my uncle's family, Gerald," said Naomi as she lowered her voice.

"I see..." replied Gerald while nodding slightly.

Getting off the tricycle, Naomi looked toward the group of people before asking, "Why are all of you here?"

"Why, we're here to cancel your room of course! We were just about to call you! Dad said that since you don't even have the money to meet Master Jenkinson, why should we continue paying for your room? I'll tell you now that this high-ranked hotel only permitted a poor person like you to stay here since they wanted to pay respect to the Legh family! You've humiliated our family enough for staying here for far too long! This ends today!" sneered a woman dressed in luxurious clothes.

"Indeed! Look, if you really can't afford it, just bring your mom home already. As if you don't already know that only those who are influential and powerful are able to meet Master Jenkinson. With the small amount of money you have left, you won't even make it halfway up the mountain!" added another man from the group contemptuously.

When Naomi's family was still considerably rich in Mayberry, her family had contacted the Leghs from the Salford Province quite often.

Because of that, Naomi had gone to them to ask for their help after selling off all her properties. They had taken her in at the time since they didn't know she was already poor by then. However, it only took a day for them to realize what she had done with her family's properties.

Fearing that Naomi would only continue burdening them, from that day onward, they began treating her terribly like how they had just done. That was the gist of how things ended up this way.

"Yeah! Besides, my dad was already kind enough to find a family here for you to get married to! However, you ended up refusing it. Sure, the guy's a bit slow in the head but at least he's rich!" said yet another woman without filtering her words.

"I know right? Still, it's no wonder why you refused it back then. So you already have a boyfriend! However, to think that he only rides on electric tricycles to move around!" added another woman.

Listening to all their ridicules, Gerald could only shake his head while laughing bitterly. If this had happened in the past, he would've already humiliated them by now. However, he knew better than to succumb to standards as low as theirs.

Chapter 893

"Tanya! Mollie! You're still here? Your grandma's heading up the mountain now so come along and help!" said a middle-aged woman as she walked toward the group at that moment.

"Oh? Alright, mom! Let's head there together then!" said both of the girls.

Seeing the two people who had just arrived, Naomi respectfully greeted, "Uncle, aunt..."

"Humph! So you're here too?" said the woman in a contemptuous manner while crossing her arms.

At that, Naomi nodded before saying, "Is grandma meeting Master Jenkinson to have her illness diagnosed? Is she feeling alright?"

"Hold it right there!" said her aunt in shock when she heard her question.

"Ignoring grandma for the moment, I'm telling you now that Master Jenkinson charges patients individually! You better not be getting any ideas!"

From what she had said, it was clear that she was afraid that Naomi wanted to bring her mother along.

On the contrary, however, the thought hadn't even crossed Naomi's mind!

"Look, Naomi. Since you won't be able to afford the medical expenses anyway, just bring your mom home. Don't worry, we'll cover the hotel expenses for the previous nights," added the woman, her arms still crossed.

"That's quite enough of that. As for you, Naomi, it's better that you just head up and take care of your mom," said her uncle in a casual tone.

Just as he was about to leave with his children, an extended luxury car slowly came to a halt right in front of the hotel. When the car's door opened, a distinguished and polite-looking middle-aged man stepped out before looking at Jorge and asking, "Good day, sir. Is it right to assume that this is Yorknorth Mountain? The area where Master Jenkinson lives?"

Since Jorge was the president of several furniture factories in the Salford Province, he had seen enough of the world to know that the middle-aged man standing before him was an extraordinary person.

Knowing that, he then respectfully replied, “You would be correct.”

“I see. Thank you for your time,” said the man as he nodded slightly.

“Well, Mr. Duncan? Is this the place? Why isn’t there any parking space here?” asked a young man wearing a blazer as he got out of the car together with a young woman.

The man was so handsome that as he walked over to Mr. Duncan’s side, almost all the women present began breathing heavily. What a prince charming!

As for the woman who had stepped out of the car with him, she was both tall and slim. While she was also extremely beautiful, the slight aloofness she projected on her face was enough to make anyone who looked at her feel slightly tense.

“Yes, this is the place,” replied Mr. Duncan with another slight nod.

As Jorge looked at the youth before nodding with a smile, both Tanya and Mollie—who were still standing beside their father—cast flirtatious gazes at the handsome young man instead. To their disappointment, he didn’t even take a glance at them.

“Whose electric tricycle is this? Move it aside so that we can park here!” said the youth as he loosened his tie while looking around before pointing at the tricycle.

Hearing that, the security guard standing at the hotel’s entrance immediately ran over and pushed the tricycle aside. As a result, the tricycle began moving on its own and finally stopped once one of its wheels hit a large stone.

Upon seeing that, Tania, Mollie, and the others simply snorted.

“You!” said Naomi angrily.

‘What was that supposed to mean?!’

However, Gerald simply pulled her back before shaking his head at her.

“Let’s get grandpa up the mountain already,” said the young woman rather aloofly.

With that, the two youths began supporting an old man out of the car. The old man himself had a sallow complexion as the group slowly began ascending the mountain.

“Come on, let’s head up together with them!” said Jorge to his own family.

As they left Gerald and Naomi behind, Naomi lowered her head with shame before saying in a resentful tone, “I’m so sorry, Gerald... Not only have I burdened you, but you had to suffer through that humiliation with me as well...”

“Hush, there’s no need for that. Now let’s head to your room to get your mother,” replied Gerald.

“...Huh? Where are we taking her?”

Chapter 894

“We’re taking her to Joshua Jenkinson to have him diagnose her illness of course!” said Gerald with a weak smile.

Gerald would’ve preferred treating Naomi’s mother himself if he could. However, he was well aware that it simply wouldn’t do to treat a patient in a hotel. Besides, he didn’t have that many herbs or medicine with him at the moment.

In the end, it would be much better and convenient if Naomi’s mother was treated at Joshua’s place.

“Huh? We’re seeking Master Jenkinson’s help now? But didn’t you say that you were no longer Mr. Crawford, Gerald?” asked Naomi curiously.

Naturally, she hadn’t meant anything else when she asked that question. She simply hadn’t expected that Gerald would still be able to maintain such connections in his current state.

“Haha! Just because I’m no longer Mr. Crawford, that doesn’t mean that all my connections are now useless! Now let’s get your mother up the mountain,” replied Gerald.

With that, the trio then began ascending the mountain.

Since Master Jenkinson was extremely famous, it was no wonder why his clinic was so crowded. Though he was well known for his skill, he was also infamous for rejecting some of his patients.

According to rumors, a large family once wanted to hire Master Jenkinson to be their personal family doctor. Though they even offered him an immensely high salary, Master Jenkinson still ended up turning them down!

“How much longer do I have to wait here? To think that I’ve spent a good seventy-seven thousand dollars just to have to wait in line!” said a rich-looking businessman in an anxious tone before sighing.

“Just be patient. There are people who’ve paid over fifteen thousand dollars just for the registration fee, you know?” replied someone from the line.

Master Jenkinson’s clinic was truly an extraordinary place. For one, the entire building looked like an antique clinic. Even the staff working there wore traditional attire that resembled clothes from the 1900s.

“We’ve spent almost forty-six thousand dollars yet we’re still only forty-fifth in place!” said Mollie as she made her way back to her family with a registration number in hand.

“I see... Well, the amount doesn’t matter...” replied Jorge with a somewhat bitter smile before sighing.

To think that the forty-six thousand dollars was merely for the registration number. They still had to pay a much higher fee for the diagnosis once it was done.

“Why do we need to pay just to line up here? And why are there people paying different amounts for the registration fee? I’ve noticed others paying fifteen thousand dollars, forty-six thousand dollars, and seventy-seven thousand dollars,” asked the cold woman from before.

“Well, it’s a lot like bidding... Essentially, the higher you pay, the faster you get to be diagnosed,” replied Jorge.

“Oh? Then what’s the highest amount one can pay?” asked the cold woman again.

“You can see it over there, beautiful! The top three clients have their names written there alongside their registration fees! Let me just go over and have a look... Holy cr*p! The highest registration fee ever made was two hundred and thirty thousand dollars!” said one of Naomi’s cousins who was obviously trying to please the woman.

“Thank you. Quest, go ahead and pay seven hundred and seventy thousand dollars at the registration area,” said the woman as she nodded slightly at the handsome youth.

“S-seven hundred and seventy-”

Somehow, the room was quiet enough at that moment for almost everyone to hear what the woman said. As a result, a massive uproar followed.

Soon enough, however, the noise died down again though everyone was now looking at her in astonishment.

Quest himself walked over to the registration area and swiped his debit card on the machine prepared there. Once the amount was paid, he returned with the registration number that had cost seven hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

With that, it was obvious that they were going to be first in line now.

“T-they’re so rich!” screamed several people in shock.

As everyone remained flabbergasted, Mollie—who had just so happened to turn around at that moment—suddenly said, “Mom! Look behind us! They’ve actually followed us up here!”

As Naomi’s aunt turned to look at the direction her daughter was pointing at, she anxiously said, “Oh my god! What are you doing, Naomi? Do you even know where you are right now? To think that you would actually follow us up here!”

‘Why on earth does Naomi and her family have to cling on to us like leeches?!’

Just as she was about to further mock Naomi, a staff member appeared before saying, “Our sincerest apologies, ladies and gentlemen, but the master can only diagnose two more patients today. Once that’s over, we’ll be closing for the day. Aside from the first two clients, the rest may leave and come again tomorrow.”

“...What? Did you just ask us to return tomorrow?” said Jorge, stunned.

The rest of the clients were left stupefied as well the moment they heard that.

“We won’t leave! We’ll just wait here till Master Jenkinson is ready to treat the patients again!” announced the people there, one after another.

“Please be considerate, ladies and gentlemen. Do understand that there are simply too many of you making a ruckus in here which isn’t good for our recuperating patients who are currently in the backyard.”

“Then we’ll quiet down... Besides, we’ve all already paid so much for the registration fee,” said a few businessmen there in aggrieved tones.

Naturally, this placed the staff member in a rather difficult position.

“They’re right. Since we had to pay to even be in line, we should all be considered VIP clients! Instead of asking us to leave, you should instead be chasing away those who didn’t pay to register! That should clear the masses quite a bit. We’ll be sure to remain silent as well,” added Naomi’s aunt.

Chapter 895

After saying that, she immediately looked at Naomi. Her action was clear enough for the staff member to instantly catch on to what she was trying to imply.

“Kind ladies and gentleman, could you please present your registration number to me?” asked the staff member as he walked over to Gerald’s group.

“We... We don’t have one...” said Naomi as she shook her head in embarrassment.

“Ah, then do head over there to pay for one,” said the staff member as his gaze grew slightly colder.

“We... Don’t have the money for that...” said Naomi as she bit her lower lip.

“What? Did they actually sneak into this place?”

“Hey now, take a look around you! Why would you even come here if you don’t have any money?”

“That’s right! Such a beautiful girl too... Too bad she behaves this way!”

Several of the businessmen in the lobby were now shaking their heads with disapproving smiles on their faces.

“G-Gerald, Naomi... Why don’t we just leave for now?” said Naomi’s mother as she tugged on her daughter’s sleeve. After all, she was well aware that she was just making things difficult for both Gerald and her daughter.

“There’s no need for that, Madam. Just leave it to me,” replied Gerald as he turned to face the staff member before glaring back with his own cold gaze.

“I’m sure you’re new here, so I’ll let it slide. Ask for Joshua Jenkinson to come out! Tell him that a young man with the surname of Crawford is looking for him!”

“Wha- Y-you... How dare you address the master by his name?! What do you mean by Crawford? You... You rude person, you!” replied the staff member in his shock.

The other businessmen in the room shared the same feeling as well, and they were all looking at Gerald now with dumbfounded expressions on their faces.

“F*ck! Just look at this guy! If Master Jenkinson ends up being infuriated by his rudeness, then nobody is going to be able to meet him today!” said Mollie aloud. She seemed to be enjoying fueling the flames.

Hearing that, the others in the room immediately grew angry.

“She’s right! Where did this guy even come from? How utterly rude!”

Even the aloof woman and old man from earlier were now looking at Gerald.

“He truly is asking for it, isn’t he!” said Quest as he sneered before walking over to Gerald.

While the old man and the woman clearly knew that Quest was looking for trouble, they didn’t stop him. Perhaps they subconsciously felt that the fearless Gerald needed to be put in his place.

“Hey, you’re the b*stard who was riding the electric tricycle, weren’t you? If you’re penniless, then just get lost already! Stop disturbing those who want to meet the master to get diagnosed!” shouted Quest as he pressed his hand down hard on Gerald’s shoulder.

As Gerald looked at the hand on his shoulder, he said, “Move your hand away if you don’t want to regret it.”

Upon saying that, his calm aura was immediately replaced with a frigid coldness.

“Regret? Haha! I’m afraid you don’t know what I do for a living!” sneered Quest as he began intensifying the force of his palm.

To his surprise, he was only able to realize that Gerald had tilted his shoulder slightly before a sickening crack could be heard.

The sound that followed was the anguished cries of pain from Quest.

He immediately retreated from where he once stood as he held on to his pulsing hand while shouting, “M-my hand!”

Quest appeared to be in great pain as cold sweat dripped down his forehead. When he finally took a look at the condition of his hand, he could see that all his veins were bulging so much that they almost looked like earthworms.

“I... I’ll break your limbs!” roared Quest, feeling that he had just been greatly humiliated.

Just as he was about to pounce on Gerald, the ill old man shouted, “Quest! Stop, right this instant!”

Though Quest hadn’t realized it, the old man had already caught a glimpse of the back of his pulsing hand. Upon seeing the damage that had been done, the old man was filled with a mighty fear.

After all, he knew how strong Quest was. He was also well aware that Quest was proficient in fighting alone. Even if three specially trained soldiers were to face him, they’d surely be the ones losing terribly.

Despite all that, all it had taken for Gerald was a slight tilt of his shoulder for Quest to get hurt so badly. If that was the only thing Gerald needed to do to inflict so much damage, then the old man didn’t even want to imagine how strong Gerald truly was.

“Step down I said!” ordered the old man again.

Even the aloof beauty who had been staring at Gerald for a while now had a slight frown on her face.

“I apologize, sir... My grandson was truly rude earlier...” said the old man.

As soon as his sentence ended, however, he instantly began coughing terribly.

Chapter 896

“Grandpa!” shouted both Quest and the cold beauty nervously.

“I’m fine. Sir, I’m willing to let Master Jenkinson diagnose the ill person from your group first. I can wait,” said the old man, much to everyone else’s surprise.

“...What? But why, grandpa? Why the hell should we let him go first? Who the hell even is he?!” growled Quest angrily.

“I appreciate it. After all, Joshua probably can’t treat a terminally ill patient,” said Gerald in a casual tone without any intention of being nice.

“...Y-you!” shouted both Quest and the beauty in rage.

Even the old man bore a rather ugly expression on his face at that moment.

“While I admit that you certainly are very powerful, you should watch your mouth and manners. I don’t really mind since I’m already this old, but if you say such things to others, trouble will definitely come your way,” said the old man, lengthening his words to express his clear dissatisfaction.

With daggers now drawn from both parties, the staff member—who had been watching all this unfold from the very beginning—immediately ran to the backyard.

“It’s fine, Gerald... I don’t need to see the doctor anymore... Please... We can’t afford to offend them...!” said Naomi’s mother who was getting increasingly frightened.

Meanwhile, a middle-aged man—who looked to be almost fifty—rubbed his hands with a towel within a room lit only by an oil burner.

As his patient left the room—that was located in the inner part of the building—after receiving his diagnosis, the staff member from earlier came running in while shouting, “M-master! A fight seems to be imminent in the lobby!”

“What? How dare people create trouble here! Kick all the people involved out!” ordered the man coldly. The man in question, was none other than Joshua.

“Before that, master... I must say that one of the parties involved with the fight is quite noteworthy. Their family name is Westley and they’re quite generous with their money. They paid seven hundred and seventy thousand dollars alone for their registration!”

“Westley?” asked Joshua with a cautious tone. Linking that surname with how lavish they were, Joshua was able to slightly get the gist of the situation.

“...Humph! I guess I’ll have to head out there myself now! Who exactly was foolish enough to offend the Westleys?” asked Joshua as he wiped his face.

“It was a poor, young man, master! Not only did he not pay for the registration fee, but he even talked big and wanted you to meet him in person! He’s strong too so I was hesitant about kicking him out... Regardless, if I remember correctly, his surname was Crawford!”

Upon hearing that, the towel Joshua was holding on to immediately fell to the ground.

“...What did you say his surname was? Crawford? You said he was a young man, right?” asked Joshua, expressions of both shock and fear on his face.

“Y-yes!” replied the staff member, clearly starting to feel frightened.

“...Could it actually be him?” said Joshua in a nervous tone before immediately running toward the lobby somewhat excitedly.

“He’s definitely ruined now! Not only did he offend Master Jenkinson, but he’s also offended such a high-status rich heir! ”Hah! Let’s see how miserable he’ll end up becoming!” sneered Mollie.

“Indeed! We probably won’t be able to meet Naomi in the Salford Province ever again after this!” added Tania smugly.

The moment her sentence ended, several of the clients there began shouting, “Master Jenkinson!”

Joshua had finally made his appearance and his gaze was now locked on the spot where the two parties were still facing off.

Strangely enough, he looked more excited than anything as he quickly made his way toward Quest.

“God d*mn! I wonder what kind of power they truly have for Master Jenkinson to be this excited!”

“I know right? It’s so strange seeing him like that!”

While the others were surprised by how eager Joshua looked, their jaws truly dropped wide the moment they saw him walking past Quest and his family.

He was now standing before the poor guy! As if that wasn’t shocking enough, Master Jenkinson immediately bowed before Gerald before saying, “Greetings, senior!”

Chapter 897

“...Senior?”

Everyone now had their mouths gaping wide. The mighty master, Joshua Jenkinson... Did he really just call that pauper his senior?!

While even Naomi was slightly surprised, the ones who were left the most stupefied were those from the Legh family.

“Good day. I just came here today to borrow your place for a bit,” said Gerald in resignation. Though he wasn’t sure whether he should’ve let Joshua address him as his senior, it was too late for Joshua to retract the title anyway.

“By all means, please use my facilities as you see fit, senior!” replied Joshua with utmost respect in his voice.

As Gerald, Naomi, and her mother moved on, those from the Westley family could only look at each other in dismay, deeply shocked.

Just as the old man had thought, the youth truly was extremely extraordinary.

About half an hour later, Naomi was anxiously pacing to and fro outside a guest room door. She had been sweating profusely from the moment Gerald and Joshua had entered the room with her mother.

“Humph! I just can’t bring myself to believe that that guy actually knows how to treat illnesses!” growled Quest as he crossed his arms.

Aside from Naomi, the three Westleys were waiting behind her as well.

Quest’s dissatisfaction was clear as day. After all, not only had he been humiliated by Gerald in terms of strength, but as it turned out, Gerald was also proficient in treating others!

Since he was used to being arrogant and ruthless, the embarrassment he suffered today had no doubt left his pride in shambles.

“Shut up!” said Master Westley coldly in response.

Bob had simply assumed that Gerald was being rude when he was earlier told that Master Jenkinson wouldn’t be able to cure his illness.

However, from the moment he heard Master Jenkinson addressing Gerald as his senior, Bob Westley began fearing that what Gerald had claimed was true. That even Master Jenkinson wouldn’t be able to help cure him.

It was due to that fear that Bob had waited respectfully for Gerald outside the guest room.

The moment Gerald stepped out, Naomi immediately rushed over to him before asking in an anxious voice, “How’s my mom’s condition, Gerald?”

“She should fully recover in three months if she takes her herbal medicine as prescribed,” replied Gerald with a smile.

“Thank god... Speaking of which, when did you learn how to treat illnesses?” asked Naomi, feeling both delighted and surprised. After all, the Gerald currently standing before her felt almost foreign compared to the one she used to know.

“It’s a long story. I’ll explain it to you if there’s a chance for me to in the future. For now, go on inside and have a look at your mom,” replied Gerald.

As soon as he said that, Joshua himself stepped out of the room with a needle bag in hand. From the looks of it, it was evident that Gerald had been the main doctor this time around. At most, Joshua must have only assisted him throughout the half-hour period.

“Senior, please!” said Joshua respectfully while handing the bag of needles over to Gerald.

Looking back at Joshua, Gerald could only sigh internally.

It was about five months ago when he had first met Joshua. At the time, Finnley was still busy teaching Gerald all his medical and martial art skills.

The old man had even given Gerald a medical book, and Gerald was told to memorize all its contents. Since he was excellent at learning, it wasn’t difficult for Gerald to completely grasp the concepts within that book.

In fact, all it took was a month for him to be able to recall the contents of the medical book by heart. However, though his theory was strong, his actual skill in handling medicine was far from perfect at the time.

Joshua first made his appearance around then.

From the way Joshua had begged Finnley to take him in again, it seemed that the old man had once taught medical knowledge to Joshua sometime in the past.

It was clear that he simply wanted to deepen his knowledge and skills, and he was extremely persistent. After kneeling outside Finnley’s house for an entire day and night, the old man simply couldn’t bear seeing him like that.

As a result, he told Gerald to teach Joshua some of the contents in the medical book. Finnley had hoped that by doing so, Gerald himself would be able to master the basic application skills.

While he allowed Gerald to educate Joshua for about a month, Finnley himself never took Joshua in as his apprentice. Due to that, Joshua habitually addressed Gerald as his senior even though Gerald told him not to.

“Mr. Crawford! Master Jenkinson! Both of you have worked hard!” said Bob respectfully as he approached both men.

“I’m sure you’ve already heard from my senior earlier but just to clarify, I’m aware of your illness, Master Westley. Even so, I have to admit that I truly am incapable of curing you,” replied Joshua rather ashamedly.

Chapter 898

“I did indeed hear that, yes. However, since Mr. Crawford was able to notice my illness with just a simple glance, I’m sure he has a way to cure it!” said Bob, a faint smile on his face.

“I apologize, but I’m no doctor. I don’t have the qualifications to treat you,” replied Gerald.

Since Gerald was now still susceptible to outside dangers, he was trying his best not to be overly conspicuous. It hadn’t crossed his mind that Bob would actually wait for him right outside the guest room.

“Hey, now! Have some self-awareness! Are you even aware that my grandpa’s never begged anybody for help? He’s even addressing you as Mr. Crawford out of respect! At least try to help him out!” growled Quest coldly.

Hearing that, Gerald turned to look at the youth with a frown on his face.

“Don’t be rude, Quest!” scolded Bob.

“I’m terribly sorry Mr. Crawford... If my grandson’s rude behavior offended you, I’m willing to apologize for his sake...” said the old man as he slowly began bowing.

Both Quest and the aloof beauty were immediately stunned silent. They had never seen their grandpa behaving this way.

Before Bob could properly bow, however, he was stopped by Gerald.

“I’ll let it slide, Master Westley. Since we ended up getting acquainted with each other, I’m sure that fate has a role in all of this. I’ll have a look at your illness though I won’t promise positive results,” replied Gerald.

Gerald had realized by now that since it would be inconvenient for him to look for members of the Crawford family, he may as well use this chance to get to know more distinguished people. After all, it was near impossible to make any progress without the aid of large families.

With any luck, he would be able to gain enough forces and influence to deal with the Moldell family properly in the future.

“Thank you so much, Mr. Crawford!” said Bob happily.

“Before you thank me, I need you to agree to two conditions,” replied Gerald.

“Name them. I’ll definitely fulfill them!” declared Bob with a firm tone.

“They honestly shouldn’t be too difficult for you to fulfill. First off, is regarding my identity. I’ll just say that it’s currently inconvenient for my identity to be exposed to the public. I need you to keep it a secret.”

“Of course!”

“As for the second condition, I need to head to Mayberry in a few days. I need a smart, capable, and obedient person to be with me there at all times. Highlight the word, ‘obedient’ since the person you assign to me needs to listen to all my orders.”

“Humph! If it’s just a servant you want, the Westleys have plenty of them... As long as you’re able to cure my grandpa, I’ll personally give you a luxurious house with at least fifty maids and servants who’ll heed your every command!” sneered Quest.

“I don’t require a luxurious residence, nor do I have a need for that many servants. Still, I can see that you’re quite smart and capable yourself, Quest... I wonder...” said Gerald as he smiled faintly while looking at the boy.

“...What? You can’t seriously be telling me to serve you! Are you out of your mind? I’m the young master of the Westley family!” replied Quest, obviously finding Gerald to be more ridiculous than he looked.

“He’s rather reckless, but he’s definitely a smart man. I was honestly having the same idea!” added Bob as he laughed loudly.

“...Wait, what? Grandpa?! Sister...!” said Quest, suddenly sounding much more dispirited than before.

“You’ll be staying by Mr. Crawford’s side from now on, Quest. Be sure to obey his every command, regardless of whether it’s hard work or not,” said Bob.

“But why me...”

“Why, you ask? Are you really daring enough to disobey me now?” replied Bob, a hint of anger in his voice.

Gnashing his teeth, Quest then replied sulkily, “Fine, I’ll do it for you, grandpa...”

After hearing Quest’s involuntary agreement, Gerald nodded and brought Bob into another room.

“Is that young man truly capable of curing my grandpa, Master Jenkinson?” asked the aloof woman as she watched the room’s doors close. She simply felt that Gerald was too young to be this capable.

“Haha! Miss Quinley, you don’t have to worry at all. Since my senior didn’t flat out deny curing him, there’s definitely a possibility of it happening! Besides, both of us share a master. Quite frankly, I used to be a gangster. After meeting my master, however, it only took a month for my master to completely change my ways. During that period, I was exposed to a lot of medical skills and knowledge. Sadly, I only got to learn a little over the basics.”

“Senior, on the other hand, was taught the entire quintessence of our master’s knowledge. He’s practically a professional by now. He stayed with our master for half a year and my master even taught him in person every day, you know?” explained Joshua rather enviously.

“Who exactly is your master?” asked Quinley rather curiously.

“Can’t say anything about that!” replied Joshua, shaking his head.

It was about two hours later when the guest room’s doors finally opened again.

Chapter 899

“Grandpa!” said Quinley as she ran over to him.

“After you, Mr. Crawford,” said Bob, sounding very pleased as Gerald walked out first.

While only two hours had passed, Quinley could tell that there was already a great change in her grandfather's complexion.

"You don't have to worry, Quinley. As expected, Mr. Crawford was able to find a way to cure my illness. According to him, I'll be able to fully recover soon," explained Bob, his tone even more respectful now.

"I'll congratulate you in advance then, Master Westley. Speaking of which, since he managed to help you, I wonder if you'd be willing to do him another favor..." said Joshua.

"Oh? Is there anything else I could help you with, Mr. Crawford?"

"Though he didn't include it in his terms, he's actually looking for an extremely rare herb in the southern border of the Salford Province. The herb itself is called the Ginseng King, and senior has been searching for it for a long time now. If you manage to locate it, I'm sure it would help him greatly," added Joshua.

Upon hearing that, Gerald raised an eyebrow slightly.

To think that Joshua had actually beaten him to asking Bob about the Ginseng King. In truth, Gerald had been planning to ask the exact same thing to Master Westley if he had managed to cure him. It was honestly another reason why he had agreed to help Bob in the first place.

After all, though he had previously gone to the southern border of the Salford Province to look for the Ginseng King, he had realized back then that the search wouldn't yield any results if he was the only one looking for it.

Gerald was searching for it since Finnley had told him before that consuming the Ginseng King would greatly increase his body's strength and bloodline in general. Once he ate the herb, he would theoretically be as much of a threat to the Moldells as Finnley currently was.

Even so, based on his current capabilities and strength, it wasn't really a problem for him to defend himself. Gerald was honestly more worried that the Moldells would decide to attack his family living in Northbay instead.

After all, if that were to truly happen, it would only be a sign that he was still far too weak and incapable of protecting the Crawfords. To prevent that, he needed the Ginseng King to ensure that he would be strong enough should the Moldells ever launch an attack on his family.

Regardless, Joshua knew that Gerald was looking for it since he had also been present when Finnley explained about the Ginseng King. It touched Gerald slightly to know that Joshua still remembered that incident.

“So you’re looking for the Ginseng King as well, Mr. Crawford. While I had planned on looking for it myself, I gave up about two years ago since I couldn’t find it no matter how hard I looked. What more, I heard that should ordinary people consume the herb, it could very easily cause their blood circulatory system and physical strength to plummet,” said Bob.

“However, since I’m already cured and you need it, consider it to be less a favor and more of an act of gratitude from the Westley family. Upon returning home, I’ll immediately form and order a group to begin searching for it on your behalf.”

“I greatly appreciate that, Master Westley,” replied Gerald in a grateful tone.

“Now that that’s settled, I’ll be leaving for the southern border of the Salford Province to prepare for the task. As agreed upon earlier, Quest himself will temporarily be staying by your side,” said Bob.

It was a little while later when Naomi was about to check out of the hotel. As she held onto her luggage bag, she turned to look at Gerald before asking, “Could we head back to Mayberry together, Gerald?”

Naomi had asked since she had heard that he was returning there anyway to resolve some issues of his.

“Yeah, of course we’ll head back together,” replied Gerald with a smile.

Mayberry wasn’t the only stop on his mind. He planned to return to Northbay to check on how things were going as well. However, Northbay could wait.

His priority was Mayberry since Jett—the third young master of the Moldell family who had also hurt Felicity so terribly—was last seen in Mayberry from what Naomi had told him.

After suffering so much for him, Gerald knew that he would have endless restless nights if he didn’t avenge Felicity.

“That’s great to hear! We can now look out for each other!” said Naomi happily.

“Speaking of which, just leave your luggage here. Quest can take them down,” said Gerald as he pointed at the youth who was currently standing at the side with both hands in his pockets.

“Wait, why do I have to carry them?” asked Quest in disbelief that he had been ordered to do such a thing.

“What? Are you disobeying me already?” replied Gerald with a stern gaze.

Suppressing his anger, Quest then said, “Fine, I’ll take them! What’s the big deal anyway...”

After saying that, Quest then began carrying the luggage down in between huffs.

Since they were leaving in Quest’s car, he was obviously going to be Gerald’s personal driver for the time being as well.

However, the moment they entered the car, Gerald shouted, “Hold on a minute!”

“What is it this time?” asked Quest rather impatiently as he saw Gerald looking out the car’s window.

Chapter 900

Looking at the same direction Gerald was, Quest saw that a team of similar-looking cars had just parked at the foot of Yorknorth Mountain. Upon squinting his eyes, he realized that Gerald was looking at two women who had just gotten out of one of the cars.

Seeing how stunned Gerald looked, Quest placed a finger under his chin as he said with a hint of interest in his tone, “Humph! You’re a grown-up, aren’t you Mr. Crawford? Are you going to tell me now that you’ve never seen beauties before? Though I have to admit that those two women are particularly stunning.”

“Hush!” replied Gerald, his gaze stern as he continued looking at the two women.

Gerald really hadn’t expected to bump into the two girls here of all places. The two beauties were in fact his old acquaintances, Jasmine and Mindy.

He hadn’t met the two girls from the time he had bid farewell with them about half a year ago in the Salford Province.

After all, after the incident at the Fenderson family mansion, his father had told him that he was contractually bound to have a marriage with Jasmine. Upon finding out that his grandfather had been the one to sign the contract, Gerald could only feel helpless back then.

However, he understood his grandfather's motive. It was the trend back then to have strong alliances, after all.

Snapping out of it, Gerald then told Quest to stop the engine.

His intent wasn't to continue spying on them, nor was it for him to greet and catch up with them. The truth was, Gerald had noticed two figures seemingly stalking both Jasmine and Mindy from a distance. The stalkers were simply too suspicious for Gerald to ignore.

"Are you done looking at them yet, Mr. Crawford? They're already ascending the mountain," said Quest.

"I'm waiting for them to go a bit higher. Just wait here in the meantime."

After making sure that the two girls had ascended quite a distance, Gerald silently got out of the car and began inching toward the two sneaky people.

"F*cking hell! Is he actually planning to catch up with the two beauties to have a chat with them?" said Quest in resignation.

He then looked at Naomi before saying, "...Wait here, I'll go over there to see what he's up to."

With that, he walked up to Gerald.

Noticing that Quest was coming his way, Gerald waved at him before saying, "You came at the right time. See those two over there? They seem to be proficient in martial arts. I need you to taunt them. Once they start going after you, lead them to that corridor over there."

"What exactly are you hoping to achieve?"

"Just do it! Quickly!" ordered Gerald as he pushed Quest forward.

Seeing that he didn't really have a choice, Quest stood before the two men, shouting all sorts of profanities to get their attention. Gerald himself quickly got into position.

While it was true that he was now meddling in the affairs of both Jasmine and Mindy to a certain degree, Gerald wasn't doing it for the sake of it. He wasn't doing it because of the marriage contract his grandfather had signed either.

Rather, he was only doing this for his aunt and Queta's safety. After all, they too were members of the Fenderson family.

Since those from the Fenderson family could now be considered to be relatives and in-laws to the Crawfords, Gerald doubted that the Schuylers—the Fenderson family's former enemies—would even dare do anything bad to them. Knowing that made him even more curious to find out who the stalkers were working for.

As was expected, Quest was the prime candidate when it came to taunting. It didn't take long for the two stalkers to begin chasing after him.

Upon running into the corridor, however, one of them immediately sensed that something was wrong and shouted, "Hold it! We're being lured into a trap!"

Just as both men turned around to retreat, a dark figure flashed past them.

Before either of them could even react, the figure launched an extremely fluid motion. It took a second for them to realize the searing sensation on their chests. The pain was so great that it didn't take long for both men to start screaming in agony as they fell to the ground.

"Y-you... Who are you...? Do you even know who you're dealing with...?" warned one of the men as he held onto his chest while trying to get up.

In the end, however, both of them weren't even able to sit upright, let alone stand.

"I have no idea who you are, but know this. If you don't answer my questions honestly, you won't make it out alive," said Gerald coldly as he slipped a hand into his pocket before squatting down to take a closer look at the two stalkers.

Hearing that, both of them felt immense chills running down their spines.

Chapter 901

Immediately after saying that, Gerald lifted both of his hands and stuffed something into their mouths!

“W-what did you just feed us?!” sputtered both of them, stupefied by the turn of events.

It didn’t take long for the two men to realize that whatever it was, it hurt like hell. The effects were almost instantaneous as both men began holding on to their stomachs and rolling on the ground in pain, agonized expressions etched deeply on their faces.

Quest himself—who had been standing silently at the side this entire time—was left petrified as he watched them squirm in pain.

“Just poisonous worms. Do understand that the worms are probably already devouring your organs as we speak. It won’t be long before the agony ends and you’ll both be dead,” said Gerald with a cold smile on his face.

“P-please spare our lives! P-please...” begged the men.

“Only if you answer all my questions. First off, why were you stalking the Fenderson sisters? Which family do you belong to?”

While both men had sworn never to reveal the answers to those questions regardless of how much they were tortured, what they were experiencing now was already much worse than anything they could have ever imagined. A quick death would be better than what they were currently feeling!

“W-we were... sent here by the Schuyler family! We’re Master Yael’s subordinates...! Please... Please spare our lives...!” said the men as they lay twitching in pain on the ground.

“So it really is the Schuylers. What wicked things are they plotting up this time?” asked Gerald.

“W-we don’t know...!”

“I see. Well then, let’s just leave now, Quest.”

“N-no! Please wait! We’ll tell you! We’ll tell you everything we know!” shouted the men in panic.

“W-while we don’t know the exact details to what’s truly happening inside the Schuyler family, we’ve heard news that the Schuylers are secretly plotting something big to rebel against the Fendersons! Their end goal is to make the Fenderson family part of their own instead!”

“Oh? Correct me if I’m wrong, but I’m pretty sure that the Schuylers and the other minor families who are currently under the Fendersons wouldn’t have the capability to take on them,” replied Gerald with a frown.

“You’re right... B-but they’ve partnered with the Longs in Yanken! A family called the Moldells is involved as well! From what we could see, almost everyone that the Moldells sent over was exceedingly powerful! We’re pretty sure that the Fendersons are truly done for this time around!” explained the two men, spitting out everything they knew in hopes of getting Gerald’s mercy.

‘So that’s why!’ Gerald thought to himself.

“Tell me what little you know about the ‘big thing’ that the Schuylers are plotting up?”

“W-well... From what we’ve heard, Lord Fenderson is currently so sick that he’s literally at death’s door... As a result, the Schulers are going to make their move in the next three days...”

“I’ve properly handled the corpses, Mr. Crawford. What’s the next step?” asked Quest as he clapped the dirt off his hands.

The men were still alive some ten minutes ago. Not anymore.

Quest felt a shiver run down his spine as he recalled the agonized expressions on the two corpses. How equally terrible and frightening.

When they had first met, Quest had simply assumed that Gerald was a simple and honest man. Gerald certainly looked the part. It was the reason why Quest dared to speak so presumptuously to Gerald earlier.

Now, however, he finally understood why his grandfather had treated Gerald so respectfully and politely. Gerald had managed to completely instill fear within Quest’s heart at this point.

‘His means of gathering information is simply too cruel and vicious!’

“Since my family and the Fendersons are acquainted, I can’t just ignore this. Change of plans. We’ll be staying here for another three days. While I sneak into the Fenderson family to see what exactly is going on, you’ll be responsible for taking care of Naomi and her mother,” said Gerald as he looked at Quest.

Things were getting much more heated now with the involvement of the Moldells. It was clear that the Schuylers were now that family's lackeys as well.

There were three major wealthy families now. If the Moldells managed to subdue the Fendersons and acquire them, then the Moldells would essentially have two of the three major families under their control.

Once that happened, it wasn't hard to imagine them targeting the Crawford family's properties in Weston next.

How clever those from the Moldell family were to try acquiring his family by flanking the Crawfords.

Knowing very well what the Moldells were going for made it impossible for Gerald not to get involved in all this. However, now wasn't the time for him to simply barge in with his true identity. He needed a plan...

As he glanced over at Yorknorth Mountain, however, an idea emerged the moment he thought about Joshua.

The very next day, Bryson stood at the entrance of the Fenderson family mansion as he respectfully greeted, "Welcome to the Fenderson family mansion, Master Jenkinson. In case you've forgotten, I'm Bryson Fenderson and the people standing behind me are Fendersons as well. It's a pleasure meeting you again."

The old man—who needed a walking stick to support himself—then watched together with his family as Joshua got out of his car.

Chapter 902

As the old man had implied, Joshua had indeed met up with the Fendersons before a few years ago. In truth, it was the Fendersons who had wanted to hire Joshua as their family's personal doctor back then. Though they had even offered an extremely high salary, in the end, Joshua still refused their offer.

"It's a pleasure indeed," replied Joshua with a faint smile on his face.

It was at that moment when Bryson noticed a new face. Or at least half a new face.

A young man was standing obediently next to Joshua as he carried a medical kit in hand. The odd thing about him, however, was the fact that the youth was wearing half a mask. It covered his upper facial features, and it wasn't unlike a masquerade mask.

“Could I know who this might be?” asked Bryson with a smile.

“A-ah...! Ah!” replied the masked youth as he pointed at his own mouth before waving his hands slightly. He then pointed at Joshua before placing his palm near his heart.

Seeing that, Mindy chuckled before saying, “Sanderson is Master Jenkinson’s apprentice, grandpa! He’s dumb so he can’t talk!”

Since both Mindy and Jasmine had returned to the Fenderson family mansion with Joshua, Mindy had had the opportunity to get to know Sanderson a bit more. That definitely explained her enthusiastic introduction of the youth.

“How could you say that, Mindy?” replied Jasmine as she looked at the straightforward girl with a sigh.

“It’s fine! After all, I’m already quite close to him! We got acquainted atop Yorknorth Mountain the day before. Surprisingly, though that was the first time we had met each other, I instantly found him to be quite familiar! Regardless, though he can’t really talk, I feel that we got to understand each other a lot throughout our time together, aren’t I right, Sanderson?” said Mindy with a smile. The way she said it, it was almost as though she was a close friend of his.

“Ah! Ah!” replied Sanderson as he hurriedly nodded.

“Haha! I apologize for the awkwardness, Master Jenkinson... Though Mindy’s quite the straightforward and reckless girl, do understand that she’s been a loving and kind person her entire life!” said Bryson.

“I can certainly see that... Speaking of which, my apprentice here suffered from face burns when he was very young... It’s the reason why he’s wearing this mask. However, I hope you understand that he’s quite a diligent worker. I bring him everywhere I go now, and in return, he gets to learn more and more medical skills and knowledge from me.”

“Well then! With you being such a great teacher, I’m sure your student will be equally as great!” said Bryson as he held on to Master Jenkinson’s hand while leading him further into the Fenderson family mansion.

“Hah! Did you hear that, Jasmine? Grandpa said I was kind!” said Mindy as she playfully pouted.

“Sure, let’s go with that...” replied Jasmine as she shook her head slightly with an annoyed smile on her face.

Seeing this, Sanderson himself rolled his eyes at Mindy though he made sure she couldn’t see it.

'Kindness my foot! You've just never met a person who talks through sign language! You've only been nice to me since you want to learn sign language as well!' Sanderson thought to himself.

If it wasn't already evident enough, Sanderson was none other than Gerald.

While his current persona certainly wasn't ideal, it was in fact, the most convenient way for him to successfully infiltrate the Fenderson family mansion.

"Allow me to help you carry that medical kit, Sanderson," said Jasmine as she nodded toward him.

At that, Gerald immediately began gesturing with his hands again before saying, "Ah! Ah!"

Since Jasmine was so much gentler and considerate compared to Mindy, Gerald couldn't help but take a few more glances at her. His attention, however, soon returned to Lord Fenderson.

Gerald had already fully diagnosed his illness earlier from just a glance.

As long as Lord Fenderson took his prescribed medicine and received acupuncture treatment for a few days, it was almost certain that he would make a full recovery. It honestly wasn't that difficult a task for Gerald.

The situation was ideal as well, since—as Gerald had previously discussed with Joshua—he had indeed planned to stay with the Fendersons for at least a few days.

During that period, Gerald planned to observe the Fendersons while also investigating for any activity from the Schuylers. Or at least that's what he had initially planned.

As time went on, Mindy continued to look for Gerald any moment she could, and it was honestly starting to annoy him at this point. It was almost as though she had gone mad!

Thinking that he was finally alone when night came, Gerald stood in the backyard as he thought about the 'great scheme' that the Schuylers were plotting.

As for the Moldells, how many people were they actually sending over to help the Schuylers this time around?

Just as the gears in his head were about to grind, he heard a voice saying, “What are you doing, Sanderson?”

Gerald was left speechless as he turned to look at Mindy. The girl had her hands behind her back as she skipped all the way toward him.

“Ah! Ah! Ah!” replied Gerald as he gestured his hands while pointing at the garden and the surrounding area.

“Oh, I see! So you wanted to enjoy the scenery! Haha! Since you probably only focus on studying medicine on Yorknorth Mountain, I’m sure you’ve never seen this grand a garden, have you?”

“Ah!” said Gerald with a nod.

“Speaking of which, since you’re currently free, could you keep me company for a bit?” said Mindy as she held on to his right hand.

Gerald was so stunned by that that he didn’t even know how to reply.

Chapter 903

With Mindy’s small hand being so smooth and warm, it wasn’t long before Gerald started feeling weird.

Before he could even say anything, however, Mindy began dragging him over to a few small stone stools in the garden where both of them sat.

“You know, Sanderson, I’ve been wondering why I keep finding you to be so familiar... After some thought, I think it’s because of how similar our past experiences are... While it’s true that I’m a rich young lady who’s been living in luxury all my life while you’ve had an extremely difficult past—even having to face such a miserable accident—both of us are similar in the way that neither of us had proper friends our entire lives,” explained Mindy.

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded slightly.

“I resented that fact a lot when I was younger, you know? You may not know it, but because of a certain family, both Jasmine and I were grounded within the house for the longest time. That’s akin to torture for me since I’m the kind of person who simply can’t stay put in a place for long... I’m sure you’re able to relate to that to a certain degree... Regardless, due to my lack

of contact with others, I've never been in a relationship before. Before I knew it, almost twenty-three years have passed and till this very day, I don't think I've ever fallen for anyone, at least not in the way that soap operas usually play out," added Jasmine as she held onto her chin.

In response, Gerald pointed at Mindy before making a few more gestures.

"Hmm? Could you perhaps be saying that I'm pretty so it should be easy for me to get a boyfriend?" asked Mindy with a smile.

After seeing Gerald's nod, Mindy simply sighed before saying, "While I'm no longer grounded these days, I feel nothing for any of the rich heirs I've come across. It's true that I do want to fall in love, but none of the people I've met make my heart flutter at all!"

At that, Gerald nodded again.

"...Well, there was one person... However, I only got to be together with him for a short while... He's a good guy who I have to admit, is also quite cute..."

Raising an eyebrow, Gerald gestured again.

"Hmm? Why didn't I confess to him?"

After seeing him nod, Mindy sighed before saying, "Humph! It's a long story! To simplify, from what I've seen, he's a sc*mbag!"

"...Ah?" replied Gerald, shocked.

"Tell you what, Sanderson. That friend of mine? It's true that he's nice to people, but he's a little too nice to everyone, you know? Especially toward girls. It's kind of sc*mmy, don't you think? It's honestly the thing I hate most about him! That's the reason why my feelings for him eventually ended," explained Mindy.

With that, Gerald made another gesture, akin to cheering her on.

"Worry not, I'll definitely find the love of my life one day..." replied Mindy as she looked at him with a faint smile on her face.

“Speaking of which, Sanderson, do you care a lot about how others view your physical appearance?” asked Mindy.

As he nodded, he pointed at his face before putting on a terrified expression. For now, he knew he had to keep the act up.

“Were you saying that your appearance would scare others away? You’re afraid that no one will befriend you after seeing your burn marks?”

Upon seeing him nod in agreement, Mindy then asked, “Well I’m not afraid... And I won’t give you a cold shoulder, even after seeing what you look like. So Sanderson... Would you please take your mask off for me?”

Hearing that, Gerald quickly shook his head.

“Well, since you’re that reluctant, I won’t force you... Keep in mind, however, that we’re still close friends. No matter what you look like under that mask, I won’t dislike you...” said Mindy firmly.

It truly hadn’t crossed Gerald’s mind that Mindy would say such things. In response, he simply nodded understandingly.

“Ah, here you are, sir!” said a servant out of the blue as she began walking over.

Hearing that, he stood up while tilting his head at the servant.

“See, the young lady’s left shoulder has been aching a lot of late. We’d like you to have a look at her condition, sir,” added the female servant.

Chapter 904

After seeing him nod, Mindy then said, “Go ahead and check on Jasmine first. Since she’s trained a lot recently, it’s probably the same issue again. I’ll wait for you here tomorrow night so that we can chat again!” said Mindy.

Gerald then nodded in agreement as he began following the female servant to Jasmine’s room with his medical kit in hand. Once they got there, Gerald was greeted by the sight of Jasmine wearing a sling nightgown.

Her hair hung loosely around her shoulders and her goddess-like appearance made Gerald momentarily stunned.

“Since you were with Master Jenkinson for most of the morning, I felt that it would be rude to bother you then. I’m afraid I can only ask for your help at night,” said Jasmine with a faint smile on her face.

“Ah! Ah!” replied Gerald as he gestured his response, an indication that he didn’t think much about it.

Seeing that, Jasmine sat down before saying, “I appreciate it... See, my shoulder’s been aching occasionally ever since it got hurt sometime in the past. Since my training has intensified recently, the aching has gotten more frequent and also more painful...”

Hearing that, Gerald gestured with his hands as though he was asking her how her shoulder got hurt in the first place.

“Let’s just say that a friend of mine accidentally hurt me... It was back during a Taekwondo championship... I had underestimated him, so due to my carelessness, I was flung out of the ring! In the process of breaking the fall, my left shoulder received substantial damage... Ever since that day, the ache never truly went away,” explained Jasmine.

Gerald was gently rubbing her left shoulder at the time, and after hearing her full explanation, he felt a shiver run down his spine.

‘The one who caused the injury... It was me, wasn’t it? To think that she’s had this pain on her shoulder this entire time... Now that she’s asking me to treat her, I’m not even sure if it’s god’s will anymore...’

After a brief examination, Gerald gave her a thumbs up before mimicking the action of holding a needle. Essentially, he was saying that after he performed acupuncture on her a few times, she should feel as good as new.

“Is that so? Thank you, sir! While we’re at it, could I please request to not address you as sir? For some embarrassing reason, I feel rather uneasy to say it... Could I just call you Sanderson?” asked Jasmine with a subtle smile on her face.

Upon seeing his nod, Jasmine then asked, “You’ve always been staying by Master Jenkinson’s side, right? Don’t you ever get bored? When I saw you atop the mountain that morning, it seemed that you didn’t have many friends either. After all, aside from the lively Mindy, not many people actually took the time to talk to you, is my deduction correct?”

For some odd reason, Jasmine felt that she could open up a bit more to Sanderson. He simply exuded an aura that made her feel safe to talk about such things. He made her feel assured.

While Jasmine had to admit that she was late in getting involved with society, she still felt that she was quite good at judging people.

At the very least, she was definitely sure that Sanderson didn't make her feel like the other men she had previously met. Unlike the obscene looks those men usually gave her, Sanderson's gazes were soothing.

What more, since Sanderson couldn't speak properly, she could speak her mind without having to worry about Sanderson blabbering out what she had told him. He was essentially the total opposite of Mindy.

All this contributed to Jasmine sincerely wanting to chat more with Gerald.

In response to her previous question, Gerald simply nodded.

"You've been living out there this entire time, Sanderson... Do you have any idea what love feels like? I don't mean anything by that, I'm just curious..."

'What on earth is wrong with these two sisters tonight...? To think that both of them had the same topic in mind to talk to me about...' Gerald thought to himself as he shook his head.

"I see... Well that makes the both of us... While I've not been in a relationship before, I may have found myself having a crush on somebody... Though I say that, I'm not even sure when I started having feelings for him..." said Jasmine in a soft tone.

As Gerald listened on, she continued, "Maybe... Just maybe... Could these feelings for him have sprouted the moment he tossed me out of that ring? Or perhaps it was when he had saved me... How curious... Ah!"

Nearing the end of her sentence, Jasmine let out a tiny yelp as she felt an acute pain on her shoulder.

Immediately lifting his hands from her shoulder, he lowered his head in apology.

"I'm fine, don't worry. Just continue, Sanderson," replied Jasmine with a smile.

Chapter 905

It was no surprise why he had accidentally made that mistake. After all, Gerald was stunned to know that she actually had slight feelings for him.

As far as Gerald remembered, he only ever had brief conversations with Jasmine, though he did admit to manipulating her slightly during some incidents. To think that she would end up falling for him just because of that...

“Anyway, when the Fendersons went over to the Crawford family some time ago, we learned that he had gone missing. While I’ve sent a lot of people out to search for him, it’s already been a little over half a year by now yet there still isn’t any news about him... I still occasionally wonder whether he left on his own accord...” said Jasmine in a rather sad tone.

“...Regardless, are you done?” asked Jasmine as she turned to look at Sanderson.

At that, Gerald nodded before gesturing for her to get a good rest.

Just as he was about to leave with his medical kit, however, he caught a glimpse of some prayer tools lying around in her room.

With a slight frown, he then pointed at said objects before saying, “Ah, ah?”

He had meant to ask her whether there was something going on the next day, and though he was worried that the question wouldn’t get across, Jasmine seemed to understand him just fine.

With a smile on her face, she nodded before saying, “There’s a church fair tomorrow. My aunts, Mindy, and I will be heading there to pray for blessings together. Haha! You may not know this, but in the past, Mindy and I couldn’t leave the mansion all willy-nilly, Sanderson. We used to sneak out just to go to that fair! We don’t have to sneak out anymore, though, so we can thoroughly enjoy ourselves there without fear of getting caught!”

Upon hearing that, Gerald’s expression saddened.

“...Hmm? Could it be that you wish to go there too? Now that I think about it, you’ve probably never attended a church fair, have you?” asked Jasmine as she looked at his face.

In response, Gerald began gesturing happily.

“Alright then, it’s decided! If you aren’t too busy tomorrow, do keep us company and go out with us!” replied Jasmine with a smile.

Though Jasmine was rarely this friendly to someone she just met, she simply felt comfortable with him.

Perhaps it was his calming gaze and inability to talk properly—which meant that he was also naturally a better listener—that made Jasmine willing to befriend him.

Regardless of whatever the true reason was for her to feel the way that she currently did, she was comfortable with him and that was all that mattered.

As all this was happening, several people were celebrating an extraordinarily lively night in a secret room within the Schuyler family's mansion. The people involved were all seated at a large table, chatting merrily between sips of wine.

"The situation seems to have changed, dad. To think that that b*stard, Lord Fenderson, would actually hire Joshua to cure his illness! From what my subordinate reported to me, his complexion looks much better now after just a single session of the treatment!" said Yael in a worried tone.

"Master Yael, you worry too much! The Longs and the Schuylers are different now! Not only have both our families agreed to cooperate to ensure the success of this mission, but we're also getting valuable assistance from a few masters from the Moldell family! Bryson's no longer a threat!" sneer a middle-aged man who went by the name of Berk Long.

Berk was Master Long's youngest son, and just like Master Long's other sons, he had his own set of skills that separated him from the rest.

He was most prominently known for being both strong and powerful, just like how his name suggested.

Not only was he the leader of the Long family's secret forces, but he was also a key player during the attempt to capture Gerald alive in Merry City back then. Though Gerald had managed to escape, the fact that Gerald had only made it out by the skin of his teeth made him worthy enough to be trusted even by the Moldells.

"...I suppose you're right, Berk!" said Yael.

"Humph! But of course he is! You need to learn more from your elders from now on, Yael! Wit isn't everything, you know? Speaking of which, the first phase of the plan starts tomorrow. How goes the preparations?" asked Noah.

"Worry not, everything's already in place. After all, with both Quentin and Trey on our side, phase one is most definitely already in the bag!" said Yael as he looked at the similar-looking brothers from the Moldell family.

“Well I’ll rest assured then! Since the Quentin & Trey duo are Master Jett’s younger cousins, I have reason to believe that their capabilities are on par with Master Jett’s!” added Noah with a flattering tone.

“You’ve got to be joking! There’s no way we could ever compare to our cousin!” said both of the brothers as they shook their heads with bitter smiles on their faces.

“There’s no need to be modest! Anyway, a toast to the success of the first phase tomorrow!”

Chapter 906

“Cheers!”

As Jasmine had said the night before, a church fair was held in town the very next morning. With everything looking so grand, it was no wonder why it was so crowded.

“How lively!” said Mindy excitedly as she stood in the middle of the crowd.

“Could you please be a little more reserved, Mindy?” said Jasmine rather helplessly.

“Why should I be? Today’s an exciting day! Can’t you feel it? Seeing all the people here just makes me all giddy!” replied Mindy as Jasmine shook her head.

“It’s fine once in a while, isn’t it Jasmine? Let’s just have a short stroll around before heading to the church to pray for our blessings later,” said their second aunt as she turned to look at the youth who had silently been following them from behind this entire time.

“I apologize that you have to see the childish side of our family,” said the second aunt as she smiled.

In response, Gerald shook his head.

To be honest, even if they had prohibited Gerald from coming along, he would’ve still done so sneakily. After all, how couldn’t he when he was well aware that the Schuylers were actively eyeing the two sisters.

“...Hey, look over there, Jasmine. Aren’t those our classmates?” asked Mindy out of the blue as she pointed toward a few people.

As she said that, their six classmates took notice of them as well.

Since Mandy and Jasmine had both been mysterious girls who had remained cold and aloof toward them for the longest time, nobody in the group—regardless of gender—actually dared to take the initiative to greet them.

However, since Mindy was now waving at them with a smile, they naturally felt the need to walk over. After all, regardless of how distant they were, the two girls had still been their classmates for years.

“I didn’t expect to see you here!” said a woman—who appeared to be the leader of the group—as she smiled.

“Indeed! It’s high time Jasmine and I came out to have a bit of fun! I was honestly wondering if we would bump into any of our classmates here earlier. Speak of the devil, I guess! How long have you been here? Have you had your fun yet?” asked Mindy with a smile.

“Actually, we just arrived!” said the other women in the group.

“I see! Why not walk around together then? After all, aside from Stella, we’ve never had a proper chance to chat with each other, even though we were classmates for so many years! Right, Jasmine?”

Hearing what Mindy said, Jasmine nodded before smiling.

Jasmine and Mindy were more acquainted with Stella since both she and Gerald had momentarily given a hand to the two girls during the incident half a year ago.

“Also, you may not know this, but though we never talked much in class, we know all about you!” declared Mindy.

“You’re Isabelle, aren’t you? You’re the monitor of the class right next to ours! As for this beauty, your name is Maia, right? We met at the Taekwondo championship back then, remember? If I properly recall, you got transferred to our university some time ago together with that handsome guy, Warren!”

Hearing that, Maia smiled faintly at Mindy before saying, “Yeah, it was quite a while ago since that happened. We got to know Isabelle a bit better after that incident, so in a way, the events of that day had a silver lining.”

“Alright, since all of you are young people, why don’t all of you go ahead and have some fun together? Your Third aunt and I will just be walking around if you need us,” said Second aunt as she looked at the two girls.

Upon agreeing with that, Jasmine and Mindy joined their classmates, leaving Gerald sighing internally as he followed them. And here he had thought that he wouldn’t ever have to meet those people again. To think that ‘never’ turned out to be only half a year later.

Still, it was clear that all of them had changed slightly.

For one, Isabelle wasn’t as impetuous as she used to be. Stella herself had gotten a shorter haircut, though she still remained beautiful all the same. As for Maia, she seemed to have grown a bit more mature, and that amplified her beauty even more.

“Ah, speaking of which! These are our classmates, Sanderson! Let’s be sure to have fun together, alright?”

Gerald could only nod. It wasn’t as though he could refuse the offer.

When Stella, Maia, and Isabelle saw that he was wearing a mask, they felt rather uneasy walking together with him. The fact that he didn’t know how to speak didn’t help with his situation.

However, since he came with Mindy and Jasmine, the girls kept to themselves, knowing it would be imprudent of them to say anything bad about Gerald.

While none of them said a thing about him, Maia herself took an extra step by deliberately distancing herself from him.

Chapter 907

She did so since half a year wasn’t nearly enough to change her arrogant attitude. As was expected, Maia still preferred only being around people with high statuses in society like Warren, Jasmine, and Mindy.

Nobody could really blame her for that.

Regardless, Gerald was far too busy keeping an eye out on his surroundings to even notice the contemptuous gazes from both Maia and Isabelle.

“Hey Jasmine, look there! See those little candies those kids are holding? I like them a lot! I wonder where they bought those!” said Mindy a little while later as she pointed out the window at a few children who were passing by. The group was currently seated in a small shop while enjoying some coffee.

“Oh, you do? I know where they’re selling them! It’s a little further up north, but I could bring you there if you’d like!” replied Maia.

“That would be great!” said Mindy excitedly as she turned to look at Gerald.

Mindy then smiled and said, “Come on, Sanderson! Join me! After all, you don’t seem like you have anything else to do!”

“He doesn’t need to follow. We can just head there ourselves!” stated Maia, a hint of contempt in her voice.

Before Gerald could even take a good look at Maia’s expression, Mindy had already grabbed on to his arm before shouting, “Let’s go!”

Jasmine herself smiled before adding, “Just go ahead with Mindy, Sanderson... I’ll feel much more assured knowing that you’re keeping her company as well!”

Hearing that, Gerald could only shake his head in resignation as he followed Mindy and Maia to the candy stall.

Though he had assumed that Mindy would return to the group upon purchasing the candies, to his dismay, there were a lot of interesting things on sale which Mindy hadn’t seen before. As a result, it turned into a mini shopping spree as Mindy spent quite some time looking through and buying more and more things.

Eventually, Gerald tapped Mindy’s shoulder gently, indicating that they should return to the group.

“We’re in no hurry, so just stay and have a look around!” said Mindy with a smile.

“If he wants to return so much, just let him leave first...” added Maia.

“No way! It’ll be boring with just the two of us!” replied Mindy as she shook her head.

Just as he was about to persuade Mindy to return again, Gerald felt his ears twitch. A second later, his eyes turned stern as he turned to look behind them.

Though Maia and Mindy were blissfully unaware, Gerald could see ten figures slowly inching toward them!

When Gerald turned to warn Mindy, the figures immediately sped up!

It took less than a few seconds for the men to reach the trio, and the next thing Mindy knew, her arms had already been grabbed by several of the men.

Gerald himself felt a firm hand on his shoulder as the tip of a gun nudged against his back.

“Don’t you dare move, you b*stard! Or I’ll kill you!” growled the person standing behind Gerald viciously.

While it would honestly be quite easy for Gerald to resist them, he didn’t do so. After all, with so many people there, he was afraid that the group of men would get careless and accidentally shoot an innocent bystander.

Besides, it was clear that the group of men was following a very well thought out plan. With that in mind, he didn’t dare to act blindly since he wasn’t sure whether Jasmine and the others were also facing the same thing.

“W-who are you...? What the hell do you want?” asked Mindy—who was also held at gunpoint—in a frightened voice.

“They’re kidnapers of course!” growled Maia who looked like she wasn’t new to the experience. Rather than fear, her expression showed more of a frown.

“Oh? This beauty’s rather calm, isn’t she! I’m afraid that calmness won’t last for long though, haha!” sneered one of the men who was wearing a cap.

“Y-you’re all bold, I’ll give you that. However, do you even know whose territory you’re currently in? Have you any idea who I even am? Just know that my sister’s drinking coffee not too far off!” warned Mindy though her fear was still evident.

Chapter 908

“Hah! As if we wouldn’t know who you are! You’re Mindy, the second young lady of the Fenderson family! Also, Jasmine was indeed having coffee. Past tense of course, since she’s already been captured! You’re the only one left to deal with! Now walk!” ordered the man—who appeared to be the leader of the group—as he shoved Mindy rather harshly.

As soon as he said that, the distant revving of engines could be heard. Moments later, a minibus could be seen speeding through the crowd toward them!

“Get in the car!” commanded the man as soon as the vehicle came to a screeching halt before them. Not having any other choice, the trio simply obeyed.

At that point, Gerald was still considering whether he should make a move now or continue waiting for a bit. After all, even though these people had guns with them, he didn’t really think that they were all that big a deal.

At that moment, a static voice could be heard coming from a walkie-talkie, stating, “Are you done?”

“Yes we are! It was a piece of cake!” replied the leader.

As the two continued talking through the walkie-talkie, at some point, Jasmine’s voice could clearly be heard from the other end.

‘So they weren’t lying when they said they’ve already captured Jasmine and the rest!’ Gerald thought to himself.

With that in mind, he decided not to make a move just yet. He would just have to think of something once he reunited with Jasmine and the others later.

Before being allowed to leave the minibus with curtained windows, Gerald and the others had their heads covered with tiny sacks.

“Move forward!”

Eventually, the sacks were removed once they reached their destination. To Gerald, it seemed like they were in a cellar of sorts.

Looking around, he saw that Jasmine, Isabelle, Stella, and Warren were already here, though all four of them had been tied against chairs.

“Mindy! Sanderson! Are both of you alright?” shouted Jasmine in a worried tone.

"I-I'm fine... Who are those people, Jasmine? How could they be so daring?" asked Mindy hurriedly.

"Them? Hah! They're lackeys of the Schuyler family! Those ungrateful b*stards!" scolded Jasmine in rage.

"Now just stay here quietly! Others will be coming over to accompany you later!" said one of the captors before the group of men walked out of the cellar.

"...Regardless, to think that those people actually built a secret room within their house..." said Maia, breaking the awkward silence.

"Indeed. What more, the guns they're using are the newest models the country's produced! These people are definitely quite powerful!" said Warren with a frown.

Hearing that, Gerald remembered that both Warren and Maia had attended the university back then to investigate something. To think that they had remained undercover and active on the case for almost half a year by now.

"Stella, Isabelle, and Maia... I'm so sorry for burdening all of you... Worry not, I'll definitely not allow the Schuylers to lay another finger on you!" apologized Jasmine.

"It's fine, Miss Fenderson. The most important thing now, is to find a way to escape," said Warren calmly.

Following that, a sigh was heard as Stella began crying out, "It'd be great if Gerald was here... With his capabilities, he'd definitely know what to do in such a situation!"

Unlike Maia, this was the first time Stella and Isabelle had found themselves in such a situation. It was natural for them to feel utterly terrified.

Upon hearing Gerald's name being mentioned out of the blue, the other women in the room found themselves slightly stunned. This was especially the case for Jasmine though her expression turned somber soon enough.

"...Wishing for him to be here in this situation really won't help... After all, he's gone missing!" said Jasmine.

“...Huh? What? Since when? What happened?” asked Jasmine’s classmates in surprise.

“Nobody knows... It’s already been well over half a year, yet we don’t even know if he’s dead or alive!” explained Jasmine.

“How... How could that be...” said Stella in disbelief.

“...No wonder Marven’s company fell into bankruptcy so suddenly! So it had something to do with Gerald going missing!” added Isabelle, her tone downcast.

“Humph! It serves him right! After all, who told him to keep such a high profile? He thought he could do anything that he wished just because he was rich, but look what ended up happening to him after showing off so much! He’s just a man with a bad fortune!” growled Maia angrily as she remembered her past encounters with him.

Chapter 909

Gerald could only look at Maia in disbelief.

To think that he had assumed that she would have a somewhat better impression of him after lending her a hand back then. So it was all just wishful thinking. All he could do was smile bitterly in resignation as he looked at the lost cause of a woman.

“That’s enough. There’s no use talking about things like that now. What’s important is figuring out how we should escape!” said Warren.

As soon as he said that, a shout was heard as the iron door creaked open.

“Get in! All of you!”

Following that, around thirty people—both young and old—were shoved into the place. All of them had sacks over their heads, just like how their group had been brought in earlier.

When the sacks were removed, however, Jasmine was instantly shocked.

“What? It’s you? So the rest... Did they actually capture all of you?!” exclaimed Jasmine, stupefied by the turn of events.

“So you’ve been kidnapped as well, Miss! Those Schuylers truly are b*stards!” said one of the older members from the group.

The group of people all seemed quite close to Jasmine, and it was no wonder why.

After all, they were none other than key personnel from the families who were subservient to the Fendersons. There were over ten major and minor families who relied on the Fendersons for support, and Jasmine could tell that only the most loyal people—to her family—had been captured.

“Whatever you decide to do, please make it quick, miss! From what we can assume, the Schuylers are going to rebel against the Fenderson family very soon!” said another old man.

“Even if you say that, it’s not like I can do anything now... After all, I would’ve never expected them to rebel out of the blue after all these years! I don’t even know how long they’ve been planning for this!” replied Jasmine, clearly getting more and more worried by the second.

Meanwhile, Noah and a few other key members of the families subservient to the Fendersons arrived at the Fenderson family house. Everything was going according to plan.

“I apologize in advance, Mr. Schuyler and the rest of you here, but Lord Fenderson has just turned in for the night after taking his medicine,” said a butler as he watched the group of people enter the mansion.

“Tell him that this is an important affair. We’ll wait here while you inform him about it,” replied Noah.

Hearing that, the butler frowned. What a rude man! However, he couldn’t really do anything about it, so he simply obeyed.

It wasn’t long after before they were brought to Lord Fenderson’s study where he sat waiting.

“So, what’s the big emergency, Noah?” asked Bryson.

“You see, Lord Fenderson, a family member of mine who works in the headquarters was hospitalized due to some work injuries. However, the headquarters hasn’t paid for his medical fees which he should rightfully receive!” replied Noah.

“...Hmm? Did you really come all the way here just to tell me about that incident?” asked Bryson with a frown on his face.

“Oh, that’s not all! You see, since the headquarters refused to provide the medical fees in time, that family member of mine ended up passing away!” said Noah in a cold tone.

“...What exactly are you saying?” asked Bryson, slowly realizing Noah’s underlying message.

“It’s quite easy, honestly! You just need to punish the person in charge of the incident! Otherwise, my family won’t ever be able to reconcile with his death!”

“And who exactly was in charge?”

“Alas, it was none other than Jasmine!”

Bryson’s first response upon hearing that was to slam his study table with both his hands.

“How dare you, Noah! What’s your ulterior motive?! Actually, since you’ve brought so many people along with you, you couldn’t be thinking about finally rebelling against the Fenderson family, could you?”

“Humph! You’re exaggerating the situation, Lord Fenderson! My family’s always been loyal to yours! We just want to settle this incident once and for all! Since you’re so unwilling to punish her, how about this? As long as you sign your name on this agreement form, I’ll cease to pursue the incident!” declared Noah as he slid an agreement form in front of Bryson.

After reading through it, Bryson’s expression immediately turned hideous.

“What utter bullsh*t is this?! Know that you’re courting death tonight, Noah!” roared the old man as his eyes went bloodshot.

“Guards! Come in right this instant and kick them out!”

“Save your breath, Lord Fenderson. The four b*stards who usually protect you have already been subdued by my men. Nobody is coming to help you. Now that that’s out of the way, I hope that you’ll sign this agreement form for the sake of your granddaughters’, your sons’, and your own safety. Speaking of which, you’ll have to announce this in front of everyone else as well!”

Chapter 910

Immediately after saying that, Noah let out a sneer.

Bryson himself was finally catching on to how cornered he truly was. He would've never imagined that the Schuylers were actually this capable.

"You... Have you captured Jasmine and Mindy...?"

"Humph. You have five minutes to consider it, Lord Fenderson. Also, don't even bother relying on the board of directors. Rest assured that even those loyalest to you will be quick to sign and approve of it," replied Noah, disregarding Bryson's question entirely.

"Fine, I'll sign it! Still, I'd like you to clarify something. Have all of you truly become the Moldell's lackeys?" asked Bryson with a resentful tone as he signed the agreement form.

"Lackey is an unpleasant term, Lord Fenderson. I'm simply choosing to work with the wiser person! Do note that you were the one who brought this upon yourself! After all, you refused the Moldell family's proposal to cooperate with them in search of Gerald within the Salford Province!" said Noah.

"As part of our deal with the Moldells, once we're in power, we'll be using the Fenderson family's name to seek Gerald out! Speaking of deals, once we've smoked him out, the Fenderson family's surname will be no more! Instead, you'll all be adopting the surname of Schuyler! As I said before, this is all your own doing, so don't blame me!" added Noah.

"Now then, someone please take him back to his room so that he can get his rest. Guard him properly. We can't delay the major occasion that'll take place tomorrow."

Finally done with his monologue, Noah then walked out of the room with his men.

Meanwhile, more and more kidnapped people were being brought to the Schuyler family's secret room.

As was previously deduced, most, if not all, of the people there were those whom the Fendersons trusted or relied on a lot.

"This simply won't do... I have a feeling that something bad is going to happen to grandpa... We need to think of a way to escape soon!" said Jasmine.

“We do. I’ve been thinking for a while, and the best we can probably do now is gather those in the room who have great martial art skills and attempt to break out!” replied Warren.

He then added, “From what I can tell and have personally experienced, you should be the most skilled martial artist among all of us here, Miss Jasmine. You seem to be proficient with guns as well. Including Maia and I, the three of us will be taking the vanguard on our way out. Still, that makes only three people...”

“I know martial arts as well! Count me in!”

“Me as well!”

It didn’t take long for over ten new faces to step forward. Their courage had stemmed from their indignance about the entire situation, and nobody in the room was willing to bow down to that b*stard Noah without a fight.

“While I know you’re itching to escape, do be careful out there, mister! Since you’re not from the Fenderson family, I’m sure they won’t make things too difficult for you. Even so, things could get nasty should Noah catch you during your escape attempt!” said one of the captured men in the room.

Gerald himself was gesturing his hands wildly, telling them to not act impetuously and simply wait a little longer.

“Humph! The weak should just let the strong take the lead,” said Warren as he shook his head in resignation.

After looking at Gerald for a while, Jasmine nodded before adding, “I currently have to agree with Warren’s statement. Attempting to break out of this place will be much better than simply resigning to our fates.”

In her mind, she was thinking about how she could quickly inform the others about the Schuyler’s plan should she make it out safely. If that were to happen, the Schuylers could be dealt with before they could implement whatever they had planned.

“I’m glad to hear that. Speaking of which, I’ve noticed that the defense system in the house is quite lenient. However, I have a feeling that things will be much stricter outside. Are you familiar with the exterior of the Schuyler family’s mansion?” asked Warren.

“I am. Stick close to me on our way out. I’ll lead you along the paths that I think should be less guarded. With any luck, we’ll be able to break out of this place.”

Hearing that, Gerald then said, “Ah! Ah ah!”

It was evident that he was telling them to bring him along.

“I know you’re afraid, Sanderson, but we may not even succeed in breaking out! What more, we don’t know how dangerous it is yet outside there!” replied Jasmine with a hint of concern in her voice.

Maia herself simply rolled her eyes at his suggestion.

“With our family in its current condition, I can’t just stay here doing nothing either, Jasmine! I’m coming along!” declared Mindy as she gritted her teeth.

Upon hearing that, Jasmine turned to look at the rest of the people stuck in there. While many had gained courage earlier when the escape plan had been mentioned, many more were still shivering in fright at the thought of being caught again by the Schuylers.

Since Mindy and Sanderson weren’t part of the group that was afraid, after considering it for a brief moment, Jasmine nodded with a sigh as she looked at Mindy.

“Hold on! I don’t agree with this! As was said before, we don’t know how dangerous it is out there yet! Coming with us when you don’t know any martial arts could very well end with something going terribly wrong, Miss Mindy and Sanderson!” said Maia.

“Let’s not waste our energy arguing about this. For now, let’s just discuss how we’ll escape while we wait till it’s dark,” stated Jasmine, preventing Maia from creating unnecessary tension.

As the group took a brief break to calm themselves, Gerald snuck to a corner of the room. Once he was there, he took out what seemed like a jade pendant from his pocket. Upon closer inspection, however, the ‘pendant’ had a button on it.

Taking in a deep breath, Gerald then pressed the button.

Chapter 911

Night came soon enough and it was now quite late.

However, the silence of the night was broken by the sound of a massive explosion! Present members of the Schuyler family were left stunned as they watched flames erupting from where their warehouse was located.

“What the hell is going on?” shouted Noah who had felt the tremor of the explosion alongside Berk and a few others. All of them had been seated in the Schuyler family’s large conference hall when the explosion took place.

“Master, something’s gone terribly wrong! Our warehouse just exploded in flames!” announced a butler as he burst into the room where the stunned men were in.

“What?!” replied Noah as he felt his lips twitch slightly.

He had reason to be as furious as he currently was. After all, throughout the years, the Schuylers hadn’t used their warehouse to store unimportant things. On the contrary, most of their important information and documents were stored there!

“Who is responsible for this?! Who dares do something like this to the Schuyler family?!” roared Noah in rage.

“I-I’ve already sent people over to investigate!” replied the butler instantaneously.

“That’s good! We must catch the perpetrators if it’s the last thing we do!” growled Noah as he immediately led the group of people out of the conference hall.

As all that was happening, around ten figures could be seen swiftly making their way through the forests located near the Schuyler family’s mansion. It didn’t take long for them to arrive at a few tents that had been pitched rather deep in the forest.

“Everything is done, Mr. Westley,” said the people as they approached the main tent.

“Excellent work. Your mission is now accomplished. From here on out, we’ll just have to wait and see what Mr. Crawford will do next,” replied Quest as he slid out of the tent before nodding.

“Speaking of Mr. Crawford, send the second team out. Tell them to be ready to provide help should Mr. Crawford or any of the other escapees require it,” ordered Quest.

The once arrogant youth was no longer disrespectful toward Gerald after previously witnessing his true capabilities.

In fact, he now respected him greatly. After all, Gerald had tasked him with doing something extremely chaotic, and chaos was something Quest enjoyed creating. Aside from creating trouble, Quest was also responsible for providing aid to Gerald whenever he needed it.

Their plan was currently running quite smoothly since Gerald had given Quest prior instructions from within the hidden room earlier. Even the location of the base camp they were currently in had been selected by Gerald. After all, he had ordered the two Schuyler subordinates—who were now dead—to detail the landscape surrounding the Schuyler family’s mansion back then.

After the tents were pitched, Gerald’s next order was for Quest to send people into the Schuyler’s mansion to start a fire. That wasn’t a problem for Quest either. Now that he had sent the second team over to watch over Gerald’s escape, all Quest had to do was wait for Gerald’s safe return.

“What was that sound, Jasmine? Did you feel that tremor? It’s so dark outside too! I can’t see anything!” said Mindy.

“I have no idea either though it’s safe to assume that there was an explosion... However, since things sound rather chaotic outside right now, I think that’ll actually work in our favor. I say we attempt our escape now! As far as we know, grandpa could have been the one who arranged for that explosion to take place! Let’s not waste this chance!” replied Jasmine as all those involved with the escape plan nodded in unison.

After making sure that everyone involved was ready, they silently pried open the door—that had earlier been pick locked—before making a dash for the exit following the paths that they had earlier planned out.

Though they crossed paths with a few subordinates down the corridor, they were barely an issue for Jasmine as she swiftly knocked them out.

Since the electricity had gone out as well, they had the element of surprise on their side. The chaos outside had drawn most of the subordinates away from the corridors as well, allowing them to rush out of the building without too much trouble.

With the vanguard now out of sight, the remaining captives—who were peeking at the escape group’s progress this entire time from the hidden room’s entrance—said, “It seems that they’ve made it out just fine!”

Hearing that, Mindy gave a sigh of relief. Contrary to what had initially been planned, Mindy ended up staying in the room, fearing that she would just end up becoming a burden as they made their escape.

“What should we do now, Stella? Isabelle...? It still seems to be rather chaotic out there... Should we use this chance to make our own escape?” asked Mindy anxiously.

At that moment, she felt someone grabbing onto her hand. Turning to look at who was responsible, Mindy’s worries instantly dissolved when she saw that it was Sanderson.

“Sanderson? Didn’t you rush out together with Jasmine and the others earlier?”

Shaking his head, Gerald then gestured for her to tell the others to make a mass escape while things were still going haywire outside.

“Will we be able to make it out safely? We don’t even know if Jasmine and the others have truly made it out yet...” replied Mindy.

In response, Gerald gestured for her not to be worried since he was there for her.

“...Alright, then let’s all rush out together. Everyone! We should use this chance to make a run for the mansion’s back door!” shouted Mindy.

“She’s right! With it being pitch dark outside, they won’t dare to use their guns either! Let’s go!”

With everyone there now in agreement, the group consisting of well over thirty people began getting into position to make their escape as Gerald slowly pushed the door open.

However, before they could even leave the room, a gunshot was heard!

“Where the hell do all of you think you’re going?!” shouted a voice that startled several of the people.

Shadows could be seen sprinting toward the hidden room’s entrance as six bodyguards holding industrial flashlights came running over.

As Gerald stepped away from the door, all of the guards—who were also wielding guns—entered the room, blocking their only escape route.

Glaring viciously at everyone in the room, it was no wonder why a few women instantly began screaming in fear.

“W-what should we do, Sanderson? They have guns with them...” whispered Mindy in fright as she hid behind him while tugging on to his sleeve.

“If you want to live, then stay far away from the entrance!” growled one of the guards as they began walking toward the group intimidatingly.

Gerald’s next action was so rapid that nobody even saw it happening.

Chapter 912

With pinpoint precision, Gerald swiftly jabbed the weakest points of all six of the guards. It barely took a second before all of them fell to the ground in unison, bleeding profusely from their mouths and noses.

“...H-huh...? So... You were this capable this entire time, Sanderson...?” said Mindy as she watched wide-eyed and in disbelief at what she had just witnessed.

Even Stella and Isabelle—who had met several Taekwondo experts before—knew that those experts couldn’t even come close to comparing to that dumb Sanderson! To think that he was this powerful!

While everyone in the room was undoubtedly astonished by the turn of events, they simultaneously realized that they now had someone they could definitely rely on.

It didn’t take long before Gerald turned to look at the crowd before signaling for them to rush out of the place under his lead.

Following his orders, all of them made a mad dash for the backyard.

The moment they got outside, everyone immediately saw the raging fire that was still engulfing the Schuyler family’s warehouse. Due to their inability to control the flames, the fire was starting to spread to other parts of the mansion as well.

In other words, the Schuylers were currently in a great mess, and Gerald knew that this was the best chance they could get to escape safely.

Thanks to Jasmine and the others luring the main bodyguards away, the escaping group barely bumped into any trouble aside from a few people guarding the main gates. They, however, were naturally taken out easily by Gerald.

With that, everyone successfully made it out of the mansion! However, it wasn't time to celebrate yet.

Under Gerald's lead, the group ran quite a distance up north before finally stopping when several parked cars beside a forest could be seen.

Gesturing for Mindy to enter one of the cars, Mindy could finally breathe easy. However, her ease was short-lived when she finally noticed something.

"...Hold on... Something's wrong. Where's Stella? Weren't you running with Stella earlier, Isabelle? Why isn't she here?" asked Mindy in a worried tone.

As Isabelle began looking around frantically after hearing that, Gerald came to the conclusion that she must have accidentally strayed away earlier since it was so dark and chaotic.

Where was she?

Closing the door behind Mindy, Gerald then backtracked all the way back into the mansion. To his surprise, Stella never seemed to have left the cellar. When he finally found the girl, she was squatting in a corner of the hidden room, sobbing in silence.

The moment she saw Sanderson, however, she almost yelped in joy.

"Sanderson, I... I tripped earlier and sprained my ankle..." explained Stella as she bit her lower lip.

"Hurry, let me carry you!" replied Gerald as he hoisted her up against his back.

"...W-wait, what? You could talk this entire time, Sanderson?" asked Stella, extremely astonished by the sudden revelation.

"God d*mn it! Have you already forgotten what I sound like?" replied Gerald with a bitter smile on his face as he shook his head.

Upon hearing that, it took her a second to realize it, but when she did, her eyes immediately widened.

“...G-Gerald?! ...Actually that makes a lot of sense! From the moment I met you, I knew that gaze felt familiar! Why didn't I realize earlier that you had the same body shape? But wait, didn't something terrible befall you back then?” asked Stella, filled with questions.

“It's a long story. Let's just talk about that once we're out safely. Also, do keep my identity a secret for now. Nobody should know that I'm in the Salford Province. Do you understand?” said Gerald as he looked at her.

After seeing her firm nod, the duo then began making their escape.

The next two hours passed by almost painfully slowly for Jasmine and the others from the vanguard team.

Since they had bumped into Yael while making their escape earlier, they had dashed south into the mountainous area as Yael ordered his men to chase after them.

Though Yael's subordinates seemed to have lost track of them for now, Jasmine's group still wasn't out of the woods yet, quite literally. After all, they weren't even sure how many mountain paths they had already taken since they were so focused on evading Yael's men earlier.

Momentarily lost, they did eventually manage to come across a road at the foot of the mountain. However, nobody knew where it led to.

“Where are we, Jasmine...? There's not a village in sight! The way things are, we can't even make phone calls since there's no signal all the way out here!” said Maia.

“My guess is as good as yours... However, having a road to follow is better than nothing... I propose we swiftly make our way along it and see where we end up at. Hopefully we'll be able to get to an area with phone signals soon,” replied Jasmine.

As the group nodded among themselves, they were just about to sneakily make a dash for it when suddenly, the distant revving of motors could be heard!

It wasn't long before several headlights could be seen driving toward them on the beaten-down road. From what they could guess, there were at least fifty cars in that group.

After completely blocking the road, several men dressed in black stepped out of the cars, seemingly waiting for someone.

“It’s all over now!” said Jasmine as everyone from the vanguard team felt their hearts skip a beat.

Soon after, a wealthy-looking person—who seemed to be the leader of the massive group—stepped out of a car and began walking toward Jasmine.

With a smile, he then asked, “Could either of you be Miss Jasmine Fenderson?”

Chapter 913

“...Who are you? Did Yael send you here?” asked Jasmine in a rather doubtful tone.

Though night had come, the headlights from all the cars were bright enough for those within Jasmine’s group to see how imposingly solemn the bodyguards looked as they stood behind their leader.

It was clear that these bodyguards had received only the strictest of training, and from what Jasmine knew, only a few large families could afford to hire such powerful bodyguards.

What more, it was already so late yet the men had arrived with such grandeur. How couldn’t they be Yael’s subordinates? Knowing that only served to amplify Jasmine and the others’ anxiety as they stood close to each other in preparation to either attack or run.

“Humph. Yael? Who the hell is that?” sneered the young man of a leader before adding, “I was ordered by my master to transport you away from danger, Miss Fenderson. I hope that you’ll cooperate since we really don’t have much time to spare. Come with us.”

“This master of yours... Who is he?” asked Jasmine with a slightly raised brow.

The youth, however, said nothing and simply returned into his car.

As soon as he did that, two bodyguards walked over to Jasmine’s group before saying, “Please enter the car, Miss Fenderson, and the rest of you. We’ll be bringing you to someplace safe.”

Upon hearing that, Jasmine and the others could only look at each other.

If the men truly had vicious intentions, then they would've definitely attacked Jasmine and her group the moment they stood before them. However, they didn't. There was also the issue with how many powerful guards were present. Jasmine knew for a fact that none of them could handle that many trained guards at a time.

In the end, Jasmine simply nodded. What other choice did they have but to believe them?

After entering the car, all fifty over cars instantly began speeding down the road. It was a while later when the cars finally stopped again outside a large warehouse located somewhere within the suburbs of the city.

"Yael's men shouldn't be able to find this place easily, so you're safe for now," said the leader from before as he lit a cigarette while leading the group further into the place. After a brief walk, Jasmine and her group were instantly relieved to see that warm meals had been prepared for them.

"Thank you for saving us, sir... How should we address you?" asked Maia gratefully as she felt her heart flutter. She was weak toward people who had unyielding demeanors such as the leader who had just brought them here.

"Haha! You're very welcome! Though it's honestly not me you should be thanking. I'm just following orders from my master. Regardless, eat the food while it's warm and get some rest. We'll be sending you back to the Fenderson family mansion tomorrow."

"...Um... Sir...?"

Just as Jasmine was about to ask him something, the young man turned around and tossed his cigarette to the ground. After stepping on it—to put it out—he walked out of the room before Jasmine could even finish her question.

With his departure, only about a dozen people remained inside the warehouse.

"Say Jasmine... Do you have any idea who saved us...? Since the Fendersons are so powerful and influential, could the person who helped us be one of your ancestors' friends?" asked Maia.

Hearing that, Jasmine shook her head with a frown before saying, "I really doubt that... After all, anyone reliable from either my or the subservient families under us had already been captured by Noah as seen earlier within the hidden room. As for friends

of the family, I don't remember any of them being this mysterious, powerful, or even influential! I really don't have the slightest clue of who could be doing all this..."

"I see... Regardless, due to their lack of hostility this entire time, I truly believe we can let our guard down around them," said Maia.

In response, the others nodded in agreement.

A brief moment later, Jasmine looked at both Maia and Warren before asking, "Both of you seem to have undergone professional training... It's evident through how proficient both of you are with your martial arts. Could it be that neither of you are mere transfer students?"

At that, Maia smiled before replying, "You're sharp. While it's true that being transfer students is merely a guise, I'm afraid we can't reveal our true identities to you... I hope you can understand."

Meanwhile, elsewhere, Gerald was slowly lowering Stella into a car as he ordered the driver to send her home.

She was shocked the moment she heard him say, "Head straight for home and have a good rest. By the time you wake up tomorrow morning, everything will be dealt with."

"Gerald, it's too dangerous out here! Why don't you just come with me and stay the night in my home?" replied Stella, her worry reflected in her tone.

"No can do. I still have some things to settle tonight."

"But thunder can already be heard... It'll be raining heavily soon... All of us are already saved! What else needs to be done?" said Stella, persistent that he leave with her.

"Just remember our promise. Aside from keeping the fact that you've seen me a secret, you don't have to worry about anything else."

Chapter 914

After saying that, Gerald patted Stella on her shoulder before nodding toward the driver.

Seeing that, the driver immediately started driving off the moment Gerald closed the car's door.

When Stella turned to look at Gerald through the car's rear window, a flash of lightning lit the sky behind him. Though he had barely moved from the spot he was standing in earlier, Stella felt a chill run down her spine as she saw the expression on his face for that split second when the lightning had struck.

It was at that moment when Stella knew that he was no longer the Gerald she once knew. This new Gerald was terrifying.

As he slowly disappeared from her view, roars of thunder could be heard, dark clouds completely covering the night sky. Torrential rains soon followed alongside massive gusts of strong wind.

With the storm already here, Gerald himself began making his next move...

Back at the Schuyler family mansion, several representatives from both the Long and Moldell family were now watching as Noah scolded his son.

"How the hell have all of them managed to escape?! Not only did you fail to catch the culprits involved with the fire, but now we've lost our hostages too?!" roared Noah in anger.

"While we were hot on Jasmine and her group's trail earlier, they somehow managed to slip away when they ran into the forested area! Worry not, however! I'll definitely catch them sooner or later, dad!" replied Yael as he wiped the cold rain off his face.

"Humph! You've messed up big time tonight, Yael! How am I supposed to feel confident letting you inherit such a large property in the future now?!" added Noah in his rage.

Throughout his long life, this was the first time he had ever been humiliated this deeply by someone, so it was no wonder why he was feeling so embarrassed.

"Don't blame Master Yael anymore, Mr. Schuyler. It's evident that the Fendersons secretly received help from others this time around. Regardless, Jasmine and the others escaping doesn't really affect us. After all, we already have full control over Bryson. Let's just focus on increasing our manpower there. No matter how capable our invisible enemy is, we're certain that they won't be able to create any further messes," said a few members of both the Long and Moldell family as they stepped forward.

Hearing that, Noah calmed down slightly before nodding.

“...You’re right. Since both your families are helping us with this, I trust that things will still go fine. As you said, the captives making their escape doesn’t really affect the plan as a whole. Let’s just let that incident slide for now... Yes... Come! I’m sure all of you haven’t had enough wine earlier! Let’s drink as we chat the night away about our great success to come! Servants! Prepare more wine and dishes right this instant!” ordered Noah.

As one of the servants instantly ran over to fill Noah’s wine glass, he accidentally upset its contents all over Noah’s lap!

What followed was a tight slap to the servant’s face!

“F*cking hell! Do you have a death wish?!” roared Noah who was already in a bad mood.

“I-I’m sorry master! I’m so sorry!”

“This is so f*cking annoying... Where’s my wife anyway? She was here just moments ago, wasn’t she? Go call her over and tell her to make a toast! After all, there are so many distinguished guests here today!” grumbled Noah as he shook his head.

Cupping his swollen cheek, the servant quickly ran out of the room to call Noah’s wife over.

As soon as he was far enough, however, he turned back to face the room before spitting.

“You old b*stard! You’ll definitely die a horrible death one day! Haley, go call for his wife!” shouted the servant as he continued glaring at the door to the conference room.

Though he knew for a fact that Haley—a female servant—was among a few other servants who were posted at this specific corridor, no reply returned. Turning around, he then shouted the order again, though the only reply he got was a tremendously loud rumble of thunder.

The intensity of the thunder made him shiver in place.

“...What on earth...? Where are the other servants? Actually, where is everyone?” said the servant, baffled by how eerily empty the entire place was.

At that moment, the light in the yard flickered once before everything outside went dark.

Seeing this, the servant began walking toward the manor's entrance in confusion as he said, "D*mn it all... Where the hell are all the bodyguards? Were they all struck by lightning or something?"

Just as he opened the mansion's front door, a flash of lightning lit the entire yard. It was at that moment when the servant finally realized why the entire mansion was empty.

A scream of pure terror followed shortly after.

Chapter 915

The entire yard was filled with corpses regardless of gender!

As if the horrific scene wasn't enough, the heavy rain had caused the yard to stagnate with a strikingly crimson liquid...

Shaking in utter fear, another flash of lightning notified the servant of the presence of someone else in the yard...

His eyes had already adjusted to the darkness by now, so when the servant turned to look at the person standing in the middle of the yard with an umbrella in hand, he swore on his life that he had just seen a demon in the flesh.

As the demon of a man turned to look at him, the servant became petrified in place, unable to even move his legs even though the demon—who had his other hand in his pocket—was now walking toward him.

In fact, he was so terrified that he couldn't even let out the tiniest whimper.

After what seemed like forever, the servant was surprised to see that the horrifying person had quite a handsome face. However, his surprise turned to fear again the moment he realized how feral the person's eyes were.

The demon's eyes alone reflected his bloodlust, and they were enough to make the servant hold his breath in fear as the man finally stood before him.

Closing his umbrella upon reaching the manor's porch, the demonic man shook it slightly before asking in a contrastingly kind voice, "Are the rest in here?"

Not knowing whether the dark stains on the umbrella were truly blood or just a trick of his eyes, the servant then replied in a stuttering voice, “Y-yes! They’re all inside!”

“Thank you. Do hold on to this for me,” said the youth as he handed the umbrella over to the servant.

“...V-very well...” replied the servant, trembling vigorously as he watched the demon walk further into the manor.

“A toast to the partnership among the Longs, Moldells, and Schuylers! Together, nobody in the world will be able to take us down! Haha! While celebrating, let’s discuss the progress of tracking Gerald down, shall we?” said Noah as he laughed loudly.

“Honestly, Quentin and Trey, ever since the Longs asked us to help look for Gerald, my dad’s been in hot pursuit of him this entire time. If Gerald hadn’t had someone protecting him so viciously back then, I’m sure my dad would’ve already captured him half a year ago. Uncle Berk is well aware of that fact too,” added Yael.

Hearing that, Berk nodded in agreement.

“Indeed. We’re well aware that the Schuylers have been going all out in their hunt for Gerald this entire time!” said Quentin

Trey then added, “Worry not, we’ve already informed Jett about your family’s contributions. We’re certain he’ll remember all your help!”

“I’m glad to hear that! I hope that you’ll both compliment us more in Jett’s presence in the future! But enough of that for now. Let’s have another toast!” announced Noah as he raised his wine glass.

As a brief silence ensued while everyone drank from their glasses, slow echoes of footsteps could suddenly be heard coming from a distance in the corridor outside.

“Hmm? Could the lady finally be here?” asked one of the guests.

“Doesn’t sound like high heels so I don’t think so!” replied Noah with a bitter smile.

Eventually, the footsteps came to a halt right outside the door. With a long creak, the slowly opening door finally revealed the face of the demonic youth.

“...Y-you’re!” said Noah aloud as his frown turned to an expression of utter delight.

“Who is that?” asked one of the guests.

“Haha! He’s Gerald!” announced Yael as he immediately stood up in excitement.

“What? That’s him?” said both Quentin and Trey as they looked at the youth standing at the door, stunned.

“That’s him alright. That b*stard ruined my two nephews... How bold of you to take the initiative to come here alone!” roared Berk as even he stood up in a rage.

“Courting death, are we? Capture him!” ordered the Quentin and Trey duo as the other two subordinates of the Moldell family sprang into action!

Chapter 916

Before both of them could even attack, Gerald launched a spinning kick aimed right for their heads the moment they were close enough!

In that brief moment, both of the Moldell subordinates could feel their eyes almost bulging out of their skulls, as they flew to the other end of the room. They were now both unconscious!

“What?!” shouted both Quentin and Trey in unison, their eyes widened in shock.

Those two were students of the Moldell family... Did they truly just go down from a single kick? And from Gerald of all people?!

If they hadn’t seen it with their own eyes, they wouldn’t have believed it. However, everyone had been present when the scene occurred.

Since when had Gerald become this powerful?

“So there’s only four Moldells present today? Well there’s only two of you left I guess. Come at me together then!” said Gerald with a faint smile on his face.

“Guards! Get in here, quickly!” ordered Noah as he felt cold sweat dripping down his forehead.

However, nobody came.

When Noah finally turned to look at Gerald again, his face immediately went pale when he saw the smirk on Gerald’s face.

“Did... Did you take them all out...? Or did you kill them? Regardless, I hope you’re aware that you’ve messed with the Moldell family! Do you and the other Crawfords have a death wish or something? Our uncle will definitely ruin your family for this!” threatened the Quentin and Trey duo.

Though they appeared calm, the duo were honestly terrified. They honestly wouldn’t have brought up Kort’s name if the situation wasn’t this dire.

“Alas, Kort is definitely going after my family now! That is, if he hears about any of this in the first place. After all, as long as there are no witnesses to speak of, then nobody would ever know that I was the one who killed a nephew or two of his!” replied Gerald, his smile widening.

“You b*stard! Cease all of this at once before I report all of this to my uncle! Do you really want him to unleash all his wrath upon the Crawfords?!” growled Quentin furiously.

At that, Gerald simply shook his head.

“You don’t get it, do you? Why are you assuming that any of you inside this room are going to make it out alive tonight?”

Hearing that, Quentin and Trey were engulfed in rage. Even Berk was traumatized by their feral gnashing as they shouted, “You utter b*stard! The Moldells are a highly respectable family with the strongest of all bloodlines! You’re just a peasant compared to us! We’re bringing your corpse back with us tonight if it’s the last thing we do!”

With that said, the duo immediately pounced toward Gerald!

Unlike the previous two Moldells, Quentin and Trey were on a completely different level. After all, they were direct descendants of the family, and having pure Moldell blood within them made them all the more powerful.

However, they were clearly underestimating Gerald. He was now no longer the same person he was half a year ago.

Throughout that period, Gerald had been bathing in herbs that Finnley had provided him.

While the first three months doing that granted him slightly greater strength, it was the latter months that caused Gerald to transform into how he was today. He was honestly surprised at how potent the herb baths were when he finally tested out his true capabilities for the first time.

Knowing exactly how strong he was now was the reason why he wasn't afraid of the Moldells anymore. In fact, it wouldn't be far-fetched to claim that even Kort would find it difficult to personally kill him.

However, Gerald was still refraining from directly confronting Kort. After all, while he was sure that there was definitely a higher chance of surviving against him, Gerald didn't want to catch Kort's attention knowing the fact that his strength wasn't optimal to defeat him yet. He was honestly worried that if he didn't finish off Kort in one go, he wouldn't be strong enough to protect his family when Kort launched his inevitable counterattack.

Regardless, Gerald had also realized something else during his past six months together with Finnley.

While the old man made sure to always fight Gerald at least once a week, Gerald always ended up being one step behind Finnley. Though he had assumed that he would one day be able to defeat the old man—as long as he continued training hard—throughout that period of time, the day never came.

Whenever Gerald grew stronger, Finnley would suddenly seem much stronger as well! It took Gerald a while to finally understand that he couldn't even predict the extent of Finnley's true power. In a way, that humbled him down since he knew he wouldn't ever be as strong as the old man.

However, it wasn't hard for Gerald to estimate both Quentin and Trey's true strength. Even though they were working together, Gerald was well aware that they were still weaker than him.

His assumption proved to be correct when the sound of bones cracking filled the room a few hits later.

As blood flowed out of the two Moldells' gaping eyes and mouths, both of them finally fell to the ground with loud thuds.

Chapter 917

Almost instantly after, the sounds of wine glasses and plates clattering against each other could be heard.

When everyone turned to look at who was causing the racket, they saw that Berk, Noah, and Yael were all holding on to the table as they shivered tremendously in horror!

They had reason to be this terrified. After all, all three of them were aware of how mighty the Moldells were. Yet Gerald had just taken four of them out, right before their very eyes!

As Gerald took a step forward, Berk immediately fell to the ground, shouting, "P-please don't kill me, Gerald! Spare me, please!"

The over two hundred pound, brawny man was currently so terrified that mucous was dripping all the way down to his chin.

"Spare you? It was six months ago when I fled to the Salford Province you know? I had over thirty brothers and now none of them are alive because of your men. They were all my friends from Mayberry! Why didn't you spare them then?" said Gerald terrifyingly calmly as he patted Berk's head.

"I-it was wrong of me to do so! It was all my fault! Gerald, pleas-"

Before his sentence could even end, Gerald smacked him hard on the back of his head. It was as though nothing Berk had said even mattered to Gerald. The next thing everyone knew, Berk's eyes were bleeding as he flopped lifelessly to the ground with one final grunt.

As screams filled the air, all color drained from the Schuyler father and son. Both of them immediately found themselves retreating to a corner of the room. The person before them was no longer human... It was as though they were staring at the devil himself!

His attention now on the two quivering men, Gerald took a seat as he poured himself a glass of wine.

After biting into an abalone, he swallowed before saying, "So, I heard that both of you have been looking for me all over the Salford Province. You spent no small amount to hunt me down as well, as I recall. Well, here I am now. What do you need from me?" asked Gerald as he stared at them in the eye.

"T-there's nothing we need... Really! There's nothing important that we want!" stuttered Noah in fear.

'Nothing? Come now, you already spent all that cash looking for me. And here I was thinking that it must've been something extremely important! That was honestly the only reason why both of you are still alive today!' sneered Gerald in response as he finished the abalone and downed the glass of wine till there was nothing left.

Patting his thighs, Gerald then got up and began walking toward the two Schuylers. With every step that he took, the roars of thunder outside only seemed to grow louder and louder...

Until finally, the clashes stopped and so did the rain.

It was sometime later when bright lights were shone upon the Schuyler family mansion. The lights were so jarring that anyone from the inside could've easily assumed that it was noontime.

Silently, a caped figure grabbed a bag of things before leaving the Schuyler family house, undetected, and disappearing into the night.

When morning finally came, the weather was crisp due to the rain that had fallen the night before.

Inside a large storeroom, over ten mattresses could be seen laid out all over the place, and sleeping on them, were Jasmine and her group from the night before.

Upon hearing slowly fading footsteps, Jasmine's eyelids fluttered. It only took a split second for the girl to jolt awake and sit at attention. Looking around, she saw that Maia and the others were still sleeping comfortably.

Since daylight was already peeking through the windows yet nobody appeared to be outside the storeroom, Jasmine became curious, prompting her to shout, "Hey, wake up! Wake up, everyone!"

"What's the matter, Jasmine...? I'm still sleepy...!" mumbled Maia as she yawned.

"Look around! There's nobody left here but us!" said Jasmine.

Hearing that, everyone soon realized how odd that was.

"Indeed... I wonder where they went off to? There were quite a few others with us here last night but we didn't even hear them leaving!"

Chapter 918

Warren had made that statement as he stood up. Jasmine herself frowned as she scanned through the storeroom.

Her gaze stopped when she saw a few joss sticks placed near a corner of the room.

“Those must’ve been the reason why we were so sleepy!” said Jasmine as she pointed at her discovery.

“So that’s why! Still, who were those people...? Why didn’t they just tell us who they were after saving us?” replied Maia.

Before anyone could even reply, one of the group’s members—who had already been exploring the place—shouted, “Hey, come over here, I think they left something for us!”

Hearing that, everyone encircled the box with a note on it.

The note itself wrote, ‘To: Maia.’

“Guess we know who gets to open it,” said yet another member of the team.

Maia herself was now feeling giddy with excitement. As she thought about what could be inside, she caught a glimpse of Warren bearing an extremely ugly expression on his face.

Noticing that she was looking at him, Warren then said with a hint of anger in his voice, “Go on and open it already! If you don’t I will!”

“Hey, this is clearly for me! Only I get to open it!” retorted Maia in an annoyed tone.

“Well then open it! Carefully, though! We have no idea what’s in it!” grumbled Warren as he looked at Maia, almost as though he wanted to pick a fight.

In all honesty, he was worried that if Maia truly liked the contents of that box, she would end up falling for somebody else.

Before an argument could take place, Jasmine shouted in a hushed tone, "Quit it! Can't you hear that? Someone's coming over!"

Upon saying that, she instantly headed to the storeroom's main door with soundless steps.

The tension rose as everyone prepared themselves to face whatever came next. After all, the people outside could very well be the Schuylers.

After a brief moment of silence, however, a sweet female voice could be heard saying, "Jasmine? Maia? Are you in there...?"

Jasmine recognized that voice anywhere.

"Mindy? Yes! We're here!"

As everyone heard that, the group's tension slowly eased again.

Opening the storeroom's door, Jasmine saw that Mindy had brought along two Fenderson bodyguards with her.

"Jasmine! I'm so relieved that the rest of you are fine!" cried out Mindy.

After the hellish night they had to experience the night before, being able to reunite with each other was definitely the cure that they very much needed and deserved.

"It's great that you're fine, Miss Fenderson! You have no idea how worried Lord Fenderson's been this entire time!" said one of the two bodyguards who were still standing behind Mindy.

"Worry not, I'm unscathed. Honestly, I'm even more surprised that you made it out already. Did everyone else manage to escape? Weren't there any guards impeding you from leaving?" asked Jasmine curiously.

Upon hearing her questions, Mindy began sobbing as she said, "We... We were rescued by Sanderson! He saved us all!"

“What? Sanderson? Actually, hold on, why are you crying? Did something happen to him?” asked Jasmine. Though she was initially shocked when she heard that, worry soon overtook that feeling when she saw Mindy’s tears.

“I... I don’t know... I think he’s still in trouble... After all, once all of us were rescued, we found that Stella was missing! As a result, he ran back into the Schuyler family mansion and that was the last I saw him...” replied Jasmine, her sheer sadness reflected in her eyes.

“Calm yourself, Mindy... Sanderson will have luck on his side, I’m sure of it. Besides, don’t start crying when we haven’t even launched a search party for him! What would he think of that?” said Jasmine with a comforting smile on her face.

“...You’re right... Sanderson’s lived a tough life, even from when he was a child... I’m sure he’s an equally tough person. We’ll definitely find him safe and sound!” declared Mindy with a resolute nod.

While Jasmine was glad that Mindy was feeling positive again, she was curious as to where all that resolution came from. It was almost as though Mindy knew for sure that Sanderson would definitely be fine. However, Jasmine refrained from asking her anything about it for now. After all, their grandfather’s safety was still her priority.

“What about grandpa? Is he safe? Did the Schuylers do anything to him? Also, how did you even know where to find us?”

“Hah! The Schuylers? Don’t even talk about them! They must’ve personally offended a god or something! After all, not only was their entire mansion razed to the ground, all of them have officially been declared missing! To that, I say they got what they f*cking deserved!” grunted the other guard behind Mindy.

“...Wait, what? The Schuylers are... gone?”

“Yeah! There weren’t even any bodies to speak of! Everyone from that family simply vanished into thin air!” replied Mindy as she wiped her tears away.

“Regardless, we should head back first, Miss Fenderson. Lord Fenderson will be hosting a family meeting soon, and it seems that he wants to announce something important!”

Chapter 919

And something important it was. Knowing full well that the Fenderson family had almost been wiped out due to his carelessness, Bryson was going to take responsibility for the incident no matter what.

After things calmed down a bit, Bryson thought about how they were nearly eliminated by a vassal family. If all that could happen under his rule, then he admitted that he was getting old and unreliable. The fact that he couldn't defend himself without help was further proof that it was finally time for change.

It explained why the mood of the Fenderson family meeting this time was so different. Everyone had their heads lowered as they waited for Bryson to speak.

Coughing to break the silence and get everyone's attention, Bryson cleared his throat before saying, "I... have some very important news to announce today... This announcement will also be the very last decision that I'll make as the head of this family!"

Hearing that, everyone lifted their heads as they looked at the old man.

"Listen closely, for the next head of the Fendersons will be Jasmine! I'm far too old now, and though Second and Third are both equally mature and reliable, I'm afraid they're far too complacent. They're both more suited to be supporters than leaders, not that there's anything wrong with that. Regardless, after careful consideration, I truly believe that Jasmine will be the one who will help develop and recover our family's glory!" announced Bryson.

As soon as his declaration ended, the entire meeting hall was abuzz with people discussing their opinions aloud. Jasmine herself hadn't expected the meeting to be about her.

Standing up, she then said, "While I'm honored to have been selected, I simply can't take the position of head, grandpa! I'm still far too young and there's still a lot for me to learn. I'm certain that I won't be able to handle the position of leader yet. What more, up till this point, there haven't been any female leaders in the Fenderson family!" replied Jasmine who honestly felt she wasn't ready for such responsibility.

In response, Bryson simply raised a single hand, prompting everyone to go silent.

"There's no need to discuss this any further. My decision is final. While I'm sure that you're doubtful about the whole thing, I believe in you, Jasmine. I believe that even if you were to marry the person you love, you'll still end up becoming an excellent family head. As for the rest of you, you should already know by now that I'd never appoint someone to be leader without a valid reason! Speaking of being a leader, I'll be granting you your first long-term task now, Jasmine! I see a lot of potential among those from your uncles' third and fourth generations. From today onward, you're responsible for training up the third and fourth generations to become better leaders!" concluded Bryson.

Upon hearing that, everyone started calming down again.

They were honestly most worried about the fact that the Fenderson would have to change their family surname once Jasmine got married to another person and bore a child. However, with Bryson sounding so sure with his final decision, the crowd was swept with a new determination.

“I... I fully support the decision to let Miss Jasmine be the head of the Fendersons!” shouted one of the family members.

“As do I!”

“You’ve definitely earned it!”

Bryson found himself smiling as he watched both his own family and the vassal families cheering on for Jasmine.

“There, you heard the people, Jasmine. With them supporting you, there really isn’t a reason for you to turn down the position anymore. With that, I declare that from today onward, you, Jasmine Fenderson, will be the new head of our family!” said Bryson aloud.

Once the meeting ended, Bryson made his way back to his room, his butler supporting him as everyone else went over to congratulate Jasmine.

As Jasmine thanked all of them rather reluctantly, she couldn’t help but notice something at the last minute. Where was Mindy?

The usually noisy girl hadn’t been seen throughout the entire meeting... Once the crowd gave her some space, Jasmine walked over to Mindy’s butler before asking, “Have you seen Mindy?”

She was at least certain that Mindy had been with her when both of them returned to the Fenderson family mansion earlier.

“Oh, Miss Mindy drove off before the meeting started! She said she was going to look for someone!”

“What? Look for someone?” repeated Jasmine, stunned.

It took her a second, but she finally realized what Mindy’s goal was. As the realization set within her, she mumbled, “Could you have gone out searching for Sanderson without me...?”

While Jasmine herself treated Sanderson like a good friend, she knew how much more Mindy treasured him. What more, he was now essentially missing because of their family's issues!

Shaking her head, Jasmine said, "Get the car ready. It's currently still too dangerous for her to be wandering outside alone!"

"Right away, Miss Jasmine!"

Chapter 920

As the butler got the car ready, Mindy herself was already standing in front of what remained of the Schuyler family's mansion.

"Excuse me, but have you seen anyone wearing a mask? He's about this tall and with his mask down, he has serious burn marks around his eyes..." asked a girl to a random passer-by as she lifted her hand over her head to mimic how tall Sanderson was.

"...No I haven't..." replied the confused man.

"But how could that be possible? He told us he'd come looking for us yet he didn't! He wasn't even at Yorknorth Mountain! Where could he possibly have gone to...? I even tried calling Stella but I can't reach her either! When I went over to her place, it seemed like she had moved out... Hey, who do you suppose could tell me where Sanderson went...?" asked Mindy.

The passer-by himself was stunned to know that she had directed the question at him. Scanning her from head to toe, he then shook his head before running off. How sad that such a beauty sounded so insane.

"Where could you have gone to, Sanderson...? You... You said you'd come back... That you'd talk to me in the garden every night... You promised... I... I refuse to believe that you lied to me! Please, Sanderson... You're my best and only friend... You... You can't just leave like that... Where are you...?" mumbled Mindy to herself.

The only thing on the girl's mind now was Sanderson. She thought about how simple and gentle he was. How every time she talked to him, he would listen to her attentively, comforting and encouraging her through his gestures.

While it was true that she had first gotten close to him since he looked like he was easily bullied and she wanted to learn sign language, her intent slowly changed over time.

In just those few days of them being together, she had grown dependent on him. What more, since she knew he had risked his life to rescue her and many others, she was well aware that forgetting him would be near impossible now.

After waiting for quite some time, Mindy eventually leaned against a wall before squatting down.

“Where are you, Sanderson...?”

When she had earlier gone to Yorknorth Mountain, neither Master Jenkinson nor Sanderson was present. Stella’s place, on the other hand, seemed to have been completely deserted. Since she never picked up any of Mindy’s calls, Mindy wasn’t even sure if the rest of Stella’s family had left together or without her.

In short, Mindy couldn’t even contact the last person who could’ve possibly seen Sanderson.

“Just... Please be safe, Sanderson...!” pleaded Mindy silently.

After a while longer, Mindy got up. She was feeling far too uneasy to be moping around here when she could still be searching for Sanderson.

Opting to search for him by walking around instead of getting in her car, she felt a new determination in her to search for him. To search for the man who had managed to spark hope in her again after living on this planet for over twenty years.

She had simply lost too much of her childhood. Mindy had no friends, nor did she have any meaningful relationships with anyone outside of her family for the longest time. Sanderson was the embodiment of everything she had ever longed for.

Mindy didn’t care if he was ugly, nor did it matter to her that he couldn’t even speak properly. None of that was important to her.

What mattered most was the fact that Sanderson was a person who understood her. A person who was always around whenever she was upset. A person she could feel secure with.

Her focus wavered as she continued thinking about him, not even noticing that she was crossing an open road...

She only returned to her senses when she heard the loud revving of an engine. Turning to look at the source of the sound, she was petrified to see a huge lorry speeding toward her!

The driver himself had been yawning, yet the moment he saw her, it was already far too late. Even though he stepped on the brakes, he knew he was in deep trouble the moment he heard the sound of a sickening collision.

Following that, Mindy's frail body flew quite a distance away before landing heavily on the ground. The phone she was holding on to earlier fell even further away, its screen now completely cracked.

A keychain of what seemed like a tiny man with a mask on could be seen hanging at the end of her phone. It was clear who it resembled...

Chapter 921

As the muffled wailing of ambulance sirens could be heard in the distance, Mindy found herself slowly losing consciousness.

"...San...derson..."

Meanwhile, a young man sitting inside an express train clutched his chest all of a sudden as he shuddered.

"What's wrong?" asked a girl sitting close to him out of concern.

"...It's nothing. My heart just felt tight all of a sudden... The feeling's gone now, though. How odd..." replied the man with a wry smile on his face.

He then turned to look at the girl before saying, "Speaking of which, here, you can have this. Once you settle down in Mayberry and get a job there, together with the money in this card, you should be able to live easy for the rest of your life!"

As he said that, he handed a bank card over to the girl.

"I can't take this, Gerald! As long as I manage to land a job, my life will already be pretty manageable! You, on the other hand, definitely need the money more than I do!" replied the girl as she immediately returned the card to Gerald.

It was obvious that the girl was none other than Naomi.

"She's right, Gerald. Not only do you need it more than we do, but we should be the ones giving you money instead! After all, you cured me without even asking for anything in return!" added Naomi's mother.

“It’s honestly fine. It’s not like I’ll be using much money from now on anyway. I’ve already done too many things... Haha...” replied Gerald with a bitter smile on his face.

“Why would you say such a thing, Gerald...? Actually, you haven’t even told me the full story as to why you no longer have anything to do with the Crawfords!” said Naomi, a hint of worry in her voice.

“Honestly at this point, it’s better for you not to know, Naomi. As they say, ignorance is bliss,” replied Gerald as he gently patted her on the head.

Gerald was now returning to Mayberry since he wanted to visit an old friend. That, however, wasn’t his only goal there. He had something else planned once he got there...

Regarding the bank card, it was honestly more of a burden to him at this point. As he thought about it, he felt that life truly was intriguing.

After all, back before all this had happened, he had also taken a train to Mayberry city. Back then, he had assumed that he would be able to face his university life with a new attitude. That he would no longer need to live with such terrible self-esteem as he had during middle and high school due to him being so poor.

Things, however, hardly changed at all. As it turned out, as long as he was poor, things would never change for him, or at least that was the conclusion his past-self came to. His past-self yearned for riches. As long as he was rich, he would’ve been able to have a decent life, and maybe even flattered by those poorer than him.

However, when he actually inherited the money, the old Gerald found that he didn’t really enjoy showing his wealth off as much as he had thought. Quite the contrary, in fact.

Upon finding out that he already had all the riches in the world, his desire for fame simply vanished. Instead, he wanted to live a plain and simple life. After getting to know Mila, his end goal was to get married to her and maybe have a child or two, preferably a boy and a girl. His ideal life was one that was carefree, and one where he would be able to relax in Mila’s arms every day till they eventually passed on.

A dream that truly was. Now that Mila was still missing, riches meant little to him. He simply lost all desire to have any money anymore.

“...You’ve changed, you know, Gerald...” said Naomi out of the blue.

“...Hmm? How so?”

“Well, I can’t put my finger on it, but from the moment I met you again after so long, I could already tell that you were very different compared to the Gerald I used to know... The one thing that hasn’t changed, however, is your kindness toward me. Even after all this time, you still treat me so well!”

“But of course! You’re my good friend!”

“Since you still see me as a friend, then please, Gerald... Please share your thoughts with me whenever you feel troubled... I know there’s a lot on your mind right now, and I’m also aware that you’re no longer the rich heir you used to be... Hell, I feel that once your return to Mayberry this time, big changes are going to happen soon... Regardless of all that, I want you to know that whatever happens, you’ll always be my best friend! I won’t pry into what you’re planning to do any further, but please keep in mind that I’m someone you can share your problems with...” said Naomi.

Upon saying that, she placed the bank card into Gerald’s hand once more before adding, “...Which is why I simply can’t accept the money. Hold on to it! Who knows, you could make a comeback in Mayberry City! I could be your assistant, you know?”

“Naomi, believe me when I say I truly don’t need this money... In all honesty, I don’t even know if I’ll have the chance to return here in the future once I’m done with what I’ve set out to do!” replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

“...What? What do you mean by that? What exactly do you plan to do?” asked Naomi in despair.

Hushing her slowly, he then said, “I’m sorry, but I’m afraid that you’ll be terrified after hearing it. You said you weren’t going to pry any further, didn’t you?”

Though she really wanted to ask more, she remained silent in the end, knowing full well that she wouldn’t get any answers.

Chapter 922

It wasn’t long before they arrived at Mayberry Station.

After stealthily slipping the bank card into her pocket, Gerald hailed a cab for her. He wasn’t worried about her not being able to use it since she had already known what the password was, even from back when they were still in university. The password itself was just his birth date.

“Aren’t you coming along with us, Gerald?” asked Naomi as she rolled the cab’s window down.

"I'll be on my own from here! Farewell, Naomi!" replied Gerald with a wave as the cab began driving off.

Sticking her head out the window, Naomi then shouted, "Gerald, please! I don't care if we end up having a lot of money or not! Let's just stick together and get married! We'll find jobs together in Mayberry city and from there, we'll be able to support ourselves just fine in the future! I'm sure of it! If Mayberry isn't to your liking, then... Then let's just live in the countryside! We'll get a small place of our own... Settle down, then live the rest of our lives ordinarily and in comfort! Are you hearing any of this?"

"What's that? I can't hear you! Regardless, travel safely and remember to live well!" yelled Gerald in return as he waved his hand.

"I said, why don't both of us get married? Can't we? I don't mind it at all! Sir, please stop the car!" yelled Naomi anxiously when she realized that Gerald couldn't hear what she was saying.

However, no matter how much she pleaded, the driver simply wouldn't stop the car. Taking in a deep breath, the cab driver tapped on the money in his pocket that Gerald had given him before stepping on the accelerator.

Even after the cab was no longer in sight, Gerald found it hard to stop waving.

Of course he had heard her. He had heard every single word she had said extremely clearly.

Though a normal life was honestly what he had always yearned for after getting rich, he knew he wouldn't be able to achieve that. Not until he found Mila again.

As long as she remained missing, he had absolutely no intention of starting a new chapter in his life.

Even though he was well aware of that, why was he feeling so reluctant to part with Naomi this time...?

Thinking about it for a while, he realized that it must've been because he was quite sure that he would never be able to see her ever again...

Shaking his head, he slipped on a mask and cap before hailing another cab.

“Where to?” asked the cab driver to the man wearing the black sweater who had most of his face covered up.

“To the hospital!” replied Gerald immediately.

Arriving shortly after, Gerald looked through the glass window of Felicity’s ward. Attached to a ventilator, the girl lying on the bed had an extremely pale complexion.

As he continued looking at her, Gerald recalled how lively the girl used to be. If only she hadn’t met him, she would’ve probably still been living a good life now. After all, she was a natural beauty who could definitely become a world-famous internet celebrity with ease.

Things could’ve gone so much differently... She could’ve lived her life happily! Yet here she was in a hospital, a complete vegetable after being tossed off a building. The worst thing was, she was only in such a state because she was trying to locate him.

Gerald could only imagine how she must’ve felt while looking for him on the day all this happened. How worried both she and Naomi must’ve looked as they waited at that hotel’s lobby.

To think that their glimmer of hope would end up becoming Felicity’s greatest misfortune yet.

Jett truly was a ruthless person.

In his devastated state, Gerald could only press his hand hard against the ward’s door as he tried to calm himself. He applied so much force that he was sure that even his fingerprints had already been imprinted deeply into the wooden door at this point.

“Hey! You’re a weird person, you know that? Are you planning to go in or aren’t you? You’re blocking the entrance!” said an angry voice at that moment.

Turning around to look at who had said that, Gerald saw a fuming nurse who had a tray in her hands.

Though he was wearing a mask, the nurse could clearly see all the strong emotions that were reflected in his teary eyes. She was so stunned to see that, that she almost dropped her tray as she watched the man wipe his tears away.

“...Here, take this and listen closely. This piece of paper contains very specific acupuncture instructions as well as a herbal prescription. Once you and the doctor fully understand the method, use it to save this girl’s life!” said Gerald as he placed the prescription on the nurse’s tray.

After saying that, he simply slid both his hands into his pockets before walking away.

Chapter 923

Just as he arrived at the hotel’s lobby, a girl who just so happened to be running in his direction seemed to lose balance as she sprained her ankle!

Before she could even hit the ground, however, in one swift swoop, Gerald managed to catch on to her.

“Oh my god! That was such a close call! T-thank you, handsome!” thanked the girl as she immediately straightened her messy hair after being helped up by Gerald.

Looking at him, however, she couldn’t help but feel that the man who had just saved her from a world of pain felt a little strange.

Though he looked mysterious enough with his mask and cap on, his gaze felt oddly familiar yet foreign at the same time.

Furthermore, the young man only replied with a nod instead of saying anything.

As she wondered if she had seen him before, Gerald himself couldn’t help but stare at her for a little while longer. After all, he knew who she was.

“...Could... We perhaps be acquainted?” asked the girl with a smile.

In response, Gerald shook his head.

“I see... Well, regardless, thank you for breaking my fall!” replied the girl with a laugh.

“How did it go, Leila?” asked a rather handsome person wearing a suit at that moment as he walked over to them.

“Oh, the physical exam? I’ve completed it of course! By the way, get this! I was just about to go looking for you when I nearly tripped over!” said the girls as she locked arms with the man rather intimately.

“If you truly did end up tripping and hurting yourself, how would I even begin explaining things to Uncle Jung?” replied the man with a laugh.

The girl, of course, was none other than Leila.

“Oh, right! This here’s the handsome fellow who saved me!” added Leila as she looked at Gerald.

“Why thank you, brother! I’m the doctor in charge of this hospital, so do let me know if there’s anything I can ever help you with!” replied Leila’s boyfriend as he nodded toward Gerald with a smile.

Hearing that, Gerald simply shook his head before walking away.

However, he couldn’t help but recall how Leila used to be before all this happened.

To think that he had used to like her when he was much younger. After all, the poor child he was back then always thought that she was the most beautiful of them all. She always dressed so well back then too.

Though they shared a somewhat ambiguous relationship in later years, after his six-month disappearance, Gerald could now see that Leila had already moved on. She now had her own life, and she seemed to be doing pretty well. That was all that mattered to him.

“That guy was pretty strange!” muttered the young man as he stared at Gerald’s slowly disappearing back.

“He is! However, he feels awfully familiar as well... I know I’ve definitely met him someplace before but I just can’t put my finger on it!” replied Leila with a frown.

“What are both of you doing, standing here?”

“Ah! You’ve finally come out, Jacelyn?” said Leila as she turned to look at the fashionable girl standing behind them.

“Well I did take a few extra examinations... After all, I’ll be getting married next month! Got to make sure that I’m as fit as a fiddle! Haha!” replied Jacelyn with a happy hum.

However, she couldn’t help but feel startled the moment she looked in the direction Leila had been looking at earlier. She had just managed to catch a glimpse of Gerald’s back before it disappeared completely as a door shut behind him.

“Hmm? Could it be... That you find him familiar too, Jacelyn? Or maybe you’re just attracted to his fit body? Heh! I know you well now after spending so much time with you in Mayberry! You just can’t help yourself whenever you meet handsome guys, can you?” said Leila with a chuckle.

“The former guess was already correct... Regardless, he really does look extremely familiar... Especially his back! I really feel that I’ve seen him somewhere before...” said Jacelyn as she pondered on.

“Well, not that it’s important anyway! Let’s just go ahead and have dinner once my husband gets off work, alright? After that, we can go on a mini shopping spree!” add Jacelyn while laughing.

“Sounds like a plan!”

With that, the group continued chatting and laughing among themselves as they left in the opposite direction.

Gerald, on the other hand, soon found himself standing at the hospital’s entrance. He truly hadn’t expected to run into Leila here. He wasn’t about to let her find out who he truly was either. After all, that would open a whole new set of troubles.

As he walked past a food stall by the roadside, he overheard a conversation.

“Boss... Please spare me something to eat...?”

“Get lost! You’re this young yet you’re already begging for food? Get a job!”

Turning to look, Gerald saw a young man with an extremely haggard appearance. One of his legs seemed to be broken, and he held on to a wooden crutch to support himself as he continued begging for food by the roadside food stall.

Not long after, the boss chased him away as though the man was nothing but a fly. Other pedestrians seeing this soon began pointing at the young beggar while whispering among themselves.

Shaking his head, Gerald was about to walk on before he suddenly came to a halt upon realizing something.

Chapter 924

Squinting his eyes as he scanned the young man—who was slowly inching away—from head to toe, he then yelled, “Hey you! Stop right there!”

Freezing in place, the young beggar was so frightened that he immediately began trembling in fear. He was teary-eyed as he lowered his gaze before pleading, “Y-yes...? Please, sir... Could you spare me some money for food...? I beg of you...”

“...Yoel?” replied Gerald in a soft voice.

Hearing that name, the beggar instantly shuddered immensely as he raised his head. The moment Yoel looked into Gerald’s eyes, his lips began quivering like there was no tomorrow.

“G-Gerald?” asked Yoel as he felt his tears rolling down his cheeks.

Taking his mask off in disbelief, Gerald immediately held on to Yoel’s shoulder before replying, “Yes! Yes, it’s me, Yoel!”

“Brother! So you’re still alive!” said Yoel aloud as his crutch fell to the ground.

“I am... Yoel... How did you end up like this...?” asked Gerald in shock.

After all, the Yoel he used to know was always so glamorous and well-off back then. It was near impossible for Gerald not to feel distressed after seeing this miserable version of his brother

It was a little later when Gerald sat opposite of Yoel at the exact same roadside stall from before.

Pouring Yoel a glass of water before patting him gently on the back, Gerald then said, “Eat slowly, the food’s not going anywhere!”

Upon hearing that, Yoel nodded though that didn’t really stop him from continuing to stuff more food into his mouth.

“I really hadn’t expected so many things to happen in just six months... This is all my fault! All of you were dragged into this because of me!” said Gerald as he began blaming himself.

From what Yoel had told him earlier, though things in Mayberry City mostly remained unchanged throughout the past six months, the same couldn’t be said for those who lived within it.

After the incident that befell Gerald, Jett came to Mayberry City. Since Yoel had assumed that Jett had ended Gerald’s life, he brought a few of his men over to personally take revenge against him.

However, it was obvious at first glance that they weren’t even close to being worthy opponents for Jett.

Due to Yoel’s initial attack, Jett made it a personal goal of his to make everyone that Gerald knew—be it his friends or anyone who used to work for him—suffer.

Naturally, since Yoel had been the one to launch the attack, he ended up suffering the most. Before he was even allowed to leave, they made sure to break one of his legs beyond the point of curing. They wanted him to experience a life worse than death within Mayberry City.

As if that wasn’t enough, Jett also secretly assassinated Uncle Holden’s entire family!

Of course, Jessica was aware of all this, and though she was angry beyond words, there was nothing she could do.

All that led to the events of today.

As for the others, Aiden and his family moved away from Mayberry City to escape the calamity that would soon befall them if they continued staying there any longer. Eventually, Aiden even joined the army.

Even Elena was affected, and from what Yoel had heard, Jett’s subordinates forced her family into bankruptcy. The last piece of information he heard about her—before she went off radar—was that she was currently working as a nurse.

Everything had truly changed for the worst... And the Moldells were behind all this suffering.

“Jett Moldell...!” growled Gerald in a primal rage as murderous intent flashed through his eyes for a split second.

“Still, I’ve really embarrassed you this time around, brother... I’m nothing more than a useless cripple now! Haha!” said Yoel as he finished his meal with a bitter smile on his face.

“Say that again and I’ll smack you hard... You’re no useless cripple... Worry not, I’ll definitely cure your leg one day. As for all the suffering the Holdens had to experience... I’ll be doing them justice if it’s the last thing I do!” declared Gerald coldly.

Yoel, however, simply shook his head.

“No, brother... You should leave Mayberry City tonight. The city’s already changed a whole lot in the past six months. I’ll say it now that Yunus isn’t even close to being comparable to Jett. Not only is Jett rich, but he’s also extremely powerful. It wouldn’t be a stretch to say that even if Jett had attacked us during our peak glory in the past, we wouldn’t have been able to take on him at all!”

“I hear you, Yoel, but you can rest assured. You needn’t worry about me.”

“You’re still evading the Moldell family’s constant pursuit, aren’t you brother...? What are your plans for the future?”

“Hahaha! I have none at the moment... I’ll just make decisions as I go along!”

“Then... Could I follow you, brother? Dying would be completely worth it if it was together with you, brother. I just... really don’t want to continue living like this anymore... The way things are now, I’m better off being dead than alive!

Hearing Yoel’s suggestion, Gerald paused for a moment.

What he said was true. Not only did Yoel no longer have a home to return to, but Jett had also tortured him to his current sorry state.

Gerald knew for a fact that he couldn’t just abandon him like that.

“...Very well. You’ll be following me from now onward! Both of us will live and die together! However, I’ll still be sending you off to a place where you’ll get your injuries treated first,” declared Gerald.

“Y-yes! Yes! We’ll live and die together!” shouted Yoel, feeling extremely moved.

With that, Gerald gave Yoel an address and told him to head toward the border of the Salford Province. There, he would seek refuge with the Westley family where Master Jenkinson also currently resided. With his help, Yoel would surely make a full recovery.

“What about you, brother?” asked Yoel.

“Hahaha... Well, let’s just say I have something to settle here first....”

Chapter 925

Quest, on the other hand, was told to remain in the Salford Province together with Master Jenkinson after the entire Schuyler operation. After all, Gerald saw no need for Quest to follow him all the way to Mayberry City.

In addition, with Quest returning home safe and sound, Gerald knew that he had secured a shelter in the Salford Province where he could retreat to should things ever get awry.

It was honestly the only shelter he had left.

If there ever came a time where the Westley family was exposed, Gerald knew for a fact that he wouldn’t have anywhere else to seek refuge once the Moldells caught scent of him. After all, he had killed four Moldells back in the Salford Province.

While he was sure that the Moldells weren’t going to kill him easily, he couldn’t deny that their family was extremely powerful. Gerald was well aware that he shouldn’t even consider dealing with the Moldells on his own.

It was the reason why he was now carefully considering every move he was about to take.

After arranging for Yoel’s trip to the Salford Province, Gerald immediately headed to Mountain Top Villa.

Climbing atop one of the many high trees nearby, Gerald closed his eyes as he rested against a sturdy branch, high above the ground.

There, he laid in wait till night eventually came. It was then when he finally opened his eyes again.

By then, Mountain Top Villa was already brightly lit.

After checking if anyone was close by, Gerald dropped his haversack to the ground, creating a soft thud. Following that, he got off the tree as well, landing silently as though he was a cat.

Now on the ground, he opened his haversack and pulled out a black, hooded trench coat. After slipping it on, Gerald's face could barely be identifiable.

With that, his infiltration mission began.

"So, what's the situation like? What did the men you sent over to the Salford Province say?" asked a young man who was lying on a sofa in Mountain Top Villa's living room.

Within the room, were several men who were standing at ease, their hands to their backs. Hearing his question, a few other men standing right before him explained, "Since the Schuyler family mansion was completely razed to the ground and everyone from that family has been declared missing, we haven't been able to find any leads on where the Quentin & Trey duo could be! We aren't even sure if they're dead or alive!"

"B*stards! You should be well aware that all members of the Moldell family are of noble blood! No ordinary person could be compared to both Quentin and Trey! They're my right-hand men! If they truly were to meet their end in a place like the Salford Province, that would surely spell the greatest humiliation the Moldell family has had to face! Double your efforts until you find them!"

"Right away, Mr. Moldell!" shouted everyone involved as they hurriedly left.

Closing his eyes, Jett then said with a smirk on his face, "Still, how perfect Mayberry City is... Hahaha... I'll definitely be making this city my base once the Moldells finally get rid of the Crawfords for good!"

Just as his sentence ended, slow and faint footsteps could be heard making their way toward the room.

"Hmm?" said one of Jett's subordinates as he narrowed his eyes before opening the door to the main hall.

"...Huh? Who are you?" asked the startled subordinate.

“Is Jett Moldell here?” asked an old and commanding voice which created a feeling of unnerve to whoever heard it.

Standing at the door, the man wearing the black trench coat only had his eyes exposed. If a person was sharp enough, however, they would certainly be able to see that the person hidden behind the coat had rather fair skin, a clear indicator that—contrary to the old voice—the person was actually a young man.

“Who are you? And why are you looking for me?” asked Jett as he casually stood up and sipped some of his red wine.

He wasn’t about to express his shock to anyone, even if they looked rather extraordinary.

“I’m here because I want Jett Moldell to follow me somewhere! Come along now!” ordered the person in black.

“Hahaha! And who exactly are you? Actually, do you even know who I am? How ballsy of you to order me around!” sneered Jett.

At the same time, several of Jett’s men were already fuming in anger.

As they instantly began pummeling him, they soon retracted their fists in shock. Each impact felt like they were punching a stone wall instead of an actual human!

“What the hell?” said a few of the men as they began trembling while holding on to their now numb fists.

Jett himself felt his eyelids twitch before shouting, “Courting death, are we? End him!”

Hearing Jett’s command, fury took over their fear and the men immediately attempted to attack the man in black once more!

Chapter 926

This time, however, the man wasn’t going to just stand there anymore.

The moment they got close enough, the man instantly grabbed two of the men in front of him by their necks before gently flexing his wrists.

A second later, both men immediately began spurting out blood as they heard their necks crack. And just like that, their lives were no more, ended as easily as snuffing out a candle.

Following that, he repeated the same process with the rest of his assailants, striking all of them down with extreme precision and efficiency.

“W-who exactly are you...” stuttered Jett.

This person was extremely strong. Furthermore, his methods were equally as skillful as they were brutally terrifying. Aside from Kort, Jett had never seen anyone else with such raw power. It made him think that the man standing before him right now was a master no less powerful than his father.

Knowing that was the reason why he was so shocked as he continued staring at Gerald.

“There’s no need to ask. Just follow me!” replied the man.

“...Alright, since you’re choosing the persona of an elder, I’ll come along as a junior. But before that, elder, could you at least tell me your name? I’d like to mention it to my father in future. While we’re at it, allow me to ask this question. Are you a friend or a foe?” asked Jett as he squinted his eyes slightly.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you not to ask any further.”

It was the only thing Jett managed to register before the man in black immediately walked up to him and held onto his shoulders. A split second was all Gerald needed to apply a bit of pressure and create another sickening crack.

Jett’s eyes immediately widened as he roared in pain. His arms had been completely dislocated and destroyed!

However, Gerald wasn’t done yet. His next move was to kick Jett directly on the knee, causing his right leg to dislocate as well.

As Jett’s eyes turned bloodshot while enduring all the pain, he turned to look at the man in black before asking, “...You... Do you have any idea who my father is...?”

He truly hadn’t expected this man to be so cold and ruthless.

“I don’t need to,” replied the man in black coldly as he lifted Jett like he was carrying a limp dog.

Since one of Jett's subordinates hadn't attacked Gerald earlier, Gerald had left him alone. However, he was now frightened half to death as he quivered in a corner of the room.

Tossing Jett at the subordinate's direction, Gerald pointed at him before ordering, "If you want to live, carry him and follow me! Now let's go!"

Having no other choice, the subordinate simply obeyed.

As all three of them made it out of the villa's front doors without much trouble, by chance, Gerald happened to see something at the corner of his eyes. What he saw caused a smile to slowly form on his face as he led the other two men down the mountain with him, disappearing into the night soon after.

At the exact spot where Gerald had laid his eyes on earlier, was a badly battered man who was clutching tightly onto his chest. He was the first person whom Gerald had beaten up that night, and he had crawled all the way up to the villa from the middle of the mountain. Though his face was bloody, it was also extremely pale, creating a haunting contrast.

Aside from the subordinate whom Gerald had brought along with him, the injured man was the only other person left alive there.

Realizing that Gerald had left the mansion together with Jett, with much difficulty, he eventually managed to get his cell phone out and dial a number.

"The third young master's been kidnapped! The other party is a top master who could also be part of a secret society! From his voice, he sounded like an old man around the age of sixty! Notify the second young master about this immediately and send some men over right this instant!" reported the man through the phone.

"A member of a secret society? And he's kidnapped the third young master as well?! Find a way to follow him closely! I'll notify the second master about this immediately!" said the person at the other end of the line before ending the call.

He then rushed to a hidden room to relay what he had just heard.

"What? Jett's been kidnapped? Who in the right mind would be this bold?!" roared Kort as his eyes widened in anger.

“We don’t know yet, though from the subordinate’s description, he said that the man could very well be over the age of sixty. He also said that our current opponent’s skills are comparable to yours, second master! After all, he didn’t seem to have much trouble taking out the third young master and his subordinates! ”

Just as the subordinate said that, his phone rang again.

“Are there any updates? What? Paradise Province? ...Alright!”

After ending the call, he looked at Kort again before saying, “Based on what the subordinate could tell, all three of them seem to be headed for Paradise Province!”

“Who on earth from that province has beef with us?” growled Kort as he slammed a fist onto his table, splitting it in half in the process!

“Regardless of who that person is, he won’t get away once I find out his true identity!” shouted Kort in his rage.

Gulping, the subordinate then suggested, “Do... You think that it could’ve been someone from the Crawford family who did this, second master?”

“...No. And I have reason to believe that they aren’t involved. After all, Dylan would never have the courage to do any of this. Even if he did, he wouldn’t have the manpower for it! Something is very off about this incident...” explained Kort rather calmly as he analyzed the current situation.

After a brief moment, he raised his head before saying, “Instruct all the forces who are currently suppressing the Crawfords to transfer over to the Paradise Province as soon as possible. Jett must be found no matter what!”

‘You mustn’t falter, Jett... Stay strong!’ Kort thought to himself as he sighed.

Chapter 927

It was the next night in the Crawford family mansion in Northbay when a butler came running while shouting, “Sir! I bring good news, sir!”

At the time, Dylan was reading in his study room. Permitting his butler to enter, Dylan then put his glasses down before rubbing his brows and saying, “Go on...”

“It’s regarding KortMoldell! While both Kort and Jett have been doing everything they could to go against our family in the past six months, we’ve just received news from a reliable source that Jett has gone missing!”

“What? Jett’s missing?” said Dylan as he stood up in surprise.

Jett was Kort’s third son who had slowly been building his power in the past six months. He was also constantly being a pain in the ass, intentionally causing trouble for the Crawfords whenever he could.

Though Dylan only saw him as a pest who didn’t need to be taken too seriously, it didn’t change the fact that Jett was a constant annoyance to their family. So annoying, in fact, that the Crawfords would often feel worn out just having to deal with him over and over again.

To think that the thorn to their family’s side had now gone missing!

“Him going missing isn’t even the best news, sir! You see, Kort’s withdrew most of his men last night and transferred them elsewhere! The Crawford family can finally take a breather now!” said the butler with joy.

Dylan himself nodded as a smile formed on his face.

“However... As I recall, Jett is Kort’s favorite son... Now that he’s missing, do you suppose that Kort will suspect that our family is involved in the matter?” asked the butler with a frown on his face.

“Of course he won’t!” said Dylan as he closed the book he had been reading before placing it to the side.

“Kort’s no fool, after all. He knows very well how skilled Jett is, and he’s also well aware that even the Crawford family’s top guards wouldn’t be able to lay a finger on him! I’m sure that Kort also understands that our family wouldn’t ever dare to do such a thing in the first place! Since you said that he withdrew his men who were keeping an eye on us, that obviously means that they know we aren’t the threat! Better yet, that means that they’re having their own major problem to deal with!” replied Dylan as he heaved a huge sigh of relief.

“You’re absolutely right, sir! It seems I was simply overthinking things!” said the butler with a smile as he watched Dylan take his cell phone out.

“Still, whoever it was that captured Jett, within Mayberry City of all places, must be an extremely skilled master... A master above all masters, even! Fynn!” said Dylan with a sudden serious expression on his face as the call finally connected.

“How may I assist, sir?”

“I’m now giving you a secret task. I want you to investigate Jett’s disappearance and try locating the master who kidnapped him. If we do manage to hire or get him to help our family, then we might finally have a chance to defeat Kort! You’re free to use any means you can think of to search for him!” ordered Dylan as he slammed his free hand against the table.

“Understood! Preparations for the investigation will begin immediately!” replied Fynn as he ended the call.

Just as the butler was about to leave, Dylan called out, “Wait! Tell the eldest lady, madam, Lyra, and the rest of the family that we’re having dinner together tonight!”

“...Yes, sir!” said the butler, beaming with joy. After all, it had been a long time since he saw Dylan looking this happy.

Ever since Gerald’s disappearance about six months ago, the Crawfords hadn’t had a proper family dinner together. Even Yulia had hardly spent any time around Dylan during that period since he always locked himself up in his study room.

When dinnertime came, Jessica and Lyra were all smiles when they saw Dylan feeling so happy after so long.

“What happened, dad? What’s the occasion? Did you manage to find out where Gerald is?” asked Jessica as soon as she got the chance to.

Shaking his head dejectedly, he then replied, “...No... We still haven’t been able to locate him...”

Upon hearing that, everyone instantly turned slightly gloomy.

“...However! Even if that’s the case, today is still a good day! After all, Jett’s gone missing! A tragedy of sorts occurred at Mountain Top Villa and all but one of Jett’s subordinates there were killed!” announced Dylan.

“What? That b*stard’s missing?” said Jessica as she stood up and laughed.

“Indeed! Some master has kidnapped Jett, and regardless of whether he did it for his own reasons or to help us, it doesn’t matter since his actions still greatly benefited the Crawford family!” replied Dylan with a smile.

“But who could that master have been? Are you aware of any other secret societies or families aside from the Moldells, dad?”

“If there are any, I’m not aware of them. Regardless, under these circumstances, I feel that our family is in dire need of such a powerful master to help deal with the Moldells. If we do indeed find him, I’m willing to offer a third of our family’s assets just as an incentive for the master to aid us!”

In response, Jessica and the others nodded in agreement.

Meanwhile, southwest of the Paradise Region, a bus was slowly making its way toward the Paradise Province.

Chapter 928

The bus was currently traveling up a mountainous road, and aside from the occasional driver, the road was—for the most part—completely empty. No matter which direction one looked, mountains were the only constant sight.

“You know, I heard that lots of robberies happen on this road!” said a fat young man who was clearly finding the entire journey to be quite depressing.

When he saw that others were now looking at him, he then continued, “It was in the news some time ago! A group of robbers had apparently taken over a bus on this very road, and once they were done with their looting, they killed off everyone in the bus!”

“That can’t be true! I’m pretty alert to such news... Why didn’t I see it then?” asked a middle-aged woman rather nervously.

“Well, the news disappeared not too long after it was released to the public! After all, spreading news like this out of the blue could easily propagate panic!” explained the fat man.

“Hah. Even if robbers do attack us, we’ll just beat them to death! After all, there are so many of us in here!” sneered a rather large and muscular man.

“Yes, but we aren’t wielding knives like they are...” mumbled the fat man in response.

Hearing that, everyone fell silent for a while. After all, who wouldn’t be nervous after hearing what he had to say.

A little while later, the same man took out a packet of biscuits and slowly began munching down on them.

“Pfft! Didn’t you say there were robbers along this road? How are you still in the mood to eat now? You’ll definitely be the first to be robbed since you’re so fat!” said the woman from before in a rather dissatisfied voice.

“Hey, I’m only eating to relieve stress! Here’s a trivia! Humans relax easier when our jaws are constantly moving!” replied the man.

“Is that really true?”

“I’ve no reason to lie. Here, have a pack of biscuits and try it for yourself!” said the fat man as he handed a packet to the woman.

“Oh? I’d like some too!” said another person seated on the bus as he laughed.

“My biscuits are precious to me! Don’t any of you bring along your own snacks for long trips? I’ll sell them to you for three dollars a pack if you truly want some!” replied the fat man as he instantly hugged his luggage bag tightly.

In response, everyone immediately laughed loudly. It was evident that the fat man was a biscuit seller.

However, since a few dollars didn’t mean anything to them, they began handing out money to him to buy some biscuits.

As the fat man happily took the money and began distributing the biscuits around, he turned to look at the strange man who had been sitting silently in the bus this entire time. The man himself was wearing a cap and mask which covered most of his facial features, making it difficult for the fat man to even guess his age. As if he wasn’t odd enough, sitting right behind him were two extremely weak and fragile-looking men.

Walking over to the trio, the fat man then asked, “None of you have said a word throughout this entire journey, sirs! Surely you must be hungry too! Why not have some biscuits so that you can relax a bit more?”

In response, the man in the black trench coat simply shook his head.

“I’m giving each of you a packet on the house! After all, the three of you look tenser than anyone else on the bus! Let’s just be friends!” added the man.

Instead of replying, however, the masked man simply turned to look out the window.

'What an odd person...' Thought the fat man to himself as he turned to look at the girl sitting opposite of the odd man.

She wore black leather pants as well as a leather jacket. Quite frankly, the long-haired beauty resembled 'black spider,' a famous fictional movie character.

While she definitely looked pretty, she also bore a cold expression on her face.

"How about you, beauty? Do you want some biscuits?" asked the fat man with a smile.

At that, she only shook her head slightly.

"Come on, while the biscuits can be a little sweet, they're great for helping you relax!" added the man.

Simply wanting him to leave her alone, she then said in an impatient tone, "Just give me a packet then!"

After handing it to her, he continued staring at her with a smile, waiting to collect the money she owed him.

Just as she was about to fish her wallet out, however, she suddenly thought of something.

Turning to look at the man again, she frowned before saying, "I didn't bring any money out!"

"What? Not even three dollars? That's a bit far-fetched, I must say!" replied the fat man in surprise.

Chapter 929

"I'm telling the truth!" added the girl as her frown deepened.

"Hey, chubby! Just forget it! She's a beauty anyway! If you're really persistent, then here! Take three dollars from me instead!" offered one of the passengers as he laughed.

“You can’t be serious! To think that such a girl exists! Wanting to eat yet not even willing to pay three dollars!” pouted the fat man.

Hearing that, the girl frowned even harder.

Instantly after, however, a brief fierceness flashed in her eyes as she said, “If you really want my money, then get off the bus with me later. If you accept the dare, forget three dollars, I’ll give you three thousand dollars if you want! What do you say?” asked the girl coldly.

“I say why wouldn’t I dare to do so! However, you said it yourself that you’ll hand me three thousand dollars! It’s not too late to take that statement back!” replied the fat man as he snorted.

“Deal!” shouted the girl before taking in a deep breath.

Throughout their conversation, the man in black had constantly been sneaking gazes at the girl. Though one of his brows was raised, he quickly withdrew his gaze before anyone could notice.

It was only when things had settled down a little later when the girl yelled out, “Stop the bus, driver!”

“Here? In the middle of nowhere? Beauty, you’ll be stranded out here alone if I drop you off here!” replied the driver with only kind intent.

“Mind your own business and just stop the vehicle already!”

Hearing her cold yet resolute response, the driver had no choice but to obey.

Once the bus stopped moving, the girl looked at the fat man before carrying her white box and getting off the vehicle.

With his bag of biscuits in hand, the fat man then followed her down before saying, “Humph! Here I am! Where’s the three thousand dollars?”

As the bus driver continued looking at the two of them, he was surprised to see the man in black—along with the two weak-looking men—getting off the bus as well.

His surprise turned to concern when he saw another five burly men carrying their luggage with them off the bus!

“What on earth are all of you doing? We’re only midway there!”

Though he was curious about what was about to take place there, he was old and experienced enough to know that he shouldn’t stay to pry. As a result, he simply drove off with the remaining passengers.

Now standing in a completely deserted area, the fat man repeated, “I did my part of the deal, so stick to yours! Where’s the three thousand dollars?”

The girl—who had earlier been looking around—turned to face the fat man again before replying, “What, can’t you see it? The money you’re looking for is right behind you!”

“Beauty, I just want my money, not those five people!”

“You heard that brother? She’s waiting for us! Hahaha! We’re definitely going to have a wild time with her!” said one of the burly men.

Laughing along, all five of them threw their luggage bags aside before walking up to the girl and surrounding her.

“Could it be that you suddenly felt lonely halfway through the journey, beauty? Worry not, we’re here to accompany you!” added another of the five men.

Dumbfounded by the sudden turn of events, the fat man then said, “...B-brothers? Could you guys be robbers?”

“Hah! Just mind your own business if you want to live!” replied another of the burly men as he shoved the fat man aside.

The man in black, on the other hand, simply stood some distance away together with the two frail men, watching as the show slowly unfolded.

“Oh my, accompany you say? How so?” replied the girl with a charming smile.

“Haha! We’ll accompany you however you want us to!”

Upon saying that, the men were about to throw themselves onto her when she suddenly asked, “Does your leader go by the name of Hansel?”

“...Huh? You... How do you know his name?” asked the men as they exchanged glances with each other in astonishment.

“Well of course I’d know his name! After all, he’s going to die by my hands soon! Just like you five nauseating pieces of trash!” sneered the girl.

“What-”

Before they could even say anything else, the beauty swiftly pulled a short blade out of nowhere and began slashing at them!

It only took a second or two for all five of the men to fall to the ground, clutching onto their badly gashed necks as they eventually stopped moving.

“H-huh?!” shouted the fat man as he instantly began shuddering in fear.

Even the man in black couldn’t help but feel his right eye twitch slightly at the sight before him.

Chapter 930

However, he retracted his gaze soon after.

The beauty, on the other hand, simply glanced at the fat man before saying, “If you want to live, then carry my luggage and follow me. Do that properly and I’ll hand you a hundred thousand dollars once we’re done!”

As she watched the fat man nod silently in fear, the corner of her eye caught a glimpse of the three other men who had gotten off the bus earlier.

Watching them walk off in the opposite direction, she couldn’t help but furrow her brows slightly.

'That man in the black trench coat truly is a mystery...' She thought to herself.

Regardless, he wasn't getting in her way so he didn't really matter to her. She had her own things to focus on in the meantime.

She then squatted down and began removing all the communication devices off the five corpses. Once she was done, she gestured for the fat man to follow and the two then walked off silently.

"Elder... Master... Whichever you prefer... Where are you taking me to...? If it's money you want, then my family can give you as much money as you need! Even if it's something else, I believe that the Moldell family can definitely provide it to you! So please free me! I'm beyond hungry and thirsty right now!"

If it wasn't evident enough, the one who had spoken was none other than Jett.

Alongside his subordinate, neither of them had dared to say a word throughout their journey on the bus. After all, they knew better than to make a scene when their captor could easily end their lives with a single hand. Now that they were literally in the middle of nowhere, however, Jett knew he could finally speak again.

"Where we're going is just right ahead!" replied the man in black.

"Here?" asked Jett in surprise as he looked around the deep valley.

"Indeed. Regardless, I'm sure the rest of the Moldells must be frantically looking for you right now. From what I can guess, Weston must've turned upside down the moment they found out that you were missing. They'll certainly be overwhelmed when they eventually manage to track your location all the way out here," said the man in black.

"I'm glad you understand that, Elder! With your level of intelligence, I'm sure you know how much my father loves me! By this point, he's probably going to mobilize all the top masters in the family, to search for me! This really doesn't have to end with you offending the Moldell family, Elder! Let's discuss things amicably! Who knows, we could even end up becoming allies!"

"Humph. As you said, your father won't stop until he finds you!"

"That's right! So please, Elder! Please just--"

Before Jett could even finish his sentence, Gerald made a swift grab for his silent subordinate's throat. The subordinate wasn't even able to react before Gerald moved his fingers slightly and a snapping sound could be heard.

Blood immediately spurled out of the man's mouth as he fell to the ground, dead.

"...H-huh? Elder? You?!" stuttered Jett, utterly shocked by the sudden turn of events.

"I must say, your subordinate's pretty clever. After all, he's been taking notes and leaving clues behind throughout the entire journey!" sneered the man in black.

"Let me ask you this, third young master, Jett. Do you still not know who I truly am?"

"N-no... Who exactly are you, elder...?"

Hearing that, Gerald then removed his cap and voice changer that had been attached to his neck this entire time.

Saving the best for last, Gerald finally took his mask off, revealing his handsome face.

"I-it was you...? Gerald?!" shouted Jett in both shock and utter horror when he finally saw the face of his kidnapper.

To aid the Moldells in hunting down Gerald, Jett had previously read all the information regarding the ex-rich heir. Though he had assumed that he already knew everything that there was to know about Gerald, he now knew how wrong he was.

"Bingo. To think that you and your father had been looking for me so desperately this entire time... Bet you never expected falling right into my hands, did you?" asked Gerald as he smirked.

Terrified beyond words when he saw Gerald's smile, Jett then said, "Gerald! No, M-Mr. Crawford! I never expected you to be part of our bloodline as well! Please excuse my lack of manners! Everything that's happened has just been one massive misunderstanding!"

There was no way that Gerald wasn't a Moldell. After all, his skills and abilities were simply too powerful!

“A misunderstanding you say? You’ve been suppressing the Crawford family unrelentingly for a good six months now. Many, if not all, of my former acquaintances have already suffered in your hands. As if that wasn’t enough, I’ve also been homeless and miserable throughout this entire hunt of yours. You dare say to my face that all of that was simply a ‘misunderstanding?’” growled Gerald before sneering.

“Regardless! Why didn’t you kill me on the spot then? Why did you kidnap me instead? What are you planning to do?” asked Jett with a gulp as he took two steps backward.

“Oh, don’t get me wrong. I was simply looking for the perfect time and place to kill you,” replied Gerald.

“...I get it now. You’ve been actively trying to divert my father’s attention so that you can give the Crawfords a chance to finally relax! However, do you honestly think that you’ll be able to escape for long after kidnapping me? You may be strong and powerful now, but don’t forget that you’ll be dealing with the entire Moldell family once they catch you, including my father!” growled Jett viciously.

He then added, “My father’s going to catch up to us extremely quickly, I can feel it! Think about it, Gerald! If you kill me now, then you won’t have a bargaining chip left once he finds you!”

At that, Gerald simply nodded before saying, “I’m aware. Which is why I took a particularly long time thinking about how I should dispose of you. After all, if I simply set you on fire, there’d still be traces left behind. Upon careful consideration, I finally came up with this brilliant idea!”

“See, there’s a deep valley upfront called the Wild Miasma Valley. It’s infamously known as the Poisonous Mosquito Valley as well. Approximately hundreds of millions of highly poisonous mosquitoes live down there, you know? Once I toss you down there, it’ll take at most half an hour for all of your skin to be completely devoured! I’m sure your father won’t be finding you anytime soon once that happens!”

“You... You b*stard! You vicious b*stard! My father will definitely chop you up into a million pieces once he gets his hands on you!” yelled Jett in both rage and terror with an utterly hideous expression on his face.

Chapter 931

It was an hour later when Gerald finally walked out of the valley.

Gerald himself made it out alive since the trench coat he was wearing was specifically designed to protect him from the mosquitoes there.

As he quickly donned on some ordinary clothes, he recalled Jett’s final miserable moments as he died slowly just minutes ago.

Exactng his revenge had finally allowed Gerald to feel a sense of satisfaction after so long. After all, even if Kort's men were able to track down his son all the way to the mountainous area, Gerald was certain that the Wild Miasma Valley would be the last place they would ever think to search for.

If it all went according to how he envisioned it, Kort would definitely continue searching for Jett for quite a while. During that period, Gerald's family would finally get a chance to temporarily get some rest.

However, since Gerald wouldn't be able to return to Weston for a while, he knew that he needed to quickly find someplace else to retreat to, at least for the time being.

Slipping on his backpack once he was done changing, he looked exactly like a fresh graduate. He bore a simple and unadorned look, just like he used to back then.

Just as he was about to decide which direction to head toward, he suddenly heard the loud revving of motors coming from uphill.

Squinting his eyes, Gerald soon saw an off-road vehicle chasing after two clearly worn-out people who were now running toward him. He instantly recognized both of them.

They were none other than the fat biscuit seller and the beauty wearing the black leather pants from before!

"So it's them..." said Gerald to himself as he quickly put on his cap and lowered its brim slightly.

"H-help! Those people are trying to kill us!" shouted the fat man.

Upon closer inspection, Gerald noticed that the girl had suffered a serious injury and that her leg was bleeding rather profusely. He also noticed that the white box she had earlier been carrying around was now black.

"B-brother, please! Save us! Those people have guns!" cried out the fat man again in his desperation.

Seeing how pale the beauty was and how close the off-road vehicle was already getting, Gerald considered for a moment.

Though the girl had killed off five people earlier, they were all robbers. What more, he honestly couldn't see her being a treacherous person.

Looking at the ones chasing after them next, he saw that the men in the vehicle were all bald. They also seemed to have either dragon or phoenix tattoos all over them.

Finalizing his decision once he saw one of the men stretching his hand out of the car's window, Gerald yelled, "Follow me into the valley!"

Seconds after he led both of them into the valley, gunshots could be heard. Tiny stones and pebbles flew all over the place as well, as the off-road vehicle drove over the rocky road.

Eventually, the car came to a screeching halt.

As five bald men exited the vehicle with guns in hand, their leader grumbled, "D*mn it! They run pretty fast! Not to worry, though! I managed to shoot the girl in the leg so they won't be able to get far! Make sure your guns are loaded, brothers! We're chasing after them!"

"Boss, don't! That valley is called Poisonous Mosquito Valley for a reason! If we get attacked by the mosquitoes in there, then we'll definitely be wiped out in an instant! Even our skin will be completely vaporized... We definitely shouldn't go in there!" warned one of the bald men.

"Well we can't just leave without that box of money..." replied the leader rather hesitantly.

"...Humph. Well, if the valley is as dangerous as you say it is, I'm sure they'll come running out soon! In the meantime, call more of our men over to surround all the valley's entrances. Be sure to remind them to each have loaded guns with them!" added the leader.

"Right away, boss!"

"F*cking hell! Why are there so many mosquitoes here? What is this place, brother?" asked the fat man nervously as he carried the barely conscious girl deeper into the valley.

"Well of course there would be a lot of mosquitoes. This is the Poisonous Mosquito Valley, after all!"

“The... The Poisonous Mosquito Valley? You couldn’t be talking about the one in the Death Forbidden Land, right?” asked the fat man—who was surprisingly knowledgeable—in surprise.

“Bingo!”

Chapter 932

Gerald nodded as he said that.

“...Oh god. It’s best that we didn’t go in any further, brother! From what I’ve heard, the mosquitoes don’t even leave any traces of their victim’s skin left! We might as well just get shot by bullets than have to endure through poisonous mosquito attacks!” said the fat man, terrified.

“You should’ve thought about that while you were running toward me earlier. Doesn’t the fact that you did that already implicate that you didn’t mind me dying together with you in the first place?” replied Gerald as he smiled wryly.

The fat man, however, barely even registered any guilt since he was much too terrified of where he was currently at.

Gerald himself was calculating the chance of him surviving if he tried to go against those men. In the end, he was certain that the men would simply release fire from a distance the moment they saw him. Hiding could still be possible at that point, but he’d still end up getting hurt! There just wasn’t any silver linings in confronting the men now.

With that conclusion in mind, Gerald couldn’t help but laugh slightly bitterly before saying, “Come on, follow me. There’s a cave within this valley which we can hide in for the moment! Since she’s already lost too much blood at this point, the girl desperately needs some rest or her life will be in danger soon!”

“S-seriously?” asked the fat man in surprise.

Shaking his head, Gerald continued taking the lead until eventually, all three of them arrived at the cave Gerald had mentioned.

There seemed to be considerably less mosquitoes around this area as well.

“What a miracle! To think there was a spot within this death zone that those mosquitoes wouldn’t gather around!” said the fat man as he gently placed the now unconscious girl on the ground.

“See those green plants out there? The mosquitoes are naturally repelled by their scent! With there being so many of that plant right outside the cave, the mosquitoes definitely won’t be attacking us any time soon as long as we stay in here!”

With Gerald’s immense knowledge of medicinal plants, it was no wonder why he knew the plants’ properties.

As Gerald began checking on the unconscious girl’s injuries, he soon heard her ask, “...Who... exactly are you, brother...? How do you know so much...?”

When he turned to look at her face, she was frowning as she asked the question.

“My identity isn’t important. Regardless, if these wounds don’t get treated soon, you’ll be dead within a few hours! What happened to both of you anyway? Why were those men hunting you down?”

Recalling what she had said to the five burly men before murdering them, Gerald remembered her saying that she wanted to assassinate someone. From her current condition, it was clear as day that her mission had failed.

“That’s right! If I’d had known that you were going to do such a thing, then I wouldn’t have followed you, even if you threatened to beat me to death! You’re really got me in deep trouble this time!” said the young man in a bitter tone.

“Haha! Well, since we won’t be living for much longer anyway, I guess it wouldn’t hurt to tell you guys this! See, my plan was to assassinate a boss at the border of the Salford Province! After all, that b*stard cheated and killed my friends! Since I was able to escape, I’ve been planning my revenge since then!” explained the girl.

“I see. If I may, it seems that you have the background of a martial artist. Did you receive any special training for fighting and assassination as a child?” asked Gerald as he tore some gauze to bandage up her wound.

Upon hearing his question, she instantly began seeing Gerald in a new light.

As she continued staring at him, the fat man broke the silence by anxiously asking, “Hey, hey! Your grievances with those men isn’t what’s important now! You said that we weren’t going to be living for much longer right? What exactly did you mean by that?”

“Haha! Well, knowing Hansel’s way of doing things, it wouldn’t surprise me if his men have already surrounded all the exits to this valley by now. Even if we don’t die to the mosquitoes here, the only other option is to starve to death! Still, I guess I needn’t be lonely in death since the two of you will be joining me!” replied the girl.

“W-what...? You... You’re evil! Pure evil! So we only exist here to cushion your blow?!” said the fat man as his eyes widened in shock and fear.

“To think that you still have the energy to scare him even with that serious injury. Hahaha... Well, since we truly are going to die here together, then we may as well die as romantic ghosts! After all, I’m sure fatty here has never enjoyed the company of a woman before!” said Gerald as he laughed while shaking his head.

“You... Don’t you even dare!” growled the girl as she glared at Gerald.

Ignoring her threat, Gerald then turned to look at the fat man before saying, “Say, fatty. Head a little deeper inside and you’ll find a small undercurrent creek. Get some water for me there. I’m going to disinfect her wound!”

“R-right!” said the fat man as he nodded slightly before fumbling off with a water bottle in hand.

“Alright, while your arm’s only slightly injured, the wound on your thigh is much more serious. That’s going to get infected extremely easily so I’ll need to suck the contaminated blood out before that happens!” said Gerald as soon as the fat man left.

“How are you going to suck it out?” asked the girl.

“How else? With my mouth of course! So... Please spare me the embarrassment and take your pants off if you want me to help you...” said Gerald as he couldn’t help but blush slightly.

In response, she immediately gave him a slap across his face!

“Y-you asshole! Don’t even think about it!” growled the girl as her face turned as red as a tomato.

Chapter 933

Due to the environment she had grown up in, the girl had always been particularly sensitive whenever it came to having contact with men. Sensitive wasn’t even the right word in this case. Rather, it was more akin to disgust.

As long as she had to deal with matters involving relationships between men and women, she simply couldn’t help but feel utterly sickened. It could sometimes even get so terrible that she felt disgusted simply being in the presence of men.

It was why she barely felt guilty when she said that they should just die together earlier.

Gerald himself had never expected for such a cold and indifferent girl to put up such strong resistance.

“Look, I’m just trying to save your life here. If we don’t treat your wounds now, it’ll definitely come to bite you back when we make our escape later. Do you really need me of all people to tell you what’s going to happen should you fall into their hands?” persuaded Gerald.

“...You...”

Hearing that, the girl was momentarily stunned.

It was obvious that she was having an internal struggle at that moment with how tightly she was clenching her fists.

“...Fine! But close your eyes throughout the process or I won’t hesitate to slice your neck!” said the woman with a frigid tone.

“Lady, you’re making it sound as though I’m that desperate to look at you!”

“Well then turn around already! Close your d*mned eyes as well!” ordered the girl as Gerald obeyed while shaking his head.

Moments later, he heard the familiar rustling of a person undressing behind him.

Though the girl was a little cold, Gerald had to admit that she really was a true beauty. While any other ordinary man would surely be tempted to give a peek, Gerald easily refrained from that temptation. After all, he truly didn’t have any other intentions aside from treating her wound.

“...I’m done!” said the girl as Gerald slowly approached her with a sigh.

“Again, I warn you not to touch anywhere else... I can end your life with a single move, you got that?!”

It was about five minutes later when a familiar voice called out, “Brother! I brought the water over like you asked! ...Actually, hold on. What’s going on here? Why’s your face so red, beauty?” asked the fat man.

Upon closer inspection, he realized how disheveled she looked as well. It took him a second, but his astonishment was soon evident as he asked, "You... Both of you didn't do anything weird while I was gone, right?"

"If you say another god d*mned word then don't blame me for slicing your tongue off!" growled the girl as she pulled her short blade out.

In response, the fat man was so terrified that he immediately cupped his hands over his mouth.

Night passed quickly and the next thing the girl and the fat man knew, they were being patted awake on their cheek as Gerald said, "Hey, rise and shine! It's high time we made our leave!"

"But brother... It's still dark outside... Plus those men probably set up tents last night in wait for us... What makes you think they're already gone...?" asked the fat man as he rubbed his eyes.

"I went scouting earlier and from what I found, all the entrances were left unguarded. Either they've left or the poisonous mosquitoes got to them first! Regardless, let's just take this opportunity to hurry up and leave!" said Gerald.

"What? Not a single one of them is there?" asked the fat man in surprise.

The girl was equally as surprised when she heard that.

"I'm certain and I'm serious about leaving immediately. Any later and escape may prove impossible!" replied Gerald as he slipped his backpack on.

Exchanging glances with each other, the fat man and the girl could only start readying themselves. After all, both of them were fully aware that in the end, Gerald was still the most reliable person among them.

True to Gerald's word, once they got to the valley's entrance, the girl was surprised to see that all the tents had been completely deserted. Hansel's men seemed to have simply evaporated into the night!

'This hardly makes any sense! Even if they were attacked by the mosquitoes, I should've definitely been able to hear them screaming at the very least!' Thought the girl to herself.

As she turned to look at Gerald, she was surprised to see that he had already gotten atop one of the off-road vehicles.

“It seems we’ll be parting ways here then! After all, I still have other things to do! Both of you can just use the other vehicles here to make your escape!”

Chapter 934

“You...where are you headed?” asked the girl rather hesitantly as she looked at Gerald.

“Your guess is as good as mine! Once I make my stop at the Salford Province, I’ll probably continue traveling till I reach the end of the world!” replied Gerald with a smile as he revved up the engine of the off-road vehicle he was on.

It was evident that he was the one who had taken out all of Hansel’s men during the night. It was also exactly because of that that he couldn’t afford to stay here for a moment longer.

“Before you leave, tell me your name! Mine is Rainey Levington!” called out Rainey as her beautiful face blushed.

This was honestly the first time in her life that she had ever been this intimate with a guy. To her, Gerald was completely different from all the other men she had previously met. After all, Gerald had told her that he wouldn’t have any dirty thoughts of her, and Rainey could see it in his eyes that he hadn’t lied.

“Ah. Uh... Just call me Sanderson!” replied Gerald.

Upon hearing that, Rainey didn’t even have a chance to even reply before Gerald stepped on the accelerator and drove off while waving a hand.

“...Sanderson? Who the hell would even have such a name?” grumbled Rainey angrily.

She had honestly wanted to continue questioning him, but by now, Gerald was only a tiny speck in a distance.

Gerald himself began making his way through the Salford Province. Following Quest’s previous directions, he was now headed for an area near the province’s border.

The area in question wasn’t part of any country, and there was no single person in charge of it either. Aside from a few large families sharing authority over the area, one could say that the place was as free as the heavens.

Due to that, the area was commonly known as the Heavenly City in the Triangle District.

However, due to the lack of an authoritative figure, lawlessness ran rampant within the Heavenly City's many cities, villages, and towns.

It was simply an area infamously known for housing several major underground forces.

The Westleys themselves were seen as nothing more than wealthy businessmen around these parts. Speaking of the Westleys, Gerald's current plan was to head for their mansion.

Aside from potentially locating the Ginseng King, Gerald had another important reason for coming here.

With him currently unable to return to Weston for the time being, he figured that with all the crooks mixed together with honest folk here, even the Moldells would have a difficult time searching for him here. In other words, this place was Gerald's best bet to remain undetected, and safe, at least for a little while.

Gerald didn't plan to stay for long, however. After all, he had already made up his mind that he wouldn't establish an open relationship with the Westleys. Their family was, after all, the only bargaining chip he had left, and it wasn't even a long-term bargaining chip.

After driving for some time, the car finally ran out of gas. As a result, Gerald simply abandoned it, walking through the mountains instead.

It wasn't really that hard for him since if he was thirsty, he could always just drink spring water. Even hunger wasn't an issue since catching and roasting a wild pheasant or hare barely posed any trouble for him.

Eventually, however, a heavy downpour began. Not wanting to be completely drenched for the rest of his journey, he found a nearby cave and used it as a temporary shelter.

It was evening when the rain finally stopped and Gerald stood before the stream right outside the cave to wash his face.

However, it wasn't long before he heard violent fighting not too far away.

Gerald simply shook his head with a wry smile. It was evident that it was a fight between two forces.

“This truly is the triangle district... I need to be more careful wherever I go now!”

Just as Gerald said that to himself, Gerald could hear the rustling of several footsteps... However, they seemed to be frantically headed toward his direction!

Squinting his eyes, Gerald counted a total of five men, all of them fully dressed in camouflage clothing. They appeared to be desperately trying to escape from something.

“Boss!” shouted one of the men as he watched one of his more injured comrades fall to the ground. The one who had fallen had an extremely pale complexion as the other four men quickly surrounded him.

“I... I can't go on anymore! Just leave me behind and run! Hurry, before they arrive!”

“No! We aren't leaving you behind, boss! We're all brothers, remember! If we die, we die together! Worst come to worst, we'll just fight our way through together until we perish!” said another of the five men.

“You b*stard! What are all of you even saying! Promise me right now that you'll all continue to live well! I'll stay behind to buy you some time, so please, please just hurry up and leave already!” replied their leader as he slapped one of the men who was already crying beside him.

“Beat us to death then, boss! Until you manage to do that, we won't ever leave!”

“Secoded! We aren't leaving no matter what!” shouted another man as all of them wiped the tears off their faces, their decisions resolute.

Chapter 935

“...Hold on, there's a cave over there! Why don't we try hiding there, boss? As we've said, we're not leaving you here to die alone!” said another man as the others nodded in unison.

Knowing full well that the others weren't going to listen to him, he simply allowed them to carry his wounded body over to the cave.

“...Huh? Is it just me, or does it seem like someone lives here...?” said one of the men in surprise when he saw the remains of a campfire.

“It’s not just you... Regardless, let’s not worry about that first. We should focus on bandaging boss’s wounds first.”

“Honestly, it’d be better for him to bleed a little more under these circumstances. He’ll die even faster if you bandage his wounds now,” said a voice out of the blue.

Shocked to hear that comment, everyone immediately raised their guns as they aimed at the young man who had just spoken.

Still standing at the cave’s entrance, Gerald simply stared directly at the black muzzles of the guns before casually sitting down by the side of the cave. In his hand, was a hare that he had apparently just roasted.

While the boss of the group glared coldly at the young man who had just appeared, he couldn’t help but feel that he was an extraordinary person.

After all, though the boss was seriously injured, he was well aware that he was much more vigilant compared to regular people. Even so, he hadn’t been able to notice the young man’s presence until he said something! What more, the young man hadn’t even batted an eyelid when his men pointed their guns at him! Hell, a commoner wouldn’t be roasting hares this far up the mountains!

All these qualities were far from what a normal person would possess!

“Lower your guns!” said the leader with a wave of his hand.

Once his men obeyed, he smiled while looking at Gerald before saying, “Correct me if I’m wrong, but this appears to be your home, young man! Our apologies for simply bursting in on short notice!”

“What, do people live in caves where you come from? I was only taking shelter from the rain here. Since this place isn’t mine to begin with, feel free to stay for as long as you want,” replied Gerald with a sneer.

“Hah! As if we need his permission, Boss! It’s obvious from the way he dresses that he’s just a regular backpacker! Also, try not to talk too much, young man. Otherwise, don’t blame us for not giving you any face!” replied one of the men angrily before immediately starting to bandage his boss’s wounds.

Seeing that the man was using a short blade to cut off a piece of gauze, Gerald immediately came to the conclusion that these men were probably from the same group as Rainey.

After all, her short blade and the man's looked incredibly similar.

Recalling what she had said, Rainey had told Gerald that her friends had been cheated by Hansel, resulting in their death. That was her motive to take revenge on Hansel in the first place.

Seeing the miserable state the five men were in, Gerald had a feeling that Rainey could've been wrong about them dying.

What the men said next, however, confirmed that his theory was true.

"That d*mned Hansel... If we make it out alive of this, I'm definitely going after his head! To think that he actually hired others to get rid of us! We won't be taken out that easily!"

"Indeed! Still, I hope Sixth sister is doing alright now... I fear that she'll end up getting caught in one of Hansel's tricks!" added their boss with a cough.

Gerald himself thought about how Rainey had truly almost lost her life because of Hansel.

"Regardless, what's our next step, boss? Hansel's been extremely wary with us, making sure that we wouldn't even have a place to seek refuge! I can't even think of a place where we can head to at the moment!"

"We'll take things slow. Worst comes to worst, we'll just be vagabonds for a while! However, I still say that all of you should just leave me here. There's no point in losing your lives because of an injured man!" persuaded the boss.

However, no matter how much he persuaded, none of his comrades wavered with their final decisions.

At that moment, several footsteps could be heard running toward the cave. From what Gerald could tell, there were at least a dozen men heading toward them.

"I beg of you! Leave while you can!"

“Negative, boss! We’re fighting till the very end!” growled the men as they gritted their teeth, fully prepared to engage in battle with the other party.

Shortly after, their hunters—who were also donning camouflage clothing—finally appeared at the mouth of the cave. As they pointed their guns at the group of people inside, the person—who seemed to be their leader—took a step forward before saying, “Hah! You guys can really run! To think that you even made us chase you all the way up the mountain for so long! You truly are amazing, Whistler Sankey!”

“Just cut the crap and kill us already if you want to, Leopold!” shouted Whistler in return.

“Bold! How truly bold of you!” sneered Leopold.

“Don Leopold! There seems to be another man in here!” reported one of Leopold’s men.

Chapter 936

“Hmm? A backpacker? Brat, if you know what’s good for you, leave this instance. If you don’t, I’ll only be wasting a bullet on you!” said Leopold as he pointed a gun directly at the side of Gerald’s head.

In response, however, Gerald simply turned to look directly into Leopold’s eyes.

“The hell are you looking at, brat?” growled Leopold angrily.

“You know, though I’ve been wandering around for quite a while now, I must say that nobody’s actually dared to point a gun directly at my forehead before!” replied Gerald with a laugh.

“A death wish? Be my guest!” roared Leopold as his finger moved to pull the trigger.

However, the next thing he knew, a clang of metal echoed throughout the cave.

It took Leopold a second to realize that the gun was no longer in his hand, and it was at that moment when he knew he had f*cked up.

As cold sweat began trickling down Leopold's forehead, everyone—including Whistler and his men—was so stunned that they didn't even dare to breathe.

After all, everyone had seen it happen. In that split second before the trigger was pulled, Gerald had flicked a branch so precisely that it jammed the tip of Leopold's gun!

As if that feat wasn't amazing enough, the laws of physics didn't seem to apply to Gerald at all since not only did the branch pierce through the gun, it actually embedded itself at least an inch into the cave's solid walls!

Leopold felt a faint trickle of blood flow down his cheek as he stared wide-eyed at his gun which was now hanging loosely like an onion ring on a kebab stick.

By god! What kind of strength and speed even was that?!

If Gerald had only aimed the branch at his throat or chest, he would've been dead just like that!

"I-incredible!" stuttered Leopold as he gulped down hard.

"Since I'll be staying the night here, please choose how you want this to go. You can either go outside and fight me now, or leave us alone. What's it going to be?" asked Gerald as he bit into his roasted hare.

Narrowing his eyes in utter fear, Leopold immediately shouted, "We'll withdraw!"

"Don Leopold?!"

"Withdraw I said!" roared Leopold as he waved his hand, signaling for his men to evacuate immediately.

"There's over a dozen of us here, Don Leopold! Why are we withdrawing?" asked one of his subordinates immediately after stepping out of the cave.

"Hahaha! I'm assuming you haven't heard of the case that befell Hansel's men! Color me surprised since the news has been circulating heavily around the Heavenly City! Regardless, dozens of his men were killed in a single night when all they were chasing after were three people!" replied Leopold.

“What? Dozens? And none of them made it out alive?”

“You heard me! And that isn’t even the most terrifying thing about the incident! Upon investigating, it was found that all of them were killed with the same weapon before they could even pull the triggers to their guns! And guess what, the weapon in question was a tree branch! Do you see where I’m going with this? If dozens of armed men couldn’t deal with a single assailant wielding a tree branch, what makes you think our group will make it out alive if we don’t retreat?” explained Leopold, his forehead still dripping with cold sweat.

Now understanding where Leopold was coming from, his subordinates immediately began hastening their paces away from the area.

After all, Hansel was an extremely powerful big shot so his men were definitely no small fries. However, to think that all of them were killed by a single person, and with only a single tree branch!

Judging from the strength, skill, and weapon of choice of the young man from earlier, all of them could only wonder if he was the one who was responsible for killing off all of Hansel’s men.

Back inside the cave, Whistler stood up after some difficulty before saying, “I really didn’t know that such a powerful and talented person could even exist on this planet! I go by Whistler Sankey! Thank you for saving our lives, sir!” said Whistler, his voice filled with respect and gratitude.

Seeing that, his other men began doing the same as well.

“You’re all being way too polite. It was just a coincidence that I happened to save your lives. After all, what happened earlier was merely self-defense,” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

“I see... Speaking of which, sir. You mentioned earlier that my wound shouldn’t be bandaged now. Why was that?” asked Whistler.

Hearing that, Gerald looked at the wounded man.

He had honestly only saved them since he had seen how much those men valued their friendship. If they were merely working as hired individuals who thought little about their brothers and only prioritized taking down the enemy forces, Gerald wouldn’t even have bothered interfering with Leopold’s attack in the first place.

Shaking his head, Gerald then said, "...Lie down on your side. I'll get that bullet out from you first before we continue talking..."

Chapter 937

"Amazing! Not only are you incredibly skillful and strong, but you're also proficient with medicine! My admiration for you now knows no bounds!" said Whistler respectfully

In response, Gerald only shook his head in silence.

After exchanging glances with his men for a while, Whistler then added, "I do wonder if there's anything my men and I could do for you in future, sir? Since you saved our lives, we're more than willing to follow you around and do whatever we can for you!"

He didn't just say that to please Gerald either. Their gratitude was genuine. After all, anyone would feel the same way after being saved from such a tight situation. The fact that Gerald was aware of how much Whistler and his men valued their brotherhood only served to make their proposal all the more meaningful.

In addition, it's not like they had anywhere else to go now. They all knew that by following this powerful young man, a bright future wasn't completely out of the question anymore.

"Follow me around? Sorry to disappoint, but I'll be looking for a place to stay in, in the Triangle District myself. After all, I don't exactly have a place to return to anymore!" replied Gerald with a bitter smile.

"You don't have anywhere to go to as well, sir? Well that's perfect then! All of us here are relatively familiar with the Triangle District, so we could help you navigate around the area, sir! Do consider taking us in!" said Whistler.

Hearing that, Gerald thought to himself for a moment.

He was well aware that what he currently lacked most was manpower. If he was to go against Kort, he would eventually need to find help anyway since there was no way he was going to be able to take that b*stard down alone.

From what he had earlier seen, Whistler and his men also had excellent foundations as well as a strong sense of loyalty. If he trained these men like how Finnley had trained him before, then they would no doubt be able to at least be at Quentin and Trey's level in the future.

“You’re looking too highly of me if you’re asking me to take you in. After all, I’m a vagabond as well. However, since you suggested it, I accept. Thanks for having me,” replied Gerald with a smile.

“This is simply too perfect then, sir!” shouted Whistler and his men, overjoyed.

As they laughed merrily, roars of thunder slowly grew louder and more frequent as dark clouds filled the sky again. Soon after, the heavy downpour resumed.

It was honestly a rare opportunity for the men to enjoy such peace of mind as they stared out at the rain from inside the cave.

Eventually, Whistler said, “If we’re going to be working together from now on, we simply can’t continue living like this, sir! If we want to survive in the Triangle District, then we’ll have to build our own industry and power!”

Gerald simply nodded in agreement. After all, it would definitely not be a cakewalk to survive in the Triangle District when a cave was currently their only source of shelter!

“Since you suggested it, do you have any good ideas of where to start?” asked Gerald as he turned to look at Whistler.

“Well, we’ll definitely be avoiding Heavenly City, at least for now. While it’s the largest city in the Triangle District with a booming economy and their own ways of conducting themselves in society, there are simply too many forces going against each other there. Trying to establish a footing there with our current situation would definitely be extremely complicated and chaotic!”

“However, a small town that goes by the name of Talgo town lies about ten kilometers away from that city. While not as prosperous as Heavenly City, the economy there isn’t too bad for a small town. I suggest building our name there, sir! While I currently only have a little money left, I believe that it’s still enough to start a small business there!” explained Whistler.

Gerald simply waved a hand before saying, “There’s no need to start small. I currently have enough with me to buy a few large industries. Speaking of which, what’s the main industry in Talgo town?”

“If I remember correctly, they’re most well-known for their medicinal herb and material-processing factory! However, the factory itself is rather large, so it’ll definitely cost quite a bit to buy it!” replied Whistler.

“A medicinal factory you say?” said Gerald, his interest clearly piqued.

'While I'm still in search of the Ginseng King, I'll still need other medicinal herbs and materials to train myself... By buying the medicinal factory, things will be much more convenient for me!' Gerald thought to himself.

"Alright, as soon as the rain stops, let's rush over so that I can borrow the money we need to buy the factory!" announced Gerald.

It was two days later in a small hotel located in Talgo town when Whistler pushed a room's door open and said, "It's done, sir!"

Following him, were two men by the name of Stanley and Wyham.

Chapter 938

"So quickly?" asked Gerald.

Coughing before clearing his throat, Whistler then said, "Well, the owner of the factory has constantly been harassed by the local forces here for quite some time... He just couldn't endure it anymore. He was actually quite willing to sell the factory for a low price! As a result, we still have a little money with us now. Speaking of which, since he's no longer the company's owner, should we change the company's name?" asked Whistler.

"Hmm... Let's go with Royal Dragon!" said Gerald rather casually.

"Oh? Royal Dragon Inc? Or perhaps, Royal Dragon Group? Regardless, that sounds like an excellent name! It certainly sounds domineering, that's for sure. I'll proceed with the rest of the paperwork immediately! Also, before I leave, my brothers and I have pooled in our money to buy the manor which the previous factory owner used to live in! You can live there in future!" added Whistler with a smile.

"Just to make sure, you didn't coerce him into doing so, right?" asked Gerald, fully aware of how much money Whistler and his group currently had on them. To him, that amount was definitely not enough to purchase an entire manor.

"Of course we didn't! The boss voluntarily agreed to everything!"

Hearing that, Gerald nodded. Before they had gone off to buy the factory earlier, Gerald had made it clear that under no circumstances should any of them threaten or coerce the factory's owner if he refused to sell it. Whistler had kept that rule in mind, which was why he hadn't lost his temper at all during his discussion with the company's ex-owner earlier.

“Alright, I trust you. Also, what do you mean only I can live there? All of you should move in as well! We’re companions now, are we not? Now lead me to the manor! I’d like to have a good look at it!”

“R-right away!” stuttered Whistler and the others, overjoyed by Gerald’s kind words.

Upon exiting the hotel, Gerald was greeted by two big Mercedes Benz. He honestly had no idea how Whistler even got his hands on those cars.

However, after getting to know the man a bit more in the past two days, Gerald realized that not only was Whistler capable, in a sense, he was very much like Zack, both careful and meticulous with everything that he did.

As Gerald looked out the car’s window on their way there, he frowned slightly when he saw a few gang members smashing and destroying several shops.

Sadly, this wasn’t an uncommon scene here. As Gerald looked at all the other gangsters who were walking up and down the streets with their dragon tattoos on full display, he recalled how Whistler had told him that Talgo Town was a pretty small town.

When he first arrived two days prior, however, he found that Talgo town was anything but small. In fact, the prosperous town was probably about the size of two Serene Counties!

From what he had seen, the town had several bars, restaurants, and many other facilities. However, just like all the other places within the Triangle District, this place was definitely chaotic.

It wasn’t long before they finally arrived at the manor. Upon stepping inside, however, Gerald was immediately greeted by the sound of crying. It seemed to come from the living quarters.

As Whistler pushed the door leading there open, they saw a middle-aged man reprimanding around twenty maids.

“All of you have to be on your best behavior, got that? If all of you aren’t smiling by the time the new master arrives and he ends up being unhappy, I’ll personally skin each and every one of you alive!”

Fuming, he then turned around before realizing that Gerald and his men were already there!

“O-oh! Mr. Sankey! I didn’t notice that you had already arrived! Could this gentleman over here be the new master of the manor? With such a great temperament, I’m certain he’s the one! Ah, where are my manners? I go by the name of Sherman Levine, and I’ll be working as your butler from today onward! It’s an honor to meet you, new master of the manor!” said Sherman with a rather wicked glint in his eyes as he bowed respectfully before Gerald.

“G-greetings, master!” said all the beautiful maids in unison, some of them already trembling as they looked at Gerald.

“Speaking of which, these here are the maids who used to work for the factory’s previous owner! Since they seemed to be pretty good at their job, I decided to keep them!” said Whistler.

“They are indeed! You can rest assured, master, for I was the one who personally trained all of them! They’ll follow your every order to a T!” added Sherman with a laugh.

“These girls... Were they abducted?” asked Gerald as he slowly walked toward one of the maids.

Pulling her sleeve up, several bruises and whip marks were instantly noticeable.

“Hahaha! Well, I wouldn’t use the term, ‘abduct’... I simply bought them off the market! A single one of these maids actually costs less than a packet of my cigarettes! Can you believe that? Also, if you were wondering, all these beauties are unopened packages! I’ve already driven away anyone who’s already been used! I hope you’re satisfied with them, master!”

On the contrary, Gerald now had a huge frown on his face as his disgust for Sherman peaked.

Turning to look at the butler, Gerald said in a frigid tone, “I don’t need any of them. Ask them for their home addresses and return them safely, right this instance!”

Chapter 939

“I-I beg your pardon...? Send them home...?” asked Sherman in surprise.

“Did sir not make himself clear enough?!” yelled Whistler coldly.

“L-loud and clear! I’ll be sending them home right away then, master!” replied Sherman as he nodded repeatedly in fright.

Hearing that, the maids instantly began bowing gratefully toward Gerald as they took turns saying ‘thank you’ to him.

“Alright, alright, settle down... You’re all free to return to your homes now!” said Gerald as he smiled subtly.

Since Gerald had personally experienced what it felt like to be forced to leave his own home, he wasn’t about to allow these girls to continue going through the same sadness and grief that he had. To him, they had already suffered enough after going through the humiliation of being bought as servants. Besides, he wasn’t really a domineering person in the first place.

Soon after, most of the maids left together with Sherman. However, two of them remained standing there, sobbing silently.

“Aren’t both of you going to leave?” asked Gerald.

“O-our parents have already been slaughtered by the gangsters here... We’re homeless, master!” said one of the girls as the other nodded between tears.

“Please allow us to stay here, master! We’ll definitely serve you well! We only ask that you provide food and shelter for us, master!” said the other girl.

“Very well, then. You’re free to stay if you wish. Rest assured, however, that nobody here is going to bully either of you from now on!” replied Gerald with a smile.

Upon getting his approval, both of them immediately shouted in gratitude, “We, Yukie and Lucy thank you sincerely with all our hearts, master!”

Yukie, in particular, seemed particularly grateful as she felt her heart rate rise after taking a peek at him.

After all, not only was he extremely handsome, but unlike the many vicious others who had only ever seen her as an insignificant person, her new master seemed to also have a very kind heart.

Now that that was settled, Gerald finally began settling down in his new mansion.

With the remaining money, Whistler then personally sought out and recruited over a hundred young men who were all physically capable and loyal.

They would serve as the bodyguards of the Royal Dragon Group.

Their training routine began with Whistler teaching them for the first two weeks before transferring over to Gerald once they were ready for more advanced techniques.

As a result of all that training, the men under Gerald showed a clear spike in both strength and general quality within less than a month. Though they had previously only been ordinary men, Gerald could safely say that they were now comparable to the bodyguards who worked for his family.

It was sometime after that when Yukie and Lucy could be seen in their room.

While Yukie appeared to be carefully separating quality white fungus from the regular ones from a small pile on her table, Lucy herself was simply rolling on the bed.

Smiling bitterly, Lucy said, "You've already been grouping the white fungus for so long, Yukie! Aren't you tired at all?"

Though it had barely even been a month since Gerald became their new master, both of them already had much better complexions.

This was especially so for Yukie who had grown to become so sweet and beautiful that anyone who saw her instantly felt the need to treat her compassionately.

"Not at all! If anyone should be tired, it's sir! After all, he's been training those bodyguards for days now! He has to manage the company as well! Since he probably hasn't had the time to take care of himself, I'll be preparing a bowl of white fungus soup for him later!" replied Yukie with a sweet smile.

"Yeah, sir truly is a very kind man... However, you're even kinder than him, Yukie! After all, all you ever think about is his well being! Almost everything I've seen you done is for him! Haha!" said Lucy with a laugh.

What she had said was true. Throughout their time working for Gerald, Yukie had always stuck close to him.

In fact, she had made it her personal duty to take care of everything regarding her master, from the food that he ate to the clothes he wore. Yukie made sure to plan and prepare everything perfectly for Gerald.

As both of them reminisced about their short time working under Gerald, Lucy suddenly said, “Speaking of which, Yukie... Back when sir freed us from being slaves, why didn’t you choose to return to your country and hometown? Sir was even willing to provide the cash for the plane tickets! After all, though uncle and aunt have passed away, you still have other relatives living there, right?”

Chapter 940

“Could it be that... you like our master?” added Lucy as she cupped her mouth while laughing.

“Quit spouting nonsense, Lucy... I... I don’t have any other relatives to speak of! However, I will admit that I felt a sense of security the first time I laid eyes on master... It was the reason why I chose to stay. Also, regarding the liking part, how could someone like me ever be qualified to fall for someone like master?!” replied Yukie as she blushed.

“Speaking of which, Lucy... I distinctly remembered that you wanted to return to your hometown even more than I did! Why didn’t you leave back then?” added Yukie.

“Well, I simply felt that master was a good person who wouldn’t abuse us like our previous ones... Adding that to the fact that he respected us so much, I just felt obligated to stay and work for him! I do have a second reason for staying, however... Remember Tyson? He told me that he would come pick me up in a little under a month back then! I didn’t want him to have to hunt around for me so I simply stayed put here! That way, he would be able to pick me up easily when the time came! However, since he isn’t here yet, I’m assuming that he’s still undergoing his mission to save his brother. Once he’s done that, he told me that he’d take me away before finally marrying me!” explained Lucy with a smile on her face.

“I see... Still, do you truly believe everything that he said? I mean yes, Tyson did save us before... However, I’ll be frank and say that I don’t think he’ll actually come over to take you away! Have you prepared yourself for that possibility...?” said Yukie as she attempted to lower Lucy’s expectations so that she wouldn’t end up getting too hurt if Tyson never came.

“Don’t worry, I get where you’re coming from... However, I’ve chosen to have faith in Tyson. He’ll definitely come looking for me once he saves his brother! After all, we’ve already gotten engaged! Be it within this month, a year, or a lifetime, I’ll still be waiting patiently for him!” declared Lucy as she cupped her blushing cheeks.

“Alright then! Still, it’s pretty rare to see you being this devoted! Also, I’m already done with the mushrooms so come along and let’s make some soup for sir!”

With that, both of the girls exited their room, chatting and laughing happily as they left for the kitchen.

A little while later, a group of men could be seen making their way through the jungle atop a huge mountain located north of the Royal Dragon Group.

The group itself consisted of over a hundred men who had been divided into five teams. Whistler and his four brothers were each given a team to be in charge of.

While the men trained on, Yukie and Lucy made their own way toward their master who was sitting on a lounge chair as he drank his tea while two bodyguards wearing sunglasses stood attentively on either side of his chair. One of the guards had his arms behind his back while the other held on to an umbrella, keeping Gerald constantly under the shade.

“We’ve made some bird’s nest for you, sir! Do try some!” said Yukie as she handed him the thermos which she had been carrying along with her.

“You didn’t have to go through all that trouble! Thank you!” said Gerald with a smile as he lowered his tea and took the thermos.

Yukie herself couldn’t help but smile sweetly in response.

As she continued looking at him, she couldn’t help but feel that Gerald’s body and physique seemed to change constantly!

After all, she distinctly remembered that the muscles on Gerald’s body weren’t that huge sometime ago... However, they seemed to have suddenly gained a lot of mass out of the blue in the past few days!

This was the second time Yukie was witnessing such a scenario...

Before she could wonder any further about his physicality, rapid footsteps could be heard approaching them.

Turning around, all of them then saw Whistler running toward Gerald together with his team. From what they could see, a few of his men at the back were carrying a man’s body.

“Sir! We found this unconscious man while we were up in the mountains earlier! He has serious injuries all over his body and he seems to have fainted for at least a few days by now! He’s slowly dying as we speak! What should we do, sir?” announced Whistler as his subordinates slowly lowered the injured man to the ground.

Frowning, Gerald turned to look at the injured man... However, the moment he saw the man’s face, his heart instantly began beating rapidly.

Lucy, on the other hand, was now quivering so much that the tray she was holding onto soon clattered on the floor.

“Tyson?!” shouted both of them in unison.

While Gerald immediately stood up from his shock, Lucy was already crying as she crouched beside the injured man.

The dying man wasn't just any other Tyson. He was the Tyson from the Drake & Tyson duo.

Shaking his shock off, Gerald found himself running over to Tyson's side as well.

Chapter 941

“Tyson!” cried out Lucy again as Whistler turned to look at Gerald.

“Are you acquainted with him, sir?” asked Whistler.

In response, Gerald immediately replied, “But of course I am! He may not be my biological brother, but I treat him as one!”

“...Huh? T-then, please save him, sir! Since you're proficient with medicine, you have to save him!” wailed Lucy between sobs.

When he heard her request, Gerald recalled Lucy mentioning someone by the name of Tyson to him sometime back. To think that the Tyson she was waiting for turned out to be the exact same person he cared greatly for as well!

If Gerald had been aware that this was the case, he would've sent some of his people out to look for him ages ago. If only that had happened, then this turn of events could've very easily been avoided.

“Please give them some space, Lucy... Didn't you hear that master treats Tyson like his real brother?” persuaded Yukie as she pulled Lucy aside.

Gerald himself immediately began checking Tyson's wounds. As was expected, the man was severely injured. Should Tyson have been found a few hours later, even Finnley wouldn't have been able to save him. Regardless, treatment couldn't be delayed any longer.

“Quick! Carry him back to the manor!” ordered Gerald.

It was two hours later when one of Tyson's fingers finally twitched. Following that, his eyelids fluttered slightly as the man slowly opened his eyes.

The first thing he saw was Lucy, the girl clutching onto his hand tightly.

"...Lu...cy...? Could I... be dreaming? Or am I already dead...?" said Tyson weakly.

"T-Tyson! You're awake! N-no, this isn't a dream! Master! Master cured you!" cried out Lucy, happy to see him awake again.

Hearing that, Tyson was slightly baffled.

"Master? Lucy, I'm well aware of the extent of injuries I sustained... As far as I'm aware, not even Master Jenkinson from the Salford Province would have been able to cure me. That was the reason why I chose to run all the way here just to meet you for one final time... Are you really sure that I'll make a full recovery...?"

"Extremely sure, Tyson... After all, master is highly capable! Speaking of master... I was so excited upon seeing you awake that I almost forgot to inform master about it..." replied Lucy, tears of joy in her eyes.

After heading out to call the 'master', it was moments later when Tyson heard an extremely familiar voice asking, "Are you awake, Tyson?"

Tyson recognized that voice anywhere, and he instantly began trembling in shock as he turned to look at the owner of the voice.

"M-Mr. Crawford...?"

Tyson's lips were twitching with both happiness and surprise as he immediately attempted to sit up.

"Don't move too much. I just closed those wounds," replied Gerald as he walked over to balance the weakened man.

Grabbing hold of Gerald's hands tightly, Tyson then said, "T-there were so many rumors of you being dead... Yet... I'm so glad that you're not... To think that I would be able to meet you again all the way out here, Mr. Crawford! How wonderful!"

As Tyson got teary-eyed from his excitement, Gerald simply smiled before saying, “I’m alive and well! They aren’t going to kill me that easily!”

Never had Gerald expected to bump into Tyson again, especially not in such foreign lands.

“He’s the master I was talking about, Tyson! He saved you!” said Lucy as she watched the two happy men.

“...What? Mr. Crawford? You were the one who healed me? When did you acquire such high medical proficiency?” asked Tyson, astonished by what he heard.

“It all happened over half a year ago... I’ll tell you all about what happened in the future... For now, let me do the asking. What exactly happened for you to end up in such a state? If we had found you any later, you’d be dead by now, you know? Also, where’s Drake?” questioned Gerald in return.

Hearing his brother’s name, Tyson’s face scrunched up slightly. He then began detailing everything that had happened to him and his brother throughout Gerald’s absence.

It all began on the night they had risked their lives to send Gerald away.

After achieving that, they returned to the Crawford family.

Chapter 942

However, by then, the Crawfords had begun fearing that the incident—of the Drake & Tyson duo rescuing Gerald—would be exposed sooner or later. As a result, they provided both the brothers some money and told them to leave the Crawford family.

The Drake & Tyson duo didn’t really have any issues with that, and while they had first planned to return to the mercenary base abroad, on their way there, they caught wind of the incident that had befallen both Gerald and Zack in Merry City that night.

Upon finding out that Gerald had gone missing, they immediately rushed over to the Salford Province to secretly investigate the incident. However, even after three months had passed, neither of them had been able to find any new leads.

As if that wasn’t enough, even the Schuyler family had begun noticing their activity. Knowing that, both of them knew that they didn’t have much of a choice but to halt their investigations for the time being. After some planning, they decided to leave the Salford Province and head to the Triangle District in Heavenly City.

Their plan was to build a base there, and with the remaining money the Crawfords had given them, they intended to form a few forces. Once they were prepared enough to return to the Salford Province, together with their forces, they would take revenge on the Schuyler family.

That was their plan anyway. Little did they know that they had severely underestimated those living in the Heavenly City.

In one of their many attempts to acquire more powerful and influential forces there through battle, the two brothers ended up getting defeated by a man called Sven Westmore, a great and powerful overlord in the Heavenly City.

While they managed to capture Drake, Tyson was able to make it out by the skin of his teeth.

From then onward, Tyson had to live in the shadows, making sure that he switched hiding spots every once in a while.

During that period, he came across a butler—by the name of Evan—flogging over ten girls. Disgusted and enraged by that, Tyson ended up killing Evan on the spot.

It was then when he got to know Lucy. During their few days together, the duo found themselves falling for each other to a point where Tyson even promised her that they would get married once he successfully rescued his brother.

Sadly, the mission was an absolute failure. Sven had easily defeated him, and just like the first time, Tyson barely managed to escape with his life intact. However, unlike back then, he was severely injured this time.

After being on the run for some time, he eventually made it to the mountains where he promptly fainted. All that led to the events of today.

“Sven?” asked Gerald with a frown.

Hearing that name, Whistler and his men shivered slightly before explaining, “Sven is indeed a powerful overlord in Heavenly City, sir. He’s well aware of his power and influence, so much so, in fact, that he even considers himself to be a villain! What more, he’s physically strong as well! It wouldn’t be a stretch to say that an already powerful man who’s trained for over ten years still wouldn’t be unable to defeat Sven. While it’s evident that Tyson and his brother are proficient with martial arts, it isn’t much of a surprise to us that both of them lost to him...”

“Is he really that powerful...?” replied Gerald.

Gerald’s doubt was understandable since he was well aware of the Drake & Tyson duo’s capabilities. Still, he had to admit that the fact that the strong and talented brothers were able to be cornered so badly was definitely a rare occurrence.

What more, Whistler—who was honestly not much weaker than the two brothers at this point—clearly appeared frightened of Sven.

“He is, sir! However, our lives belong to you! We aren’t afraid of death, so if you order us to fight him, we’ll do so willingly!” declared Whistler with resolution in his voice.

“He speaks for all of us, sir!” added the other men in unison.

Hearing that, Gerald simply raised a hand before stating, “If he’s as powerful as Whistler says he is, then we need to plan things out carefully first. Try gathering every bit of information about Sven’s current power and influence, Whistler. Your task begins immediately!”

While Gerald himself wasn’t afraid of Sven, he didn’t want his subordinates to die meaninglessly if Sven truly was as ruthless and powerful as they described him to be.

Regardless, the operation would still commence sooner or later. After all, Gerald had an unbreakable bond with the Drake and Tyson duo.

Since Drake was in trouble, Gerald didn’t mind risking his life to save him.

It was evening when the still weak Tyson slowly inched toward the yard. Once he was there, he turned to look at Gerald who was standing in the middle of the area, his arms behind his back.

“Mr. Crawford... Do bring me along when you head to Heavenly City...”

“Why did you get off the bed, Tyson...? Besides, I told you that I no longer go by Mr. Crawford,” replied Gerald with a smile.

“Understood, Mr. Crawford- ...Well, while we’re at it, since my brother and I have left the Crawford family, then we shouldn’t be called the Drake & Tyson duo anymore either. After all, it was the young lady who gave us that name. Instead, you can call me by my real name now, Tyson Jay,” replied Tyson with a slightly bitter smile.

Hearing that, Gerald nodded and patted him on the shoulder before saying, “I’ll be making a move in a few days. Worry not, for I’ll definitely get Tyson back safely. In the meantime, do get some rest. You need it.”

“But Mr. Crawford-”

“There’s no need to persuade me. You’re not coming along, and that’s my final decision,” interrupted Gerald as he raised a hand before Tyson could even say anything.

As soon as his sentence ended, both of them saw Whistler jogging toward them.

“Sir! You’ve just received an invitation to attend a gathering tonight! The gathering itself was hosted by the five most powerful groups in Talgo Town! The person who sent the invitation card even stated that your attendance was a must!” sneered Whistler.

“A gathering that I must attend? Is that a threat? I do wonder if the dinner is just a cover to hide their malicious intent...” replied Gerald with a cold smile on his face.

“Humph! I’m well aware of what those five groups are thinking! They just want to assert their dominance since they know that we just made our base here! Once they achieve that, they’ll definitely start telling us to pay them some sort of insurance fee. They’re barely worth your time, sir! Just say the word and I’ll reject them immediately!”

“Oh, there’s no need to reject them. Since we’ll be heading to Heavenly City tomorrow, I’d rather not have to worry about them getting offended if I decline their invitation. They’ve already made so many preparations anyway so it would be rather disrespectful if I didn’t go. Tell the person who sent the invitation that we’ll be going tonight.”

Chapter 943

“I still don’t think that the shirt I got for you is suitable for the occasion, sir... Why don’t we stop the car and get you a new and better shirt? How about it?” asked Yukie with a smile.

She was currently sitting beside Gerald as their team of cars headed toward the gathering.

“I think it’s fine...” replied Gerald as he looked down at his shirt with a slightly bitter smile.

As the cars approached a commercial building, Gerald looked out the window. To his surprise, the first person he saw was a rather familiar-looking youth.

“Is there anything wrong, sir?” asked Yukie.

“If my eyes do not deceive me, that seems like an old classmate of mine... Or at least a person that resembles him a lot. Regardless, stop the cars here. I’m heading into that building,” ordered Gerald.

Hearing his command, all the cars under him immediately halted in the middle of the road.

Though this essentially blocked most of the main road, nobody dared to say anything about it. After all, whenever the people of Talgo Town saw a team of cars acting like they owned the place, they knew that a big shot—whom they most likely couldn’t afford to offend—was present.

As a result, the other drivers on the road simply opted to take detours.

Meanwhile, Gerald and Yukie entered the commercial building together.

The youth from before was choosing from an array of suits when he suddenly felt a firm pat on his shoulder. Shocked, he immediately turned to look at who had done the deed.

His shock, however, quickly turned from surprise to joy.

“F*ck! Is that really you, Gerald?”

“So it really is you, Harper!” said Gerald with a smile on his face.

“I had no idea you were still in one piece! After all, the last time I heard, you had gone missing! So you were in Heavenly City this entire time! No wonder I couldn’t get any information on your whereabouts regardless of how much I asked around!” replied Harper excitedly.

“Regardless, how wonderful to be able to meet you here again after so long!” added Harper as he patted Gerald’s shoulder in return.

“It is indeed! Speaking of which, why did you come here, Harper?” asked Gerald with slight confusion once they were done exchanging pleasantries.

After all, this place was infamously known for being chaotic. Aside from the locals, ordinary people from the outside would never come here for any development projects.

“Well, since I’m now working for a large company in Weston that solicits business deals, I’m here on a business trip. Still, this place truly is as chaotic as they describe. Looking at the people walking down the streets, it wouldn’t be a stretch to say that nine out of every ten people here have guns on them at all times!” replied Harper with a sigh.

Upon hearing that, Gerald simply smiled.

“But that’s enough about me. What about you? I haven’t heard from you in so long! Have you truly been staying here this entire time? Are any of your limbs prosthetic?” joked Harper with a laugh.

Being such close friends, it was natural for them to mock each other playfully.

“All my limbs are the real deal! Also, no, I only arrived here not long ago. Regarding the missing aspect... Let’s just say I lost contact with all of you due to some ‘issues,’” replied Gerald.

Hearing that, Harper sighed before saying, “I see... While I did hear about the incident of you separating from your family as well, it’s really no big deal to me, Gerald. After all, you’ve already enjoyed what you could a year ago. With or without a family, your life is still very much worth it.”

After saying that, he patted Gerald on the shoulder again.

It was evident that both of them still had a lot to say to each other. Because of that, Gerald then replied, “Regardless, here’s my contact number, Harper. Let’s meet up again in about two days! I’m a bit busy till then, sadly!”

“Speaking of which, who’s that? Is she your girlfriend?” asked Harper as he looked at Yukie with a smile after noting down Gerald’s contact number.

Hearing that, Yukie's cute face immediately became as red as a tomato.

"I'll explain the entire situation once I get a chance to in future..." replied Gerald as he smiled rather bitterly.

"Fine, fine... For now, I'll leave you to your business. I need to buy a new suit too since I'm meeting an important client tomorrow."

With that, both of them hugged each other. Just as Gerald was ready to leave, a female voice could be heard saying, "Hmm? Is that you, Mr. Sullivan? What a coincidence!"

Turning to look at who had called him, Harper found himself smiling as he replied, "Chairman Quelch! Chairman Brown! What a coincidence!"

Chapter 944

Realizing that Harper's clients were here, Gerald nudged his head toward the two new faces as he looked at Harper, clearly signaling him to deal with his work first.

As Gerald turned to leave, however, he was shocked when he realized who the man and woman were. As it turned out, they were none other than Raquel and her boyfriend, Jefferson!

Back when he was still in a pitiful state over half a year ago, he remembered how Raquel had humiliated him when he was still working in the construction zone.

"D*mn! Is that really you, Gerald?" exclaimed Raquel as she crossed her arms before flashing a cold smile at him.

"Oh? Are you familiar with Chairman Quelch and Chairman Brown, Gerald? Haha! Chairman Brown's in charge of a large company here! I'm currently negotiating a project with them!" explained Harper.

"We're acquainted, yes," replied Gerald with a subtle nod.

"Humph! Pretending that we barely know each other, Gerald? As if you'd ever be able to forget about me! After all, I was the one who paid you your salary back when you were part-timing at that construction zone!" sneered Raquel.

Hearing that, Gerald only took a brief glance at her.

From what Marven had told him before, she wasn't always like this. However, her personality changed rapidly for the worse as she got older.

"I do wonder if there's been some sort of misunderstanding between both of you, Chairman Quelch. After all, he's a good friend of mine and I know for a fact that he's a good person," defended Harper when he saw how ruthlessly Raquel was mocking Gerald.

"Oh? He's your friend you say? Well then, I'm sorry to announce that whatever you've negotiated with my husband's uncle will now officially be terminated, Mr. Sullivan! I'm sure you agree with the project's cancellation too, don't you dear?" stated Raquel as she clung onto her boyfriend's arm.

"But of course!"

"Chairman Quelch, you..."

Though he wanted to say something, Harper was left completely speechless. To think that all the effort he had spent there throughout the week was now gone, just like that.

At that moment, a staff member entered the building and started shouting rather unceremoniously.

"Whoever owns the car with the registration number of ***Province, drive it away, right this instant! If nobody moves it soon, then I'm calling someone over to tow it away!"

As the staff member continued shouting for the owner of the car, it was instantly made clear to everyone foreign to the city that the people living here didn't have the same sort of courtesy one would expect to see from someone living elsewhere within the country.

The way things worked here, if an argument took place, having fights was only the natural response.

"The hell? I made sure to park my car well! What's the big idea?" shouted Jefferson coldly in reply.

“What do you mean what’s wrong? It’s blocked the road! Get out there and move it immediately else I’ll have it towed!” retorted the staff member rudely.

Not wanting to be humiliated in front of Raquel and especially not in front of Gerald and Harper, Jefferson replied, “Hey now, my uncle is Graham Worton! His nickname is Boss Gram, you know?!”

“I don’t know who the f*ck Boss Gram or Grey or whatever his name is! Just drive the d*mned car away already!” scolded the staff member impatiently.

The staff member’s response momentarily stunned Raquel’s boyfriend. After a brief moment of awkward silence, he then said, “Fine! I’d like to see who I’m blocking as well!”

Not wanting to be outdone, he then held on to Raquel’s hand as both of them left the premise.

Even though they were no longer in the shop, Jefferson could still be heard shouting, “Just so you know, I’ll be calling my uncle immediately as well! How absolutely baffling that people who don’t want to pay him any respect exist!”

Meanwhile, Yukie ran over to Gerald before saying, “Here, I’ve bought a shirt for you, sir!”

Nodding toward her, Gerald then turned to look at Harper before saying, “Not to worry, Harper. I’ll contact you in a few days, so just wait for my call.”

After saying that, Gerald then left together with Yuki.

Chapter 945

By then, both Raquel and Jefferson had arrived at the commercial building’s entrance.

In truth, Jefferson had indeed parked his car appropriately by the side of the road. However, a team of cars seemed to have parked right in the middle of the road!

Since Jefferson’s car had been parked in the only lane that the team of cars didn’t block, in a way, his car truly was blocking the road!

“Hey! We’re clearly not the one at fault here! After all, it’s that team of cars that are blocking most of the road! Why should we be the only ones ordered to move our car?” shouted Raquel, unable to reconcile with the staff member’s logic.

“Hah! Just look at your car’s brand then compare it to that of the team of cars! Though I guess you’re from out of town since you don’t seem to know how things work here. Listen, just move your car immediately. Don’t blame me if something happens, because I’m pretty sure your Boss Gram or whatever his name is won’t be able to take responsibility if things go south!” sneered the staff member.

“...Well, I have heard that only people with great influence and power in Talgo Town are able to own and go around with this many cars...” muttered Jefferson.

“I’m glad that you understand that,” said the staff member before finally leaving.

“Let’s just move our car somewhere else while we can... My uncle will probably suffer terribly if we end up offending the local influential people...”

“Alright!” replied Raquel with a sigh before sticking her tongue out at the staff member’s back.

As they walked toward their car, she looked at the team of luxurious cars and couldn’t help but feel slightly jealous.

She wasn’t the only one who felt that way either. It was evident that all the pedestrians who were walking past the cars were feeling the same jealousy she was. After all, who wouldn’t want to be well-regarded and do as they pleased on the road? To have the power to park right in the middle of the road without anyone making a fuss about it?

Raquel certainly did. How domineering the person who owned all the cars must be!

At that moment, all the cars’ doors were opened and out stepped several bodyguards donning black suits. They all looked equally imposing and their extraordinarily solemn expressions suggested that they were waiting for someone no less important than a respectful king.

“Could they be working for some influential group in Talgo Town?”

“I wonder myself... I’ve honestly never seen such imposing subordinates belonging to any of the influential groups from both Talgo Town and even Heavenly City!”

“Maybe they’re working for a new influential group that’s quickly rising up the ranks!”

“Beats me, but regardless, all of them look utterly powerful!”

Everyone was now gossiping as they continued sneaking glances at the bodyguards, stunned by their intimidating demeanors.

Shortly after, what seemed to be the leaders of the bodyguards began guiding their men over to where Raquel and her boyfriend were standing. As a result, both of them were so terrified that they were paralyzed in place. Their fear was so great that they didn't even consider driving away, even though they were standing right next to their car!

However, the group of bodyguards ended up ignoring them, choosing instead to stare at the direction of the commercial store.

Just as Raquel and Jefferson gulped in relief, the leaders of the guards began walking forward.

Turning around to see where they were headed to, the leaders stopped right before a youth before shouting in unison, “The car is this way, sir! Please, follow us!”

Hearing that, another subordinate—who was stationed in front of one of the cars—immediately opened the car's door.

“Did you hear that? They called him sir! To think that we'd get to see a big boss today!”

“Yeah! Look over there! He's so young!”

As the crowd whispered to each other in astonishment, Raquel found herself dumbfounded as well.

After all, never would she have imagined that Gerald was the one the bodyguards were all waiting for.

“Alright, then! Let's head off!” replied Gerald with a nod.

As the group walked past Raquel and Jefferson, Gerald made sure to glance casually at Raquel.

Seeing that, Raquel's astonishment and shock seemed to amplify. Even her boyfriend slowly loosed his grip on Raquel's hand. After all, Raquel had targeted Gerald on multiple occasions.

To think that he was such a powerful person with so many trained subordinates...

Gerald, however, simply looked away from her after a short while. He didn't need to bother himself with such a weak woman.

After getting into his car, the revving of engines could be heard as the group of cars immediately sped off, leaving Raquel behind with a cocktail of complicated emotions.

Fear was one of them as she continued staring off into the distance, not even sure how to process everything she had just witnessed.

Chapter 946

Meanwhile, the gathering was already taking place in the largest hotel manor in Talgo Town.

Since the leaders of the five top influential groups in Talgo Town had brought along their subordinates, the manor was crowded with at least a thousand people.

As a result, it was no surprise that hubbub filled the entire venue.

At the same time, a high stage was also being set up in the manor. Once everything was in place, a few seats were placed upon the high stage. That was where the leaders were going to be seated.

"You're a wise and resourceful man, Diego! To think that you'd use the civil and military meeting to also portray how powerful we are to that newly founded Royal Dragon Group! Haha! It's like killing two birds with a stone!"

"I know, right? Still, now that the Royal Dragon Group has acquired the pharmaceutical factory that used to be our main source of income, I wonder if things will turn out the same with the factory's previous owner. After all, I heard that the Royal Dragon Group's boss is a rather young man. Does he really think he can gain power and status in Talgo Town that easily? It's like he's wishing for death!"

"Indeed. In all honesty, I thought that he wouldn't attend this time, given his young age. Quite frankly, I'd have respected him a bit more if he had chosen not to. Seeing that he's agreed to come, however, I guess he's just another worthless piece of trash!"

In response to that, the few bosses who were talking about Gerald immediately burst out laughing.

The man they were praising, Diego Jey, was the most powerful and influential big shot in all of Talgo Town. He looked to be around the age of forty, and the two gold teeth in his mouth would glisten whenever he talked.

After hearing what the other bosses had to say, Diego then announced, “Ladies and Gentleman! While the issue of the Royal Dragon Group certainly needs to be addressed, I hope that all of you don’t forget that the main reason we’re all gathered here today is to discuss the rearranging and redistribution of influence among the five powerful groups in Talgo Town. Once we arrive at a consensus, I hope that what happened four years ago won’t repeat itself!”

While the gathering—that was held once every four years—was officially known as a ‘civil and military meeting’, the event itself wasn’t as grand as its name suggested. In truth, it was simply a meeting for the five largest groups within Talgo town to divide their territories.

Their method of dividing the territories was somewhat straightforward. Essentially, whoever had more strength was entitled to have more territories.

‘Strength’, in this case, was measured through a competition where the five bosses would pit their best subordinates to fight against each other. The winner among the five would be crowned, king.

Once the meeting was over, the five groups would then reach an agreement, and once signed, none of them were allowed to break their promises.

The vowing process was taken particularly seriously since a few groups had beaten up others due to territory snatching attempts four years ago.

After all, while Talgo town was called a town, it was still much larger than Serene County. In fact, its size could easily be compared with a city in the north of Weston. Being so large, territorial control was crucial.

At that moment, the person standing guard over the door shouted, “Mr. Crawford from the Royal Dragon Group has arrived!”

Hearing that, the entire hall instantly fell silent. It was evident that everyone wanted to see what kind of person the big boss of the newly established Royal Dragon Group was.

Seconds later, Gerald and his bodyguards entered the place. Though he only had about sixty bodyguards with him, the pressuring atmosphere that they brought with them didn’t feel any less imposing.

Their solemn expressions alone made many of the other bosses' subordinates feel chills run down their spines.

Heading directly for the high stage, Gerald smiled faintly as he greeted, "A pleasure to meet you, gentlemen."

"Likewise, Chairman Crawford. Do take your seat," replied the bosses as they took turns looking at each other.

All five of them knew that Gerald wasn't a person with an ordinary background from the moment they saw how intimidating his bodyguards were.

Once they were done exchanging pleasantries, Diego narrowed his eyes slightly before saying, "I assume you've heard about the civil and military meeting that we're hosting tonight, Chairman Crawford. Since the competition is about to start soon and your subordinates all look equally powerful, I was wondering if you'd like to partake in it? Maybe we could also broaden our horizons from that."

Diego's underlying meaning was clear as day. He was simply saying that the Royal Dragon Group was probably even weaker compared to the previous president of the pharmaceutical factory.

However, he was also taunting Gerald since he wanted to test the abilities of the Royal Dragon Group's subordinates. After all, the way both Gerald and his men presented themselves was definitely extraordinary if anything.

"I'll have to refrain... While my subordinates certainly look the part, they're all honestly pretty useless. How on earth would they be able to compare with any of yours?" replied Gerald with a bitter smile as he shook his head.

"Now, now, Chairman Crawford! You're being way too humble! Who's to say they won't end up on top if they don't compete first?" said Diego before roaring with laughter.

"Well, since you insist, I guess I'll have to agree. Whistler, get the subordinates of these bosses to teach you and the others about the rules of the competition later," ordered Gerald with a smile.

"Very well, sir! We'd love to learn them!" replied Whistler as he smiled in return.

Chapter 947

It was honestly beyond Diego and the other bosses' expectations that those from the Royal Dragon Group wouldn't back down from the competition. Quite honestly, Gerald and his men looked rather confident about the whole thing.

Sensing that, Diego and the bosses knew that if they didn't show how powerful they were right off the bat, it was only going to get more and more difficult for them to keep Gerald's company in check in the future.

Soon after, the civil and military gathering began and the participants were led to a large area that had been set up within the center.

The five groups had each naturally chosen their most powerful subordinates to take part in the competition. Gerald himself had sent Whistler and a few of his other more capable men to participate.

Those whom Gerald had selected had all undergone personal special training with him. Due to that, their strength was much more reinforced compared to before.

As soon as the competition began, everyone was surprised to see Gerald's men immediately go on the offense. With swift and precise attacks, Whistler's men beat up the other group so vigorously that they never had the chance to even fight back before going down.

"...What?"

Diego and the other bosses could feel their eyelids twitching as they watched the defeated men laying on the ground.

Before the competition had started, the bosses had assured themselves that the subordinates Gerald had with him were simply putting up fronts, pretending to be Special Forces. After all, the way they had presented themselves was somewhat similar to how the previous pharmaceutical factory boss had first done.

Since both the previous boss and Gerald had put on airs before the actual competition, Diego and the other bosses simply assumed that Gerald's men would be as weak as the old boss's participants.

Little did they know that no fronts had ever been put up. Gerald's men were genuinely strong.

"So it seems that Mr. Crawford enjoys keeping a low profile... To think that he would have such powerful subordinates... Claiming that he'll be the one who will have the most say when it comes to dividing the territories once the meeting is over doesn't even sound all that far-fetched now..." said Diego as he forced a smile.

With the territories being divided among six people now instead of five, things were definitely going to be a lot different compared to how the civil and military meetings usually went. As if things weren't looking grim enough for the five bosses, it seemed that Gerald's subordinates really were going to be crowned champion by the end of the night.

While Gerald said nothing throughout the civil and military meeting, Diego and the other bosses got more and more restless every time a battle commenced.

This was mainly because Whistler himself hadn't made a single move throughout any of the battles. The other four of Gerald's subordinates were more than enough to take down their opponents.

By the time all the battles had been fought, an awkward silence filled the room. The silence was so overbearing that one would be able to hear a pin drop.

"My men and I appreciate how modestly you've been treating us, Chairman Jey. Thank you very much," said Whistler as he walked over, breaking the silence.

In response, Diego could only smile awkwardly as he said, "You're welcome... Still, you and your men are incredibly powerful... My own men weren't even able to show off that much tonight..."

"I'll have to correct you there, Chairman Jay. After all, the most powerful person here isn't any of us, but rather, our master. We learned everything we know from him," replied Whistler as he looked at Gerald before shaking his head with a bitter smile on his face.

"Oh? You're saying that Chairman Crawford here is much stronger than any of you are? Then it seems that we've truly made a terribly wrong judgment tonight!"

Though a smile was on Diego's face as he said that, inside, he was getting increasingly flustered.

After all, Gerald's men had completely defeated all five of Talgo Town's most influential groups in front of everyone. Not only had they failed to acquire the Royal Dragon Group tonight, most of the territories were now going to fall under Gerald's hand instead!

"Speaking of which, Chairman Jey... I wonder if what you said earlier was true... The part where the winner gets to divide the territories...?" asked Whistler.

Coughing before clearing his throat, Diego then replied with a smile, "...But of course that was true! With the competition results now out, we'll be discussing how we'll divide the territories once the party is over!"

Diego didn't even dare to say much despite his clear dissatisfaction. After all, he couldn't just break his promise.

"In the meantime, you there! Go remove the plaque bearing the names of all five of the influential groups involved in the Civil and Military Groups. From today onward, six names will be on it!" ordered Diego as he pointed at one of his subordinates.

While four other bosses barely said a word, they all had their own thoughts about the situation.

Though some of them resented the Royal Dragon Group for disrupting their affairs despite being outsiders, the others seemed to rather enjoy the misfortune of the displeased bosses.

The ones enjoying the current situation were the weaker groups who hoped that with Gerald's involvement—which would definitely upset the original balance—they would be able to manipulate how things ended up once chaos eventually ensued.

As a few subordinates returned with ladders to remove the plaque, a voice shouted, "There's no need to go through so much trouble!"

Chapter 948

The voice had come from Gerald, and after a loud sneer, he picked a fork up.

Looking at the plaque, Gerald squinted his eyes for a second before flicking his wrist extremely quickly. A split second later, the fork was no longer in Gerald's hand and the sound of something cracking could be heard!

By the time the audience looked up, the fork—that had already been embedded within one of the many shattered plaque pieces—was already falling to the ground alongside whatever remained of the broken plaque.

A crash soon followed as the plaque pieces shattered even further on the ground, the fork still clearly visible to the five bosses as they gulped.

"...W-what...?"

Shock and fear swept through them, and the ones who had earlier been smoking each felt their grip loosen on their cigarettes.

“W-who exactly is that person....?”

“It’s... It’s near impossible isn’t it...? I mean, how could a person have that much force to break a plaque so high up?!”

It was evident that the five bosses had never seen such a maneuver before as they discussed what they had just witnessed, terror reflected in their eyes. Though nobody mentioned it, all of them were thinking the same thing. If the plaque could shatter like that even though it was so high above the ground, what would happen if Gerald used the same technique on their heads?

Whistler and his men, on the other hand, only looked at each other with subtle smiles on their faces as they each thought, ‘Humph. Looks like sir took it upon himself and made a move. Of course they’d be dumbfounded.’

It was evident that the plaque-shattering incident was an indirect message from Gerald to the five bosses. Essentially, he had no interest in dividing territories with them, and if they didn’t behave, they’d probably end up the same as the plaque. Completely ruined in an instant.

With his silent message sent, Gerald then sat down with a subtle smile on his face as he said, “Chairman Jey and the rest of you, please, have a seat.”

“R-right away, M-Mr. Crawford!” stuttered Diego as he desperately tried to keep his cool. However, his calm façade was in shambles and the cold sweat flowing down his forehead only served to further exhibit how terrified he was.

His response was reasonable since he was, after all, in the presence of a man who could kill others with regular forks. And forks were everywhere in the room they were in.

Knowing that made everyone feel obligated to address him differently.

After a brief moment of silent contemplation, one of the five bosses said, “I go by the name of Tristen Jurden, Mr. Crawford, and I must say that I’m extremely impressed with your capabilities. If you allow it, I’m willing to hand over all my properties to you and become one of your subordinates!”

The moment the other bosses heard Tristen say that, another boss immediately agreed to do the same. One after another, the bosses agreed to the same terms, till all that was left was Diego.

As Gerald and Whistler looked at each other, Diego remained silent, thinking about the consequences if he didn't agree. In the end, though he was unable to just accept the chain of events that had taken place tonight, Diego eventually caved in.

The worst part about all of this was the fact that all five of them had been the ones who had invited Gerald over that night. If they hadn't invited him, none of this would've happened.

Then again, it was probably beyond any of their wildest imagination that the civil and military meeting could end in such a disastrous way, at least for them.

Soon after Gerald and his men returned to their mansion, Whistler excitedly told Gerald about how several of Talgo Town's businessmen had already called, asking to seek refuge under Gerald.

Hearing that, Gerald recalled how the bosses had also fawned over Gerald once the meeting was over. In fact, before they left, several other people had already presented themselves before him, showing great interest in wanting to be a part of the Royal Dragon Group.

To top it all off, Gerald also received several gifts in terms of cash from those who wanted to please him.

Gerald, however, was in no mood to bother about any of that. Instead, he ordered Whistler to deal with everything carefully as he thought about his next move.

After tonight's events, the Royal Dragon Group Gerald had established was finally going to gain a firm status within Talgo Town. What more, the Royal Dragon Group now had a lot of influence as well as control over multiple territories.

With all that in mind, Gerald knew it was high time for them to save Drake.

From what Tyson had told him, none of the many influential groups in Heavenly City could be looked down upon.

He was speaking from experience since both he and his brother had previously spent money to establish their power and influence in Heavenly City back when they were still looking for Gerald. Soon enough, however, they were defeated by Sven.

It didn't help that Heavenly City was much larger than Talgo Town. The entire area was simply an all-inclusive place hosting numerous forces and groups.

In fact, the place was so huge that Tyson couldn't even estimate how many groups—as powerful as Sven's—existed.

Gerald, however, was way too concerned over Drake to be worried about that. He was well aware that the longer they stalled, the more dangerous it would be for Drake. They simply didn't have the luxury to wait till everything was ready and in place.

Arriving at his conclusion, Gerald then ordered, "Whistler, pass on my order to the rest. We'll be heading to Heavenly City tomorrow."

"Very well, Mr. Crawford! I'll begin the preparations immediately!"

Chapter 949

From what Tyson had said, Sven could often be found in the largest underground casino in Heavenly City.

With that in mind, Gerald then led his men straight to that casino. Once they were there, Gerald immediately began gambling randomly at a table to blend in. However, the next thing he knew, he had already won over ten rounds.

This caught the banker's attention. After the banker secretly notified a subordinate about the incident, the subordinate stealthily headed for the office next.

Once inside, the subordinate stood before a person sitting at the boss's chair before saying, "Boss Sven! A person out there won a lot of money and he's even brought along several subordinates! He doesn't look like someone who's easy to deal with!"

At the time, the sturdy-looking man with a rather intimidating scar on his face was polishing his katana.

As soon as his subordinate's sentence ended, he immediately slashed at a jade ornament that was on his table! Following the swift slice, the ornament split in two, sending its top half shattering as it fell to the ground!

Blowing the blade of the katana slightly, he then asked his terrified subordinate, "From your description of him, I'm assuming that he's quite a capable person. Because of that, he should already know the rules of my place! How daring! Guess I'll just have to head out there myself to have a look!" sneered Sven as he exited his office.

Though the casino had consistently been noisy before this, the moment Sven and his subordinates made their appearance, everyone fell silent.

Once he was close enough, everyone then shouted in unison, "Boss Sven!"

Barely even acknowledging his customers and subordinates, Sven and his men only stopped once they stood directly in front of Gerald.

“And here I was wondering who the rule-breaker was... So it turned out to just be some young man! Do you truly have no idea of how my place works? Or are you just pretending that you don't know that you have to pay a certain fee after winning ten consecutive rounds?” said Sven.

“Forgive me, for I'm new to this place. I truly didn't know such a rule existed.”

“Heh, it's fine. After all, you'll definitely be able to learn once I'm done with you. Since I'm already here, how about we have two rounds of games? Only if you're daring enough to take up the challenge, of course,” proposed Sven with a wicked smile on his face.

“I'll have to know what the stakes are first,” replied Gerald as he scanned Sven from head to toe. Aside from his sturdiness and fierce look, Gerald found it odd that he couldn't discern the aura of a strong person from Sven at all.

Even Jett and the others he had previously met had warrior-like auras, but not Sven. If this man truly was as strong as Whistler and Tyson had said, then why couldn't Gerald sense any of that from him?

“Hmm... Well how about... We put our lives at stake!” declared Sven after thinking for a while.

Hearing that, everyone present was instantaneously stunned. Whistler and Gerald men, on the other hand, could only look at each other helplessly.

“I accept your challenge!” replied Gerald with a nod.

Though Sven was a considerably slick and experienced person in terms of gambling, in the end, he wasn't even close to defeating Gerald. In fact, all it took was a single round for Sven to be defeated!

“I truly appreciate your modesty, Mr. Westmore. Thank you for allowing me to win!” said Gerald with a smile as he shook his head.

In response, however, Sven simply touched his watch...

And all of a sudden, all his subordinates instantly entered formation and took aim at Gerald and his men!

“I have to agree that you truly are a great gambler! However, I’m afraid that you can’t take my life! However, since someone still needs to die, I guess we’ll just end yours instead!”

After saying that, Sven stood up before sneering, “Do it!”

Before his men could even fire their guns, Sven was momentarily able to see Gerald get up... The next thing he knew, however, Gerald was already holding him by the neck!

Realizing this a second later, his subordinates wanted to step in, though none of them dared to do so for fear that they would accidentally hurt Sven.

Slowly applying more and more pressure till he was practically choking Sven, he lifted the sore-loser of a man till his feet were above the ground.

“If you don’t want to die immediately, order your subordinates to back off!” ordered Gerald sternly.

“You heard the man! All of you, back off already! S-sir... Please refrain from acting rashly! You should be aware that this is my territory!” growled Sven, unable to completely mask his fear as he gestured for his subordinates to retreat.

“Oh? Are you saying that you lied to me then? After all, I defeated you fair and square so your life belongs to me!” replied Gerald.

“N-no! Please don’t do it, friend! Please spare my life! I’ll give you anything you want!” begged Sven, realizing how much trouble he was in.

Chapter 950

“We can honestly resolve this situation quite easily, you know? The way I see it, a life should be traded with another life. Let me ask you something. Did you previously capture a person by the name of Drake Jay? If you have, where is he?” asked Gerald.

“S-so you came here to save him... Yes, he’s with me! I’ll release him now but you’ll have to promise to release me too once he’s free!” said Sven immediately.

“Do you think you’re in a position to be making demands? Quit spouting nonsense and release him now!” growled Gerald as he intensified the force of his palm on Sven’s neck.

“H-he’s locked up in the cellar in this underground casino! I’ll order a subordinate of mine to release him now if you want!”

Thankfully, Sven was a rather straightforward person and soon enough, Whistler—who had followed the subordinate down into the casino’s cellar—led Drake toward Gerald.

Drake himself was in terrible condition, barely conscious, and with severe scars covering his entire body.

The moment Gerald saw how miserable Drake’s condition was, he was so infuriated that he immediately kicked Sven in the stomach, sending him flying across the room. As soon as Sven landed, he instantly vomited blood, his utter fear reflected in his eyes.

Whistler and the others were stunned to see this. From what they had heard, Sven was an extremely strong person. To think that he would end up becoming a mere nobody before their master! Though they knew that their master was strong, wasn’t Sven being too illogically weak now?

“Bring him along and let him escort us all the way out!” ordered Gerald as he personally supported Drake out.

Hearing that, Gerald’s men instantly held on to Sven’s arms and led him into one of Gerald’s cars. Once everything was settled, Gerald’s group of cars drove off.

Sometime later, Sven knelt before a riverside—that people hardly ever came to—before shouting, “M-my life is cheap! Please don’t kill me!”

“Humph! I never thought that the powerful Sven from Heavenly City would be this pathetic!”

“Yeah! To think that people would actually be terror-stricken to hear the name of such a coward!”

Whistler and the others were now smiling bitterly as they belittled the man they had once feared after realizing how much of a coward he truly was.

Gerald, on the other hand, stared coldly at Sven for quite a while before finally asking, "...Answer this honestly. Where's the real Sven? And who are you to him?"

As soon as Gerald's men heard his question, they were astonished beyond words.

"P-please spare my life, sir... My real name is Leif and I'm Sven's younger brother... He's been gone for about a week and I'm only here to help him look after the casino in his absence... Please spare my life, sir... It's my brother you want to take revenge on, not me!" pleaded Leif in between tears.

"What?! So he really isn't Sven?" exclaimed quite a few people, stupefied by the turn of events. Thankfully, Gerald had been able to see through Leif.

"You b*stard! So you've been fooling us this entire time! Where's Sven now? Where is he!" growled Whistler as he grabbed Leif by the collar.

"I-I don't know! He just brought his men along and told me that he would be returning in a few days! He said he was going to find something and that's all I know!" cried out Leif.

After looking at Leif's reaction, Gerald simply scolded coldly, "...We'll be bringing Drake along with us. As for you, you're too disgusting for us to even kill you. Get lost!"

"T-thank you! Thank you!" shouted Leif before immediately running off.

"What an absolute coward..." muttered Whistler as he followed Gerald and the rest back to their mansion.

As he continued running, Leif rubbed his sore throat as he scolded, "That d*mned b*stard... I'm the hero of the story! Still, to think that that young man was as ruthless as my brother... I'll have to tell him to return soon to ruin that guy once and for all!"

Not paying attention as he thought about his revenge, Leif ended up bumping into somebody! Momentarily losing his balance, he ended up falling to the ground.

"F*cking hell! Are you blind or something?" growled Leif angrily. However, he stopped scowling the moment he saw who he had bumped into.

The man standing before him wore a black robe, and it covered most of his facial features aside from his eyes. His eyes alone were both murky and vicious-looking, suggesting that the person under the robe was an old man.

Staring into the robed man's eyes, Leif felt that if he stared at them for too long, his soul would end up getting stolen.

Quivering slightly in fright, Leif then asked, "You... Who are you...?"

The moment Leif said that, however, the robed man began walking over to him. Frozen in fear, Leif felt the old man's hands patting his head softly...

A split second later, a snapping sound could be heard.

Vomiting blood, Leif's eyes widened momentarily before he fell flat to the ground.

The old man himself placed his arms behind his back as he turned to look at the direction Gerald and his men had used to leave, a frown slowly forming on his face.

Chapter 951

Meanwhile, Gerald and his men were returning home when from afar, Gerald noticed a team of cars parked right in front of their manor.

"I wonder who those people could be..." said Whistler, evidently feeling confused.

"From the looks of it, that should be Quest, the young master of the Westley family. He must finally have news regarding the item I've been trying to locate this entire time," replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

Upon inviting Quest into his mansion, Gerald momentarily excused himself to bring Drake to another room to have his wounds properly bandaged. Once that was done, he headed to the living room where Quest sat waiting patiently—with a document in hand—while sipping some tea.

Quest's politeness clearly stemmed from his respect toward Gerald. After all, it would've been impossible for a rich heir like him to behave so courteously to anyone in the past.

In fact, his respect for Gerald was so great that he was the one who had funded the money Gerald needed to purchase the factory. Due to that, it was natural that he'd know where Gerald lived as well.

“It’s been a while, Quest! Have you waited long?” greeted Gerald as he approached the seated youth.

“Not at all!”

As they exchanged pleasantries, Gerald recalled how reckless and arrogant Quest had been when they first met. However, he realized—during their first encounter—that if he could tame Quest, then Quest would surely turn out to be an excellent and capable assistant. Gerald’s guess was, of course, correct.

After a brief chat, Quest cleared his throat as he went straight to the main point.

“I’m here today, Mr. Crawford, to tell you that our investigation efforts have finally paid off! After so long, we’ve finally been able to locate the Ginseng King!” said Quest before taking a large gulp of water.

“...However, we don’t currently have it. In fact, we’ve never actually seen it for ourselves. That’s because someone beat us to finding and retrieving it about half a year ago! Honestly, we wouldn’t even have found out about this if my grandpa hadn’t cast a wide net. The information actually came from a random vendor!”

“From what the vendor said, a group of rather influential people hired him back then to serve as their guide around the mountain since he was famous for knowing the mountain paths like the back of his hand. After searching for the Ginseng King for some time, they eventually found it in Depth Valley, located in the depths of the mountain. Upon digging it up, the group of people handed the vendor a large sum of money to keep quiet about their discovery.”

“In all honesty, however, the vendor felt that the money they provided was simply too little. It was thanks to his dissatisfaction and my grandpa paying relevant people—regardless of status—huge sums of money to gather information about the Ginseng King that the vendor shared what had happened back then to us,” explained Quest as he took in a deep breath.

Lowering his voice, Quest then added, “...The Ginseng King is currently in the hands of the Yowell family.”

“The Yowell family?” repeated Gerald in surprise.

“They’re another powerful family in the business field in Heavenly City, just like the Westleys. While my family is only there because we moved in, the Yowells are locals who were already powerful by the time we arrived.”

"I see... Can the information from the vendor be trusted?"

Taking another sip of water, Quest then replied, "He can. Speaking of which, while he was scouring for more information, grandpa found out that we're not the only ones aware that the Yowells have the Ginseng King. A few local and foreign forces seem to be aware of their discovery as well. As a result, several of them began taking action on the Yowells starting from around three months ago. One of the more extreme cases was the kidnapping of Tulip, the second young lady of the Yowell family! Her kidnapping was most likely linked to the Ginseng King, though she was promptly rescued."

"While the Yowells are certainly good at hiding the fact that they currently own it, the fact remains that anyone holding on to the Ginseng King is akin to them hugging a ticking time bomb. Once you own it, being targeted will simply become the norm!" said Whistler with a bitter smile on his face.

Frowning slightly, Gerald then replied, "Regardless of how many powerful groups are attempting to get their hands on it, I must be the one to own it in the end!"

It was honestly no wonder why the Ginseng King was so well sought-after. After all, according to legends, it was able to promote longevity.

However, it was also said that normal people who attempted to consume it would simply perish after doing so, unable to endure the power of the Ginseng King. Gerald, however, knew that he was no regular person.

In order to defeat Kort, he would definitely survive eating the Ginseng King once he got his hands on it. He had to.

"Regardless, the Yowells are suffering rather terribly at the moment. After all, while they do have the Ginseng King in their hands now, they don't even know who to sell it to. There are simply too many people who want it for themselves."

"If you wish to own it, sir, I'm afraid that stealing it from them isn't going to work out well. I do, however, have a plan in mind. Whether it'll work or not is another question..." added Quest.

"Go on," said Gerald.

"Well, I propose that we use some outflanking tactics... We'll start by going after the second young lady of the Yowell family. As long as we're slick about it, we may be able to deceive her into handing the Ginseng King over to us! That way, we won't have to resort to fighting immediately. If all goes well, we should be able to maneuver covertly with the other powerful groups as well."

Chapter 952

After hearing what Quest had to say, Gerald simply rolled his eyes at him before rather grumpily replying, "I'm sure you're an expert at gaining a woman's affection... Guess I'll be leaving the task to you then. How about it?"

Waving his hands quickly, Quest then said, "I can't since she knows me! The Westleys and the Yowells are well acquainted you know? Regardless, it's not like affection is the only way we'll be able to pull this off. It'll do as long as we're able to approach her. That's why grandpa suggests that you find a suitable confidant for this task aside from me. After all, since Tulip is being targeted by so many people now, we must act fast before she falls into the hands of others."

"Tulip's currently a freshman in Heavenly City University. Once the confidant is ready, I'll help you get them into the university under the guise of a lecturer."

"But who's suitable enough for the task?" asked Gerald as he frowned slightly before scanning through the crowd.

Though Whistler immediately volunteered, his height and sturdy appearance made Gerald feel that he would resemble a security guard more than a lecturer.

While Tyson did look slightly younger, both he and Drake were still injured. What more, both the men were simply too cold and aloof to be suitable for the task. Nobody would ever believe that they were students or lecturers!

Seeing what Gerald was doing, the others began looking around as well. After taking turns shaking their heads, everyone eventually found themselves staring back at Gerald.

"Since you're probably the only one among us who's actually attended university before, I think you're the most suitable person for the job, sir..." said Whistler with a smile.

"Me?" replied Gerald, stunned.

"But sir has a lover! You can't just tell him to have an ambiguous relationship with another girl!" said Yukie out of the blue as she entered the room carrying several teacups. There was a clear hint of dissatisfaction on her charming face as she said that.

"It was obviously a joke, Yukie... As if we'd ever suggest for the master to gain another woman's affection! The main focus now is simply to protect Tulip and place her under our group's care!" replied Whistler as he smiled slightly bitterly.

"...I see!" pouted Yukie in response.

Meanwhile, Gerald himself seemed to be pondering about something.

With both Drake and Tyson currently recuperating and Whistler having the responsibility of managing the properties, in the end, Gerald seemed to be the most suitable person after all.

Resolute with his decision, Gerald then nodded before saying, “Alright, guess I’ll be doing this. I’ll be counting on you to arrange things for me, Quest.”

“Not a problem, sir! Since you’re proficient with medicine, you’ll be under the guise of a Biology substitute lecturer. Since I graduated from that university, I’ll tell you ahead of time that being a lecturer there is a breeze. All you’ll need to do is read the textbook aloud!” replied Quest.

The very next day, Gerald slipped on a suit and blazer—perfecting his scholarly look—as he headed to the university. Upon arriving, he was promptly greeted at the university’s main entrance by the vice team leader of the Biology team alongside a young male and female.

“I see you’ve arrived on time to report to your duty, Mr. Crawford. Allow me to first introduce you to these two. This here is Miss Marjorie Swift from our Biology team while the gentleman over there goes by Mr. Quinlan Yoxon,” said the vice team leader.

Turning to face the two next, the vice team leader then added, “This is Mr. Gerald Crawford, the new substitute teacher. Your position is similar to his, Mr. Yoxon, since both of you are new here. Regardless, you’re both colleagues now. Now then, could you please show them around the university, Marjorie?”

Marjorie was a woman with charming looks and long hair. Both slim and tall, she looked to be around twenty-four of age and her disposition seemed somewhat extraordinary. The professional-looking black suit and skirt only served to increase her seductiveness.

“Mr. Yoxon and Mr. Crawford, shall we?” said Marjorie with a sweet smile on her face as she took a few peeks at Gerald.

Chapter 953

It was really no mystery why she did so. After all, Gerald was both handsome and impeccably dressed. It wasn’t hard to see why girls would admire him.

As Gerald nodded at her, he guessed that his new female colleague must have just graduated from the university fairly recently.

Quinlan, on the other hand, caught on quickly that Marjorie seemed to admire Gerald a lot. Seeing that, he couldn't help but feel slightly jealous.

After all, both of them were newcomers who had the same post and same specializations. They even came at the same time! With so many similarities between them, Quinlan couldn't help but feel slightly competitive with him.

However, Marjorie wasn't even giving him a chance to shine. Seeing her being nice to only Gerald only added to his gloominess and annoyance.

Despite that, Quinlan wasn't an idiot who didn't know how to read the mood. Because of that, he simply followed behind the two, silently watching as Marjorie continued chatting with Gerald.

"Oh? Are those the two new lecturers who'll be joining our team, Miss Swift? Both of them look quite handsome!" said a few young lecturers as they walked over and greeted Marjorie.

All of them were women and they looked to be around Marjorie's age.

"Indeed! This here is Mr. Gerald Crawford, while his name is... Um... I apologize, but what was your name again...?" asked Marjorie rather awkwardly as she turned to face Quinlan.

Since Marjorie had placed most of her attention on the handsome Gerald, she now realized that she didn't even remember Quinlan's name!

Smiling wryly, Quinlan then said, "I'm Quinlan Yoxon!"

In the end, however, the same thing happened when all the female lecturers began surrounding and talking with Gerald instead of him.

As Quinlan's jealousy intensified, a few luxury cars could suddenly be seen driving toward the group. Screeching to a halt right in front of them, Marjorie and the other women were stunned when they saw a few bodyguards donning black coats getting out of the cars.

Once all of them were out, the bodyguards bowed slightly before saying, “We heard from the boss that this is your first time here in Heavenly City, young master. We’ll be hosting a welcoming party for you tonight.”

In response, Quinlan simply readjusted his gold glasses before saying, “Very well. Tell my cousin that I’ll be there tonight.”

“Very well, young master.”

After bowing once more, the bodyguards re-entered their cars and left.

By then, all the female lecturers—who had earlier surrounded Gerald—had their mouths wide open as they looked at Quinlan in shock.

“Why... Did they address you as young master, Mr. Yoxon?” asked one of the female colleagues in amazement.

“Oh, they work for my cousin. He’s established a few bars and hotels here in Heavenly City,” replied Quinlan casually.

Upon hearing that, Marjorie couldn’t help but sneak a few more glances at him before asking with a smile on her face, “I hadn’t expected for you to have such an awesome cousin! Speaking of which, you aren’t a local, are you Mr. Yoxon?”

“That is correct. I’m from Talgo Town. Have you heard about the five forces?”

“I have! Talgo Town is currently being supervised by the five forces, right? From what I’ve heard, they’re all-powerful and they each have high statuses here in Heavenly City!” exclaimed another of the colleagues in shock, sounding very intrigued.

“Well, my dad helps to run the affairs for the Charley family, one of the five forces,” replied Quinlan with a smile.

“What?” said all the colleagues present, utterly astonished.

Being locals of Heavenly City, the girls had been influenced by their environment to prefer people who were more powerful. Nobody could really blame them since the more power and influence one had in Heavenly City, the more they could enjoy a life of grandeur there.

It was simply something that all women, especially those living in Heavenly City, yearned for.

Chapter 954

After seeing all those luxurious cars, all the women there were even more jealous once they found out that Quinlan was actually involved with the five forces.

“Why didn’t you just work with your group then?” asked another colleague.

“Haha! I’d rather not work in Talgo Town now due to all chaos the newly established Royal Dragon Group has created. The five forces are all obeying that group now, you know? Besides, my dad told me that it’d be better for me to go out and try making a living for myself first,” replied Quinlan as he shook his head with a bitter smile on his face.

Hearing that, Marjorie smiled subtly. To think that Quinlan was already so steady and mature!

“Your dad has a point, Mr. Yoxon. After all, you’re still young so who knows? Maybe you’ll be able to blaze a new way out by being a bit more adventurous and making a living of your own out here!” said Marjorie with a smile as she went closer toward Quinlan.

“I agree!”

The girls were now inching closer toward Quinlan as he detailed the major incidents that had recently taken place in both Talgo Town and Heavenly City.

As they chatted happily, Gerald could only laugh bitterly as he shook his head at the side. He had long gotten used to scenes like these.

Seeing that Gerald was now being ignored, Quinlan found himself growing extremely smug.

Since Gerald didn’t have lectures to attend to in the morning, he simply sat in the office the entire time till noon came.

Nearing lunchtime, Gerald turned to look at Marjorie—who was seated next to him—before saying with a smile, “How about we head to the cafeteria now, Miss Swift? My treat.”

He was only taking the initiative to ask her out for a meal since she was the one who had invited him out for lunch earlier that morning. After all, Gerald was still new and unfamiliar with the university’s layout.

Aside from that, he didn't really have any other unnecessary thoughts.

"Apologies, Mr. Crawford, but I have some business to attend to at noon. I'm afraid I can't join you this time," replied Marjorie as she gently straightened her hair.

"I see. I'll head there myself then," said Gerald as he nodded at her before heading off.

While Heavenly City was undoubtedly a chaotic place, it was also well equipped with all the essentials such as medical institutions, education institutions, and so on.

The university itself didn't look particularly different from the ones Gerald had seen before. Well, aside from the fact that all the students looked like gangsters.

Upon entering the cafeteria, Gerald bought some bread, sausages, and a salad before taking a seat at one of the empty tables to enjoy his meal.

It had been quite a long while since he was last able to enjoy such a life, and he found himself thinking that being an educator in a university and leading a quiet life was much preferable compared to being the boss of Whistler and the others.

Smiling bitterly as he thought about it, he then wondered how long he could even afford to live such a peaceful and quiet life.

As he sighed before continuing with his meal, Gerald heard a male voice saying, "Nobody seems to be sitting there, Marjorie. Let's head over!"

"I'm afraid that's the VIP area... You need to pay to sit there!"

"Haha! That's fine. If only we didn't have to be in a bit of a rush for that meeting later, I'd surely have brought you out for lunch!"

Looking up, Gerald could already tell that the voices belonged to none other than Marjorie and Quinlan.

So it turned out that Marjorie's 'business' was actually just her wanting to go out and have a meal with Quinlan. Knowing that made Gerald smile rather wryly.

It was evident at that point that both Quinlan and Marjorie had spotted Gerald. After all, he was sitting at a rather desolate corner beside the VIP area, making him stick out like a sore thumb.

Since it was a symbol of status if one was able to have their meals in the VIP area, people usually avoided the spot Gerald was sitting in if they could.

Noticing that Quinlan was staring at him contemptuously, Gerald simply lowered his head and continued eating his meal.

Marjorie, on the other hand, was now feeling rather awkward since she knew for a fact that Gerald had noticed her. After all, she clearly remembered asking him out for lunch earlier. Despite that, she had lied to him, claiming that she had business to attend to. Her being there with Quinlan clearly suggested that she was going out for lunch with him instead.

Any girl would feel embarrassed to some extent if they were placed in her current shoes.

Straightening her hair, Marjorie quickly averted her gaze before nodding with a faint smile as she looked at Quinlan.

"Hmm? Isn't that Mr. Crawford? Why did he sit there?" asked a female voice at that moment.

Chapter 955

Looking up, Gerald saw that it was the other female colleagues who were in the same team with him.

Seeing that they had bumped into him as they were looking for seats to have their meals, Gerald simply smiled with a nod as he looked at them.

However, none of them seemed to even bother about his smile. In fact, some of the colleagues found themselves cupping their mouths in amusement as they said, "What a surprise! You really don't know anything, do you? Why'd you decide to have your lunch here instead of anyplace else?"

After saying that, they simply turned around to leave.

Seconds later, one of the colleagues said, "Huh? Hey, look there! It's Mr. Yoxon and Miss Swift! Hi there!"

The moment they saw Quinlan, their moods instantly switched, smiling as they waved their hands at him.

“What a coincidence! Why don’t you sit with us? If I had known that you were going to eat here, I’d definitely have invited all of you along!” said Quinlan with a bright smile.

“Is it really fine if we joined you?” asked a few of the female colleagues.

In the end, however, all of them ended up sitting at the same table, chatting and laughing among themselves.

While Gerald was well aware that he was a nobody in the presence of Quinlan, he didn’t really want to have that much contact with his colleagues anyway. After all, befriending them wasn’t part of his mission.

Gerald simply hoped that he would be able to meet Tulip soon.

Once the afternoon meeting ended a little later, Gerald prepared to teach his first class. Upon entering the classroom, Gerald saw that there were over thirty students in the class. The most conspicuous of them all, however, was none other than Tulip.

Her demeanor alone allowed anyone who saw her to instantly figure out that she was the boss of the class.

Since the first lecture was a lesson that required experimentation, Gerald brought his students along to a laboratory so that they would be able to observe the specimens there. He simply thought that it would be fitting for them to be able to observe things up-close since the topic he was about to teach was quite a major one in their Biology course.

Excited that they didn’t have to remain in class, the students quickly grabbed their notebooks and followed Gerald out.

“Haha! I wonder if you’ve noticed that that handsome lecturer seems to have an interest in you, Tulip!” laughed a girl on their way to the laboratory as she held on to Tulip’s hand.

“What nonsense are you spouting this time, you silly girl...” replied Tulip, almost speechless by her friend’s comment.

“It’s true! I realized that he had occasionally snuck glances at you from the moment he was done with his self-introduction. He continued doing so up till the point he headed out just now! I’m absolutely sure that he’s been charmed by your beauty!”

“There you go again with your nonsense! Still, if he really did sneak that many glances at me, he’d better not let me catch him in the act! If I catch him red-handed, then I’m cutting his eyeballs out and feeding them to my Tibetan Mastiff, Hooch! You know how much I hate quiet and honest-looking men like him! There’s not a hint of bloodthirstiness in him at all!” said Tulip as both of them burst into laughter.

After a while, they arrived at the laboratory. However, to Gerald’s surprise, he found that there were already two classes inside the laboratory.

While conducting lessons in the laboratory with two neighboring classes at the same time was commonplace there, one usually had to abide by a schedule.

Though Gerald and Marjorie’s classes were the only classes that were supposed to be able to use the laboratory during this period, Quinlan was for some odd reason already inside with his own students.

The moment Marjorie saw Gerald, she awkwardly said, “Mr. Crawford?”

“Shouldn’t only both our classes have access to the laboratory during the first period? Why is Mr. Yoxon and his students here instead?”

Although Gerald didn’t really have that much of a sense of belonging there in the first place, he was starting to get annoyed by all this.

“Apologies, Mr. Crawford, but Mr. Yoxon came over to me earlier saying that he had no experience teaching students before this... Because of that, he suggested that we did a combined lesson... I assumed he had already notified you about it, so I simply agreed with his plan...” replied Marjorie as she blushed.

Clearing her throat, one of the students from Quinlan’s class then shouted, “How about this, lecturers? From now on, why don’t we use the current arrangement of classes instead of the previous one? After all, we’d very much prefer having lessons with Miss Swift and Mr. Yoxon.”

“There’s no reason for that! Our classes have already been pre-arranged nicely so how could you just take over somebody else’s class period as you please?” retorted Tulip, clearly feeling dissatisfied.

A quarrel was starting to brew and the reason behind it was quite obvious. After all, Gerald's pupils had all excitedly brought along their notebooks to the laboratory, only to find that another class had stepped out of line and occupied it without first informing their lecturer about it.

The entire situation was honestly quite humiliating.

"Since we've already made preparations for the experiment, why don't you just take your students back to class, Mr. Crawford?"

Chapter 956

Clearing his throat before saying that, Quinlan then slid his hands into his pockets before sneering.

"What's with all the commotion? We're trying to have our lesson here!" shouted a female lecturer as she and her colleague stepped out of a neighboring laboratory in dissatisfaction.

Turning to face them, Quinlan then said, "It's just Mr. Crawford... I asked Miss Swift to have a joint lesson with me since I wanted to get some teaching experience... Coincidentally, the period I chose clashes with Mr. Crawford's class! This is honestly all my fault..."

"It really isn't. Mr. Crawford's just being inconsiderate! Just take the next lesson! There's no need to make a mountain out of a molehill, is there?" said the other female colleague as both of them nodded in unison.

Straightening her hair, Marjorie then added, "Why don't you return to your class first, Mr. Crawford?"

Hearing that, Gerald could only frown. He was very much aware that trying to argue with them wasn't going to be worthwhile. What more, it would be imprudent of them as lecturers to create a mess here.

With that in mind, he placidly said, "...Let's just go!"

As he began leading his students back to class, the students in the laboratory, in turn, immediately started an uproar.

"Yeah! Just leave already!"

"You're all equally annoying mother*ckers! You hear?!" growled Tulip as she tossed her notebook to the ground before waving her two fists in the air.

After the small incident, Gerald earned the nickname, 'Teacher Skitterbrook' from the students.

Not that Gerald minded that sort of thing. After all, it didn't really affect his observation on Tulip.

It wasn't long after before Gerald realized the existence of secret undercurrents in the university. From what he managed to gather, a few groups of influential people were already plotting against Tulip again.

Gerald also noticed that despite being previously kidnapped, Tulip was still very much ignorant and fearless. She simply acted like a boss wherever she went in the university.

Sometime later, Gerald was about to enter his second-period class when suddenly, he heard someone shouting, "D*mn it! What should I do? Tulip's run off again!"

Frowning slightly, Gerald entered the class and saw that a few of his female students were anxiously discussing the matter.

"What's wrong?"

"Humph! It's none of your business, you useless piece of trash! The others drove you away and you just succumbed to it! As your students, we feel utterly humiliated by that, you know? It's also because of that humiliation that Tulip refused to attend your class! She's driven off somewhere to have some fun instead! Her dad's repeatedly ordered me to keep an eye on her, you know? Now I'm going to get scolded for sure! All of this stems from you! Humph!" complained one of the students as she shoved Gerald to the side.

She was so angry that she wanted to run off to look for Tulip immediately.

For as long as she knew her, Tulip had always bore such a temperament. The girl was simply too used to having things go her way without having to care about anything else.

When things didn't go her way, however, she would head out looking for amusement instead.

As she thought about that, a student wearing glasses panted as he slid the class's door open. Noticing that tulip's bestie was present, he calmed his breathing before saying, "L-Liske! Something's wrong! I saw Tulip driving her sports car toward Bloomlin

Mountain! When I asked her about it, she said she was going there to have some fun! She also told me to tell you to wait till Teacher Skitterbrook's class--"

The moment he saw Gerald standing there, the bespectacled boy immediately fell silent, feeling extremely awkward.

"D*mn it! She really headed to Bloomlin Mountain? It's all over now! If her father knows that she went there to have fun, my dad will probably be beaten to death as well! All sorts of dangerous people gather at that chaotic place! What should I even do now...? Is there any of you daring enough to follow me there to get Tulip back?" said Nicole Liske as she anxiously stomped her foot on the ground.

"I'm in!"

"I'll be going as well!"

As a few of their male classmates volunteered, Gerald couldn't help but ask, "What sort of place is Bloomlin Mountain?"

Chapter 957

"D*mn it! Are you even a lecturer? How could you not know about Bloomlin Mountain? That's the place where several youths, who are mostly in gangs, usually gather to host parties! What more, they like to have car races there to amuse themselves as well! That place is just bad news!" explained another student rather helplessly.

"There's no use explaining it to him! Regardless, Tulip's daring enough to go literally anywhere once her recklessness kicks in! I should know since the same thing happened when she last got into trouble! Come on, let's just hurry and try to get her back already!" said Nicole who was now so anxious that she was almost in tears.

While Nicole was Tulip's bestie, she was also the daughter of the Yowell family's butler. Because of that, Nicole was usually tasked with keeping an eye on Tulip.

After all, almost everyone associated with the second young lady of the Yowell family knew that she was infamous for being reckless. She was a person who valued her own enjoyment above anything else, which was why she was now skipping Gerald's class.

Gerald found that her classmates were all quite loyal to her as well, as all of them instantly agreed to go after her. Getting to Bloomlin Mountain wasn't an issue for them either since several of the classmates were rich heirs who had their own cars. After entering the cars in twos and threes, all of them left.

“...Wouldn't your arrival there be rather strange and unexpected...?” muttered Gerald to himself helplessly.

‘Just don't get into any trouble... If she gets into any then all my efforts this time around will be for naught!’ Gerald thought to himself.

Knowing how many influential groups were targeting her now, it was impossible for him not to be worried. Shaking his head, he got atop his scooter and immediately began following them to the place.

Meanwhile, Tulip—who had just arrived not too long ago—was starting to slightly regret coming to Bloomlin Mountain. Looking around, the place resembled more of a colosseum rather than a racetrack.

The racetrack itself was located at the foot of a mountain in the suburbs of Heavenly City. Since the suburbs were already complicated enough with several intertwining paths, it inspired the planners of the racetrack to build it there.

Due to their efforts, what used to be a deserted open space was now filled with all sorts of cars, even high-end sports cars like Ferraris and Maybachs.

The regulars of the racetrack were all young men and women who were either screaming or playing musical instruments loudly, making the entire area somewhat deafening.

From the moment she had arrived, Tulip was left shocked by the youthful atmosphere there. Her sheer disbelief stemmed from the fact that she had never been exposed to people like these in the past. The existence of such individuals had simply been beyond her wildest imagination.

While she had definitely heard about Bloomlin Mountain before, this was actually her first time here since her father had prohibited her from ever coming here. While that was the case, Tulip had been in a bad mood recently.

The incident regarding her elder sister still flustered her greatly. As if that annoyance wasn't enough, she was humiliated in front of so many people today due to a coward!

Dwelling on the incidents filled her with so much wrath that she forgot all about her father's prohibitions and simply drove to Bloomlin Mountain to have some fun.

Now that she was there, however, she could only sit in her car, bewildered by all the sights and sounds there.

Just as she was about to consider leaving, a man with big hair—reminiscent of the eighties—who had his left ear adorned with a row of silver studs stood by her car before saying, “Well hey there, girl! Are you a new face here? How about a race with me? If you win, I’ll host a party here tonight for you!”

“I’ll have to refuse. I just came here to have a look around,” replied Tulip as she shook her head.

“Oh, you’re not going to race? Well, you are still a student, after all! I guess you must be afraid to compete with others! What a waste that this sports car ended up in your hands!”

“You take that back you mother*cker! Who’s afraid? I’m joining the race!” scowled Tulip angrily.

However, upon realizing what she had just said, Tulip found herself regretting it slightly.

After all, she truly had just wanted to have a look at the fabled racetrack in Bloomlin Mountain. Since she had previously assumed that the place would be deserted, she had even considered the thought of speeding along the winding paths of the mountain at least once before returning to university. It hadn’t occurred to her that this place would be so populated with hooligans!

Sensing what Tulip was worrying about, he simply pointed at the people surrounding them before saying, “See those beast-like people? F*ck then! Don’t see them as humans! Once you see them as mere animals, you’ll be fine. However, if you truly are reluctant to look at them, then just close your eyes!”

While Tulip was hesitant, when she looked at his resolute and fearless expression, she replied, “...Since we’re competing with each other, cut the cr*p and let’s go already...!”

“Settle down, this round has already been taken by someone else. We’ll just have to wait for the next round!” said the man as he pointed at two cars revving their engines loudly in the open space.

Hearing that, Tulip could only anxiously smack the side of her steering wheel in anger.

At that moment, a dozen or so cars arrived at the area, signaling the arrival of Nicole and the others.

“Hey! Look over there! That’s Tulip’s car!” yelled Nicole as the Tulip’s classmates ran toward her.

Immediately after, however, a loud clamor was heard.

Chapter 958

Upon noticing the arrival of Nicole and her classmates, the many other youths who were there instantly began screaming and whistling at them. After all, none of them had ever seen students dressed in uniform there before. What more, among the thirty over students, half of them were tall and slim women who looked both innocent and cute.

Their presence at Bloomlin Mountain was nothing short of extraordinary to the hooligans.

Even the big-haired man jumped out of his car in excitement, his eyes widened.

“Nicole... All of you... Why did all of you come here?” asked Tulip.

“Why else would we be here? We were worried about you, of course! Let’s just leave quickly! Still, to think that you would actually come here! What if your dad found out? Do you really want to suffer that terribly?” replied Tulip as she held on to Tulip’s arm.

Since it was evident that Tulip wanted to leave with them, the man from before simply sneered, “Come now, there’s no rush to leave! Why don’t we have a race first? After all, it mustn’t have been easy for all of you to come here. Or are all of you just obedient university students who are still afraid of your parents?”

“Cowards! Cowards!” chanted the crowds loudly.

“F*cking hell! Wait for me here, Nicole! I’m racing him first to shut him up for good!” scowled Tulip.

“That’s the spirit! Speaking of which, beauty, according to the rules here, you’ll have to give a ride to a person of the opposite gender if you’re participating in a car race. Since you already have so many male classmates, why not pick one of them? Or would you rather choose a handsome guy from among us? What do you say?” said the big-haired man.

As Tulip turned to look, she saw a woman with heavy makeup sitting in his car. So he wasn’t lying.

“Me! Me! Pick me, beauty!”

All around them, various men were shouting to get Tulip's attention.

"As if I'd ever get in a car with any of you! Specky! Get in the car!" ordered Tulip at the bespectacled boy from before as she rolled her eyes at the crowd.

"B-but, Tulip! I can't... I... I have car sickness!" replied Specky as he gulped before shaking his head quickly.

Tulip's poor driving skills was no mystery to any of her classmates.

If a regular passenger thanked their driver for their troubles after arriving at their destination, a passenger of Tulip's would instead thank her for allowing them to leave the car with their life intact!

In short, she was a mad driver.

Specky wasn't the only unwilling one either. All her other male classmates were similarly deterred from sitting in the car if she was driving!

"Useless! All of you!" shouted Tulip as she smacked her steering wheel in frustration.

As the big-haired man continued laughing, Nicole suddenly pointed in a direction before saying in an astonished tone, "...Hey, that's our lecturer, right? D*mn it! Why is he here?"

Turning to look at where she was pointing, all the students realized that she wasn't kidding. Their Biology lecturer was indeed there!

Pushing his scooter along, Gerald soon saw his students and began running toward them. His arrival, however, was nothing short of ridiculous and amusing to the hooligans.

"Haha! Hey, everyone! Look there!"

With everyone's eyes on him now, a roar of laughter erupted throughout the entire area.

It was funny enough to even think about someone riding a scooter to a racetrack, yet here Gerald was, pushing his now dusty scooter as he ran!

“Why the hell is that piece of trash here, Nicole?! Who even told him to come along?!” said Tulip, flabbergasted by his arrival.

Chapter 959

“Don’t look at me... I really hadn’t expected him to actually follow us here...” replied Nicole rather helplessly.

“It’s going to be all over for me if he tells the university about it! That’s not even the worst part! What if the university informs my dad about it?!” cried out Tulip in a state of berserk.

“Calm down, Tulip. I have a way to get him to cooperate obediently. You currently need a man in your car, right? Why don’t we get him to do it? Once he’s inside, he’ll definitely be afraid of you!” suggested Specky.

“F*cking...” While Tulip certainly wanted to scold Specky after hearing his indirect roast on her driving skill, thinking back, he had a point.

Since she was already annoyed with Gerald anyway after this morning’s incident at the laboratory, Tulip wasn’t too worried about making him suffer too much.

Besides, he looked like an honest and rather silly man. Once she was done with him in the car, he’d definitely not dare to report her misbehavior. With all that in mind, she decided to go along with Specky’s plan.

“Aren’t all of you being too disrespectful to the university? How dare all of you play truant together!” said Gerald as he walked over after parking his scooter properly.

Due to how far Bloomlin Mountain was from the university, Gerald’s scooter ran out of batteries a bit earlier, explaining why he had pushed it toward the racetrack instead of riding it in.

“Just shut up and get in the car!” ordered Tulip.

“And why should I? All of you had best return to the university right this instance!” replied Gerald.

“Fine! But you’ll still need a ride back, right? After all, we all saw that your scooter’s batteries were drained! Can’t you see that I’m offering you a ride back? Now come on!” added Tulip.

“She’s right, sir! Since you came all the way out here, just let her give you a ride back... As for your scooter, we’ll think of a way to get it back there...” added a few other students.

They were frantically trying to get Gerald into the car since the competition was about to begin soon. In their minds, the sooner the race was over, the sooner they could leave, and none of them wanted to linger there for any longer than they needed to.

“...Fine!” replied Gerald with a defeated nod.

He knew for a fact that Tulip wouldn’t ever be this kind to him. However, he was slightly interested to see what kind of trick she had up her sleeve.

Upon closing the car door behind him, all the car’s doors were immediately locked.

“What’re you doing?” asked Gerald, astonished.

“Haha! You idiot! You’ve fallen straight into my trap! Did you honestly think that I’d be that nice to allow a worthless piece of trash like you to get into my car without a price? You’re coming along with me for a car race! And you’d better not vomit inside my car or you’ll suffer terribly!” warned Tulip.

Now that everything was ready, Tulip and her opponent drove to the starting line. After honking to indicate that both of them were ready, a large screen began projecting numbers counting down as both their cars began revving up.

The moment a loud buzzing sound was heard, both cars immediately sped forward like wild horses that had just been freed.

“Hell yeah! This is so cool!” shouted Tulip excitedly. Though she really didn’t like the atmosphere of the place, it did end up becoming enjoyable once the race actually began.

“The road! Keep your eyes on the road!” shouted Gerald, terrified as he held on to the car’s grab handle.

While Tulip’s driving was definitely as reckless as her classmates remembered, she wasn’t completely devoid of skill. After all, she was still ahead of the big-haired man’s car.

However, that fact alone seemed rather illogical to Gerald. Looking through the rear-view mirror, Gerald found that his doubts were warranted. After all, the man clearly had a lot of chances to overtake her car. However, he just never did.

As Gerald frowned, wondering what was up, all of a sudden, Tulip let out a shout!

Turning to look ahead, Gerald saw that they were headed straight for a few rows of steel nails that had been placed across the road.

They clearly served as roadblocks, yet even if Tulip were to hit on the brakes now, both of them were well aware that she wouldn't be able to stop the car in time.

As a result, she simply accelerated the car forward with her eyes closed.

Seconds later, two distinct sounds of tires bursting could be heard!

Eventually, the car couldn't go on and Tulip was forced to park the car in the middle of the road.

"F*cking hell! Who would put roadblocks in the middle of a god d*mned racetrack!" shouted Tulip furiously.

On the contrary, Gerald appeared extremely vigilant as he turned around to look behind them.

Chapter 960

By now, the car behind them had stopped as well, blocking any possible escape routes.

'Something is definitely wrong!' Gerald thought to himself as he watched the big-haired man and the woman get out of their car.

"Hey, now! How could you people be like this? These roadblocks clearly shouldn't be here! I demand we start over!" scowled Tulip, feeling cheated.

"But of course, Miss Tulip Yowell! You're the second young lady of the Yowell family, after all... We can start over as many times as you please!" replied the big-haired man as he laughed loudly.

"...You... How do you know my name?" asked Tulip, finally realizing that something was wrong.

“Humph! Just get out of the car already, miss! Don’t trouble us any more than you need to!” shouted the big-haired man as he pulled his wig off, revealing his bald head!

Following that, he took a gun out, aiming it at Tulip before roaring, “Didn’t you hear what I said? Get out, now!”

Seeing the gun, Tulip immediately went pale in fright. It was then when she understood that she was getting kidnapped again.

Raising both her hands to show that she was harmless, she then slowly got out of the car.

Once she was out, the woman revealed her own gun as the bald man shouted, “Wren, go kill that other guy! After he’s dead, report to Old A that we’ve captured her and tell him to take over from here immediately!”

“Got it!” replied the woman with a nod as she walked toward the shotgun seat.

However, when she peered through the window, she was left stunned. Raising her head to look at the bald man, she then said, “...Dominic... There’s nobody in there.”

“What? We all saw him enter the car earlier, right?” replied Dominic as he dragged Tulip along with him toward Wren’s side.

Peering inside, it appeared that she was right. Gerald had completely disappeared!

“How odd! He couldn’t have just vanished in broad daylight!” said the bald man in astonishment.

As he continued wondering where Gerald could possibly have gone to, out of the blue, a voice from behind the bald man shouted, “I’ll try my best to fight you!”

Hearing that, Dominic turned around immediately... Only to be greeted by a large stone!

With a loud ‘thud’, the bald man felt his eyes roll back as he fell to the ground, now unconscious!

Though Wren wanted to immediately retaliate by shooting the assailant, for some baffling reason, she just couldn't fully raise her arm!

"I-I'll fight you too!" shouted the youth again as he picked the same large stone up and staggered toward the woman before smashing it into her head. Naturally, she fainted as well.

The youth in question was of course, Gerald. Since he needed to keep his identity a secret, he knew that he had to pretend to be weak.

"Wow! You... You killed them, sir! You've killed two people! You're definitely ruined this time!" exclaimed Tulip excitedly now that she knew she had been rescued.

Rolling his eyes, Gerald then replied, "They're not dead! They've just fainted! However, since their accomplices are probably coming over soon, I suggest we leave quickly!"

"You're right! Let's go then!" replied Tulip as both of them headed for Dominic's car.

Getting in the driver's seat, Tulip then turned the car around and sped all the way back to the starting line. Seconds after they left, however, a few ATV cars came to a screeching halt at the spot where both Dominic and Wren lay unconscious.

Watching Tulip and the man make their escape, the leader of the group found himself slamming a fist onto the hood of the car.

"F*cking hell! We were already so close just now! How did things end up failing? Who the hell saved her?!"

"Do we pursue after them, boss?"

"F*ck that! There are too many people at the foot of the mountain! Do you want to die that much? If you don't, then bring these two useless people along with us! We're leaving!"

Meanwhile, Tulip was beginning to admire Gerald slightly as she said, "D*mn, sir! You were so cruel earlier!"

"If I hadn't been, then we'd both be dead by now!" replied Gerald as he thought about what could've happened if he wasn't in the car with her.

“Still, something just doesn’t add up, sir!” said Tulip as she seemed to recall something.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, back when I stepped out of the car, I’m fairly certain that you were still sitting beside me! How could you have just appeared behind the two kidnapers earlier?”

Chapter 961

“...That... Well, when he grabbed you, I simply took the chance to slide down the slope! All I needed to do after that was to take a detour back to where the cars were!” explained Gerald.

“I see! I didn’t expect you to be that smart!” replied Tulip in shock.

Hearing that, Gerald simply shook his head in silence.

Upon arriving at the foot of the mountain, Gerald squinted his eyes and saw that several other luxury cars were currently speeding toward them. Once the cars surrounded the area, Tulip immediately yelped.

“Oh god! That’s my dad’s car! Nicole must’ve told him that I’m here! I’m definitely ruined now!” said Tulip as she quivered in fear.

Seconds later, a middle-aged man stepped out of the car and walked toward her before anxiously asking, “Are... Are you fine, second young lady...?”

“H-humph! If you had arrived any later, then you wouldn’t have been able to see me anymore!” replied Tulip, a hint of fear still lingering in her voice.

“Thank goodness we made it in time, then... Nicole was the one who alerted me that you could be in danger. As a result, I immediately brought all these people here. How wonderful that you’re safe!”

As it turned out, a few men had chatted with Nicole earlier while the race was going on. After chatting for a bit, Nicole found out that the big-haired man wasn’t a usual here. In fact, this was the men’s first time meeting him as well. What more, he was apparently filthy rich. After all, Dominic ended up booking the entire racetrack that day!

Upon finding out about that, Nicole instantly became vigilant about him. After all, if he truly was that rich, why wasn't he driving an expensive car?

Knowing that it would be better to be safe than sorry, Nicole immediately notified her father about the chain of events.

"So it seems that my guess was correct, Tulip... What kinds of dangers did you have to face? Speaking of which, where's your car?" asked Nicole in a worried tone.

Hearing that, Tulip then began describing what had happened to her. However, her version of the story had been slightly altered.

According to Tulip, she had pretended to be bait to attract the attention of the two kidnappers. While they were going after her, Gerald had taken the chance to knock those two people unconscious!

After getting the details he needed, Mr. Liske immediately sent a few men up the mountain. The remaining men were told to surround the entirety of Bloomlin Mountain for investigation purposes.

Once that was done, Mr. Liske nodded at Gerald with a smile before saying, "I'm sure this is the Mr. Crawford you've been talking about. Do know that the Yowell family is indebted to you for your kindness this time around. As thanks for saving the second young lady, we'll certainly provide you with a great reward once she meets up with the master."

"It's fine. Tulip is my student, after all."

"Then how about this, Mr. Crawford? For now, allow me to send you back to the university in one of our cars."

"I'd appreciate that."

With that, Mr. Liske ordered a team of cars to send Gerald and his students back to the university.

Upon returning, Gerald told his students to return to class first. Gerald himself prepared to return to the office. The moment he got there, however, he immediately heard someone shouting, "Something's gone terribly wrong!"

He truly wasn't expecting to receive more bad news right after he had to deal with all that.

As he watched a few lecturers run outside, he casually stopped one of them before asking, "What happened?"

"It's Miss Swift and Mr. Yoxon! They seem to have gotten themselves into quite a bit of trouble! See, during their joint lesson earlier, there was apparently a student who was quite arrogant in Miss Swift's class! While he was smoking in the washroom during recess, he ended up getting into a fight there with students from other classes!"

"In the end, the arrogant student was beaten up terribly. However, that wasn't the end of the incident! While we honestly just wanted to wait for the university to deal with the situation, Mr. Yoxon was adamant about dealing with it immediately. As a result, he led the male students from his own class over to the neighboring class, which was the class of those who had beaten up Miss Swift's student."

"While Mr. Yoxon had gone over to reason with them, he failed to realize how bad his own temper was. After the argument turned unpleasant, he ended up beating up one of the male students!" explained the lecturer.

"So that's what happened... How imprudent for lecturers to beat up students!" said Gerald as he shook his head with a bitter smile on his face.

However, it was clear as day that Quinlan had only done so to impress Marjorie. After all, it was evident that he had a crush on her.

Sighing, the lecturer then added, "It'd be fine if that was where all the trouble ended, Mr. Crawford... Sadly, it isn't. Do you know which student he beat up?"

"Go on..."

"Well, the student's the son of a rich man in Heavenly City! Since the rich man has a close relationship with the underground forces of Heavenly City, the student declared that he would call some people over! Something terrible is definitely imminent now!" said the female lecturer before running off to the scene.

Seeing that she was running toward the scene of the incident, Gerald simply walked in the direction she was headed to. He was following her mainly because his class was currently also in the same location and he wanted to check on his students.

As was expected, the entire Biology course's corridor was crowded with people.

“Here you are, sir!” said Specky as soon as he saw Gerald. Since the corridor was completely blocked by a wall of people, his students weren’t even able to return to class to have their lesson.

Chapter 962

“How are things looking?” asked Gerald.

“Well, the lecturer who took our laboratory time from us was beaten up! Mr. Yoxon’s in deep trouble now! After all, he offended the young master of the Lightburn family! If you aren’t aware, the young master of the Lightburn family is under the protection of underground forces!” explained Specky.

Hearing that, Gerald looked ahead and saw Quinlan surrounded by a group of men donning black suits. Marjorie and a few other female lecturers were also present, all of them frozen in fear.

“We’re far from done!” shouted one of the men in black as he glared at Quinlan. Quinlan himself appeared to have several clear slap marks on his cheeks.

As the university’s chancellor continued trying to calm the situation down, Quinlan simply wiped the blood off his glasses before sneering, “It’s fine, chancellor. Just let me make a call and everything will be settled.”

“Humph! Be my guest! Let’s see who you call over!” scoffed the man angrily.

Shaking his head, Quinlan then took his cell phone out before dialing a number.

Seeing how confident Quinlan still was, Marjorie couldn’t help but feel a sense of assuredness in her heart.

Everyone else was getting increasingly excited as well. Who was Quinlan going to call over?

“You know, I heard that Mr. Yoxon is from Talgo Town!”

“I heard the same thing too! From what I know, all sorts of cruel people live there!”

“Indeed! Speaking of which, my dad told me that there’s a powerful force in Talgo Town that even has territories in the Heavenly City! Could Mr. Yoxon possibly be calling someone from that group over?”

“Well, that possibility certainly isn’t out of the question!”

Throughout the next twenty minutes, the more well-informed students continued discussing the incident until a few of them finally pointed out of a nearby window before shouting, “H-hey! Look down there!”

As the rest of the students looked out, they were shocked to see at least a hundred black luxury cars driving toward the university. By the time the cars stopped, the area was completely surrounded by them.

Following that, several black-suited bodyguards began getting out of the cars before swiftly making their way to the corridor everyone was currently in.

Due to the imposing aura each of them possessed, all the students simply stepped aside, making way for them to proceed.

Those who were too slow to act, however, were immediately shoved aside as the overbearing bodyguards shouted, “Step aside!”

As Gerald found himself being pushed aside as well, Marjorie and the other female lecturers began biting onto their lower lips in excitement as they watched the scene further unfold.

Realizing how dominant the other party was, Mr. Lightburn’s men found themselves getting more dispirited by the second. In the end, all of them stepped forward to begin negotiating.

“Are you alright, Mr. Yoxon?” asked the leader of the bodyguards.

“Could you perhaps come from Talgo Town, gentlemen? I wonder which force you belong to?” asked Mr. Lightburn’s men.

“We belong to one of the families there. However, it was the Royal Dragon Group who ordered us to come here this time around,” replied the leader as he respectfully gave way to another man in black.

“I beg your pardon? You’re from the Royal Dragon Group, you say?” asked the opposing guards, stupefied by the turn of events.

After all, the Royal Dragon Group was considered to be a very powerful dark horse in Heavenly City. In just a single night, it had acquired all five forces in Talgo Town. The group had even blocked an entire road in Heavenly City! Those from within that group were truly vicious people!

As a result, being only a small force in Heavenly City, Mr. Lightburn's men really didn't dare to offend the Royal Dragon Group.

"That is correct. Mr. Yoxon's father is an ally to the Royal Dragon Group. Due to that, The Royal Dragon Group will now deal with this issue. Which force do you belong to? I do hope you'll give us some respect," replied the man wearing sunglasses, coldly.

"But of course!" replied Mr. Lightburn's men as they nodded with a smile.

"How could we just settle things like this, Bryan?" said Mr. Lightburn, unwilling to just accept defeat like that.

"Please just endure it for now, Mr. Lightburn. The Royal Dragon Group has been looking for targets all over the place. Even the boss has ordered us not to ever offend them," whispered Bryan in response.

Chapter 963

Though he was dissatisfied, Mr. Lightburn wasn't a fool. After listening to what his subordinate had to say, he understood what was at stake if he continued pushing on with the issue. Because of that, he didn't say anything more.

Gerald's Royal Dragon Group itself had developed at an immense rate in the past few days. After all, it now had help from the five forces it had acquired in Talgo Town. What more, both Tyson and Drake—who had been beaten up terribly by Sven—were now back at Gerald's side.

Though their main base was still in Talgo Town, they had recently begun developing in Heavenly City as well. Their efforts in doing so, of course, had been greatly aided by the Westley family.

"The Royal Dragon Group truly is a powerful dark horse!" muttered Specky—who had been standing next to Gerald this entire time—to himself.

"I wonder how they got so powerful so quickly..." asked a few girls who heard Specky's comment.

"Well, from what I've heard, the Royal Dragon Group's boss is extremely powerful! I've also heard that the bosses of the five forces surrendered themselves only after a single round! Because of that, nobody dares to block their path in the entire Heavenly City now! Well, except for Sven, probably... He still hasn't returned though!" explained Specky who seemed extremely well-informed about the entire situation.

Regardless, Quinlan was now extremely smug and in high spirits. After all, now that the Royal Dragon Group had stepped forward, the incident he was involved with was as good as solved.

Following that, he then began heading to the chancellor's office together with Marjorie and a few others to discuss some issues.

As they passed by Gerald, Marjorie took a glance at him. However, she only shook her head slightly and moved on without even greeting him.

From her middle school days till she was in university, Marjorie had always enjoyed her status as a goddess admired by all. However, once she graduated from university, she knew it was high time for her to get a boyfriend. Of course, not just anyone was going to be able to be her boyfriend.

Upon meeting Gerald the first time, she had truly admired him. After all, he was a handsome young man who had a good disposition to boot! Quinlan, on the other hand, was lacking in every aspect that Gerald succeeded in, or at least that was what she assumed based on her first impression of them.

After getting to know them a bit more carefully, however, Marjorie realized that Quinlan was hands down the more suitable candidate to be her boyfriend.

As for Gerald, he was a nobody to her now. Because of that, her attitude toward him completely changed as well.

Gerald himself could only smile bitterly in silence as he watched her ignore him.

While it was technically his Royal Dragon Group that had helped resolve this mess, Quinlan ended up snatching all the credits from him.

'Humph!'

Even so, this wasn't his first rodeo experiencing such injustice.

Recalling the multiple times similar incidents had taken place, Gerald remembered the time when he had regretted not exposing himself. Back then, he had been just as aggrieved as Alice was.

However, he now felt nothing of the sort anymore.

With that, he then returned to the office as the clock struck twelve. It was a little later when he was just about to get off work when he received a call. To his surprise, the number belonged to Tulip.

“I’m currently in a Starbucks in the city, Mr. Crawford. You’re off work now, right? Could you come over? I have something urgent to tell you!” said Tulip rather mysteriously.

“What is it? Could you be planning to treat me to some coffee to repay my kindness for saving you?” asked Gerald in return.

“Well, yes, but that’s not the only thing. Just come over now. We’ll talk more about it once you’re here,” replied Tulip before hanging up the phone.

Frowning slightly, Gerald knew he still needed to go there in the end. After all, his main purpose was still to maintain a good relationship with her.

Upon arriving sometime later, he saw that Tulip was seated at a table by the window, a cup of coffee placed before her.

However, Gerald was surprised when he saw the woman—who looked to be around twenty-four, the exact same age he was—sitting beside her.

Chapter 964

Just like Tulip, the woman was very beautiful, and both of them resembled each other a lot. However, Gerald could see that while Tulip had a more innocent look to her, the woman, in contrast, looked much more mature.

“That’s him, sister!” said Tulip with a soft tone as she pointed at Gerald.

Hearing that, she scanned Gerald briefly from head to toe before nodding slightly.

Following that, she grabbed her bag and got up to leave. While Gerald did intend to at least greet her, she completely ignored him.

Once she was gone, Tulip smugly said, “That was my elder sister, Juliet Yowell! What do you think? A beauty, isn’t she? Hah! Even if you deny it, I saw how wide your eyes were the moment you saw her!”

Nodding slightly, Gerald simply replied, "So tell me, what did you want to meet me for?"

"Well, it's something good so of course I had to tell you in person. Actually, scratch good, it's great news!" said Tulip before sighing.

"The truth is, I've been looking for someone suitable for the longest time. At long last, I've finally found you to be the perfect candidate!" added Tulip.

"Pray tell what exactly I'm a perfect candidate for..."

Hearing that, Tulip simply chuckled before saying, "Alright, so before anything else, let me just say that what you're about to hear will be extremely shocking. If you end up dying from excitement, don't say I didn't warn you!"

Taking in a deep breath, she then continued, "...So you see, my sister's been looking for a live-in son-in-law for a while now... And after searching for so long, you seem to be the most suitable candidate for the job!"

"...I beg your pardon? Me? A live-in son-in-law?" said Gerald as he immediately stood up, wide-eyed.

"Haha! I know, right? I was surprised that my sister agreed with it as well!" replied Tulip happily. Tulip had clearly mistaken Gerald's surprise for excitement, which explained why she was feeling so joyful.

"...Alright, let's slow down for a bit. First of all, your sister's extremely beautiful, so I'm sure she has many admirers. Why's she only looking for a live-in son-in-law...?" asked Gerald, his resignation evident in his voice.

"It's a long story..." said Tulip with a sigh before detailing everything.

Basically, after Gerald had saved her, Tulip got scolded by her family the moment she arrived home. However, after being scolded by her father, an idea came to her.

To understand that idea, Tulip had to explain why she ended up going to Bloomlin Mountain in the first place. In short, she had been in a very bad mood recently. Though Gerald failing to get them into the laboratory was the last straw for her, it was far from the actual source of her annoyance.

The main issue, as Tulip explained, had been regarding an incident relating to her sister whom she had a very good relationship with.

According to Tulip, upon Juliet's return to her homeland recently, she had been taking things extremely terribly due to issues pertaining to a broken heart. Juliet was simply upset all the time, and she was almost completely different from the sister Tulip used to know. Things got so bad that at one point, her sister even considered committing suicide!

It was the reason why Tulip had been so worried and easily angered at the time.

As for why Juliet had a broken heart in the first place, she had initially been studying abroad in M country. During her time there, she had a boyfriend and both of them were in love for a good many years.

However, she eventually found out that that sc*mbag had already been engaged to another person!

When she suggested that he marry her instead, he was actually hesitant about doing so! Understanding at that point that his heart never belonged to her in the first place, Juliet took things extremely badly and immediately returned to Heavenly City in great fury!

Before dumping him, out of spite, Juliet even said word for word, 'Since you're so hesitant about being with me, fine then! Since you think so highly of yourself, I'll just find the most worthless man on the planet to be my husband! You'll regret ever making me feel this way!'

Upon returning, she had asked for Tulip's help to locate such a person. Essentially, the perfect candidate would be someone who was worthless, but honest.

Fast forward to the present, as she said, she got the idea that Gerald was perfect for the role as her father scolded her.

Once her father was done, she immediately sought out her sister and told her all about Gerald.

As Gerald attempted to register all that he had just heard, Tulip replayed the earlier conversation she had had with her sister in her mind.

Back then, Tulip had found Juliet staring out the window. Running up to her excitedly, Tulip had said, "I've finally found the perfect person for you, sister!"

“Who is he?”

“Well, he’s a new lecturer of mine whom we all call Teacher Skitterbrook! He’s also the one who saved me today, so I can say for sure that he’s an honest man. To be quite frank, he doesn’t look bad either. What do you think? Should I ask him out once he’s done with work today? By doing so, you’ll be able to have a good look at him! If things go well, then you can get married to him and have your revenge on that sc*mbag! He’ll certainly be pissed since my lecturer clearly has no advantages to him! Haha!”

“I see... Alright then, please ask him out tonight. Once I get a good look at him and if things go well, we’ll sign the contract so that he’ll be my husband for a year. Once that year is up, I’ll reward him accordingly. With the reward money, I’m certain that he’ll be able to live his life without any more worries till the day he dies.”

“Alright! Just leave everything to me!”

Chapter 965

With that, the memory of the incident came to an end. Looking at Gerald, Tulip could very much tell that he was deep in thought.

Gerald himself was certainly not too excited about the fact that he was about to marry that beauty out of the blue.

However, he was also thinking about the practicality of going along with it.

Quite honestly, Tulip had made a good move in terms of advancing his plans. After all, as long as he was able to sneak into the Yowell family, then he would be able to put a stop to his vagabond lifestyle for at least a while.

However, the main issue still remained. Why did he have to get married to such a strange woman just to achieve that?

A better question yet, would his choice of actions be answerable to Mila later on?

“So, how about it? Haha! Just so you know, the marriage will only last for a year. Once that year is up, you’ll need to divorce her. However! The Yowell family will be sure to present you with a massive amount of money once that happens. I see no downsides to you agreeing! After all, not only will you be set for life once the year is done, but you’ll also have the title of the Yowell’s son-in-law throughout the next year!” said Tulip.

“Deal!” replied Gerald instantaneously as he looked at her.

As long as he could become stronger, then he would have a higher chance to save Mila and also deal with Kort. Gerald was well aware that attempting to do so with his current strength was futile, therefore there was zero hesitance in his final decision.

“...Huh? I haven’t even told you the conditions yet! How could you just agree like that?” pouted Tulip slightly, a hint of contempt in her eyes.

‘Humph! And here I thought you were a gentleman of honor... In the end, you’re just another money-grabbing b*stard!’

“So there are conditions... State them,” replied Gerald.

“But of course there are! Well, there’s only one, though it honestly shouldn’t be that big of a deal for you. Regardless, the most important thing is that you understand that your marriage with my sister is akin to the relationship between an employer and an employee. Don’t even dream about ever being able to go beyond that!”

“I see. What you’re trying to say is that the marriage is only nominal, correct?” replied Gerald with a bitter smile on his face. Though his expression suggested otherwise, this was exactly what he wanted.

“Bingo! That’s pretty much the only condition so if you don’t find a problem with it, then just sign the contract! Do note, however, that the wedding ceremony will be held in the next two days before my mom returns from abroad. While my dad certainly won’t say much about it, my mom’s a different story. She’ll definitely disagree with the wedding, so we need to proceed with this quickly!”

Gerald really didn’t know what sorts of tricks the sisters were up to, but he simply couldn’t be bothered about them. Knowing that this was as good a chance as ever to get involved with the Yowells, Gerald immediately signed the contract.

And just like that, seven days came and went.

It was a fine morning sometime later when Juliet and Gerald got into her car.

The moment Gerald closed the door of the shotgun seat, the aloof woman—who was now driving—immediately said in a cold voice, “The gathering we’re attending now has been organized by my classmates who are returning from abroad today. All of them have seen much of this world, so once we’re there, speak less. Understand?”

It had now been three days since their marriage and Gerald himself had moved into the Yowell family as a live-in son-in-law.

However, throughout that period, Juliet never spoke to him unless absolutely necessary. In fact, she didn't even look him in the eye most of the time.

Gerald completely understood her reasoning. After all, what was he to her but a mere tool? Then again, it wasn't like that bothered him or anything.

"Got it," replied Gerald with a brief nod.

Soon, both of them arrived at a high-end hotel in Heavenly City.

"Ah, welcome, Juliet!" said a few men and women as they stood up when they saw her entering their private room.

Noticing her presence, one of the young men—who was dressed in traditional attire and wore a gold watch—walked toward her before saying, "Hmm! Upon returning to the country, I heard that you got married to some teacher, Juliet! Is that the guy?"

Chapter 966

A hint of slight resentment could be heard in the man's voice as he pointed at Gerald.

"Indeed! This is my husband, Gerald!" replied Juliet as she locked arms with Gerald.

"Gerald, this is Cavan, a classmate of mine from university!" added Juliet as she introduced him to the man.

"A pleasure to meet you!" said Gerald as he reached a hand out in accordance with the etiquettes Juliet had earlier taught him.

"I truly can't comprehend what goes on in your mind... Even if you broke up with him, you could've easily just gone for anyone else other than this guy..." muttered Cavan.

Noticing Juliet's warning gaze, however, Cavan simply stopped talking. It was evident that Cavan was one of Juliet's suitors. That explained why he completely ignored Gerald's handshake as well.

Cavan wasn't the only one treating Gerald that way though. Many of Juliet's other male classmates shot equally hostile gazes toward him, refusing to say a word to Gerald at all.

Even her female classmates were staring at Gerald contemptuously from time to time. It was as though they were all wondering how a beauty like Juliet could end up being with such a pathetic person as Gerald.

"Just look at that guy, Cavan! I would've never imagined that Juliet would actually get married to such a person! To think that she actually fell in love with a teacher working in Heavenly City University! I'm speechless! What the hell even goes on in Juliet's mind?"

It was a while later when several of her male classmates were discussing Gerald right outside the gents.

Their dissatisfaction with him was warranted since most, if not all, of them there had either had a crush or fallen for her once. Cavan himself had had feelings for her for the longest time.

However, since Juliet already had someone else in her heart back then, nobody ever had a chance to even ask her out. Upon finding out that she finally broke up with her boyfriend, all her classmates were eager to finally be able to try their luck!

Alas, the next thing they knew, she had already gotten married to some useless person!

With all of them being distinguished people, it was really no wonder why they looked down on Gerald so much. After all, he was simply a lecturer.

"Humph! I know right? We can't even say anything to Juliet now since he's constantly around her! What an inconvenient eyesore!" scowled another classmate.

"In that case, then we should just make him leave then! We'll make it clear to him that our gatherings aren't events that just anyone can attend, especially people with his status!" sneered Cavan.

After saying that, he began whispering his plan to all the present male classmates. Once everyone agreed, they all returned to the private room together.

The moment Cavan saw Gerald, he walked over toward him with a smile before saying, "Speaking of which, we haven't even had a drink with the bridegroom! Since you snatched our goddess from us, you'll have to drink with us today!"

The other males simply exchanged gazes with each other in glee before smiling coldly at Gerald.

Despite the evident and sudden change in Cavan's attitude, Gerald simply returned the smile as he replied, "Sure thing! What are we drinking today?"

"That's the spirit! Also, we'll be drinking liquor! I just so happen to have a few boxes of good liquor in my car that I've brought from home! Someone's bringing some over as we speak!" said Cavan who wasn't expecting Gerald to agree so easily.

"Liquor sounds fine! In fact, I love drinking liquor!" replied Gerald with a laugh.

Since Juliet had easily sensed that Cavan and the others were up to no good, she had initially planned to remind Gerald against falling for it.

Seeing how mindlessly he was acting, however, Juliet was left completely speechless.

'Just let him drink if he wants to so much, then!' Juliet thought to herself before looking to the side.

Soon after, her male classmates returned with two boxes of liquor in hand.

"Oh, and by the way, Gerald. My friend here runs a winery! As a result, he can hold his alcohol extremely well. Would you have a problem with him being the master as we drink along? After all, both of us are plenty eager to enjoy a good drink with you! How about it?" asked Cavan as he continued smiling.

"Not a problem!" replied Gerald with a nod.

Nobody noticed the impish glint in Gerald's eyes as he said that. After practicing the many skills that Finnley had taught him, Gerald had trained himself enough to become immune to all forms of alcohol.

In fact, he was now even able to consume basic poisons without having to deal with any side-effects. Liquor was nothing to him!

The main reason Gerald agreed with Cavan's proposal was because he knew how much Cavan and Juliet's other classmates disliked him. The current Gerald was no longer as passive as he used to be. He wouldn't just endure all his anger after being bashed around so much.

Since they wanted so much to play with him, then play with them he would.

Chapter 967

Cavan, on the other hand, couldn't help but shake his head as he smiled wryly. All humans had a limit to their alcohol tolerance, and he would definitely make Gerald drink till he exceeded his.

True to his word, his classmate's family truly did own a winery. Cavan was certain that he would be able to completely ruin Gerald since his classmate—whom he also considered to be his brother—and his father were both extremely tolerant toward alcohol. In fact, after a check-up, their bodies apparently had access to a lot more alcohol breaking enzymes compared to regular people!

He had once seen his classmate drink seven whole bottles of extremely high alcohol percentage liquors, back to back, before finally reaching his limit.

Seven whole bottles of alcohol!

With that in mind, Cavan felt that Gerald would already be bleeding from his stomach long before his classmate even got too drunk.

Now that all of them were ready, the rules were simple. Each of the five participating people—inclusive of Gerald, Cavan, two other classmates, and Cavan's winery friend—would have to take turns downing cups of liquor, and every time their cups were filled, they had to finish every last drop in it before it could be refilled.

It wasn't long before both Gerald and Cavan's friend—whose family owned the winery—managed to finish three whole bottles of liquor, each.

Cavan himself had already gone pale by then, and he bore quite a frightening expression on his face. However, he was still conscious enough to know that he should still be fine for at least three more bottles of liquor.

At the same time, Juliet and the other girls were all getting increasingly scared with each glass the five men drank. They were definitely overdoing it!

Worried, Juliet turned to look at Gerald... However, to her surprise, he looked completely unfazed! It was almost as if he hadn't drunk any liquor at all!

"You can really hold your liquor, Gerald! I'm sure you can drink another three bottles, right?!" grumbled Cavan in both disbelief and surprise.

"Well of course I can! Still, remember that you three still have to drink together with us! Since this brother and I have already downed three bottles of liquor each, shouldn't you guys start picking up the pace as well?" replied Gerald with a smile on his face.

"Alright, then! Since Gerald's willing to carry on drinking, then we'll continue drinking as well!"

As the other two classmates declared that, Cavan whispered to his good friend, "Say, Jarson, are you still able to hang on...?"

"I... I'm fine...!" replied Jarson—who was the son of the winery's owner—as he waved his hand dismissively.

Hearing that, Cavan nodded and the next round of drinking soon commenced.

Juliet could only watch in horror as the five of them continued downing more and more liquor.

While Jarson and Gerald were still drinking on par with each other, Cavan and the other two boys had considerably slowed down by this point. What more, as the other two continued downing cups of liquor in single gulps, the remaining trio found themselves drinking half-a-cup at a time.

As a result, in no time flat, Gerald and Jarson had each finished another three bottles of liquor!

Cavan and the other two, on the other hand, had only managed to drink another bottle and a half of liquor, each. While the two other classmates had passed out by this point, both Jarson and Cavan were still slightly conscious.

"You drink rather well, Jarson. Care to have another three bottles of liquor with me?" asked Gerald as he looked at Jarson's sallow face. As he did so, he also took a peek at Cavan, whose face was now drained of all color.

"You still want to continue drinking? Both you and Jarson have already drunk six bottles of liquor each!" said Juliet, trying to talk some sense into them.

“Drink! We’ll... We’ll continue drinking! Jason! Drink I say-”

Before Cavan could even finish his sentence, he quickly wobbled toward the exit, clearly trying to hold himself back from vomiting in front of everyone.

Eventually managing to make his way to the washroom, Cavan instantly began vomiting as soon as he reached a toilet seat.

He would’ve never have dreamt that Gerald was this capable of holding his liquor.

Due to him underestimating that, Cavan’s entire world was now spinning as his stomach ached like never before.

At some point, he even began vomiting blood! However, due to how drunk he already was, he didn’t even register the implications of that.

After quite some time, Cavan could barely feel his legs as fumbled back to the private room. The moment he got to the door, however, he was greeted by the sound of screaming!

Concerned, Cavan immediately pushed the door open to see what was wrong.

To his dismay, the first thing he saw was Jason sprawled on the ground! Blood and foam were spurting from his mouth and even the whites of his eyes were showing!

“C-call an ambulance! Hurry!” shouted Cavan as he stumbled over, his eyes wide in shock.

Not long after, the wailing of ambulance sirens approached the venue.

With the matter now dealt with, Juliet and Gerald returned to her car.

Now that they were alone, Juliet immediately turned to look at Gerald—who was still looking as fine as ever—before asking in amazement, “You... Are you truly still doing alright...?”

“But of course I am! I’ll let you in on a secret... I’m actually naturally immune to alcohol! The only side effect of me drinking that much is a strong urge to use the washroom!” replied Gerald with a subtle smile on his face.

“How could a man with such an honest-looking face be such a liar!” said Juliet as she couldn’t help but glare at him.

At that moment, Juliet’s phone suddenly began ringing.

Picking the call up, Gerald listened as she made several ‘hmm’ sounds before eventually hanging up, a worried expression now on her face.

“...The call was from my mother who’s just returned from abroad... It seems that she’s somehow found out that I secretly got married without her knowledge!”

Chapter 968

After saying that, Juliet simply frowned before adding, “...You know what? I don’t care anymore. She can just do whatever she wants to, right?”

With that, Juliet drove both of them home.

Upon returning home, both of them were greeted to the sight of a glamorous woman sitting on the sofa.

As soon as she saw Gerald and Juliet, she immediately stood up and pointed at Gerald before saying, “So he’s Gerald? What right does a person like him have to enter the Yowell family?”

The woman who had just insulted Gerald was of course, Juliet’s mother who went by the name of Heidi.

Heidi had been notified about her daughter’s marriage while she was still abroad. The moment she found out that Juliet had gotten married to some wimpy man, she ended up immediately passing out! When she woke up, however, she instantly booked a flight straight for home. All that led to the current scene.

“Like that has anything to do with you. My marriage with him is a personal matter that doesn’t require your interference!” retorted Juliet.

“Doesn’t require my interference you say? Tell me, Juliet, what exactly goes on in that head of yours? Have you any idea how many marriage-seeking rich young masters I’ve turned down for your sake? Even if you truly wanted to get married without

taking me to heart, you shouldn't have married this kind of man! Do you even understand the shame and humiliation our family will have to endure because of you?!" replied Heidi before tossing a teacup directly toward Gerald.

With a loud shatter, the cup smashed into a million pieces right at Gerald's feet!

Gerald, however, simply remained silent.

"As for you, Tulip! I heard that you were the one who urged the two to get married in the first place! Just you wait and see how I'm going to deal with you in the future! To think that both of you would actually cause such massive trouble for me while I was abroad looking for a buyer in M Country!"

After saying that, the madwoman immediately stomped her way toward Gerald before giving him a tight slap across his face!

"Why don't you take a good, long look at yourself in the mirror? Do you honestly think that someone like you is worthy enough to be married into the Yowell family? I'll say this now so listen closely. If both of you know what's best for you, then you should get a divorce immediately! Make sure I never see you ever again!" roared Heidi as she stomped up the stairs in a rage while knocking down all the flowerpots—on the stairs—she could see.

While Gerald could've easily avoided Heidi's slap, he had simply been too distracted by something she had said.

As it turned out, Heidi had actually gone to M Country to look for a buyer. Since Gerald was well aware that the Yowells weren't traders, there was no other reason for a rich mistress like her to look for a buyer overseas unless it was regarding the Ginseng King.

Recalling what Quest had told him before, the Yowells were still looking for a buyer at the time though they didn't even know who they could sell it to. In the end, they must've decided that the best course of action was to export the Ginseng King.

Regardless, since Heidi had been the one to go abroad, that must mean that the Ginseng King must be with her.

That was the gist of how Heidi managed to actually land a slap on Gerald's face.

Regardless, when Juliet saw that Gerald still seemed to be in a daze upon returning to their room, she said, "Since she slapped you so hard, I'll be sure to add an extra hundred thousand dollars as compensation when we finally terminate our one-year contract!"

“...Do you honestly think that money means everything?” asked Gerald out of the blue as he raised his head to look at her.

“Is it not? Haha! Didn’t you agree to do all this in the first place because of money?” replied Juliet with a hint of contempt in her voice.

Hearing that, Gerald chose not to respond. Instead, he headed to the bathroom outside to wash his face.

As he was washing his face, however, he briefly caught a glimpse of a shadowy figure moving extremely quickly outside the bathroom’s window from the corner of his eye.

After training for so long, Gerald knew that he could trust his vigilance. There was definitely someone out there earlier!

Wiping his face dry, Gerald simply looked at the window for a brief moment. Following that, instead of walking out the door, he instead jumped out the bathroom window! Noticing that the shadowy figure was right ahead, he immediately began chasing after the other person.

It was soon evident to Gerald that the unnamed person was someone who was both extremely fast and skilled. After all, no matter how much Gerald increased his speed, the escaping shadow always seemed to maintain a ‘safe distance’ from him.

The term, ‘safe distance,’ was used by Gerald to describe the distance from where one would be safe from being killed by others through the use of hidden weapons. The more he thought about it, the more Gerald realized that there was a possibility that the shadowy person was actually more skilled than him.

Eventually, the person stopped moving once he arrived at a boat by a moat. Gerald himself caught up to the shadow seconds later and was finally able to see what the person looked like.

Under the glow of moonlight, the figure appeared to simply be a man with a black robe draped over him. However, the robe itself efficiently covered most of the man’s features, leaving only his eyes visible.

Frowning, Gerald then asked, “...Who are you?”

Chapter 969

His eyes stared coldly at the man as he asked the question.

With his keen ears, Gerald was able to hear how the person breathed from where he stood. Based on that alone, Gerald could already tell that this was an extraordinary person.

Since the figure wasn't replying, Gerald was about to consider his next move when all of a sudden, a few flashes of lights flickered before him. The next thing he knew, four other similarly dressed men jumped out of nowhere and they were now all standing before him!

Just like the person he had initially been chasing after, all four of the new hooded figures seemed to have skills and abilities far higher than what he currently possessed.

'Could it be the Moldells?' Gerald thought to himself.

"There are two reasons why we have called you out today, Gerald!" announced the man who had led Gerald there. From his voice, Gerald could guess that the person under the hood was a somewhat elderly man.

"State them."

"Before that, I hope you're aware that the Crawford family's name has been passed on for many, many years and is widely associated with being distinguished and having great wealth. Know that as the young master of the Crawford family, you've humiliated and ruined the Crawford family's customary moral standards and their way of life by agreeing to become a live-in son-in-law! Therefore, our first reason for calling you out today is to teach you a lesson!"

"So you know my true identity... Based on what you've just said, can I at least confirm if you're from the Moldell family?" asked Gerald.

However, the man didn't reply.

Instead, the man dashed forward and before Gerald could even react, the man was already right in front of him! Immediately after, the man delivered two tight slaps to his face!

Once he recovered, Gerald instantly turned to look at his assailant. However, he was left shocked when he realized that in just a blink of an eye, the old man had already returned to his original position!

Gerald barely had a fighting chance!

In his surprise, Gerald repeated his first question, "...Who... Who are all of you?"

"As for the second reason, I've received an order from our lord to bring you back to see him. However, I am aware that the Ginseng King will be of great benefit to you. Because of that, I'll leave the Mighty Four Kingsmen by your side for now. Do note that they'll take you away once ten days pass, whether you're prepared or not."

"The Mighty Four Kingsmen...?"

"That would be us!"

"During these ten days, all four of you are to stay by Gerald's side and abide to all his orders. Regardless of whether he gets his hands on the Ginseng King or not, once his ten days are up, all of you are to bring him back to our lord!" instructed the old man in black.

"Affirmative!"

Upon hearing that, the old man nodded before turning around. However, before he could leave, Gerald shouted, "Hold it! Who exactly is this lord you speak of?"

Since the corners of Gerald's mouth were already bleeding due to the two slaps he had received earlier, he had asked while cupping his cheeks.

"You'll know who he is once you meet him!" replied the old man before leaving immediately after.

...How very strange. Thinking about it, the strength and abilities of these men far exceeded what even the Moldells were probably capable of. Could there truly be even stronger masters in this world who weren't from the Moldell family?

As Gerald speculated on, he thought about how great it would be if Finnley was by his side now. After all, Finnley would definitely be able to estimate how strong these men truly were!

When Gerald tried questioning the Mighty Four Kingsmen to get further details, all they did was either nod or shake their heads. It was clear that he wasn't going to get any useful information from them, and this made Gerald feel extremely helpless about the entire situation.

Understanding that he would only be able to know more about them once he met their lord, Gerald told them to return to his manor to await further orders. After all, it wouldn't be convenient for him to have them around since he was still living in the Yowell family's mansion.

Speaking of the Yowells, at that moment, Heidi had gathered all of her family members in the Yowell manor's family hall.

Noticing that Gerald wasn't present and that Juliet herself seemed to be looking for him, Heidi then said, "Humph! Well isn't this perfect that he isn't around! Maybe he's already dead somewhere! Wherever he's gone to, don't ever let me see him again! I just feel extremely annoyed and frustrated every time I think about his face! Regardless, I've called all of you here today to announce something extremely important!"

Chapter 970

Heidi then continued, "Throughout my absence, I've been contacting several extremely powerful forces from different countries. As was expected, all of them were very eager to get their hands on the Ginseng King! You should've seen the prices they were offering us for it!"

"But didn't you say that the price wasn't an issue, mom? After all, getting it off our hands should be the priority since all the Ginseng King has brought to our family is trouble! There are already a number of powerful forces keeping a close eye on us because of it! Why are you still contacting so many buyers instead of quickly getting rid of it?" replied Tulip in surprise.

"Pfft! Silly girl... Can't you see what I'm trying to achieve? Contacting more foreign buyers will definitely be beneficial for our family in the long run! See, once the buyers realize that other forces are also aiming to get their hands on the Ginseng King, all of them will eventually end up fighting for it! With each of the foreign forces being so powerful, the smaller forces in Heavenly City—who are also targeting the herb—will most definitely fail to persist till the end once the foreign forces get involved."

"To summarize, by involving foreign buyers, the Yowells will essentially—and eventually—force the families in Heavenly City into sieges. Adding the money we'll get from selling the Ginseng King into the equation, we'll surely be able to establish our family's supremacy in Heavenly City in the near future! If everything goes as planned, we'll definitely succeed in killing two birds with one stone!" explained Heidi.

"I see... I understand your reasoning now! Once the foreign big guns arrive, the smaller forces in the city who are also looking for the Ginseng King will definitely be forced to retreat!" replied Tulip with a nod.

"I'm glad you finally see the bigger picture. Regardless, I've decided that the Yowell family will be holding an open auction for the Ginseng King in three days. When the time comes, we'll simply allow the forces to fight among themselves while the Yowells profit from all of this!" said Heidi, a subtle smile on her face.

Though Tulip's father was essentially still the head of the Yowell family, Heidi's position was similar to a dowager's. Though Tulip's father wasn't dead yet, Heidi usually had the final say regarding family matters both big and small.

Heidi, for one, had definitely given it her all this time to be fully in control of matters regarding the Ginseng King. The fact that she had been able to come up with such shrewd ideas proved that this woman was very good at scheming as well.

"Since several of the forces will surely begin gathering here tomorrow once I publicize the auction, both of you aren't allowed to leave the manor in the next three days. You're to help me receive our guests instead. Do I make myself clear?" said Heidi as she glared at Juliet.

The sisters simply nodded in response.

Before Heidi could say anything else, however, Tulip suddenly yelled, "Oh! You're back, brother-in-law!"

Hearing that, Heidi immediately glared daggers at Gerald before scowling, "So, the trash is back! Once this matter is done with, I hope you'll disappear from my sight forever!"

After saying that, she turned around to walk upstairs again.

Gerald himself had earlier managed to get back in time to catch Heidi's entire plan.

He honestly felt that this old woman was extremely vicious since she barely sounded guilty for plotting up a plan to get so many powerful forces to fight among themselves. After all, Gerald was aware of how feasible her plan was.

The next day came soon enough, and just as Heidi had said, once news of the open auction for the Ginseng King was made public, chaos was quick to ensue in the entirety of Heavenly City.

After all, it was needless to even talk about the immense economic value of owning the Ginseng King. To think that the herb had been in the hands of the Yowell family this entire time!

Forces both large and small had received the invitation to participate in the open auction. Even several underground forces were already showing up, resulting in all the hotels in Heavenly City getting fully booked.

On that day, the entire city simply came to life like it had never before.

However, just as Gerald and Heidi had anticipated, bloody disputes were soon to follow.

It wasn't even past morning when two local forces got into a terrible fight, resulting in both sides suffering severe losses. Due to that, both the forces found themselves withdrawing from the auction on the very same day they were invited.

Those, however, were only small fries. The two powerhouses that actually mattered in the Heavenly City were the Sven Westmore Group and the Royal Dragon Group.

Sven himself—who was the boss of Sven Westmore Group—had yet to make his appearance up till this point, which led many to begin speculating that Sven must have encountered some kind of mishap. Some wilder accusations even suggested that he was already dead!

As a result, many forces who were initially affiliated to the Sven Westmore Group found themselves eventually submitting to the Royal Dragon Group, the extremely strong and powerful dark horse.

Moving back to the Yowells, they had naturally been very busy seeing that they were the organizers of the event.

For the venue of the event, the Yowells had booked Longstone Mountain Villa which was a large scenic spot in Heavenly City. From the start of the first day, Heidi and her two daughters had spent most of their time there receiving guests from all over the place.

Several locals of Longstone City also came over to join in on the fun, all of them wanting to watch the extremely grand-looking ceremony. After all, nothing similar on this grand a scale had happened in Heavenly City for decades now.

“Aren't there too many people, mom...? It's going to be impossible for us to arrange for all of them to stay in Longstone Mountain Villa! It's simply too crowded already!” complained Tulip.

Tulip had even invited her classmates over to come help them today.

“Have you already forgotten? I kept reminding you that out of all the forces who are attending, we only need to make special arrangements and pay extra attention to eighteen of them! You don't need to bother about the other forces too much! Speaking of which, just in case you've forgotten, please remember to make extra special arrangements for the two major forces in Heavenly City as well. I'm talking about the Sven Westmore Group and also the Royal Dragon Group! After all, the Yowells will still need to deal with them once the matter is over. Because of that, we absolutely cannot afford to offend them at all!” warned Heidi as she turned to look at Tulip.

Chapter 971

"I got it, mom. Still, isn't the Royal Dragon Group's boss rather mysterious? After all, he was able to rise up the ranks in Heavenly City so quickly! The boss must be extremely extraordinary! Also, from what I've heard, he's been unwilling to participate in many occasions... It makes me wonder if such a powerful figure would actually want to participate in our family's event in the first place!" replied Tulip.

"Upon returning to the country, I've heard matters regarding the Royal Dragon Group as well. Rumors say that the Royal Dragon Group is packed with extremely fierce and tough subordinates. They also say that the boss of the group is a very young man with extremely vague origins! Would you happen to know anything more about them, mom?" asked Juliet who had also been curious for a while now.

After all, to think that the boss of the Royal Dragon Group was actually at the same age that she was! Juliet was also greatly interested in finding out what he actually looked like, as well as how he had acquired such great abilities to the point where people actually willingly submitted to him.

It certainly wasn't out of the ordinary for girls to admire such capable people, and Juliet was no exception to that.

"I'm not too familiar with him either... While the Yowells did send someone over to the Royal Dragon Group to congratulate him during their opening ceremony, in the end, the boss himself didn't participate in his own opening ceremony!"

"Regardless, I'm certain that he'll attend our auction this time. After all, very few people are able to resist the allure of the Ginseng King. Once the Royal Dragon Group's boss has arrived, I want both of you to be on your best behavior! You know, if he's interested in either of you, then the Yowells truly will be the overlords of Heavenly City in the future! The Westleys can just beat it by then!" replied Heidi with a smile as she crossed her arms.

"I'm already married, mom!" grumbled Juliet as she frowned slightly.

"Nonsense! What sort of marriage even is that? Don't think I'm unaware of what you're trying to do by marrying such a wimpy guy! I'm telling you ahead of time that what you're doing is useless! Also, the divorce happens as soon as the event is over! Stop being an embarrassment to the family!" growled Heidi as her face turned slightly red in anger.

Before she could continue bad-mouthing Gerald, a voice called out, "Our teacher is actually pretty good, Aunt Sachs! He was the one who saved Tulip, after all!"

Turning to look at the owner of the voice, it turned out to be Specky as he and Tulip's other friends backed Gerald up.

“You’re all just kids, so what would you know? Love and gratitude are two completely different matters you know?” replied Heidi.

At that moment, one of Tulip’s classmates shouted, “You’re here, teacher!”

True to the student’s words, Gerald was slowly walking over to the group of people. He had earlier been making arrangements for the guestrooms after being instructed by Juliet to do so. Now that he was done, he had decided to come over.

“I guess you’ve all come over to have fun since the university’s closed for the next few days,” replied Gerald as he smiled with a subtle nod.

“That’s right, teacher!” said Specky and a few others as they all laughed.

“Pfft! What utter trash! Trying to put on airs here! Just have a good look at yourself! If it wasn’t for Juliet, would you even be able to witness such an event with your own eyes?!” scowled Heidi as she poked Gerald’s chest with a finger.

Heidi was really trying to make it a point that she was extremely upset with her daughter’s decision to marry this wimp. After all, she had made it clear to Juliet before that her son-in-law had to at least be a reputable figure!

Just as she was thinking about that, Heidi heard a female voice saying, “Hello, Madam Sachs!”

Facing the direction of the voice, everyone present saw a group of people walking over to them. The leader was a beautiful, long-haired woman who was dressed in a professional suit.

Her group seemed to have attracted quite a bit of attention by the time they finally stood before Heidi.

“Oh, it’s you, Miss TakenaMeiko! I apologize for not greeting you earlier!” replied Heidi with an instant change in mood as she smiled at Meiko.

“It’s alright, Madam Sachs! You seemed to be busy earlier so I didn’t want to disturb!” said Meiko—with her rather inarticulate attempt at speaking the local dialect—as she glanced at Gerald. After looking at the earlier reprimanded man for a brief moment, she nodded toward him before smiling subtly.

The Japanese woman's smile was truly beautiful. After all, whenever she did so, her lovely eyes would curve into the shape of two breath-taking crescent moons that simply gave off a warm and pleasant vibe.

"My apologies! I was simply lecturing one of my naïve servants! You're not getting in the way of anything at all! Still, you must be exhausted from your journey all the way from Japan! I'll immediately arrange for a guestroom for you to rest in!" replied Heidi rather awkwardly.

"A servant? I remember you mentioning something about a son-in-law, however..." said Meiko as she fiddled with her hair.

Chapter 972

"You must've heard wrong then! It's impossible that he could be my son-in-law!" replied Heidi instantaneously as she peeked at the six young Japanese men who were standing silently behind Meiko. All of them had indifferent expressions etched on their faces.

Gerald himself was already looking at the six subordinates Meiko had brought along with her. Sensing their powerful auras, Gerald could tell that all six of them were masters at their craft. This Japanese woman certainly wasn't an ordinary person to be able to have such powerful guards by her side!

Meanwhile, a large group of people began heading up from below the mountain villa. While several other forces had also been making their way up the mountain road, as soon as they noticed the ascending group behind them, the other forces immediately stood on both sides of the road to make way for them.

"Madam! Those from the Royal Dragon Group are here!" exclaimed Heidi's butler who had been standing by her side this entire time.

Hearing that, Heidi instantly prepared her most respectful attitude before announcing, "Welcome, Royal Dragon Group!"

By then, even Juliet and Tulip were already looking at the swiftly approaching group. After all, they both wanted to see what the young boss of the Royal Dragon Group looked like.

Even Meiko—who was initially already walking away with her guards—stopped in her tracks and turned around.

"What is it, Miss Meiko?" asked one of her guards.

“I’ve heard plenty about the Royal Dragon Group of Heavenly City... They’re so powerful that they managed to conquer half of Heavenly City in less than a month! I believe that getting acquainted with their boss will definitely be beneficial to me in the future!” replied Meiko with a smile as she looked at the group of people who had just stopped in front of Heidi.

“Greetings, Madam Sachs! I go by Drake and this here is Whistler! Both of us have been sent to be representatives of the Royal Dragon Group!”

With Gerald’s help, over thirty percent of Drake’s injuries had already been healed. Though fighting was definitely not possible yet, Drake could already resume doing normal activities.

“The Yowell family is already very grateful that the Royal Dragon Group took the time to even attend our event! Your attendance is very much appreciated. I’ll get someone to arrange a guest room for you immediately! Speaking of which, about the Royal Dragon Group’s...?” said Heidi as she smiled before looking around. It was evident that she wanted to ask about their boss.

“Chairman Crawford is currently busy. However, he will definitely come albeit a bit late!” replied Drake.

“I see! So his last name is Crawford... Well, it would definitely be for the best if he came!” said Heidi.

The moment her gaze fell upon Gerald, however, her expression immediately changed as she yelled, “What are you still standing there in a daze for? Hurry up and arrange the guestrooms for the VIPs from the Royal Dragon Group and the Takena family already!”

“Roger!” replied Gerald with a subtle nod.

After looking at both Drake and Whistler, he began leading both groups to their respective guestrooms.

“Seriously! The more I look at him the more anxious I get! How is someone like him even still alive when there are so many other outstanding people on this planet! What more, his last name is Crawford as well so why’s there such a massive difference between him and the other party?” scoffed Heidi.

Juliet herself didn’t say anything to that. After all, she had deliberately chosen to marry a man who was as useless as Gerald.

Speaking of Gerald, once he had arranged the accommodations for Drake and his men, he quickly gave them new instructions.

A change of plans was definitely needed since he could never have anticipated the participation of so many powerful forces and masters due to Heidi's actions. With how chaotic things were getting, Gerald simply told his men to stand down for the moment until he gave further instructions.

After relaying that, Gerald immediately arranged for Meiko's accommodation next.

"This will be your guest room, Miss Meiko. Service staff will always be present as soon as you step out of your room, so do seek them out if you have any particular requests!" explained Gerald with a smile.

Just as he was about to leave, however, Meiko suddenly called out, "Hold on a moment, sir!"

"Is there anything else I could help you with?"

"Yes, I was wondering if you could do me a favor..." said Meiko as she bowed slightly before Gerald.

"A favor?"

Chapter 973

"Yes... If possible, I'd like you to pass on this message—along with my business card—on my behalf to those from the Royal Dragon Group... 'The Takena family would love to have the opportunity to meet up and have a meal with Crawford-san from the Royal Dragon Group. Do you accept?' I do hope that you'll convey this message to them for me!" explained Meiko as she bowed once more while holding out her business card.

After taking it from her, Gerald looked at her card while thinking about how remarkable and well-educated this demure lady was.

However, Gerald was well aware that this probably had to do with how strict Japanese culture was. Regardless, he still believed that as an individual, Meiko was no simple person.

The fact that he didn't know what kind of family the Takenas were only served to increase his suspicions.

After thinking about it for a moment, Gerald nodded before replying, "Alright, I'll pass the message to them for you, Miss Meiko. Enjoy your stay!"

With that, Gerald nodded at her before leaving.

Once he was back outside, he saw that Heidi was still waiting in front of the mountains. This struck him as odd since the representatives for all eighteen of the powerful forces had already arrived earlier. Gerald would know since he was the one who had helped all of them settle down.

Who was she still waiting for then?

“Everyone’s already here, mom... Shouldn’t we leave now?” asked Tulip.

“And who was it that said that? There’s one more mysterious guest who has yet to make their appearance! I have to personally receive this guest, you know?” replied Heidi with a smile as she continued looking down the mountain.

“Oh? We still have one more guest? And here I thought that the most luxurious villa within the mountain villa was reserved for us! Could that be for the mysterious guest instead?” asked Tulip again.

“Bingo! I’m thankful to have such a smart daughter!” replied Heidi with a triumphant smile on her face.

“From what we’ve seen, the guests who are already here are all extremely wealthy and distinguished! Not only that, many of the famous foreigners present are known for their power! Is there truly someone else who is even more powerful compared to the people we’ve seen today?” questioned Juliet next.

“But of course! There will always be more famous and powerful people out there! Speaking of our current guests, quite frankly, none of them are even close to comparing to how strong this noble family is!”

“I was only able to meet this person by chance when I was still in M Country. She was both elegant and gentle, the perfect oriental woman one could say! While she’s only about your age, Juliet, I can safely say that your temperance can’t even compare to hers, even after a billion years! If it wasn’t for her distinguished identity, I would’ve already asked her to become my sworn sister!” explained Heidi.

“Is that so?” replied Juliet slightly enviously.

“There’s no need for you to feel so dissatisfied... Regardless, I happened to mention the Ginseng King to her... Who would’ve thought that she would immediately express interest in buying it! She should be here any moment now!” said Heidi.

While waiting, Heidi continued telling her daughters more about the mysterious guest. In short, while she didn't know where the mysterious guest came from, she did know that the young woman was exceptionally rich.

She was honestly the main reason why Heidi was able to gather so much confidence to host such a major event in the first place.

Gerald, on the other hand, simply listened in to their conversation. The more he listened to her talking, however, the more Gerald felt that Heidi was an extremely snobbish and arrogant woman.

Shortly after, several luxury cars came to a stop at the foot of the mountain. After a group of solemn and respectful-looking bodyguards cleared the way, two women stepped out of a car.

The woman taking the lead seemed to have an excellent temperament and she looked to be around the age of twenty-five. The younger woman, on the other hand, looked to be around twenty-two.

Locking arms, both of them slowly began ascending the mountain as Heidi laughed excitedly before saying, "She's here!"

Seeing Heidi so excited, Gerald and the two sisters turned to look at the young women who were slowly getting closer.

Squinting her eyes slightly, Juliet was instantly filled with awe the moment she saw how beautiful and elegant the woman walking toward them was.

Gerald himself found his eyelids twitching the second he realized who those two women were.

"...Lyra? Bea?" muttered Gerald to himself as he suppressed his urge to shout in shock.

There was no doubt about it. The two women were none other than his fiancée, Lyra, and Bea, his cousin sister!

The men surrounding them were naturally from the Crawford family as well.

It had already been over half a year since they last met and Gerald couldn't deny that he had frequently missed and thought about his family throughout that period.

He really hadn't expected that he would be able to meet them out of the blue and here of all places!

Chapter 974

Though Gerald was considerably excited, he quickly calmed himself down.

While Gerald knew that his family had finally gained some respite after his disappearance so long ago, he was also well aware that he couldn't just rush reconciling with the Crawfords just yet.

His thought process was that once news about the matter got out to the public, then all his effort and hard work in the past few months would go to waste. The foundation that he had so painstakingly established would easily be wiped out by the Moldells once that happened!

Understanding that, he knew that he absolutely couldn't reconcile with his family yet!

After glancing at Bea and Lyra one final time, he turned around and instantly left the scene.

"You've finally arrived, Lyra! I've been waiting for you to arrive!" said Heidi excitedly.

"You must've waited for a long time!" replied Lyra with a subtle smile on her face.

Now that Lyra was standing before them, Juliet herself was starting to feel overshadowed upon getting a closer look at the girl who was currently exchanging conventional greetings with her mother.

As they were doing so, however, Lyra caught a glimpse of a figure entering another room. For some odd reason, her heart skipped a beat the moment she saw him!

"Is something the matter, sister-in-law?" asked Bea.

"...No... Nothing at all..." replied Lyra as she quickly shook her head.

Lyra was here today since she had heard about how important the Ginseng King was from Dylan. From what her father had told her, the herb was extremely valuable and difficult to obtain. Even the Crawfords had apparently sought out for it once, though they were never actually able to find it.

As for how Lyra got to know Heidi, she and Bea had met her while they were attending an economic management class in M Country. Since Lyra and Bea were also there to manage some of their assets in that country, they had bumped into Heidi sometime then, which resulted in Lyra eventually finding out that the Ginseng King was in her hands.

The moment she found out about it, Lyra immediately reported the matter to Dylan. Following that, Dylan barely hesitated as he ordered her to buy the Ginseng King off Heidi's hands, no matter the costs.

All that eventually led to the events of today.

Soon after, night came, and excluding the most luxurious villa within Longstone Mountain Villa, all the other rooms were filled with joyous singing and dancing.

Almost everyone was drinking and celebrating the night away since the open auction had allowed people from all walks of life to gather in one place.

Meanwhile, Bea—who had just finished her bath—entered Lyra's room before asking, "What on earth could that Heidi Sachs be thinking...? Why would she go this far when all she's hosting is an open auction? If it's money she yearns for, then I'll just give her a blank cheque and tell her to fill in any amount she wants!"

Hearing Bea's complaint, Lyra—who was wearing a pastel nightgown as she dried her hair—simply smiled before replying, "You should know that by doing so, you're only going to scare her away! After all, anyone would immediately wonder if you were up to no good if you simply told them that so casually before handing them a blank cheque!"

"...That... makes sense..."

After that, both of them fell silent for a while as Lyra looked around while cupping a hand over her cheek.

Though neither of them noticed it, a figure was eavesdropping on them right outside their villa's window.

"Speaking of which, Sister-in-law, I've seen you occasionally sighing ever since we got here... Are you sure nothing is troubling you?" asked Bea.

“...Well, earlier when we just arrived, I noticed a figure that looked very similar to your brother...” explained Lyra as she felt her eyes water slightly.

“Ah... You’re missing my cousin again, aren’t you...?” replied Bea with a saddened tone.

“It’s already been over half a year yet there’s still no news about Gerald at all... We don’t even know whether he’s dead or alive...” mumbled Lyra as she slowly covered her entire face, bursting into tears shortly after.

Also in tears now, Bea replied, “Not to worry, sister-in-law... My cousin is a good man so the heavens will always keep him out of harm’s way! He’ll definitely be fine! What more, if the Moldells have truly captured him, then their family would certainly not keep mum about it, right?”

After saying that, Bea pulled Lyra close to her and the two sisters hugged each other tightly.

Upon seeing this, the figure outside found himself clenching his fists tightly as well.

Chapter 975

Gerald himself was well aware of why Heidi hosted the open auction in the first place.

Putting it simply, she had made sure to invite as many large and powerful forces that she could in hopes that they would eventually fight each other to the death.

That way, once everyone else was battered at the end of the day, the Yowells would be the only ones left standing. In other words, not only would they get lots of money, but they would also be placed at an extremely advantageous position!

Of course, Lyra and Bea had no idea about all this and simply assumed that it was an over the top auction.

Surprisingly, they had become easy targets for Heidi to drag into this mess due to how mysterious both of them were.

“Just why the hell did both of you have to get involved in something so complicated...?” grumbled Gerald.

Naturally, he was the one who had been spying on them this entire time. As Gerald looked at the two fresh corpses at his feet, he couldn’t help but worry even more for the girls’ safety.

Gerald knew that Lyra had planned to be low-key this time around from the moment he saw how few men she had actually brought along with her. The fact that there were so few people guarding her only served to increase Gerald's unease. It was the reason he was so actively protecting and keeping watch over the girls now.

As for the two dead bodies at his feet, Gerald still couldn't guess who they worked for. Regardless, both of them had clearly been sent over to investigate the girls and Gerald just so happened to run into them while coming over to spy on Lyra and Bea himself.

After dealing with them, Gerald did consider ordering the Mighty Four Kingsmen to keep watch over the girls. After all, the black-robed old man had ordered them to follow everything Gerald instructed them to.

However, in the end, Gerald chose not to since he knew he wouldn't be able to rest easy unless he was the one keeping an eye on them. Sitting outside their window, he knew all he could do for now was continue listening in to their conversations.

'I've broken way too many hearts since my disappearance back then... However, it's not like I have a choice since I can't go home yet.... I feel like I've let Lyra down the most though, since she still considers me to be her fiancé after all this time...'

'I'm sorry, but it really is impossible for me to be with you!' Gerald thought to himself.

The hours then passed by and eventually, Bea returned to her own room to rest. Lyra herself slowly cried herself to sleep.

In the dead of night, once he knew Lyra was fast asleep, Gerald silently snuck into the room. Under the moonlight, Gerald could still see traces of tears on Lyra's sleeping face.

Gently using a finger to wipe one final tear off the corner of her eye, he then blanketed her as he sat by her bedside.

"...Gerald... I've been... determined to be your wife ever since I was a child... Please... Just... please show yourself already... Please come home..." muttered Lyra in her sleep.

"...Home? I wonder when I'll finally be able to return home myself..." replied Gerald in a soft tone, a bitter smile on his face.

'I appreciate your love toward me Lyra... Though we can't be together, I swear on my life that I'll never allow harm to ever befall you!' Gerald thought to himself as he gently caressed her forehead with the back of his hand.

It was at that moment when Gerald heard Lyra's room's door opening slowly.

As Gerald immediately turned to look at the door, Gerald realized that it was too late to even think about escaping now. After all, the girl who had just entered was now staring right at him.

Understandably shocked, the extremely startled girl was just about to scream when the dark figure sitting on Lyra's bed instantly made a dash toward her, covering the girl's mouth!

"There's no need to scream, Bea! It's me!" whispered Gerald as soon as he covered her mouth.

Bea recognized that voice anywhere and as soon as she heard it, her eyes immediately widened.

"Keep it down, we'll talk outside..." added Gerald as he released his hand over her mouth and pulled the girl out of Lyra's room.

"C-cousin!" cried out Bea as she leaped into his arms as soon as they were outside. She was currently experiencing a cocktail of positive emotions, so much so in fact, that she was even shaking slightly in her exhilaration.

"Is... Is this really you, cousin? Am I dreaming?" asked Bea as tears ran down her cheeks.

Gerald could feel how tightly Bea was hugging onto him. It was almost as if she was afraid to let go, thinking that the dream would end once she did.

Chapter 976

"...You're not dreaming... I really am here!" replied Gerald with a smile as he wiped the tears off Bea's face.

"Where have you been in the past six months, cousin...? You seem to be much stronger and tanner now... If this really isn't a dream, then I... I... I don't know, I'm just so happy to finally be able to see you again!" sobbed Bea.

"It's a long story... I'll tell you all about it in the future. For now, you just need to know that I'm still perfectly fine!" replied Gerald as he felt his eyes going slightly red.

"Speaking of which, how are my parents doing...?" added Gerald.

“Well, it isn’t uncommon for aunt to cry all day long these days... Uncle himself seems to look much older than he used to before your disappearance... Both of them simply spend most of their time worrying about you...!”

“...I see. And what about my sister?”

“She’s... grown to have a very short fuse now... While she used to be very kind to her subordinates, from the day you went missing, she’d occasionally beat them up over very small matters! Nothing seems to please her anymore, and she orders her subordinates to search for you on a daily basis!” replied Bea.

Hearing that, Gerald could feel tears trickling down his cheeks.

Upon seeing that, Bea then continued, “...Still, it’s great that you’re finally back now, cousin... I’m sure that everyone from your family will be overjoyed once they find out about it, especially Lyra! You know, she’s constantly been missing and thinking about you this entire time... She’s also the one in charge of shouldering all our family’s affairs now... The poor girl is just beyond tired and exhausted now...”

“However, she keeps insisting that she be the one to take good care of the family! She’s been positive that you’ll make your return one day now here you are! She’ll definitely be extremely happy once she finds out about all this! In fact, I should probably call her over now! Oh, and I should call uncle as well!” added Bea, feeling so excited that she wasn’t even sure what to do first.

“...Hold on a moment, Bea. ...Please understand that I’m only meeting you now since I couldn’t hold myself back anymore... Bea, please promise me that you won’t tell anybody about what happened tonight... Nobody should find out that we ever met,” said Gerald as he wiped his tears away.

“...Huh? ...Why not, cousin?” asked Bea, clearly confused.

“Because I’m currently at a critical point in my battle with Kort... After killing Kort’s third son and ceasing his power in the Salford Province, everything will come crumbling down should my whereabouts or status be exposed... By then, not only will my family suffer a massive blow, but I probably won’t be able to make it out alive either... Do you understand, Bea?” explained Gerald.

“...W-what? You killed Jett?” replied Bea as she cupped her mouth in shock.

“B-but I heard that Jett was kidnapped by a mysterious master! From what I know, he’s still considered to be missing! After all, the Moldells have frantically been trying to locate him to the point of insanity since the day he disappeared! They just can’t seem to find clues about his whereabouts anywhere!” said Bea, now more surprised than anything.

“Well, I made sure that not even a single strand of his hair remained once I was done with him... He died a very clean death, so I highly doubt that the Moldells will ever be able to locate him!” replied Gerald with a bitter smile on his face.

“How exactly did you kill him, cousin...? Even the top masters in our family are no match of Jett’s subordinates, let alone Jett himself!”

“Just know that Jett wasn’t an actual threat to me. Regardless, I was serious about making the promise. Nobody should ever know that you saw me, understand? Also, please bear in mind that the auction you’re participating in is extremely dangerous so you’ll have to be alert at all times. If you sense anything unusual, notify me about it as soon as possible. I’ll secretly be assisting and protecting both of you throughout your stay here,” replied Gerald as he hugged Bea tightly.

Nodding with a heavy heart, Bea then said, “...Alright, I promise. Regardless, I’m just so happy to know that you’re still doing fine!”

“Silly girl... Speaking of which, I’m currently the chairman of the Royal Dragon Group and I’m after the Ginseng King as well. I need your help getting the herb for me once the auctioning begins! It’ll be more useful in my hands rather than my family’s anyway!”

“Not a problem, cousin! Also... While I’ll definitely keep our promise, could I please tell Lyra about our meeting? After all, I spend a lot of time daily with her and I simply can’t bear looking at her so upset as she thinks about you day in and day out!”

“I’m sorry, Bea, but you can’t. I’ll meet her when the time is right so please keep the matter a secret until then!” instructed Gerald.

“...I understand-”

“Shh!”

Before Bea could even finish her sentence, Gerald had placed a finger over his lips as he gestured for her to remain silent as well.

“Someone’s coming. Don’t say a word!” whispered Gerald as he frowned.

Frightened, Bea did as she was told.

Gerald himself sprinted quietly in the shadows toward the direction of the sound, much to Bea's surprise.

Once he was outside, he saw what seemed to be a masked man donning black clothes slowly approaching the villa.

Looking at the ground, Gerald noticed a few twigs at his feet and purposely stepped on them. The moment the man in black heard the sound of snapping twigs, he immediately dashed away from the villa with extreme speed!

'How skillful! It seems that there truly are no ordinary people participating in this event!' Gerald thought to himself as he slid on his mask before chasing after the man.

Chapter 977

Under the moonlight, Gerald could see the man running faster and faster on the grassy and leaf-covered ground, leaving a trail of rustling noises behind him.

The gentle rustling signified how light the man's steps were, and he honestly looked like he was almost gliding across the grass rather than running over it.

While Gerald had to admit that the man in black's skill was top-notch, there was still a big gap between that man's and his.

'You're still trying to escape...?' Gerald thought to himself as he let out a tiny sneer.

Gerald then kicked a branch off the ground with the tip of his shoe and, with extreme precision, he flicked it with his finger, sending it flying toward the running man as though Gerald had just fired an arrow!

It wasn't long before the branch connected with the man's back, creating a loud 'thud'! The impact of the branch was so great that the man in black found himself rolling on the ground several times till he eventually rolled down the mountain slope!

To Gerald's surprise, when he went over to inspect the rightfully injured man, the man in black was nowhere to be seen! No traces of him ever being there were left behind either!

'How strange... How could he have just simply vanished into thin air?'

He could only frown at his own carelessness as he continued searching around the area. After a while, Gerald realized that there truly was nothing left behind so he silently left the area.

Elsewhere, a hotel room's door squeaked open as a figure staggered in before collapsing in the bathroom.

Blood was flowing out of the person's arm as they finally removed their mask, revealing the person's beautiful face and long, black hair. Her dark hair honestly made her face look all the more paler.

'How truly amazing!' The woman thought to herself as she gasped to catch her breath before getting some gauze and beginning to wrap her wound up.

In just the blink of an eye, the third day came and it was finally time for the open auction to begin.

Though things had appeared calm on the surface in the past few days, it was evident that the peace was only a façade.

After all, throughout the three days, several of the forces had been busy engaging in countless secret battles and rivalries.

From assaults to kidnapping incidents, anyone who seemed like a competitor to be worried about was dealt with swiftly.

The biggest danger, of course, came from the major forces who had no issues with going on killing sprees.

Due to their honorary receptions, Lyra and many others were just sitting ducks in this event. However, due to Gerald's protection, he managed to foil all of their plans, which included both kidnapping and assault attempts.

Things definitely weren't as fine and dandy as they appeared. However, on the day of the open auction, it was as though nothing had ever taken place under the peaceful façade.

In fact, all the major forces appeared to be beaming with joy as they brought their men over to participate in the auction.

Apart from the mysterious Lyra, the Takena family and Thunderous Dragon Inc. from the north of M Country seemed to have the strongest reputations and power among everyone else.

As for the layout of the auction site, it was set in the open-air front yard of the mountain villa. A large stage had been set up there and rows upon rows of seats had been prepared for the guests.

Though the Yowells themselves were the organizers of the event, they weren't qualified to sit on the platform. Instead, those from that family were all seated on the row of seats right below the stage.

The eighteen strongest forces were all seated up front, and the remaining forces simply sat behind them.

Aside from the bidders themselves, tens of thousands of onlookers were also present. The crowd of people stood around the bidders and it was honestly extremely lively then.

As Heidi—who was wearing a formal dress—delivered a speech for the auction on stage, Tulip called out to her classmates, “Hey! Specky! Nicole! Over here! I reserved some seats for you!”

Hearing that, the two and a few others quickly went to where Tulip was.

They made sure to greet their teacher as well as they passed by him. As a member of the Yowell family, Gerald naturally had to attend the event today. However, he simply chose to sit at a corner.

“Are you really going to continue spending the rest of your life with that guy, Juliet...?”

The question had come from one of Juliet's many friends whom she had invited over.

Chapter 978

The girls themselves were sitting beside Juliet as they continued staring at Gerald who hadn't moved from his corner.

“That's right! Sure, you broke up with that previous guy and that's honestly fine! However, you really don't need to make yourself suffer by being with this one! I mean, just look at all the powerful and reputable figures who are here today! You know, I've also noticed that several of the handsome men here have already taken interest in you!”

“Yeah! So why not take the opportunity to finally get rid of him today so that you can start seeking out your true happiness again!”

Listening to her friends trying to persuade her, Juliet herself began thinking about it.

Honestly, if her friends had persuaded her on any other day, Juliet knew that her decision to continue on with the fake marriage wouldn't falter in the least. After all, as the name suggested, the marriage was only for show and Juliet was well aware of that.

However, things were different today. After all, rich, young men from all over the world—with temperaments that far exceeded her ex-boyfriend's—were currently present.

A person's circle of friends determined their horizons, and in the past, Juliet used to think that her circle of friends was already large enough. Now, however, she finally realized and came to terms that she had been a person with a narrow view this entire time.

As a result, Juliet was now gripping onto her skirt tightly.

She regretted it. She regretted her own wilfulness. She regretted getting together with Gerald as well. Even though it was simply a fake marriage, she still utterly regretted her actions.

"You know, I think that Mr. Lockhart over there is a pretty good catch. Just look at how he speaks and behaves! Between you and me, he's secretly been sneaking peeks at you this entire time! I really think that he's fallen for you! So please come to your senses and seize this opportunity to divorce Gerald already! It's high time you start seeking your own happiness again!"

While Juliet's friends continued persuading her, one of them sighed before saying, "...Alright, if you're too embarrassed to bring this up with Gerald, then I'll go talk to him about it on your behalf! That way, both of you can get divorced tomorrow then! How about it?"

Since Juliet didn't seem to disagree with it, her friends took her silence as consent for them to do so.

"That's great! I'll go over and tell him right this instant!" said the same girl from before as her other friends smiled with glee, happy that Juliet was finally coming to her senses.

Seconds later, Gerald looked up as Juliet's friend walked toward him and said, "Hey! There's something I need to tell you, Gerald Crawford!"

"Go on."

“Do you honestly think you’re worthy of being with Juliet? Hah! Just have a good long look in the mirror! How could you possibly ever compare to a person like Mr. Lockhart over there? Look, Juliet already regrets marrying you so she told me that she wanted to divorce you tomorrow! Since she’s said that, what’s your response? Are you going to continue pestering her?” explained Juliet’s friend extremely bluntly.

Hearing that, Gerald frowned slightly before smiling.

“A divorce, you say? Sure! I guess I have no choice but to agree!”

Gerald had only agreed to get married to Juliet since he had his eyes on the Ginseng King. If he managed to get his hands on it today, then staying married to her was pointless anyway.

“Well that was straightforward. Haha! I’m glad you’re at least aware of your own status! Fine then!” said Juliet’s friend as she smiled contemptuously before returning to Juliet’s side to tell her the good news.

After hearing that he had agreed, Juliet simply began straightening her hair as her gaze fell upon Mr. Lockhart’s back.

The man had been sitting in the front row this entire time, and Juliet knew little about him. However, she did know that he was extremely popular. From what she had heard, Mr. Lockhart was also the son of a wealthy businessman from Myanmar. What more, he had already established a cooperative alliance with the Royal Dragon Group in Heavenly City!

If she was truly able to end up together with him, then it would certainly spell the best outcome for both herself and the future of her family in Heavenly City!

As Juliet continued thinking about it, Tulip—who had been sitting with her friends—suddenly said in a rather angry tone, “Humph! Why are they here as well? I feel disgusted from just looking at them!”

Those who heard her remark instantly turned to look at who could’ve possibly made Tulip so annoyed.

As it turned out, it was a young man who had brought along several young women with him.

The man himself was none other than Quinlan from Talgo Town. As for the three other females, one of them was Marjorie while the other two were lecturers from the biology department.

While Tulip was angered by their presence, Nicole immediately said, “Keep it down, Tulip! I think Quinlan’s here with his father today! Since his father works for the Royal Dragon Group, you better not let them hear you!”

Hearing that, Tulip could only silently hold her rage in.

“Regardless, Miss Marjorie seems to have gotten together with Mr. Quinlan, hasn’t she?” asked one of the girls.

“Indeed! You know, someone saw both of them holding hands while walking around campus! Speaking of Miss Marjorie, I’ve heard other interesting things about her as well! Haha! It’s about her and Mr. Gerald!” replied Nicole as she lowered her voice.

“Oh? What’s the scoop?” asked Tulip and the others, their interest clearly piqued.

Chapter 979

“Well, from what I’ve heard, Miss Marjorie seemed to be very interested in Mr. Gerald when Mr. Quinlan and him first came to the university. However, Miss Marjorie instantly had a lot of interest in Mr. Quinlan next, the moment she found out about his background! As a result, she’s been treating Mr. Gerald like a complete stranger since then!” explained Nicole.

“Hah! What an evil woman! What’s so good about her anyway?” grumbled Tulip, dissatisfied,

Marjorie and Quinlan themselves walked past the group—hand in hand—without greeting Tulip and the others. After all, they were here as guests today instead of being their lecturers.

As they continued walking on, Marjorie noticed Gerald who was still sitting in the same corner.

When she first found out that Gerald had gotten married to the eldest young lady of the Yowell family some time ago, Marjorie had felt extremely anxious about it. However, she soon calmed herself when she realized that he was only a live-in son-in-law.

Shaking her head with a wry smile on her face, Marjorie then turned to look away from him as she and Quinlan walked on. She wasn’t obligated to greet the Yowell’s live-in son-in-law on a day like this anyway.

It wasn’t long before everyone was seated and the auction began proceeding in an orderly manner.

The moment the Ginseng King made its appearance, a small spike of excitement could be detected from the audience as everyone's eyes lit up while looking at the legendary herb that was being displayed inside a glass cabinet.

Gerald himself couldn't help but take several glances at the Ginseng King.

'The reiki of the Ginseng King is so compelling... It's clear from a single glance that it truly has the ability to strengthen and renew a person's body!' Gerald thought to himself before sighing.

By then, Gerald was starting to get both anxious and impatient. He wasn't alone either.

Like everyone else, Gerald truly wished that he could just grab the Ginseng King now and bring it home with him.

"The Ginseng King is a priceless gem. Regardless of how expensive it is, I, Taito Mahone, am going to be the one to take it back with me today! Anyone who decides to go against that will immediately signify that you refuse to give me any face!" shouted a tanned, middle-aged man out of the blue.

"Oh my! What a coincidence! It just so happens that I'm going to be taking it back with me instead!" retorted another force.

"Are you challenging me? Do you believe that I have the ability to make sure that you won't be able to leave Heavenly City alive?"

"Sounds rather unlikely to me!"

As both forces continued quarreling, a fight seemed to be imminent.

However, before anything else could happen, a young man who appeared to have come from M Country stepped onto the stage before saying, "Aren't both of you being too impatient, sirs? Let's be real here, everyone sitting in the front row is probably filthy rich. Because of that, no matter how high we bid for the Ginseng King, in the end, it'll still be completely useless. Therefore, it's useless for both of you to start fighting now!"

Since the young man was speaking in English, his verbal translator explained what he was saying word by word.

"Hah! Who do you even think you are, blue-eyed boy? What do you suggest we should do then?" yelled Mahone in return.

“Personally, I say all the strong forces should just fight it out. After all, since money can’t be used as a standard to get what we want, then fighting is our second best option! The last man standing gets the Ginseng King! Clean and simple!” replied the young man with a smile.

“A brawl? Do you honestly think that a young lad like you is worthy enough to be my opponent? If we’re going all out, then none of you will be able to win against me, the great Mahone! Get down from the stage, right this instant then, young man from M Country!” yelled Mahone coldly.

“What did you say?” said the young man as he locked his gaze onto Mahone, his blue eyes as sharp as an eagle’s. They seemed to bear great meaning behind them.

It was only a second later when Mahone’s face turned pale and cold sweat began pouring out his forehead. His eyes went dull next and all of a sudden, the arrogant man knelt with a loud ‘thud’!

“B-boss!” shouted all of Mahone’s subordinates at the same time, utterly stunned.

Mahone’s expression, however, barely even changed. It was almost as though the man had been possessed.

As was expected, that scene instantly created a massive uproar among the crowd.

“What?! Taito Mahone, the person infamously known for his fierceness actually knelt after receiving a single stare from that young man?!”

“Actually, wait! Don’t any of you realize that there’s something clearly unusual about that young man from M Country? From the look in his eyes alone earlier, it almost seemed like his gaze could pierce through a person’s soul!”

Chapter 980

“Could that person be a practitioner of sorcery? Isn’t that a little too evil?”

As the people in the crowd continued discussing the situation, the young man simply glanced at everyone below stage as he said, “So, what does everyone else think about my proposal? After all, the best things in the world should naturally belong to the strongest, right?”

After all that had happened, several of the big bosses were now too frightened to speak up.

While the bosses momentarily remained silent, someone from the crowd said, "...That young man goes by the name of Marco Thunder! He's from Thunderous Dragon Inc. and just as the rumors had stated, Mr. Thunder truly is an extraordinary person! It's really no wonder at this point how Thunderous Dragon Inc. managed to dominate so many strong underground forces! How evil!"

"...He's right! Victory should always belong to the strongest! I agree!" shouted one of the bosses after a long silence.

One by one, the bosses took turns agreeing to Mr. Thunder's proposal until eventually, everyone was in on the plan.

With that settled, the rules were decided on the spot. Essentially, those who wanted a chance to bring home the Ginseng King would have to choose a representative to fight against those from other groups. Once their representative lost, they would automatically have to withdraw from the auction.

"How could they even do this...?" muttered Lyra—who had been sitting in front this entire time—nervously. Her nervousness was warranted since she didn't really bring any martial artist masters together with her this time around.

Knowing that, the flustered girl wondered if she had already lost before the competition even began. After all, anyone she sent out would definitely have to deal with extraordinary people.

"There's no need to worry, sister-in-law... All we need to do later is to fork out money for it! Just know that someone will definitely step forward to fight for us later. Our most important role today is to help the Royal Dragon Group acquire the Ginseng King!" said Bea as she smiled at the worried girl.

"The Royal Dragon Group again? Bea, you've kept mentioning their group to me throughout the entire day. While I can definitely assume that you've had a word with their men, why do I feel like you're constantly focusing on assisting them?" replied Lyra who couldn't help but feel that Bea's behavior was a little odd.

"The questions can wait! Regardless, just understand that if you were currently in my shoes, you'd want to help their group out as well. Trust me when I say that helping them out won't be in vain!" said Bea as she held on to Lyra's hands tightly, a hint of excitement in her voice.

"What on earth are you hiding from me...?" questioned Lyra as she looked at how strange Bea was behaving today.

"Hehe! I can't tell you about it now, so just know that it's something great!"

Hearing that, Lyra simply shook her head helplessly. What was this girl even babbling about...?

Before Lyra could say anything else, a battle had already begun on stage.

As everyone else turned to look at who the representative for Thunderous Dragon Inc. was, many of the selected representatives instantly lost confidence. After all, the one currently standing on stage was Mr. Thunder himself!

It was evident that Mr. Thunder was a master at his craft. There was simply nobody who could last long enough to withstand three rounds against him!

Due to that, several of the initially participating forces simply gave up on their pursuit to acquire the Ginseng King.

“I guess Thunderous Dragon Inc. will be the one getting the Ginseng King this time around...”

As the fights went on, Tulip and the others began discussing the matter. The statement wasn't baseless either. After all, several of the larger and more powerful forces had already been defeated by this point and many of the smaller ones had simply chosen to give up on the herb.

Meanwhile, Mr. Thunder himself was on stage as he threw a leg whip, instantly resulting in a strong and burly man getting kicked off stage. As shouts filled the air, the man who was kicked out was now lying on the ground, unconscious as foam came out of his mouth.

“There goes another one! Sven Westmore Group really doesn't stand a chance without Sven himself! They should be the last force that should've possibly even stood a chance against Mr. Thunder, right?” said someone from within the crowd.

“Bullsh*t! Neither the Royal Dragon Group nor the Takena family have sent out their representatives yet!” yelled another person.

Hearing that, a young man who had been sitting beside Meiko this entire time asked with a cold expression on his face, “Miss Meiko, should we...?”

Meiko herself—who at the time, had a demure and delicate look on her face—turned to look at the people from the Royal Dragon Group who were sitting close to them.

Sensing that they didn't intend to take any action for the time being, she simply nodded before saying, "Do try to restrain yourself as much as possible once you're on stage. There's no need to try so hard. After all, we only need to defeat Thunderous Dragon Inc.!"

Upon saying that, she smiled before glancing once more at those from the Royal Dragon Group.

She had honestly been waiting for them to take action from the very beginning. Meiko wanted to see for herself what kind of power the biggest and strongest force in Heavenly City possessed. Had they actually already given up?

Meiko simply couldn't help but feel slightly disappointed by their inaction.

"Understood!" replied Ito as he got up with a nod.

Chapter 981

"It turns out to be a master from the Takena family! Perfect! I have been waiting to compete against you on this trip!" Mr. Thunder said as he smiled lightly while standing on stage.

As for Ito, he had already walked up onto the stage, and he was bowing slightly in front of Mr. Thunder.

A big battle was about to begin.

The people in the audience did not make any more noise, and all of them were simply staring quietly at the stage.

"Although this Japanese warrior is very powerful, I don't think that he will be Mr. Thunder's opponent at all because Mr. Thunder is simply too evil!"

"That's right. But I believe that he will be able to fight at least three rounds against Mr. Thunder. After all, he looks pretty strong and powerful too!"

There was a lot of discussion going on amongst the people below the stage.

"You can start. Let me see whether the Takena family really has this kind of strength and power, or whether it is merely for show!" Mr. Thunder laughed as he said this, crossing his arms across his chest.

“Excuse me, then!”

Upon saying that, Ito started moving at an extremely fast speed.

It seemed as though Ito had left his afterimage and shadow in place.

Mr. Thunder was shocked for a moment.

He had already heard of the Takena family from a long time ago. They were a family with a ninjutsu inheritance.

However, Mr. Thunder had initially thought that his own skills and power had already reached its pinnacle.

Unexpectedly, there were still people who were stronger compared to him.

Ito, who was in front of him, was extremely strong.

As Mr. Thunder was faced with the attack, he was already starting to feel a little tired and exhausted after battling dozens of rounds.

He wanted to use his own secret methods to deal with Ito, but Ito did not give him any chance to do so at all.

Boom!

At the end of the thirty-odd round, a white light suddenly flashed across Ito’s chest. After that, Mr. Thunder seemed to have fallen into a trance before Ito kicked Mr. Thunder off the stage with a roundabout kick.

“What?!”

Everyone stood up in shock.

“Mr. Thunder!”

Marco’s men hurriedly surrounded him at this time.

They could only look at Ito with a fearful expression on their faces.

Mr. Thunder had actually been defeated!

Ito nodded slightly. “Mr. Thunder, you let me win!”

“Let me go!” Marco broke free from his subordinates’ grasp, and he was feeling a little dissatisfied at this time.

“The Takena family really have many methods to deal with their opponents! However, there will be another time in the future! As for the auction for the Ginseng King this time, I, Marco Thunder, will give up on my right to bid!”

After waving his hand heavily, Marco sat down directly.

“Then... then the Ginseng King will eventually belong to the Takena family!”

Heidi was feeling a little nervous as she walked up on the stage.

She had also been a little frightened by the scene before her.

At this time, Meiko also stood up as she got ready to get up on stage.

“Wait a minute!”

A voice suddenly sounded.

Everyone immediately focused their attention on the person who had just spoken up.

“Madam Sachs, it seems as though the battle is not over yet. So, why are you in such a hurry to give the Ginseng King to the Takena family? Our Royal Dragon Group has not even competed for it yet!”

The person who had spoken was none other than Whistler.

“Oh! That’s right! There is still Royal Dragon Group!”

“I heard that the boss of Royal Dragon Group is very powerful. Do you think that he will be the one competing?”

“I don’t think it will be him! The boss of Royal Dragon Group is just a young man!”

“I thought that Royal Dragon Group has already given up!”

Everyone continued discussing this matter amongst themselves.

“Sir, please enlighten me!” Ito said with a blank expression on his face.

“You have misunderstood me. I am not your opponent. Your opponent is naturally our boss!” Whistler said.

Meiko’s beautiful eyes moved as she smiled slightly. “What? Mr. Crawford is already here?”

“Of course he is already here!” As Whistler spoke, he suddenly glanced at the corner.

Right then, Lyra, who was aside, could not help but curiously ask Bea, who was very happy at this time, “Bea, how did you get to know the people from Royal Dragon Group?”

Bea replied, “Sister-in-Law, just wait and see! Don’t ask me anything first!”

“What?! Their boss, Mr. Crawford, is already here?”

Everyone began searching for him at this time.

Chapter 982

“Marjorie, you came at the right time today! You will have the opportunity to see the big boss in Heavenly City!”

Quinlan was also looking forward to this moment.

Marjorie straightened out her hair as she asked, “Based on what you have just said, it seems as though you have never met him before either?”

“Of course, not! Even my dad has only ever seen him once from a distance. Only the head of Talgo Town has ever had direct contact with him!” Quinlan replied as he smiled.

As for Gerald, he had been observing all the major forces from below the stage. He was now almost done observing every force here.

Gerald had already encountered and fought against many masters in the past six months or more.

However, ever since someone had tried to plot a sneak attack against Lyra the other night, Gerald already felt that this group of people were all not that simple.

Therefore, Gerald was not in a hurry to stand up and step forward without knowing and finding out the exact details.

But at this time, Gerald had already witnessed their strength and abilities.

Gerald now felt confident and certain in his heart.

So, why would he need to continue hiding, then?

Gerald stood up directly at this moment.

“Eh?!”

“D*mn it! Teacher, why did you suddenly stand up?” Tulip asked in surprise.

Juliet also glanced at Gerald before she said in disgust, “This has nothing to do with you. Hurry up and sit down quickly. Otherwise, Mom will be upset, and she might even kick you out!”

Juliet’s good friend also chimed in contemptuously, “That’s right! You just have to interfere in everything. You are seriously an embarrassment!”

Gerald moved his muscles and bones slightly.

Instead of answering them, he simply walked up toward the stage directly.

“He... has he gone insane?”

“Would a person’s brain go bad after being a useless person for a long time?”

Juliet’s good friend continued speaking.

“Sir!” The people from Royal Dragon Group and Talgo Town suddenly stood up and bowed before him collectively.

“What?!”

Everyone was dumbfounded as they witnessed this scene.

Juliet’s mouth was also hanging open because she was so surprised.

‘Sir?’

They were all actually being so respectful toward Gerald!

Wouldn’t that mean that Gerald was the boss of Royal Dragon Group, then? Gerald was the mysterious boss, Mr. Crawford?!

A shock! This was seriously shocking!

Marjorie and Quinlan, who were sitting at the side, suddenly saw Quinlan's father standing up and bowing before Gerald. Quinlan's father also hurriedly pulled at Quinlan's sleeve to make him stand up.

He did not turn around until Gerald had straightened out his suit and walked past them toward the front.

The strong aura that Gerald exuded somehow made Quinlan stand up involuntarily.

Meiko could not help but open her beautiful eyes in shock as she spoke with a smile on her face, "You... you are actually Crawford-san?!"

"Miss Meiko, I could not let you know about my identity because of certain matters. I am sorry."

At this time, Lyra, who was sitting aside, slowly stood up because she felt as though she was dreaming.

After exchanging some greetings with Meiko, Gerald approached Lyra.

"Gerald..."

Gerald raised his hand and placed his finger gently on Lyra's lips, almost as though he was motioning for her not to expose his true identity. "Lyra! I will explain everything properly to you after I am done with this matter."

Lyra grabbed hold of Gerald's arm tightly as she nodded heavily.

After that, she tapped Bea on her head.

At this time, Gerald turned around to look at Ito, who was standing up on the stage.

"You... can you represent the Takena family?" Gerald spoke as he looked at Meiko, who was standing aside.

This was because when Gerald had shaken Meiko's hand just now, he saw that there were traces showing that Meiko's right hand had been bandaged before this.

This reminded Gerald of the incident that had happened a few nights ago. He had injured a person, but the person dressed in black had disappeared mysteriously after that.

It seemed as though Meiko was truly not as simple as she looked.

She was the real master in the Takena family.

So, this was the reason why Gerald had asked this question now.

"Yes, I can!" Ito replied as he nodded.

"Alright, then. If that is the case, we will not waste any more time and get started immediately!" Gerald said as he smiled and got up on the stage.

Chapter 983

Everyone in the audience below the stage had already stood up at this moment.

As for Ito, he performed a warrior ritual before he rushed directly toward Gerald.

Boom!

After leaping into the air, he wanted to raise his leg to attack Gerald's chest directly.

His speed was extremely fast.

However, even though he was fast, Gerald was even faster than him.

Gerald immediately raised his leg to kick Ito's raised right leg.

After a cracking sound, Ito knelt directly on the ground.

He had a very pained expression on his face.

“What?!”

Everyone in the audience was in shock.

When Lyra saw Gerald going up on stage just now, she had been worried to death because she knew that this Japanese warrior was very powerful. How could Gerald, who had such thin arms and legs, possibly be his opponent?!

Lyra was kind-hearted, and she usually would not be able to bear seeing even a white rabbit get injured.

What’s more, when this was her husband?

Lyra had been very fearful, and she was on tenterhooks when she thought about Mr. Thunder’s tragic situation just now.

However, she never expected Gerald to be so skilled.

“Wow! Teacher is so amazing!” Tulip exclaimed as she clapped excitedly.

Only Juliet had a very complicated mood at this time.

Ito became even more furious. He instantly knew that this man before him was not to be trifled with anymore.

Thus, he instantly shook his wrist, and a white light flashed across his chest.

Gerald turned his body sideways to avoid the attack.

At this time, Ito's flying kick was already directly in front of Gerald.

Boom!

Right after, everyone in the audience saw Gerald raising his hand as he pushed Ito's leg aside lightly. Ito flew up in the air, and he fell and crashed, smashing the tables, chairs, and benches below the stage.

Meiko's beautiful eyes were filled with shock.

This person in front of her was so strong!

Ito was no match for him at all.

However, Ito had never been beaten or defeated by anyone else like this before, and he was completely unreconciled at this point.

He did not want to continue evading anymore. At this moment, a white light flashed again, and suddenly, he was holding a Japanese katana in his hand.

"Baka!" He roared as he rushed directly at Gerald.

At this time, Gerald had both of his hands behind his back, and there happened to be a broken chair leg beneath his feet.

So, he simply tapped his toes lightly before applying a little force.

Whoosh!

The broken chair leg flew through the air and slashed directly past Ito's cheek.

It did not stop there, but it continued flying until it embedded itself deeply into a stone pillar that was next to Ito. The stone pillar where the chair leg had been embedded started breaking and spreading into a spider web formation.

Ito froze, still holding the katana in mid-air with both hands.

Then, he lowered his eyes to look at the scratch on his left cheek.

He did not move anymore.

Everyone in the audience stared at the scene in silence with their mouths wide open.

Meiko's eyelids twitched slightly as if she had suddenly thought of something. So, she hurriedly shouted at Ito, who was up on stage, "Ito! We lose! Hurry up and retreat!"

Ito finally regained his senses at this time. He lowered his katana and bowed deeply in front of Gerald.

"I have lost!"

Upon conceding, Ito walked down the stage.

Meiko had a different look in her eyes as she spoke to Gerald, "Crawford-san, thank you for being merciful and lenient just now. The Ginseng King will belong to Royal Dragon Group, then!"

"You let me win!" Gerald said as he smiled on stage.

Heidi swallowed her saliva as she spoke to Gerald after walking up on stage, "Ger... Gerald, you are actually the boss, Mr. Crawford from Royal Dragon Group? I already knew that you did not look like an ordinary person! You are truly worthy of becoming the son-in-law of the Yowell family!"

Gerald did not even bother to look at Heidi as he said, "Madam Sachs, we will transfer the money to the Yowell family's bank account without a cent less! Royal Dragon Group will take this Ginseng King, then!"

Then, he simply took the Ginseng King in his hand before he walked down the stage.

At this time, everyone was looking at Royal Dragon Group with a different view and perception once again.

Ito was filled with guilt as he said, “Sister, I was useless! I could not withstand any of his attacks at all!”

“Ito, the difference between you and him does not lie in your techniques or moves. However, it is simply because he is no longer an ordinary warrior!”

Chapter 984

Meiko spoke softly.

Ito was surprised. “Not an ordinary warrior?”

Meiko stared at Gerald and the others who were walking down the mountain with envy in her eyes. “Well, don’t you remember, Grandpa told us that once a person’s physical strength and his meridians had already reached a certain level, he would no longer be an ordinary warrior because his body will start releasing inner strength!”

“Wouldn’t that mean that he is already a champion, then? In that case, that is not surprising at all! How could I possibly be the opponent of a champion who practices inner strength?! However, it does not seem right, Sister. I remember Grandpa saying that some talented masters cannot produce inner strength even after training and practicing for their entire life. However, he seems to be about the same age as us. So, how could he possibly know how to channel his inner strength?!”

Meiko said, “That is also what I am feeling puzzled about! He is so young, but he actually possesses a physique that an ordinary person would not have. Furthermore, he has even developed extremely strong inner strength. In comparison, I am even more interested in finding out who his master is. What kind of skills and power could his master possibly possess?”

Ito exclaimed, “We should go back home and ask Grandpa about this. I really would not expect a master to be hidden in a place like Heavenly City!”

After the auction had ended, Gerald completely ignored the Yowell family.

Instead, he returned to his manor directly.

As Lyra sat beside Gerald in the car, she said, “Gerald, I really did not expect that you would have already become so strong and powerful after not seeing you for just half a year. I think that you are even stronger and more powerful compared to the people from the Moldell family!”

“I was fortunate and lucky enough to have met a good teacher.”

“By the way, Gerald, why don’t you come home with us this time? Did you know that Dad is constantly worrying about you every day?” Lyra spoke as she held Gerald’s hand.

Gerald smiled as he responded, “Lyra, I cannot go back now. Furthermore, the both of you cannot tell anyone else that you have seen me. I have already told you about the pros and cons. I absolutely do not want my persistence and effort over the past six months to go to waste!”

Lyra became worried again. “Alright, then. I will not say anything to anyone, okay? Gerald, what are you planning to do next? Will you continue staying in Heavenly City? I heard Dad saying that the people from the Moldell family are already in Salford Province. They are simply too close to you now!”

After driving back to the manor, Whistler said helplessly as he looked at the four men dressed in black who were standing outside the door, “Sir! It’s those four men again!”

Whistler then asked as he felt that it was really strange, “Sir, how did you get to know these four strange men? They are acting like a dumb person, and they only nod and shake their heads every day. Furthermore, why are they dressed like this in broad daylight?!”

Gerald had brought these four men home and settled them down in his manor a few days ago.

So, Whistler had naturally dealt with them before.

“In truth, strictly speaking, I do not know who they are either!” Gerald replied as he smiled bitterly.

“Then why are you leaving them at the manor, Sir?”

“There is no other way. There is someone who wants to see me. Since this matter is already done, they are waiting for me to honor my words and meet up with their lord!”

Feeling worried, Whistler then said, “If that is the case, wouldn’t it be too dangerous, Sir? Do you want to bring some of our men with you?”

Gerald replied as he took a deep breath, "No need. If they really wanted to cause me any harm, they could have attacked me whenever they wanted to. Whistler, you should continue staying here in Heavenly City with Drake and Tyson. Take good care of our company. I will just make a trip with them first!"

"Gerald, where will they be taking you?" Lyra asked again.

Gerald shook his head.

He did not know where he was going or who he would be meeting.

Just as Gerald was about to enter the manor with Lyra, the four men suddenly reached out their hands to stop Gerald.

"You have already gotten the Ginseng King. Therefore, it is time to leave now!" The four of them said coldly to Gerald.

Gerald smiled wryly as he looked at them and said, "Where are we going? Furthermore, you should at least allow me to change out of my clothes first, right?"

The four men spoke coldly again, "No need! We will leave now!"

After that, they grabbed hold of Gerald's arm.

"Presumptuous!" Whistler was immediately enraged, and he stretched out his hand to hit one of the men.

Boom!

As for that man, he simply raised his hand gently, and Whistler flew out directly.

"Whistler! Don't do anything!" Gerald hurriedly stopped him. "Sirs, how are we leaving? We cannot possibly be walking, right?"

The four men did not say anything. The leader of the men simply took out a device before pressing the red button on it.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz!

Not long after that, a large black helicopter came in from a far distance...

Chapter 985

Gerald had no choice but to bring the Ginseng King with him as he boarded the helicopter with them.

After going up the helicopter, Gerald was blindfolded by them.

Who on earth could it be?

Who would want to meet him?

He felt even more surprised and bewildered at this time.

These men were all undoubtedly masters above all masters. Even Gerald himself would not be able to deal a single blow to them at all.

This made Gerald doubt whether they were even ordinary humans at all.

Ever since his childhood, aside from Finnley, Gerald had not known any other masters at all.

However, if it was Finnley who wanted to see him, he would not have to do all this and go to this extent at all!

Gerald did not know how long they flew.

After that, the four men escorted Gerald off the helicopter.

Gerald could smell the faint smell of the sea, and he could hear the sea breeze blowing and howling. Not too far away, there was also the sound of turbulent waves coming one after the other.

His blindfold was then removed.

At first sight, it was indeed an island.

“Where is this?” Gerald asked the four men.

This time, the four men did not continue pretending to be dumb as they answered, “The Soul Palace on Colonel Island!”

“Soul Palace? Colonel Island?” Gerald was secretly surprised.

Gerald had been following Finnley as he traveled to the north and south for more than half a year, and he had gained a lot of insights and experience.

But where was this Colonel Island? What was the Soul Palace?

Gerald really could not understand at all.

However, what he could be certain of was that these men were all from the same organization—A super extraordinary organization!

“Please!”

The four men brought Gerald into the island. The island was huge, and there were many black palace-like buildings on the island.

They brought Gerald to a place in another courtyard before they settled Gerald down there.

“Who wants to see me? Can I meet him now?” Gerald asked as he was already beginning to feel increasingly anxious.

The leader in black spoke up, “Mr. Crawford, please give us the Ginseng King!”

This group of men was obviously not trying to snatch the Ginseng King from him. Besides, even if they were truly trying to snatch it away from him, Gerald would not be able to defend and stop them from taking it anyway.

So, he simply handed the Ginseng King over to them.

The four men did not say anything else to him, and they stepped out after nodding slightly.

Gerald helplessly thought to himself, 'What are they trying to do?'

He started pacing back and forth in the room anxiously.

Not long after that, the room door was opened.

Then, Gerald saw an old man walking in with a few maids behind him.

Each of them was carrying a plate, and there were various things on each plate.

After that, they placed the plates on the table in front of Gerald.

'They are treating me to a feast? Well, I am indeed feeling a little hungry. But... the appearance of the food certainly looks a little ugly!'

"Is this food for me to eat?" Gerald asked.

The old man nodded as he smiled. He seemed to be a mute as he was making a hand signal at Gerald, asking him to eat the food on the table.

"Alright, then. I will try the food!"

Gerald picked up the chopsticks, and he picked up something that looked very dark and black.

Since the old man had already said that it was food, no matter how ugly it looked, he should still be able to eat it, then.

Was it because this place was really backward? Was that the reason why their food looked so terrible?

In that case, he would try it!

At this time, Gerald placed the food into his mouth.

After biting the food, Gerald realized that it was a wrap, but the filling inside was soft, and something that looked like soup or gravy started flowing out in an instant.

“It’s so bitter!” Gerald’s face flushed red as he exclaimed in misery.

As for the old man, he simply motioned for Gerald to swallow everything.

“What... what is this? Why is it so bitter?”

Gerald felt absolutely disgusted.

The old man made a gesture, and Gerald understood it in an instant.

“What?! You are asking me to eat a snake’s gallbladder? Furthermore, it is not even cooked! It’s completely raw!” Gerald exclaimed in surprise.

The old man continued making another gesture.

“This is the gallbladder of an anaconda that has survived for more than three hundred years?! It is that precious?!”

Chapter 986

Frank giggled and nodded his head, indicating for Gerald to eat the next plate.

“What is this?”

“What? Eagle’s eyes? Oh no...”

Gerald felt nauseated when he saw the plate of bright red things.

Frank would only let Gerald leave if he finished everything on the table.

“What kind of place is this?!” Gerald retched multiple times as he asked himself that question.

What he could not imagine was things were getting worse.

For the entire month, Gerald had to eat those hundred-year-old snake galls and take baths in a pool of herbs.

Gerald was only familiar with the baths because Finnley had trained him like that.

However, Gerald did feel that this pool of herb was much more effective than Finnley’s because, within a month, he was much stronger.

They hadn’t meant to use the Ginseng King, but within a month, they had separated the Ginseng King into 30 portions just for Gerald to consume.

They all tried everything they could to help Gerald become stronger. But who were they?

“I’m not eating these anymore. Take them away from me!” Gerald finally burst out when Frank brought in some food for him.

Frank got nervous, and he tried to ask Gerald what had happened.

“Who wants to see me and where are the Mighty Four Kingsmen? Who was that elder that brought me here? What do you guys want, and why is the person trapping me here but not even coming to see me?!” Gerald was going crazy after he had been here for a month.

He pushed Frank aside, and he walked out the door.

If nobody was there to see him, there had to be someone there that was in charge here.

Gerald finally came out, but there was not a single shadow in this big black palace. He walked into a forest, and he finally saw some people there.

A few kids were playing around, but then he realized that it was a group of boys bullying a girl. When Gerald walked toward them, the boys immediately ran off, leaving the girl crying on the ground.

She was drawing circles with her finger on the ground as she cried.

Gerald walked beside her. "Are you okay?"

The girl got startled, and she lifted her head to glance at Gerald as she pulled her hand back.

"I thought only those people in black were here. Who'd know there were even kids like you here!" Gerald smiled.

However, the little girl seemed like she was afraid of Gerald. She just stared at him quietly.

Gerald smiled at her and took out a packet of biscuits. "Biscuits?"

The little girl's expression immediately brightened up.

"It's for you! Eat it!" Gerald patted her on her head.

Gerald looked at her smiling. "What did you draw?"

The little girl was not afraid of Gerald anymore.

Kids were easily satisfied.

She pointed to the left and said, "That's my mommy, and next to her is my daddy. The one behind is my grandmother!"

“Are they on this island with you too?” Gerald asked.

The little girl stuffed her mouth with the biscuits and shook her head. “They are not with me. They were buried underground by the masters here. They said that they will be sleeping for a very long time!

“I’m waiting for them to come and get me!” The little girl said.

Gerald’s felt a stab in his heart when he heard what she had said.

“What about the other kids?”

“They are the same as me too. Their family members are all sleeping, and now, we are living on this island together!” The little girl said as she finished the first packet of biscuits.

She then mustered all her strength to open up another packet of biscuits, but she was still too young, and she could not open it.

Gerald felt terrible watching her. “Come, let me help you...”

Chapter 987

“What are you guys doing on this island? Did they force you to stay?” Gerald wanted to find out more.

Gerald even started to suspect that the people from Soul Palace had killed these children’s parents and snatched them.

“Young Master Gerald, you’ve thought too much. We saved these children and raised them!” An elder was standing behind Gerald.

He wore a black robe, but his face was not covered.

He walked over and patted the little girl’s head gently. “Little girl, try not to snack on this kind of food in the future, you hear me?”

“Yes, Grandpa Welson. Would you like some biscuits too?” The little girl asked.

“No, thank you. You can have them. Remember to finish up your homework after that. If Hewsky and the boys bully you again, you must come and tell me!”

“Thank you, Grandpa Welson and Big Brother. I’m leaving now!” The girl took the biscuits and ran off after she had said thank you.

“Who are you?” Gerald glanced at the elder and asked.

“It has only been a month, Gerald. You don’t recognize me anymore?” The elder smiled.

“I remember now! You were the one who asked the kingsmen to follow me around!”

“I’m Welson Freed. Everyone on this island calls me Master Welson!” Welson smiled as he shook his head.

“I was looking for you. You said you were going to bring me to see someone. I’ve been here for so long, shouldn’t you let me see that person already?” Gerald was angry.

“I believe you’ve been eating those foods for a month now. I can tell from your energy that the impurities in your body have been completely detoxed with the help of the Ginseng King. Today, I’m here to bring you to see him!” Welson smiled. “After you, Gerald!”

Gerald frowned, but he did not say anything. He just followed him from behind.

There were buildings on one side of the island, and as they got nearer to the buildings, there were many extraordinary men in black guarding it.

Gerald was brought into the biggest palace that seemed like a very royally ancient palace.

There was a stage before Gerald, and an old man was standing before him with his back facing Gerald. He was staring at a very big piece of map.

“Grandmaster, Gerald is here!” Welson bowed down rigorously.

“You can leave now!” The old man waved his hand with his back still facing them, and Welson left.

“I believe we don’t know each other?” Gerald queried.

“Yes, you don’t know me, but I do know you! The only heir of the Crawfords, Young Master Gerald Crawford! Oh yes, I almost forgot, you’re also the Yowells’ live-in son-in-law, and they chased you away after they thought you were a coward!”

Gerald blushed. He was indeed a coward all because he had wanted to look for the Ginseng King and thus, he had become other people’s live-in son-in-law.

“That is my personal matter. It’s none of your concern. I’d also like to thank you for all the precious gifts that made me so powerful!” Gerald tried to change the topic.

“Your personal matter? I don’t think you understand the shame you’ve brought to your family!” The elder slammed on the marble chair as he turned around.

They made eye contact, and Gerald could finally see this elder clearly. He had a full head of luscious hair and a young face. His eyes were bright and clear, and he seemed very elegant and respectable.

Chapter 988

For some reason, Gerald felt strange as he looked at that old man, and under that pressure, he even felt embarrassed and looked down.

“Hahaha!” The old man laughed loudly. “It seems like my grandson does indeed understand what he did wrong!”

“Grandson?”

Gerald was stunned. “You’re...”

“You’ve not greeted me ever since you stepped in here. I’m your grandfather, Daryl, you silly boy!” He laughed as he sat on a marble chair.

“You’re my grandfather?! I... I thought you went missing?”

Gerald had never heard anything about his grandparents ever since young, and his father had only told him that his grandfather had been missing for more than a decade.

They had looked for him, but there had been no news of him, and Gerald had always thought that his grandfather had already passed away. Never did he expect that his grandfather was alive, and he was actually the owner of Colonel Island's Soul Palace!

"You seem surprised?" Daryl looked at him happily.

"Yes, I am! I'm very surprised, Grandfather!"

Gerald finally understood why he had felt so strange earlier on.

"Have you always been on Colonel Island and established the Soul Palace?" Gerald asked in shock.

"Yes. I left the Crawfords, and I left everything to young Dylan back then. It has been 35 years!"

"Come, Gerald. Sit next to me and let me tell you some stories!" Daryl smiled.

Gerald sat on the marble chair.

"How many things do you know about your grandfather?" Daryl asked.

"I only know that you left my father 35 years ago after you both had a big fight. You gave up the position as the family's grandmaster and never came back. I tried asking my father about you, but he didn't say much!"

"It seems like Dylan did not tell you anything about the picture of the sun!"

"The picture of the sun?"

"Yes. It is a confidential picture that is passed down from our ancestors, and the content of it contains great knowledge. The Crawfords have always been so powerful and wealthy because we possess the guidance of the picture of the sun. But then, I

realized that the picture of the sun predicted that within 50 years, the Crawfords would be gone forever, and the picture of the sun has never lied!" Daryl said.

"I've heard about that from my father, and he said that within these few years, the Crawfords might end up bankrupt or dead!" Gerald recalled what his father had told him.

"Yes, that was what I told him too. I've always been searching for an answer, and hopefully one day, I might understand what the picture of the sun was trying to say. Until 35 years ago, I finally found a new answer, and I even got a method of survival that is hundred years old, even before the Crawfords existed. Before your father, every generation of the Crawfords knew a thing or two about martial arts. Your dad broke the chain, and that is why I've never liked him!" Daryl said.

"Is that why you established the Soul Palace?" Gerald finally knew more secrets about what had happened.

"Yes. I've been doing my research, and I found this isolated location to build my reputation. I even gathered some powers to protect my family from being banished!"

"Gerald, you're very lucky to have people helping you train your skills. That is why I was very happy when my people reported back to me!"

"Does that mean that you knew my master, Finnley? Is he one of your people too?" Gerald asked.

Daryl shook his head. "I don't know him. However, I did some research on his background, and I found something that surprised me. My informants are all around the world, and there is nothing that I wouldn't know about, but your master, Finnley Quick, gave me a hard time. I believe Finnley Quick is not even his real name! One thing for sure is that he is a great and powerful master, his skills are far more excellent than mine!"

Chapter 989

"He's greater than you?" Gerald was shocked.

Daryl nodded his head with a smile. "It doesn't matter if he's our friend or enemy because he has saved you and taught you some very solid basics. If it wasn't because of him, I wouldn't see you so quickly!"

"I wanted you to have a solid foundation so that you could go through the hellish transformation. It would usually take three years to build up this kind of foundation. However, your body is pretty solid, and with the help of the Ginseng King, your body has everything it needs for you to survive the hellish transformation!" Daryl said.

“The hellish transformation?” Gerald was confused once again.

“Yes. It is something I got out of the picture of the sun, and because of this, I’ve acquired skills that normal people don’t have and become one of the legends! Honestly, your requirements are better than mine!”

“Legends? I’ve heard about that from Finnley. He mentioned that when warriors are trained to a certain level, they will gain inner strength and become champions. After becoming champions, they will stand a chance to be legends, but only the best of the best could become champions, and legends are beyond the realm of mysteries. Grandfather, you’re already one of the legends?” Gerald’s interest was piqued.

Gerald had received many secrets of nourishment from Finnley, and now that he had completely consumed the Ginseng King, he had truly become a champion. However, his grandfather was actually from one of the legends from the realm of mysteries?

“Yes. I became a legend 20 years ago! I’ve also trained a small number of warriors here to become a mid-level or high-level champion through the hellish transformation. Your skills can only be at the beginner level!” Daryl laughed.

“No wonder your people are so strong and mysterious! They are all champions!”

“Hah! Anyone here could beat you up ten times! But don’t you worry, because I’ll use up all of the resources for the hellish transformation on you, and I’ll even teach you the ways. Gerald, from today onward, you will be the future of the Crawfords!”

“So this is what your plan was all about!” Gerald finally understood.

“But...” Daryl seemed worried.

“What is it?”

“It’s just, after the hellish transformation, your powers would improve tremendously, and you’ll receive the blessing of the dragons. You won’t have the body of a normal person anymore, and there will be side effects, which is your personality. You’ll be very different from who you are right now. It took me decades to tone down too!”

“And all this is because I have great powers to suppress it. I’m afraid that once you can’t control the blessing of the dragons within you, you might become...” Daryl hesitated. “You might become a bloodthirsty demon and kill as you like!”

“But don’t you worry! I’ve been observing you since young, and you are a very kind-hearted person just like your mother. You’ll never fight for powers, and I believe you can control the powers within you!” Daryl patted Gerald on his shoulders.

Gerald needed the powers. He needed to get stronger. He understood that money could not protect the people he loved, and only power, the power to control everything could.

“Your second uncle, Peter, was also the right person to go through the hellish transformation, but unfortunately...” A hint of sorrow flashed through Daryl’s eyes.

“Fortunately enough, the Crawfords have you, Gerald. You’re our new hope. You can get used to Colonel Island first. A week later, the hellish transformation will start, and it will go on for half a year. For this one week, I’ll also prepare the space for you. Gerald... I know you’re going to go through a lot of pain soon, but... this isn’t something that you can run away from. As the next generation of the Crawfords, this is your duty! Are you afraid?”

“No!”

Their conversation lasted until midnight.

Seven days later, the grandmaster of the Soul Palace, Daryl, brought along his grandson, Gerald, and entered the mysterious space.

The grandmaster had commanded everyone that within this half a year, nobody should disturb them.

...

Half a year later.

Heavenly City’s Triangle District.

There were rows of cars parked at the roadside, and there were few hundreds of people.

Everyone was waiting for their leader as if they were waiting for their hero to return.

Whoosh!

Soon, a helicopter drew closer, and it stopped in front of everyone.

The door of the helicopter opened, and a bald guy walked out of it with a group of people following him.

Chapter 990

The bald guy had a scar on his face, and he looked very fierce.

“Boss Sven, you’re finally back!” Someone shouted.

“Sven! Sven!” Everyone cheered. They were all expressing their overdue emotions after half a year. Their king, Heavenly City’s king, was finally back.

Who else could it be if it was not Sven Westmore?

“Boss Sven, you’ve been away to further your studies in the culinary arts field for so long, and now, Heavenly City has changed! Your brother...”

Sven waved his hand coldly to ask everyone to keep quiet. “I know about everything that has happened. Leif has been killed, our sites have been intruded, and the Ginseng King is gone. I know everything!”

“Royal Dragon Group? They really think that there is no Westmore left in Heavenly City?” Sven’s eyes were cold and sharp.

The Royal Dragon Group.

“Where did the boss go? There is still no news?”

“We only know that he went north, and he’s in Weston. Even the people from Japan have sent people to look for him, but there is no news regarding the boss!”

“Continue to search for him!” Drake was furious.

Drake, Tyson, and Whistler were walking up and down the office anxiously.

It had been half a year, and Royal Dragon Group had been one of the strongest organizations in the Triangle District. They had the most sites as compared to the other organizations around them. However, the news about their missing boss would soon be spread out, and the other organizations would start to target them.

“Mr. Jay, Mr. Sankey, things are bad!” One of their subordinates came in terrified.

“Why do you look like someone just died?”

“It’s Sven! Sven is back, and he has brought along his people. They are outside!” The man said.

“What?” The three of them looked at each other and ran out hurriedly.

As they reached the door, both parties were already fighting.

Many people from Royal Dragon Group were lying on the ground.

They saw two men trying to strike Sven with their machetes, but Sven did not even bother to dodge it.

The machete landed on Sven’s body, but it immediately broke, and the two men backed off.

“I was thinking what’s so great about Royal Dragon Group. It seems like their people are just very ordinary!” Sven sneered as he shook his head.

“Oh? There are even two losers here. I think you guys have lived long enough!” Sven said.

Drake shouted, “Let’s kill him!”

The three of them charged toward Sven.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The three of them soon lay on the ground after taking three punches from Sven.

Sven wiped off the blood on his hands and smiled. “Bring them back and take back what’s ours...”

Everything happened in the glimpse of an eye, and the three of them were brought away, leaving the ground splattered with blood stains...

Chapter 991

Though winter in Colonel Island had passed, the entire area was still very cold. After all, it had previously snowed heavily for three consecutive days before it finally stopped.

As a result, the chilly island was enveloped in a layer of silver.

Despite the cold, several men donning black clothes could be seen standing respectfully by the stone entrance of a cave on the island. The men consisted of people who held high-ranks in the Soul Palace.

“Judging by the time, it should be almost done by now,” said grandpa Welson to a few leaders as a sudden strong breeze blew snowflakes—which were beginning to fall again—into everyone’s faces.

Seconds later, rumbling could be heard as the heavy stone door was pushed open.

As everyone turned over to look, they saw an old man exiting the cave alongside a much younger one.

“Lord! Young master! Welcome back from your training!” shouted all the present men in unison and with utmost respect.

Daryl then laughed loudly before replying, “That’s quite enough! Go prepare the party immediately! Everyone from the Soul Palace will enjoy ourselves thoroughly today!”

Seeing how great his mood was, Grandpa Welson simply nodded before turning to look at Gerald. It was evident that the current young man standing before him was completely different from the one he had met half a year ago.

Gerald now had a beard and his hair looked much messier than before. His torn clothes also revealed the many well-defined muscles on Gerald's now greatly strengthened body.

However, those weren't the reason why Grandpa Welson had such a fierce-looking expression on his face.

No, what he was currently feeling had stemmed from the fact that though snowflakes melted quickly upon skin-contact for all the others there, any snow that fell on Gerald remained intact.

Grandpa Welson's realization of that made the corner of his eyelid twitch rather rapidly.

Initially a Crawford, he had been together with Daryl for the longest time. He could still distinctly remember Daryl's hellish transformation all those years ago.

However, the impression Grandpa Welson now had on Gerald felt different from that distant memory. To him, Gerald currently exuded an even greater power compared to the lord all those years ago.

Gerald's eyes, in particular, reflected how strong, dignified, and calm he was as a person. However, by contrast, they simultaneously hinted at a constant bloodlust as well.

As Grandpa Welson felt a chill run down his spine, Daryl himself gently patted Gerald's shoulder as he said, "Just head there once you're done cleaning yourself up, Gerald."

"Alright," replied Gerald as he nodded before heading off to clean himself.

On his way to the bathroom, any leader of the Soul Palace whom he walked past would bow their heads to greet him.

Upon opening the door to the large bathroom, Gerald was instantly greeted by warm steam. Inside, more than ten women—both young and old—could be seen attending to their chores at the side.

Closing his eyes, Gerald stretched both his arms out, prompting a few of the women to go over to him and begin massaging his shoulders. The others got busy as well, trimming his hair and giving him a well-deserved shave.

With how masculine Gerald was, none of the women could hold back from blushing.

Once he was all clean, the women then blow-dried Gerald's body with hairdryers before sliding a bathrobe onto him.

"The suit you asked for has been prepared, young master..." said one of the women shyly.

"Alright. You may leave now," replied Gerald quite placidly.

After suiting up, Gerald found himself heaving a long sigh. He had gone through great pain in the past half-year, and after enduring through all that, his suffering could finally end today.

As he fixed his tie, Gerald suddenly heard a soft and gentle voice behind him saying, "Allow me to help you, young master."

Turning around to look at who had spoken, Gerald immediately found a fair and demure-looking hand reaching out to touch his body. The hand itself belonged to a woman who was dressed rather seductively.

As Gerald gently lifted her by her chin, the woman seemed to be eagerly awaiting something.

In her mind, she was thinking that if she was able to bewitch the young master, then she would definitely be able to improve her position in the Soul Palace. Once that happened, she would surely rise above the other beauties!

"Get. Lost!"

His immediate response was far from what she had anticipated, and it was evident that it hadn't occurred to her that the young master could be this aloof.

Chapter 992

His sudden shout frightened the woman so much that her entire body immediately trembled as though she had just been struck by lightning.

"Y-yes, young master!" replied the woman awkwardly as she quickly left the room.

It was only three days later when the party in the Soul Palace finally ended. On the morning of the day after, everyone from the Soul Palace gathered at the island's public square.

“You’ve successfully made it through your hellish transformation, Gerald, and I have to say that your final results have far surpassed my expectations. However, while you’re currently able to better control your temperament, it’s still extremely unstable. If you wish to perform the blessings of the dragon to its maximum degree, you’ll need to drink the holy blood of the holy fox. Once you do, it’ll assist in helping you control your temperament. I’ll have Grandpa Welson stay by your side to aid you when you return there.”

“I’m aware, grandpa. Speaking of which, when will you be returning there to have a look around? My dad honestly misses you too,” replied Gerald casually

Nodding, Daryl then patted Gerald’s shoulder as he said, “I’ll return when the time is right.”

It was evident that Daryl had high expectations of Gerald.

Not long after, thirty black helicopters could be heard starting up at the base.

Placing a firm gaze on his grandfather, Gerald then said, “Do take care, grandpa. We’ll be leaving now.”

With that said, he then turned to board one of the helicopters.

As the helicopters took off with Grandpa Welson, over three hundred experts from the island, and Gerald himself, their loud droning slowly faded from the island as they flew south.

Meanwhile, the night was getting darker and darker within the suburbs of the Triangle District within Heavenly City.

There, a pitiful looking woman hugging onto a document folder could be seen desperately trying to escape over ten cars that were driving slowly behind her.

Though her face was pale and wounds could be seen covering her body, it was clear that the woman found the document folder she had in hand to be much more important than her life.

The cars themselves continued moving slowly as a few people sitting inside stretched their heads out the cars’ windows and began shining their flashlights on the woman.

“Haha! That’s right! Go on and continue running! Run faster! We’re going to catch you soon!” yelled one of the men, causing the others to get increasingly excited as well.

As the woman ran, and ran, she eventually tripped and fell to the ground. However, gritting her teeth, she immediately crawled back up and continued running.

It wasn’t long before one of the cars then immediately drove up to her. Shining his flashlight directly at her face, the person sitting beside the driver then said, “We’ve got you now! Honesty, you’d better run quicker than this if you don’t want to fall into Tucker’s hands. After all, once he has you, you’ll definitely be ruined! Hahaha!”

Hearing that, the others began laughing loudly inside their cars as well, teasing the woman’s poor attempt at escaping.

Eventually, the woman found herself falling again. However, she had reached her limit and she simply wasn’t able to get herself off the ground anymore.

Knowing that, the woman immediately tried tearing the contents of the document folder apart with the intent of swallowing whatever scraps she could so that they couldn’t be recovered.

“You mother*cking bitch! Do you really think we won’t kill you?!” roared Tucker Westmore himself as he jumped out of his car alongside a few other of his men. It didn’t take long for him to brutally land a slap on her cheek, causing the woman to drop the document folder in her state of dizziness.

Picking it up, Tucker then sneered, “It would be a pity for a beauty like you to just die like this... Bring her back! I’m going to be enjoying myself with her tonight! All of you can have your turns with her once I’m done!”

“Hahaha! Affirmative, Mr. Westmore!”

Glaring daggers at Tucker, the woman immediately revealed a hidden short blade.

However, before she was even able to take her life, Tucker simply slapped the blade out of her hands.

“Oh? Did you honestly think I would allow you to die that easily? Haha! You’ll only be able to once I’ve sufficiently tortured you!” announced Tucker as he laughed maliciously.

As the woman cried out in despair, a distant droning could suddenly be heard.

It wasn't long before the droning grew louder and louder. The next thing they knew, over thirty helicopters had appeared, and they now hovered over Tucker and his men!

"What the hell is happening?" demanded Tucker, shocked by the turn of events.

After the helicopters landed, several men dressed in black came out and immediately glared at Tucker and his men extremely coldly.

Seeing how extraordinarily imposing they all were, Tucker quickly added, "Hey now, which side do all of you belong to? I don't think I've seen any of you before! Just so you know, my father is Sven from Heavenly City!"

Immediately after he said that, the door to one of the helicopters—that had landed right in the middle of the others—was opened by one of the opposing party's subordinates.

Turning to look in that direction, Tucker saw a suited man sitting inside as he sipped on red wine.

Before he could even say anything, the woman—who had clearly seen the man in the helicopter as well—immediately cried out, "S-sir! You've finally returned!"

Chapter 993

The person she was referring to was, of course, none other than Gerald.

The woman herself was Yukie, the one who had stayed by Gerald's side for some time back when he had first established the Royal Dragon Group.

Watching the teary-eyed woman run toward him, Gerald felt an acute pain in his heart as he realized how terribly Yukie had suffered.

"You've already suffered so much, Yukie... Fear not, for I have returned!" declared Gerald as he led her into one of the helicopters.

Yukie clung on tightly to Gerald's arm as they walked on, clearly unwilling to part. After all, she had yearned for Gerald from dusk till dawn ever since the day he left half a year ago.

Still, what was this peculiar feeling welling within her upon reuniting with Gerald...? Momentarily shaking the thought away, Yukie knew that there were more serious matters to attend to first.

Holding out the document folder to Gerald, she then said, "Sven is back, sir... As a result, Drake, Tyson, Mr. Whistler... They... They've all been captured! Even Lucy and many others have been taken away by him! As if that wasn't enough, he even snatched away many of our properties! The ones in this document folder are the final properties that we have left..."

Seeing how desperately she had tried to protect the properties, Gerald wiped a tear off the corner of her eye as he replied, "I've earlier told Grandpa Welson to investigate the incident so I already know most of the details. It's my fault for disappearing on all of you for over half a year..."

"F*ck! So that's Tyson's boss! Also you two, don't go acting all intimate in front of us! Still, it's high time that you finally make your reappearance! Once we're done with you tonight, Boss Sven won't need to even bother about any of you anymore!" growled one of Tucker's men, fiercely.

However, the moment his sentence ended, the same man barely had any time to register what had just happened when he felt his eyes widen.

Seconds later, a 'thud' could be heard and everyone could only stare as Gerald's subordinate stood before the now headless man.

Upon registering what had just taken place, Yukie let out a brief yelp before covering her mouth in utter fear.

Tucker himself grew increasingly frightened and anxious as well. It was now clear that the group of people standing before him now were not only frightening, but they also had great martial art skills to boot.

Quickly understanding that he held no chance against them, Tucker immediately said, "M-Mr. Crawford, there seems to be a few misunderstandings between us. I suggest we get my dad over so that you can talk to him in person! After all, I'm only doing all this in accordance with his orders. Killing me would be useless! So how about it? Should I call my father over?"

When he got no reply, Tucker's fears spiked and the anxious man immediately got to his knees. As his last resort, he gulped before pleading, "P-please spare my life, Mr. Crawford!"

Watching as the terrified man quivered before him, Gerald slowly poured a glass of red wine before replying, "Honestly, I had earlier been wondering whether I should prepare a gift for your father upon meeting him. While thinking about it, I realized

that you had quite a few subordinates and some of them are even carrying cameras around! Thanks to that, I now have an idea!”

“A-an idea...? What could you possibly be thinking of, Mr. Crawford...?”

As for why Tucker’s subordinates were carrying cameras around in the first place, it was because Tucker had a rather perverted habit. He simply enjoyed taking videos of himself doing immoral things, just like what he had done with Yukie earlier. He saw his actions as something that should be commemorated, which was why some of his subordinates made it a habit to bring along cameras wherever they went.

“Indeed. I’ll be needing your cooperation to shoot a short video. I’ll present it to your father as a gift upon meeting him,” replied Gerald.

“O-of course I’m willing to cooperate! I’ll do it, Mr. Crawford!”

Hearing that, Gerald turned to look at one of his subordinates. The subordinate in question immediately got the cue to enter the cabin.

Moments later, Tucker’s eyes widened as he saw the subordinate carrying a fuel container out with him. He understood what Gerald was planning to do.

“P-please don’t kill me!” pleaded Tucker as he immediately crawled back up and attempted to run away.

Before he could even take a step forward, however, he felt a stone piercing through his chest. Blood now spurting out of his fresh wound, Tucker fell to the ground again, twitching violently.

His subordinates could only stare in horror, completely paralyzed as Gerald’s subordinate doused Tucker’s entire body with fuel.

“Cover your eyes, Yukie,” said Gerald as he blocked her view with his own hand as a safety measure.

With that done, Gerald then ordered, “Light him up!”

A piercing scream filled the air shortly after.

Chapter 994

After some time, the cries of agony slowly died down. With that, Gerald, Yukie, and his men returned to the manor.

Upon arriving there, Gerald told Yukie to lie down and get some rest first. Turning to look at Welson next, he then asked, “So, where’s Sven currently at?”

“After looking into it, we found that he’s organizing a party at Heavenly City Hotel at the moment. He’s invited several big shots from Heavenly City over since he wants them to welcome his return. Also, we’ve found that though Drake, Tyson, and Whistler have been tortured, their lives aren’t in any danger yet, at least for now.”

“From our investigation, we’ve also learned that Sven had gone to a Southeast Asian country half a year ago to toughen himself up. Due to that, he now has top-notch skills in his arsenal,” replied Welson as he smiled rather bitterly.

“I see. Then we should deal with him now before he has a chance to cause any more trouble in the future. Remain here and take care of Yukie for me while I go rescue my men, Welson,” said Gerald.

“But young master, you haven’t consumed the holy blood yet... With your temperament currently still unstable, I’m afraid that...”

There was a good reason why Welson sounded so concerned. After all, if Gerald had no problem with killing others the moment he left training, Welson was afraid that he would only grow to become more and more aloof.

“I can control it.”

With that, Gerald selected around thirty people to go with him before setting off for the hotel.

Meanwhile, at the hotel itself, a sudden chill could be felt as the night further darkened.

Despite the gloomy mood, a female’s voice suddenly shouted, “Why are you still running around? Mom’s been trying to find you everywhere! With Boss Sven back today and the recent terrible event in Heavenly City, it’d do you good to be more careful!”

The owner of the voice was a rather mature and seductive looking woman who looked to be around twenty-four. Her tone alone also suggested that she was, in a way, an intellectual beauty.

As for the other girl she was talking to, she seemed to be slightly younger, at around the age of twenty. Even so, she was equally as charming as the older woman.

Both of them were currently standing at the hotel's entrance, and realizing how loud they were being, the older woman instantly straightened her hair before saying, "Now come along and let's get inside already!"

"Fine... Actually, you go on ahead first. I came out here in the first place to get some fresh air, you know? I'll head back up there in a bit," replied the younger woman.

"...Alright, but you'd better not be lying to me... Promise me that you'll head up again once you're feeling better, okay?" said the woman in a slightly anxious tone before finally leaving.

It was evident, however, that the young woman wasn't too enthusiastic about going back inside. Crouching to the ground, she picked a few stones up before tossing them all over the place, one by one.

Eventually getting bored, she pouted before dragging herself back into the hotel.

Upon arriving at the lobby, the girl was shocked when she saw a group of men exiting what seemed to be a secret passage from behind a wall mirror. As if the shock wasn't enough, that feeling soon turned into a cocktail of fear, surprise, and joy the moment she saw who was leading the men.

"...Huh? Isn't that...?"

It had been half a year since she had last met him, so the girl was eager to greet their leader. Before she could do so, however, a gruff voice said, "What are all of you doing here?"

The voice had come from one of Sven's bodyguards stationed at the hotel's entrance. Thanks to the girl's odd comment, he and several other of Sven's guards were able to catch the infiltrating men in their act, and they were now completely surrounded.

Instead of a verbal reply, the men from the opposing group chose to swiftly dash toward each of Sven's present guards instead. With breakneck speed, multiple snaps could be heard as Sven's guards all fell to the ground, all of their heads tilted at awkward angles.

Seeing all the dead guards with broken necks, a waiter—who just so happened to be in the lobby—immediately let out a terrified scream.

The girl herself had gone pale by the sight of so many corpses. In her utter shock, she instantly began running up the stairs to seek safety.

When the frightened girl finally came into view of a family member, the older woman quickly said, “There you are! Hurry up and sit down already!”

Following that, the old woman sighed before adding, “With Boss Sven finally back, big changes are bound to happen in Heavenly City... Because of that, we Yowells will need to grab any opportunity that presents itself. Since you and your sister take after me, both of you are extremely beautiful. Due to that, please be on your best behavior once Mr. Tucker arrives. Who knows, one of you could end up charming him! If that were to happen, then our family will definitely be able to rise up the ranks extremely quickly!”

It was obvious at this point that the three women were none other than Tulip, Juliet, and Heidi.

Since Juliet had grown more mature compared to the person she had been half a year ago, she was able to fairly easily catch on that something was amiss with her younger sister’s mood.

Worried, she then asked, “What’s wrong, Tulip? Why’s your face so pale...?”

Gulping, Tulip then took in a deep breath before slowly saying, “...Earlier... When I was downstairs... I... I think I saw him...!”

“Him?” asked Heidi.

With how keen her mind was, Juliet immediately had a hunch of who her sister had met.

Feeling her heartbeats quicken, Juliet then added, “Who exactly did you see, Tulip?”

Finally unable to hold back her tears, Tulip quivered in fear as she cried out, “It’s him! He’s finally back!”

Chapter 995

“For the love of god, give us a name!” replied Juliet who was now extremely nervous.

"I met Gerald!" exclaimed Tulip.

"...What?" replied both Heidi and Juliet as their eyes widened.

"...So what if you met him? Why are you so afraid?" asked Heidi.

"...B-because—"

However, before Tulip could say another word, Sven—the organizer of tonight's event—stepped atop the high stage before saying, "Do be silent for a brief moment, ladies and gentlemen."

Raising a hand to signal everyone to keep quiet, the entire hall fell silent.

"I've finally returned today, ladies and gentlemen. First off, allow me to express my gratitude since despite my half-year absence, so many of you still chose to show your support by attending this party. During the time I was away, many things have happened. Thankfully, everything is finally over. On another note, the Sven Westmore Group's territory has now doubled in size compared to half a year ago! I hope you'll all continue to lend me your support from here on out," announced Sven.

Though his tone sounded friendly, his vicious gaze suggested otherwise. Nobody within the hall even dared to look at him in the eye, and that was exactly the effect Sven had wanted to achieve that night.

From tonight onward, only the Sven Westmore Group would remain in Heavenly City, and Sven wanted to make sure that everyone bowed down to him.

Understanding that everything was going to plan, Sven couldn't help but smile subtly as he briefly clapped his hands. Hearing their cue, his subordinates marched into the hall—from another hall beside it—leading over ten beautiful women in with them.

"Humph! As you can see, these are the female servants who used to work under Mr. Crawford from the Royal Dragon Group! All of them are certainly attractive! Haha! However, I don't think I'll be able to properly appreciate them... Because of that, I'm going to be auctioning all of them off tonight! Do bid all you want for any of the women that you fancy!" announced Sven as he let out a roar of laughter.

“How absolutely cruel! Not only did he ruin the entire Royal Dragon Group, but to think that he would even go so far as to auction off Mr. Crawford’s female servants! What a brutal man!”

“Indeed! While Mr. Crawford upheld morality and justice, Sven himself is just an inhumane beast! Looks like we’ll have to get prepared to be exploited by him again!”

“Speaking of which, have any of you heard about what happened to the Westleys? Since they had a good relationship with Mr. Crawford, Sven completely took over their family. What more, he even kicked all the Westleys out of their own home! We’ll certainly lack any sense of security with a person like this being our leader!”

Several rich businessmen—who were sitting further away from the stage—were now whispering among themselves about how unacceptable Sven’s behavior was. Though many of them were certainly angry by how much Sven had crossed the line, nobody dared to say anything against him.

Snapping his fingers, Sven then said, “Without further ado, let the auctioning begi-”

Before his sentence could even end, however, the hall suddenly turned dim as half of the lights in it were turned off.

Following that, the projector came to life, forming a white rectangle on the large screen in the hall.

“What the hell is happening? Are the staff courting death or something?” scolded a butler as the people offstage exchanged glances with each other before turning to look at the screen, unsure of what was even happening.

Their puzzlement immediately turned to shock when the projector began playing a video that displayed a man pleading, “Please don’t kill me!”

Their silence was warranted since everyone there could clearly see the face of the man in the video. It was none other than Mr. Tucker Westmore himself! What more, he was crying while kneeling!

“I suggest we get my dad over so that you can talk to him in person! After all, I’m only doing all this in accordance with his orders. Killing me would be useless! So how about it? Should I call my father over?” said Tucker in the video, clearly terrified.

“Tucker!” shouted Sven, his eyes widened as he clenched both his fists tightly.

While nobody knew who Tucker's assailant was, everyone was sold that whoever it was, the person must have been extremely terrifying for Tucker to look so frightened.

As the video played on, the audience watched as Tucker crawled up and attempted to escape. However, before he could even take a step forward, he looked like he was hit by something.

Though nobody knew what the weapon was, blood instantly began gushing out of his chest, resulting in Tucker falling back to the ground as he twitched violently!

The true horror, however, came when someone approached the struggling man and poured fuel all over his body! A match could briefly be seen being tossed in his direction and the next thing they knew, Tucker's entire body was engulfed in flames!

As his screams of agony filled the hall, one of the attendees immediately ended up vomiting! Several others soon did the same and their legs shook violently even as they sat in place.

The few women who didn't were so shaken up that they held onto their heads while screaming hysterically!

Once the video finally ended, the lights were switched on again.

Chapter 996

"Who... Who is responsible for all this?!" roared Sven, enraged as he slammed his fists onto the table before him, sending it smashing into pieces! Even the muscles on his face were twitching uncontrollably as the angered father growled.

Though Sven's current state was certainly terrifying, many of the businessmen were secretly rejoicing after they realized how much pain Sven was now in. What went around, came around, and it was high time that Sven finally received the punishment he deserved.

The Yowell mother and daughters themselves were now huddling close to each other in fear.

"My, my! I wasn't expecting it to be so lively in here!" said a voice out loud as the hall's large doors swung open.

As everyone turned to look at who was daring enough to say that, they were all shocked to see Gerald entering the hall together with a group of men.

Though still astonished, several of the influential forces in the hall immediately stood up and bowed, submitting to Gerald's authority as they simultaneously shouted, "Mr. Crawford!"

"...Gerald?" muttered Juliet as she looked at him with a dumbfounded expression on her face. Her heartbeat quickened as she recalled the last time she had met him six months ago.

Back then, Gerald had revealed that his true identity was the boss of the Royal Dragon Group. That had been an extremely humiliating moment for her.

As if that wasn't enough, he didn't even say a word to her once he got his hands on the Ginseng King! Due to that, she came to resent Gerald, and was secretly pleased once she found out that Gerald had gone missing.

After all, the person who had brought her so much misery was finally out of the picture. However, Tulip had told her that he was finally back before the video even began, and Juliet had been nervous from that very moment.

Now that she knew that he truly had returned, she was filled with complicated feelings as she observed how different Gerald's demeanor and appearance was from half a year ago.

"Are you the Crawford from the Royal Dragon Group? You seem quite young. Pray tell, were you the one responsible for my son's death?" growled Sven as he gritted his teeth.

As he glared at Gerald with his eyes dyed red with murderous intent, Gerald simply nodded before replying, "Bingo."

Hearing that, Sven's imposing aura seemed to amplify as he roared, "If that's the case, how dare you come all the way here?! Fine, then! We'll settle all our grudges today! I'll make you suffer terribly if it's the last thing I do!"

As soon as his sentence ended, he stretched out both his arms and flexed his muscles so hard that his shirt exploded into shreds! Now topless, his bulging muscles made him look as impenetrable as a tank!

Tucker was his only son and Sven deeply adored him. Sven even already had plans to begin educating Tucker on the right ways to be his proper heir once Tucker grew a little older.

After watching his son being burnt alive, it was no wonder why Sven was driven mad. Now looking like a complete maniac, the hulking man rushed toward Gerald with surprising swiftness.

“Get away from them! Hurry!”

“Sven’s gone completely mental! Be careful not to get caught up in their battle or you’ll accidentally get hurt!”

Shouts filled the hall, warning everyone to retreat to the corners and sides of the room.

By the time everyone was at a relatively safe distance away from the two men, their eyes immediately widened as Sven swung his fist directly at Gerald.

While there certainly was a loud collision, that wasn’t why everyone was staring with stupefied looks on their faces.

No, they were all flabbergasted by the fact that Gerald had casually grabbed Sven’s fist before it could even land! In fact, he made it look easy!

Though Sven immediately tried to release his fist from Gerald’s grasp, no amount of struggling allowed him to free it.

“You’ve made three terribly wrong mistakes,” said Gerald rather casually before closing his eyes.

When he opened them again, however, his eyes were tinged red and his entire body gave off an aura akin to a demon’s.

Turning to look at each other, the subordinates who had been standing behind him this entire time took turns taking three steps back.

Sven himself felt a chill run down his spine as his imposing aura grew weaker, now almost completely overshadowed by Gerald’s murderous intent.

He couldn’t even deny that he was now feeling frightened as he stared at the demon of a man standing before him.

“...Firstly, you should’ve kept your hands off my group!”

After saying that, Gerald placed both his hands on Sven’s shoulder blades.

“Secondly, you shouldn’t have done things to my men!”

As Sven’s eyes widened in terror, Gerald gnashed his teeth viciously before growling, “And thirdly, you shouldn’t ever have humiliated my subordinates right in front of me!”

Now that Gerald was done lecturing him, he took in a deep breath before yanking both of Sven’s shoulders forward! The disgusting sound of skin and flesh being torn apart filled the room and soon after, and with one final ‘rip’, there was a momentary silence.

However, the silence didn’t last long as many of the people within the room instantly began screaming. Their screams of pure fear were so high-pitched that several of the wine glasses ended up shattering!

While many others found themselves having severe nervous breakdowns, some of the women present simply fainted on the spot!

What a cruel demon of a man!

Chapter 997

The entire hall fell into chaos as the people within it frantically tried finding ways to cope with what they had just witnessed.

While many were able to maintain their sanity by curling up into balls near the corners of the room, those who were less lucky ended up foaming on the floor due to the immense fear they were feeling.

Juliet herself was so terrified that she had already burst into tears by this point. However, due to utter fear, she didn’t even dare to say a single word.

On the contrary, Gerald simply closed his eyes before taking in a deep breath. Completely silent, he stayed that way for a brief moment before finally opening his eyes again. By then, the terrifying redness in his eyes had already disappeared.

Slowly walking up to the butler form before, he then asked, “Where did you lock my comrades up?”

Instead of giving a reply, however, the butler instantly began trembling vigorously before ultimately vomiting blood and falling to the floor! Though the butler’s body continued twitching for a brief moment, in the end, he stopped moving for good.

Due to Gerald's medical expertise, he was able to tell that the butler must have been so terrified that all his blood went up to his brain, causing a rupture in his blood vessels there. In short, the butler was now brain dead.

Looking at the fresh corpse by his feet, Gerald simply turned to face the subordinate standing behind him before ordering, "Go look for them!"

"Right away, young master!"

After his men went off to investigate, Gerald was just about to leave when he caught a glimpse of the mother and daughters from the Yowell family huddling closely together in fear. However, he simply averted his gaze before leaving the place for good.

Despite his absence, nobody dared to even move a muscle, even after an hour had passed! Throughout that time, an almost ungodly silence had filled the room.

It was evident that from now on, everyone in Heavenly City's Triangle District would be fear-stricken whenever they heard the Royal Dragon Group's name being mentioned.

Three days later in Gerald's mansion, Welson came up to him before saying, "After being told by the lord to look for the holy fox, I've glad to say that I've finally located it, young master! As it turned out, someone came across the holy fox about a year ago within the dense forest west of the Logan Province."

"I'm sure you're aware of why the lord is so keen on you locating the hold fox. Let me remind you that if you fail to nourish yourself with the fox's holy blood, there exists a chance for your temperament to be influenced by your hatred. Once that happens, it'll be incredibly difficult to salvage your old personality," added Welson before sighing.

Hearing that, Gerald frowned slightly though his expression contrasted how touched he was feeling from Welson's words.

After all, he had to admit that though he was easily able to control his bloodlust in the beginning, from the moment he made his move on Sven, his hatred intensified so much that it was akin to a tiny spark turning into a bush fire. Once a single bush was ignited, it was extremely difficult to stop the flames from spreading to the rest of the forest. In other words, Gerald was well aware that he could potentially lose control of himself due to his overwhelming hatred.

Since he had resolved the issue with such brutality the other day, a near irresistible urge to kill had constantly lingered around Gerald throughout the past three days.

“I get where both of you are coming from, Welson... I don’t want to end up becoming a killing machine either. Very well, relay my command to the others that we’ll be heading off to the west of the Logan Province immediately in search of the holy fox,” ordered Gerald.

“Right away, young master!”

After giving his order, Gerald stood up and walked toward a window where a flower pot—with fresh flowers inside—had been placed. As he gently held on to one of the flower’s petals, he muttered to himself, “If I’m not mistaken, the Moldell family base established by Kort is located in the Logan Province...”

As Gerald thought about the possibility of exacting his revenge on Kort when he arrived in the Logan Province, his grip tightened slightly. At that moment, all of the flowers within that pot immediately wilted!

Welson was watching as the incident happened, and he felt his eyelids twitching. As was expected, it was right for the lord to be worried about the young master.

The hellish transformation had greatly improved the young master’s strength, and from what Welson could remember, the young master was actually even stronger than the lord had been all those years ago when the lord had just completed his own transformation.

The old man was also well aware that if the lord hadn’t been worried about Gerald falling into immorality, he wouldn’t have told Welson to follow the young master around in the first place.

“There’s something I’d like to say, though I’m not sure whether I should actually say it, young master...”

“Go on, Welson.”

“Well, we may need a few days to locate the holy fox. Due to that, I’m afraid that there’ll be a chance that you’ll get controlled by your inner demon if you fail to hold yourself back properly. See, when the lord himself was learning the blessings of the dragon back then, he found a solution to mediate his bloodlust. I was wondering if you’d like to give it a try...” said Welson.

“What sort of solution?”

Chapter 998

“Well, back then, the lord himself was feeling troubled by his inner demons. As a result, he searched high and low for a way to better control his temperament. After all, he was fully aware that until he could easily and skillfully manage the blessings of the dragon, he wasn’t going to be able to truly achieve the status of a legend.

“He began by visiting several monks and other religious people. The lord secretly went to Weston as well to search for a few renowned masters in hopes that he would be able to gain more insight into his issue. However, it wasn’t all that long after his search began when one day, the lord ended up killing someone on the spot just because the person said something wrong!”

“Due to that, he stopped trying to seek out help out of fear that he would end up killing another innocent person. Oddly enough, he found the answer to his question himself one day. In his moment of enlightenment, he sealed his strength away and reverted to living life as a regular human. Once that happened, he looked just like a lonely, old man. The lord kept a low profile for quite a while but once he perfected his skills, he broke the seal again, and from then on out, he knew he had truly become one of the legends.”

“Since this way of doing things will require an extremely high resolution, it isn’t exactly for everyone. However, since you’ve led a poor life before and you’re an actual kind-hearted person, I think you should give it a try,” explained Welson.

Hearing that, Gerald nodded slightly before replying, “Well, Grandpa did teach me a method to seal my strength... I’ll do it. After all, I’ll be trying my best to stay away from disputes and fights anyway since I don’t have the holy blood yet. Besides, by sealing all that power, I should be able to manage my strength with greater ease sooner. With any luck, I’ll be able to enter the mysterious realms of legends earlier as well.”

“Thank you for the suggestion, Welson!” added Gerald as he smiled.

As soon as his sentence ended, however, a knock came from the door. After getting permission from Gerald to enter, Yukie immediately rushed in before saying, “Sir!”

“What’s wrong, Yukie?”

“I... I heard that you’re leaving again... Is that really true?” asked Yukie.

“Indeed it is,” replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

“I... see... Could I at least know where you’re headed to?” asked Yukie again as her eyes grew slightly teary.

From the moment she had met Gerald and was given permission to leave alongside the other maids, Yukie had given all her heart to Gerald.

She had missed him dearly throughout his half-year absence, and now that he was finally back, she found it difficult to just accept that he would be leaving again so soon.

“I’ll be heading over to the Logan Province!” replied Gerald.

“The... Logan Province...?”

The moment Yukie heard that, she averted her gaze for a second as both her hands became slightly restless.

As the two men wondered why those two words unsettled her so much, Yukie took in a deep breath before saying, “...Could I please be allowed to come along, sir? I really don’t want to leave you anymore!”

“You can’t Yukie. He will have to travel separately from us to get there anyway. What more, if a beauty like you stays by his side, you may attract the attention of villainous characters! As a result, he may have to unseal his strength to save you, causing the entire effort to be wasted! Which is why you’re not allowed to come along,” replied Welson as he shook his head.

“Well... You’ll eventually still need to meet up with each other again, right? When that happens, someone needs to be by sir’s side to take good care of him! No offense, but could you be more sensible and considerate than a woman, Mr. Freed?” said Yukie in reply.

Welson was speechless after hearing that. After a while, he simply shook his head before laughing bitterly.

“I suppose what you said did make sense... However, if you’re coming along, you’ll have to follow us. You’re not allowed to disturb the young master’s endeavor to quietly discipline himself. If you refuse to agree to that, then you can’t come along,” said the old man.

“I... I agree!” replied Yukie as she smiled broadly.

And just like that, the affair was decided there and then.

That afternoon, Gerald returned to Weston before getting on a green train to the Logan Province.

The journey itself took two whole days, and Gerald finally stepped out of the train on the morning of the third day.

Feeling hungry, Gerald then headed to a small restaurant that had been built along the train station.

As soon as he opened the door to the restaurant, however, he immediately heard a man's voice saying, "Just order whatever you want, sisters! Everything will be on me!"

Following the source of the voice, Gerald saw a man and two women seated at a table. With all three of them looking equally charming, it was no wonder why they had attracted the attention of several of the restaurant's customers as well.

As the man smiled on, one of the women simply replied, "Are you the only rich one here? Regardless, we've had enough fun out there so it's high time we return home. Otherwise, we may end up getting scolded or even punished!"

"That's quite enough... We're already back here anyway after all that fun, right?" said the other woman as she too, smiled.

"...Hmm? Say sister, look over there... That's the young man who sat beside us on the train earlier, right...?" said the same woman as she pointed at the man standing at the door.

Chapter 999

"Well, hello there! We meet again!" said Haven Lovewell—one of the charming women—as she waved at the youth.

"We do, indeed..." replied Gerald with a subtle smile as he closed the door behind him. Placing his baggage down at a specially designated area for tourists, Gerald then headed over to an empty table that was coincidentally beside Haven's.

As Gerald sat down, Haven added, "Do you remember our little conversation on the train earlier? It was so pleasant that I even wanted to ask you for your Line number at some point! Still, I never expected to meet you again so soon... I guess our meeting must have been written in the stars!"

"That's quite enough, Haven. He came here to have his meal so don't trouble him any more," said Xareni—Haven's elder sister—as she gently stepped on Haven's foot, reminding her to be courteous.

"She's right, Haven. Why did you even ask him for his Line number?" added Quintin.

Hearing that, Gerald simply shook his head before smiling wryly.

As Haven had said, Gerald had earlier bumped into the three Lovewell siblings while they were still on the train. At the time, the Lovewell siblings were sitting right across Gerald.

Quintin, however, had been dissatisfied with his window-side seat since the old man—who looked to be around eighty—sitting beside Gerald was an eyesore for him. The old man himself had been sleeping with his head leaned against the window throughout most of their journey, and Quintin couldn't bear having to look at his sleeping face for any longer.

As a result, Quintin asked Gerald to switch seats with him. Though Gerald initially had no problem with that, Quintin had tossed a hundred dollars at Gerald while asking.

If he had been a bit nicer and more polite, Gerald would've switched seats with him anyway. However, from the moment the hundred dollars were tossed his way, Gerald completely ignored Quintin's request.

Had Haven not stepped in to advise Quintin, he would've definitely started a fight with Gerald.

Later on, Haven herself began chatting with Gerald. Since Gerald has traveled so much in the past year, he was no longer the same person who only knew about Serene County and Mayberry City.

Due to his extensive knowledge of many different places, Haven soon found herself getting fascinated by him.

Xareni, on the other hand, never said a word to Gerald. Being the eldest among the three people, she was slightly colder and more aloof in general.

That was the gist of their interaction back on the train.

"So, where are you headed to next? Did you come to the Logan Province to study or work?" asked Haven curiously.

"I'm just here to travel!" replied Gerald with a smile.

“Oh! If you’re traveling around here, then I recommend that you go to a place called Balbrick Manor! There are lots of amusing things to do there, from golf to even horse racing!”

“Haven, not everyone can go there... You can’t expect an ordinary person to just go there! Regardless, just hurry up and eat already,” said Xareni who clearly didn’t like Gerald one bit.

If it wasn’t already obvious, all three of them shared a rather extraordinary background.

Being born with great pride and elegance, Xareni was the least realistic among the three of them despite being the eldest. She was simply too used to only meeting up with prestigious people. As a result, she looked down upon normal people like Gerald. To Xareni, such people didn’t even have the right to befriend her!

“Alright...” replied Haven, saying nothing more.

With that, Gerald ordered a plate of fried rice with an egg on it. Once his meal arrived, he immediately began eating slowly.

As he ate, he realized that the Lovewells didn’t really eat much based on what they ordered.

Sometime later, all three of them got up to get their baggage. Before they left, however, Haven sneakily returned to Gerald’s side before whispering, “Hey, I live in the Lovewell Manor in the Logan Province! If you find the time, come over and have some fun with me! Also, just in case you’ve forgotten, my full name is Haven Lovewell!”

Before Gerald could even reply, Xareni was already dragging Haven by the arm out of the restaurant.

“...What a naïve girl she is...” muttered Gerald to himself as he smiled in resignation.

He, for one, was in no mood to have any sort of fun with her.

Now that he was finally getting a chance to ignore all his past resentments and grudges for a few days, Gerald wanted to take the opportunity to properly relax.

With that in mind, Gerald began touring around tourist spots in the Logan Province. Before he knew it, evening had come and night was swiftly approaching.

Realizing that he still needed to find someplace to stay, Gerald was just about to go hotel hunting when he heard a voice saying, “What do you plan on doing?”

The feminine voice had come from the entrance of an alleyway. Taking a few steps back to look down the darkened area, Gerald realized that a few drunk youths had dragged a woman into the alley which only led to a dead end.

“What do you think? We’re going to have some fun with you, of course! Now, come on!” said one of the three hooligans who instantly began dragging her further down the alley.

As she desperately struggled to escape, the corner of her eye caught a glimpse of another youth walking toward them. Seeing that someone was coming over to help, the woman used all of her strength to shove the hooligan—who was pulling her arm—away from her.

Thankfully, the hooligan was drunk enough to let go and the woman immediately ran over to the new youth’s side before clinging on to his arm and crying out, “They’re trying to take liberties on me, hubby!”

She made sure to pinch his arm as well, a clear indication for him to cooperate with her.

Chapter 1000

“Hubby?” said all three of the gangsters simultaneously as they turned to look at each other. However, their confusion quickly turned to hostility as they began glaring at the youth.

“Hold on now, I’m not her husband!” replied the youth as he began waving his hands quickly in fear.

Hearing that, the woman found herself rolling her eyes as she thought to herself, ‘D*mn it! How could anyone be this much of a coward?’

The hooligans themselves broke into roars of laughter as one of them said, “It appears you’re quite smart, little beauty! We’ll be sure to teach you a good lesson later!”

Just as they were about to lunge at the duo, the youth suddenly turned around and pointed at the entrance of the alleyway before shouting, “Police!”

As soon as they heard that, the three drunk gangsters immediately stopped in their tracks and turned their backs against the duo, squatting immediately after with their hands placed behind their heads!

“W-we won’t do it again so please let us off easy!”

Seeing that the gangsters were now distracted, the youth immediately began dragging the woman by her arm as he said, “Now’s our chance! Run!”

It was only a few steps later when he realized that the woman could no longer run. Thankfully, he noticed a manhole cover close by.

Pulling her over, he applied a slight force on his foot, tilting the manhole cover up. The moment the three gangsters stepped out of the alleyway, the youth immediately—and quite effortlessly—kicked the cover toward them!

Spinning at a high speed, the manhole cover whizzed across the air before finally striking all three of the gangsters who had been standing close to each other! As a result, the gangsters all fell to the ground.

With that, the youth turned around to catch up with the woman and continue aiding her in her escape. The woman herself had already been slowly jogging away from the scene by then, which meant that she wasn’t able to witness the youth’s amazing feat with the manhole cover.

Eventually, both of them arrived at a park, at which point the woman simply said, “Stop, I can’t run anymore...”

As the youth turned to look at her, he could see that the woman was breathing heavily, her hands on her knees as she slowly caught her breath again.

Naturally, the youth in question was Gerald.

Thankful that the only luggage he had to carry along was in the form of a satchel, Gerald took the chance to properly observe the beauty now that they were safe.

However, since the uniform-wearing woman had bent over to catch her breath, Gerald was able to catch a glimpse of her fair bosom. Averting his gaze since he had no idea where to even look, the woman soon caught on and quickly held on to her collar as she blushed deeply.

After a brief silence, the woman smiled rather awkwardly before saying, "...Thank you for saving me back there... If it wasn't for you, who knows what would've become of me by the end of tonight!"

"You're very welcome!" replied Gerald as he nodded to her before turning around to leave.

Unable to just accept that, the woman then said, "Hold on, sir. I haven't even finished talking! You know, earlier when I called you my husband, you could've just gone with it for a while! Why did you have to straight-out deny it?"

Her tone reflected her slight annoyance and it wasn't hard to guess why. After all, women were usually particularly sensitive to how others viewed them. Being an extremely beautiful woman herself, this stereotype definitely applied to her.

The way she saw it, Gerald almost seemed frightened to even pretend that he was her husband. It simply made her feel slightly unhappy about the entire situation.

"I have a girlfriend... Besides, I still managed to save you without having to impersonate as your husband!"

"Still! Don't you think that- Ow!"

As the woman pouted to release some of her dissatisfaction, she had taken a step toward Gerald which instantly resulted in a sharp pain in her ankle!

Yelping in pain, the woman then cried out, "I've sprained my ankle!"

Shaking his head, Gerald then squatted down before asking, "Where's the sprain? I'll have a quick look at it..."

"There's no need for that! You have a girlfriend, right? She could misunderstand!" replied the woman.

"Then this is where we'll part ways. Have a safe trip back!" said Gerald as he immediately carried his bag again and prepared to leave.

"Hey! Hold it! Don't you know how to take care of a woman? At least send me to a hospital!"

Closing his eyes, Gerald took in a deep breath before turning back to face the woman. Finding a park bench, he led her there and lifted her sprained ankle. The woman simply sat anxiously, wondering what he was trying to do as he felt around her foot.

The moment he found the spot he was looking for, he twisted it slightly and a 'crack' was heard.

And just like that, the woman's sprained ankle was healed!

"You should be good to go now. Anyway, since it's already getting dark, you'd better head home as soon as possible," said Gerald as he got up, finally ready to leave.

"Hold on a moment!" replied the woman, stopping Gerald from leaving again.

"What is it this time...?"

"Well, you've helped me a lot but I haven't even been able to thank you properly! At least let me treat you to dinner!"

Chapter 1001

Dinner? Coincidentally, Gerald himself was planning to go for a meal once he was finally able to get away from her.

"...I accept!" replied Gerald with a nod. Since he was being treated to a meal, he may as well just accept the offer to save up on money.

"You!"

Though Misty Zachary had simply proposed the idea out of courtesy, she hadn't really expected him to accept her offer. Her immediate response was proof of that.

Regardless, women tended to admire heroic figures and while Gerald was certainly no hero in the traditional sense, she had to admit that he had indeed helped her.

What more, he was quite handsome, and that alone made others—including Misty herself—rather susceptible to wanting to get to know him a bit better.

With that out of the way, Misty then led Gerald to a nearby restaurant where they ate and chatted throughout their supper. Naturally, they soon got to know each other better.

“Still, what a coincidence that you chose this place to travel to!” said Misty.

“And why is that?”

“Judging from your response, I’m sure you’re unaware that starting from tomorrow, the Lovewell family will be hosting a treasure exchange event for the following three days! Since it’s being held a month earlier than it usually is, it truly is a coincidence that you managed to be in time for it!”

“Many people from a multitude of places—some even from abroad—attend the yearly treasure exchange event, you know? With so many people participating in the event, you’ll surely be dazzled if you attend!” added Misty.

“I see... I’ve only heard about antique exchange events... I don’t think I’ve ever even heard of treasure exchange events...” replied Gerald with a bitter smile as he shook his head.

“What’s the big deal about mere antique exchange events? Do understand that the Lovewell’s exchange event this time around is all-inclusive! In other words, not only are antiques going to be displayed during the event, but also great treasures! Speaking of treasures, as long as you have a treasure of your own, you’re allowed to display it at the event.”

“While that may not sound like much, I’ll give you an example of what that truly means. Say for example you currently have a jade bracelet that would normally sell for around fifteen thousand dollars. Now, if you’re able to get it to pass the event’s treasure identification procedures, you’ll be allowed to raise the price of the bracelet up to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars or even more during the event!” explained Misty.

“I see. Regardless, the event strikes me as something that would only amuse rich people. After all, for someone like me, I’ll only be able to look around and possibly enjoy the fun atmosphere a little. I don’t really have that much knowledge on antiques and treasures in the first place,” replied Gerald with a smile.

“...I can see that you’re quite smart since you’re able to say such things! Say, I’ll let you in on a secret... It’s about an incident only insiders know about, so you won’t hear what you’re about to find out from regular people!” whispered Misty all of a sudden.

Taking a bite of his fish, Gerald then gestured for Misty to go on as he took a sip of his drink.

“During the exchange event four years ago, a magic artifact was put up on display! Not only was it consecrated, but there were also carved inscriptions all over the ancient-looking object!”

Hearing that, Gerald nearly spat out his drink. Swallowing what he could, Gerald then asked, “Are you for real?”

Getting slightly annoyed by Gerald’s attitude again, Misty then replied, “What reason would I have to lie to you? You’re only a disbeliever because you lack knowledge of the actual artifact! See, the artifact in question was a horsetail whisk which was once used by a Taoist priest in ancient times. Back then, it was said that if one placed it in their home, they’d be able to ward off all forms of evil!”

“It was bought back then by a person from Japan who had spent a massive amount of money for it. Now here’s where it gets interesting. See, the Japanese man who bought it had a seriously ill mother who was already at the age of ninety-eight, four years ago. Miraculously, all it took was less than half a year for his mother to be completely cured! What more, she’s still alive and kicking now at the age of a hundred and two!”

“Regardless, that wasn’t the only magic artifact that had been placed on display before. In the previous exchange event, one of the participants successfully bought an ancient sword that was rumored to be a magic artifact as well!”

“Essentially, what I’m trying to say is that several similar items have been placed on display throughout the years. While many of them simply appear to be regular antiques or treasures, their history—which contributes to the artifacts’ magical properties—is what makes many foreigners come over to participate in the event on a yearly basis.”

Placing his wine glass down, Gerald frowned slightly once she was done explaining.

With how serious she sounded, Gerald could tell that what she was saying wasn’t likely to be a hoax.

While he hadn’t said much during Misty’s explanation, he was honestly thinking that if there were going to be more magic artifacts during this treasure exchange event, then he wanted her to tell him as much information about them as possible.

Gerald himself believed in the power of magic artifacts. After all, from ancient times, almost all large families relied on some form of mysterious power in order to suddenly rise above all their competitors. Even his grandfather owned an ancient magic artifact in the form of a picture of the sun with lines on it akin to veins.

Speaking of his grandfather, he had told Gerald some time ago that the Fendersons had once competed with the Crawfords for half a jade pendant many years back. The pendant itself was a magic artifact shared by both the Crawfords and the Fendersons that symbolized their families’ fortune and fate.

With it being so invaluable, his uncle—Peter—had attempted to sneak into the Fenderson family mansion to seek out the other half of the jade pendant. In the end, however, all he managed to do was refuel the rage and feud between both families.

“...You seem to be a little too knowledgeable about magic artifacts... I’m sure they don’t share all this out in public right?”

Chapter 1002

Gerald then continued acting like he was surprised by saying, “Are you some kind of salesperson? You really had me going for a while there! Haha!”

“...What? Hey now, I’m an accountant working for a company under the Lovewell family, you know? My company in particular is the main organizer for the yearly exchange event! And again, I have no reason to lie to you! Just know that I’m only sharing all this with you since you saved me. Don’t go spreading the news around! Then again, it’s not like anyone will believe you,” replied Misty as she took a sip of her own drink.

“Still, seeing that you’re interested in the event, would you perhaps like to go over to have a look?” added Misty.

“The way you’re saying it almost suggests that I could freely go to such a place. I’m pretty sure it won’t be that easy to get an admission ticket, right?” replied Gerald with a smile.

“Bingo. But lucky for you, I’m a person who doesn’t like owing favors to others. Since you’ve helped me so much, I can hand you an admission ticket under the condition that I’ll essentially have repaid all your kindness. Deal?” said Misty as she carefully took an admission ticket out from her bag and slid it over to Gerald with a smile.

“While we’re at it, consider this to be lifelong advice. Never ever look down on people again, especially beauties like me! Speaking of which, you don’t seem like you’ve seen much of the world, to be completely honest. You know, a few of my friends from out of town will be coming over to have some fun with me tomorrow. I could bring you along if you wanted to. How about it?”

“Deal! Thank you, and sure, why not? Also, regarding the Lovewell family you mentioned earlier... Just to be clear, is there more than one Lovewell family in the Logan Province?” asked Gerald as he politely took the admission ticket.

“Not at all! There’s only one Lovewell family in the entire province!”

Hearing that, Gerald cleared his throat as he thought, ‘The Lovewells in the Logan Province... Could it really be the same family Haven is from...? Then again, though those three siblings appeared to be wearing normal clothes back then, I’ve seen similar articles of clothing that cost over fifteen thousand dollars per piece!’

Gerald had long been aware that the three people were no ordinary folk. Still, he couldn't really be bothered about them. After all, his true interest lay in the exchange event.

If magic artifacts were truly going to be on sale, then he'd very much like to have a look at them for himself. After all, if someone bought them, there'd be less for him to potentially get his hands on.

After parting ways with Misty, Gerald stayed the night in a nearby hotel.

Early the next morning, Gerald rushed to the exchange event venue which just so happened to be at Balbrick Manor. Though he thought that he had arrived considerably early, to his surprise, the place was already crowded with people by then. As if that wasn't enough, the area was also filled with luxury cars.

Since he had agreed the night before to wait for Misty at the entrance today, he did just that.

As he waited, a few more luxury cars came to a halt at the entrance, and out stepped a group of men and women.

Standing at a corner, Gerald immediately recognized three people from the group when the surrounding bodyguards bowed while greeting the guests respectfully.

Of course, they were none other than the three Lovewell siblings. Just as he had thought, the three siblings definitely belonged to a rich and prestigious family.

Knowing that, Gerald slipped on a cap he had brought along and pulled down its brim.

While he definitely wasn't afraid of Haven, the other two siblings, Xareni and Quintin, were a different story. There was a chance of him getting kicked out if they recognized him, and since he was going to be walking around with Misty, he really didn't want to end up burdening her.

Thankfully, the group simply talked and laughed among each other as they entered Balbrick Manor. Just as Gerald was breathing a sigh of relief, he felt a gentle pat on his shoulder.

Turning to look at who had done so, Gerald saw Misty smiling behind him as she said, "Well you're early, Gerald!"

Smiling back, Gerald couldn't help but notice a few other young men and women who were standing behind her.

Chapter 1003

After returning the greeting, Misty then turned to look at her group before saying, "Let's get the introductions out of the way first. This is Gerald and I got acquainted with him only yesterday. He's quite a nice person and he even saved me, you know?"

"Humph! So this is the guy! If he was aware that we were attending a treasure exchange event, then why did he still choose to dress up the way he currently is?" said one of the other women rather contemptuously as she crossed her arms.

Her comment had stemmed from the fact that the exchange event was a sort of gathering mostly only reserved for prestigious people. Since only those who were powerful and influential were expected to attend, suits and leather shoes were considered to be the norm at such an event.

Since Gerald was the only one dressed like a tourist, it was no wonder why Misty's friend found him to be rather humiliating.

She wasn't the only one either. Quite a few of her friends were thinking about the same thing as well.

"It's fine, isn't it? We'll just enjoy ourselves together!" replied Misty who hadn't seemed to have caught on to her friends' evident dislike toward Gerald.

With that, all of them entered Balbrick manor together. The manor itself was extremely spacious, and according to what Misty had told Gerald, the exchange event was divided into an outer and inner area.

While the outer area only displayed regular antiques and treasures, the inner area was reserved for the so-called, 'good stuff'.

As they were walking around, Lydia Jolly—one of Misty's friends—looked at one of the men in their group before saying, "Say Jamie, I've just noticed, but is that watch new?"

"I'm glad you noticed! It is, indeed!"

"Oh? How much was it?" asked Lydia.

"It wasn't that expensive, really. Just around three thousand dollars! I still bought it though, since the watch's style matches my suit so perfectly!" replied Jamie Warner.

“What a rich man you are!” said Misty, a hint of jealousy in her voice.

Though she said that, Misty didn't really think too much about it. She was pleased enough with the fact that everyone was enjoying themselves together.

“I see... Then what about the suit? How much was that?”

“A little over seven thousand dollars. I bought it in Italy when I previously traveled there”

“How nice!” replied Lydia as she and the other two men and women in the group continued discussing their attire and lifestyles.

It was evident that Lydia was proficient in getting others to do the dirty work for her. After all, she had deliberately started that particular topic of conversation just to embarrass Gerald.

She was trying her best to ostracize and make him leave since she felt that he was an embarrassment to her and her friends due to how poorly he was dressed for such a grand event.

What more, she was honestly slightly pissed with him since she had initially assumed that Gerald was some rich young man or at the very least, a prince charming after Misty told them about her rescuer.

Though she had to admit that he was quite good-looking, in the end, he was just a poorly-dressed loser!

Because of all that, Lydia felt the need to make him understand how truly different he was from them.

As her plan continued going smoothly, someone suddenly shouted, “How dare you even attempt to put that thing on display alongside our items? Are you trying to humiliate us? Get lost!”

Turning to look at who was causing the commotion, everyone saw an old man who seemed to have been trying to set up his own stall to display his treasure.

Since he was able to bring it in here in the first place, it was evident that he had managed to pass the treasure identification procedures.

Despite having every right to set his own stall up there, most of the others who had already set up their own stalls for the event came from major families, including the few people who were close to where the old man had attempted to set up his stall.

Nobody else within the inner area was a random person like the old man, which gave the stall owners—who had already set up stalls close to where the old man had planned to set up his—even more reason to get him to leave.

Sighing, the old man knew that this simply wouldn't do. Lifting his treasure—which seemed to be an iron plaque—in his arms he then began walking off in search of another spot to set up his stall.

As Gerald watched the old man leave, he felt his eyelids twitch slightly the moment he gave the iron plaque a good look.

Gerald could feel his heart palpitating as he continued staring at the iron plaque which had blotches all over its surface. It was a feeling that he rarely ever experienced since he became one of the champions.

Chapter 1004

'Something's definitely wrong with that iron plaque...' Gerald thought to himself.

"Come on, Gerald. Let's go. Is there something wrong?" asked Misty, wondering why he was still standing in place.

"...Ah, um, why don't you guys go on ahead first? I'd like to have a look around on my own!" replied Gerald with a smile before continuing to look at the direction that the old man had left in.

"Well... Fine! But I'll call you out again when it's near noon so that we can have lunch together!" said Misty who had also noticed by now that her friends had constantly been giving Gerald the cold shoulder.

After agreeing with the plan, Gerald immediately went after the old man.

The moment he was gone, women from Misty's group instantly began bad-mouthing him.

"Humph! Why did you have to get acquainted with such a person, Misty? He's so humiliating to be around with!"

"I know, right? What a loser! It's hard to even have any fun when he's around!"

"Yeah! Please don't bring him along with us for lunch later! I mean, just compare what we're wearing to what he wore! Since he helped you, surely you wouldn't want him to feel inferior in front of us, right?"

Hearing that, Misty could only reply in a saddened tone, "That's quite enough. Though I've only been acquainted with him for a short while, allow me to remind you that he's a nice person! I'll still call him over for lunch later but please be a little nicer to him later, alright?"

"Fine..." replied the others, forced to agree.

Meanwhile, Gerald finally caught up to the dejected-looking old man who had just set his stall up again in a rather secluded area.

Shaking his head, the old man knew that though the new spot was rather deserted, at the very least, nobody would attempt to ostracize a villager like him here.

Rushing over to the old man's store, Gerald smiled at him before saying, "Is this the only item you have for sale, sir?"

"Indeed it is. You know, I didn't really want to come here today... Whether you choose to believe me or not, it was actually the event's organizer who invited me over! After we talked for a bit, they told me that the iron plaque would sell for a high price so I should definitely attend the event! Yet look at what happened! To think that I was shunned away before I could even set up my store there earlier! Humph! Do you have any cigarettes to spare, young man? If you do, I'm leaving once I've had a smoke! I need to cook lunch for my granddaughter anyway!" replied the old man with a sigh.

"I do, indeed! Just to confirm, the event's organizer invited you over the moment they found out that you owned the plaque, correct?" said Gerald as he looked at the iron plaque while handing the old man a cigarette.

The plaque itself didn't look particularly special. At most, Gerald could say that it had a simple but ancient aura surrounding it, not unlike an antique item.

"Yeah, the event's organizer found out that I owned it through a TV show, quite honestly. You know that show where they talk about selling antiques? Well, I was on one of that show's episodes since this plaque here definitely deserves to be an antique. It was handed down from my ancestors, you know? Even so, while the experts from that show definitely agreed that my antique wasn't bad, they also added that it didn't have much artistic or archaeological value! The nerve!"

“Regardless, the event’s organizer soon met up with me. They told me that the item could be sold to foreigners at a high price, which led them to invite me over to this treasure exchange event.”

“Back then, the organizer had told me to look for them the moment I arrived at the event venue. I was also told to hand the plaque over to them once we met up. I didn’t really understand the request at the time—and I still don’t—but since I heard I could gain a lot of money by selling it, I arrived first thing in the morning today. Even after wandering for quite a bit, however, I still couldn’t find them. That was the reason why I attempted to set up my own stall in the inner area earlier.”

“What more, businessmen like them can be quite untrustworthy, you know, young man? It wouldn’t be out of the question for a scenario where I get paid half of what the businessmen earn from selling the antique to happen. With that in mind, it only gave me more reason to try selling the plaque on my own,” detailed the old man as he finally finished his cigarette.

Seeing that, Gerald quickly handed him another cigarette before carefully lifting the iron plaque and weighing it. After a brief moment of consideration, a thought came to him.

Smiling, Gerald then turned to look at the old man before saying, “I’m interested in buying the iron plaque from you, sir. You can name any price you want!”

“Young man, I’ll say it right now that this thing barely has any archaeological or artistic value to it... It’s just a simple iron plaque used to fool foreigners!” replied the old man in a rather embarrassed tone—who must have felt bad after smoking two of Gerald’s cigarettes—as he quickly dissuaded Gerald against it.

“I’m fine with that. This object will be useful to me, so don’t worry!”

“...Are you really sure?”

“There’s no reason for me to lie!”

“I’ll be using the same price that I set for the foreigners, you know?”

“Just tell me the price already...”

“...Fine. Don’t say I didn’t warn you... I’m selling it for seventy-seven thousand dollars!” replied the old man as he blushed slightly. The only reason he had set the price so high was because he had heard that foreigners would pay literally anything for antique items.

Hearing that, Gerald simply smiled wryly before saying, “Forget seventy-seven thousand dollars... I’ll pay you seven hundred and seventy thousand dollars instead! Once you receive the money, you’ll be able to live a comfortable life! So how about it? It’s not like you’ll have any use for the plaque if you decide not to sell it anyway, plus-”

However, Gerald held his tongue just in time to prevent himself from saying something truly horrifying. Instead, he continued the sentence in his mind.

‘...If you’re truly unwilling to hand it over, you may just have to face the calamity of your total family’s extermination...’

Chapter 1005

“Plus...? Also, hold on, young man. Are you being serious here?” replied the old man, his eyes widened in shock.

Gerald simply shook his head before asking the old man for his bank account number with a smile on his face. After a brief call, the old man was left utterly shocked five minutes later when he saw that seven hundred and seventy thousand dollars truly had been banked into his account.

“T-thank you, young man!” said the old man as he smiled broadly. His joy was no surprise. After all, he would never have dreamed that he would actually be able to sell that iron plaque for such a high amount.

Gerald himself had bought the item since though the plaque didn’t look like anything special, there was simply something extraordinary about it. It gave Gerald a similar feeling to when he had first laid his eyes upon the picture of the sun half a year ago.

It may have only been a gut feeling, but Gerald chose to believe it.

At that moment, a group of people—consisting of both foreigners and locals who were dressed in luxurious attire—began walking toward Gerald and the old man.

When they were in front of the duo, another old man wearing traditional clothes smiled as he said, “I wonder if you’ll allow me to have a look at that iron plaque in your hand, mister...”

Seeing this, the old man who had sold the iron plaque immediately began fearing that his money would be taken away from him. As a result, he quickly left the scene, not daring to linger for any longer.

Gerald, on the other hand, simply handed the iron plaque over to the other old man as he said, "Sure."

Gently taking it from Gerald, the old man in traditional garb held the iron plaque in his hands before slowly caressing its surface. It didn't take long for his expression to suddenly change drastically.

"What is it, Mr. Snyder?" asked one of the foreigners who appeared to be the leader of the group.

"Well, for one, this iron plaque certainly isn't an ordinary object! I'll be frank and say that there's actually a holy spirit surrounding it!" replied Mr. Snyder as his hands quivered slightly.

The moment the foreigner heard that, his mood was instantly lifted as he turned to look at Gerald before saying, "How much did you pay for this? I'll pay fifty times that price for this iron plaque!"

Hearing that, Gerald turned to look at Mr. Snyder. So it turned out that this old man was equally as insightful as he was.

Regardless, even if the foreigner had upped the price to five thousand times more than what he had initially paid, Gerald wasn't letting go of the plaque.

"I appreciate the offer, but I'm not selling it," replied Gerald as he took the iron plaque back from Mr. Snyder.

Not hearing the response he wanted, the foreigner frowned before turning to look at a youth who was standing by his side. The youth himself looked to be around twenty-six and wore quite luxurious clothes, just like the rest of the people within the foreigner's group.

Sensing his cue, the youth shook his head and smiled before saying, "If you aren't aware, I go by the name of Zolton Lovewell, and I'm the main organizer of today's event, mister. I'm also the young master of the Lovewell family, so I truly suggest that you just sell it. Think about how you'll be able to lead a comfortable life without worries once you get the money!"

As Gerald looked at Zolton's subtle smile, he simply replied, "Again, I appreciate the offer, but I'm not selling it."

With that, Gerald nodded slightly at the group before attempting to leave with the iron plaque.

Before he could leave, however, an old man with white hair—who had also been standing close to Zolton this entire time—stepped in front of Gerald, preventing him from leaving.

Looking at him, Gerald could see that the rather extraordinarily imposing man's irises looked somewhat triangular. Squinting his eyes slightly, Gerald realized that the white-haired man had eyes similar to those of a poisonous snake.

It was evident to Gerald at that point that the man blocking his way truly had inner strength. So it seemed that the long history that the Lovewells had established within the Logan Province had allowed them to build up a truly extraordinary background.

"What could this possibly mean, Mr. Lovewell?" asked Gerald as he turned around to look at Zolton.

In response, however, Zolton simply turned to look away as the old, white-haired man grabbed Gerald's wrist firmly.

As he tightened his grip, he coldly said, "As mentioned before, he was willing to up the price by fifty times of what you paid. How could you still be dissatisfied with that, mister?"

Even before the old man's sentence had ended, he was already surging a secret strength toward Gerald's body!

'You're truly overestimating your capabilities!' Gerald thought to himself with a sneer before waving his hand in an indifferent manner. Just by making that simple gesture, Gerald was able to break off the old man's inner strength!

Realizing what had just happened, the old man stared at Gerald in panic as he staggered a few steps backward.

"I told you, I'm not selling it. Please don't continue pestering me," said Gerald as he walked off.

"...Are you truly sure that the plaque is a treasure, Mr. Snyder? I couldn't sense anything from it!" said the foreigner with a frown as he watched Gerald walk off.

Taking out a compass, Mr. Snyder then replied, "The compass was the one that led us here, so I'm positive that the iron plaque is what it was pointing at. In fact, the compass is now pointing in the direction where the young man had gone! There's no question about it!"

"I see. If you're that sure, Mr. Snyder, then we definitely have to get our hands on that plaque no matter what!" said Zolton as he rested his hands against his back.

It was then when he finally realized that the white-haired man had a flabbergasted expression on his face.

Chapter 1006

“What’s wrong with you, Kaleb?”

“...H-how...?” muttered Kaleb as he looked at both of his hands, evidently still stupefied.

“Explain yourself, Kaleb. What do you mean, ‘how’?”

“I-I used my inner strength earlier when I was grabbing on to that youth’s wrist... However, my inner strength just ceased halfway through! How is that even possible?”

Kaleb remained silent for a while, utterly perplexed as he pondered on the odd feeling he had experienced earlier.

“Are you sure you aren’t just looking too much into it?” asked Zolton as he looked at the white-haired man. Since his father was the one who had invited the mysterious Kaleb over, Zolton respected him quite a lot.

“No... I’m positive that something’s wrong with that young man!” replied Kaleb as he turned to look coldly at the direction in which Gerald had left seconds earlier.

Gerald himself had already made it to a riverbank not too far off. Once he was sure that he was alone, he held on tight to the iron plaque before applying his inner strength on it, causing the plaque to shatter!

As the pieces of iron fell to the ground, an ancient-looking short blade revealed itself as well.

“As expected, there truly was something mysterious inside!” said Gerald to himself as he picked it up.

Observing it, the short blade was extremely sharp and a black glow seemed to emanate from it. What more, several strange, vein-like lines could also be seen engraved all over it. Holding the magic artifact alone made Gerald feel that the blade was spiritual in nature, and in a way, he felt slightly oddly moved by it. It was as though the blade was influencing him.

Turning to look around him, Gerald noticed a large stone around three hundred feet away from where he was standing. With a simple flick of his wrist, he swiftly threw the blade toward that rock!

Making a peculiar whistling sound as it whizzed through the air, debris flew all over the place the moment the short blade collided with the rock! As bits of broken-off stone flew all over the place, the black short blade itself immediately whizzed back into Gerald's hands.

Checking the condition of the blade, Gerald found that there wasn't even a single scratch on it.

Delighted, Gerald then said, "I've truly obtained a great treasure this time!"

Just as he was about to leave, however, Gerald's ears twitched as he heard rustling sounds coming from all around him.

It wasn't long before eight figures revealed themselves as they stepped out of the nearby bushes in unison. Encircling Gerald, all of them bore equally cold gazes as a bald man stepped out from the group of people and growled, "Hey, b*stard! Hand over the iron plaque if you don't want to die! Where is it?"

"As I've already repeated several times, I'm not selling it. Why are you still trying to force me to hand it over? After all, being polite and amiable should be prioritized when doing anything, no?" advised Gerald.

"Cut the cr*p already! Master Snyder's already confirmed that the item is extraordinary! Can't you see that just by owning such a great treasure, you'll be seen as someone guilty, even if you truly are innocent! The foreigner even attempted to pay for the plaque earlier, yet you refused! Humph! Tough luck now!" sneered the bald man.

"You'd better not try anything funny. I don't want to kill any more people during this period of time!" replied Gerald who knew he was now being placed in a difficult position.

Though it had only been a few days since Gerald returned to living a normal life, his temperament had been healing at an accelerated rate. After all, he had finally been given the chance to live the plain and worry-free life that he always yearned for. While he was well aware that all this was only temporary, he cherished the fact that he could still experience such bliss in the first place.

Sadly, the only response from the eight people were bursts of laughter.

"H-has he gone mad? To think that he actually claimed that he didn't want to kill people!"

"Man, at my age, I've seen several people wetting their pants once they knew they were going to die... This guy's on a whole new level! I guess the shock must have been too overwhelming for him to even be able to say such an insane thing!"

“Well, all eight of us may have accomplished several missions together, but I guess there’s always something new to experience!”

As the eight people continued laughing till their sides hurt, Gerald took in a deep breath before pleading, “I wasn’t kidding. Please, I’m being dead serious here. If you leave me be, then all of you will live. Isn’t that ideal?”

“Hahaha! Alright... That’s enough nonsense for one day. Just kill him and retrieve the iron plaque so that we’ll be able to complete our task!” said the bald man as he gestured for his comrades to attack, his expression turning hideous within a split second.

Hearing the order, the seven other men’s eyes grew murderous as well as they immediately began walking toward Gerald. From their eyes alone, Gerald could tell that these people were experienced killers.

Chapter 1007

“This is your own fault for courting death! Prepare to be killed!” roared the bald man as one of his men immediately revealed a short blade and aimed it at Gerald’s chest!

Lunging toward Gerald, it took the assailant a second to realize that though his short blade had struck, spot on, to where he was aiming for, for some ungodly reason, the blade had failed to penetrate Gerald’s chest!

“What?”

It was the only response the stupefied man could say as Gerald angrily replied, “Don’t say I didn’t warn any of you!”

After saying that, Gerald immediately retaliated by slapping the man hard on his cheek! Though it had only been a single slap, the man was sent flying into the air!

The last thing the man could register was his head deforming as blood gushed out his eyes. Upon landing in a puddle of mud a few dozen feet away, the man was already as good as gone.

“...He knows martial arts!” declared the bald man, shocked by the turn of events. However, he instantly recomposed himself as he gestured his large hand before saying, “Don’t hold back! Get rid of him, everyone!”

Obedying his order, the remaining six men rushed toward Gerald at the same time. As was expected, however, there was no way in hell that any of them could even come close to dealing with Gerald.

Before any of them could even inflict any wounds on him, Gerald had already efficiently landed fatal blows on all six of them. In just a few seconds, all six people were already lying dead on the ground, their agonized expressions suggesting that they had died in terrible pain.

“...H-huh?” muttered the bald man to himself as cold sweat began running down his forehead. He realized now that he was the only one left, and though he was terrified, his legs felt like stone. However, the worst had yet to come.

The moment Gerald—whose eyes had turned as red as a demon’s by now—began walking toward him, the bald man became fully petrified in fear.

Now standing before the bald man, Gerald said, “Everything could’ve ended nicely if everyone had just been amiable to each other, no? Why did you have to force me to do all this...?”

“Y-yes, you’re right... I swear on my life that I’ll always be amiable from now on! What happened earlier was just a big misunderstanding!”

“I even begged you to just leave, remember? Yet what did you do? You ordered your subordinates to make a move on me! Isn’t that taking it a bit too far?” replied Gerald as he flicked some grass off the trembling man’s shoulder.

“I-I sincerely apologize! I won’t do anything like this anymore! I won’t-”

Though the bald man had assumed that Gerald would let him off if he pleaded enough, he soon found out that he was dead wrong. Before his sentence could even end, an agonizing scream filled the area as all four of his limbs simultaneously detached from his body.

Once the screaming finally ended, Gerald turned to look at a tree before roaring, “Stop hiding already! Show yourself!”

Immediately after, the slow rustling of grass could be heard as a white-haired old man revealed himself.

It was none other than Kaleb whose face was now completely drained of color.

“To think that you’ve already managed to reach your current state at such a young age... I, Kaleb Merrett, admit that I failed to recognize your great talent earlier. However, do note that I’m not on the same side with those people from earlier, mister.”

Kaleb was now speaking to Gerald so respectfully since he had seen everything that had taken place from the moment Gerald had broken the iron plaque with his bare hands.

While it was true that he had initially stalked Gerald in order to retrieve the iron plaque for Zolton—while simultaneously investigating the reason for Gerald’s great strength—he was left dumbstruck with amazement from the second he saw Gerald destroy that boulder with a single toss of the short blade.

From that point on, he no longer wondered how Gerald had ceased the flow of his inner strength so easily. As it turned out, Gerald’s had trained far more than he could have ever imagined.

That was also the moment when he had started hiding behind the tree, though it had less to do with continuing to stalk Gerald and more so out of fear after witnessing Gerald’s true strength.

His fear and respect for Gerald had only grown upon finding out that the youth had already noticed his presence long ago.

“Are you here for the iron plaque as well?” asked Gerald, coldly.

“I dare not lie to you, so I admit that that truly had been my intention at the start, mister. However, I no longer wish to do so after witnessing your strength.”

Chapter 1008

After saying that, the man who looked to be around ninety actually bowed before Gerald! Though after he witnessed all that, it was really no mystery why he did so.

Gerald himself could estimate that Kaleb’s current strength was similar to his own half a year ago. He could also tell that Kaleb had already achieved his inner strength.

While he was clearly still weaker than Gerald, with Kaleb’s current capabilities, the old man could very well be considered to be one of the champions.

With that, the bloodlust in Gerald’s eyes gradually returned to normal. His imposing demeanor slowly decreased as well, allowing Kaleb to finally heave a long sigh of relief.

"I can tell that you've spent many years training in order to achieve your inner strength. It mustn't have been easy, so I won't kill you. Just go warn the others not to ever try me again!" said Gerald as his temperament fully returned to normal.

"Thank you for sparing my life, and yes, I'll definitely obey your orders, mister! However, there is one thing that I still don't quite understand," replied Kaleb with a spark of both excitement and anticipation in his eyes.

"Go on."

"You see, after devoting my entire life to martial arts, I was finally able to become one of the champions about seven years ago. Even so, I still hope to one day be able to have my name written on the Weston Honor Roll in order to make a name for my family's Ancient Martial Arts. However, as expected, it's extremely difficult to get into the honor roll. I'm curious to know what your ranking in the honor roll is!"

"The Weston Honor Roll? I've never heard about such a thing..." replied Gerald rather placidly.

"Well, as long as one is a champion, he or she will naturally have their name added to the Weston Honor Roll. It's a sort of ranking list that's controlled by the four major secret societies in Weston. Still, even though it's evident that you've trained a great deal, I find it odd that you aren't aware of the honor roll! Could it be that you don't belong to any of the four major societies?" asked Kaleb, astonished.

"There are four major secret societies?"

"Indeed, there are! The families who rule the secret societies are the Yallatons, the Naplocks, the Moldells, and the Fergusons! And here I thought that you were an expert from one of the four major secret societies!"

"I've only heard about the Moldells!" replied Gerald as he raised a brow slightly.

From what Gerald knew, secret societies truly were extremely mysterious, just as their title suggested. They rarely contacted ordinary people due to a general agreement that their bloodlines were different from the regular folk. As a result, they absolutely looked down on the common folk.

Though they hardly ever appeared before others, secret societies existed all over the world and consisted of members from all walks of life. They also tended to have histories spanning over a thousand years.

Gerald's introduction to the Moldell family had allowed him to understand how much power and strength secret societies could hold.

"I see... Regardless, all the people on the honor roll are extremely powerful, and those from the four major secret societies occupy around eighty percent of the members on that list. I personally come from the Merrett family, and though I'd like to continue making a name for my family's Ancient Martial Arts, I'm quite ashamed to admit that it isn't as easy as I thought it'd be. Sadly, there aren't any other existing champions within the Merrett family—to compete for a position within the honor roll—either since my ancestors up till my generation have all passed away," replied Kaleb with a wry smile.

"I see. Regarding the four major societies, how strong is the most powerful person?" asked Gerald.

"I'm not too sure about that... However, according to rumors, there are great masters in the four major societies who are in charge of their respective families. As I said though, what I've heard is simply a rumor since even those from the four major secret societies can't discern the authenticity of that claim at all!"

"Now that you know more about the Weston Honor Roll, I wonder if your name is already on it... Judging from your strength, you should easily be within the top fifty people on the honor roll!" said Kaleb respectfully as he carefully retrieved an old scroll that had been hidden under his sleeve.

Rolling it open for Gerald to see, it seemed that only the top two hundred people would have their names recorded on it.

"I haven't even heard about the Weston Honor Roll before you told me about it... There's no chance that my name would be in there..."

As Gerald turned to skim through the scroll, he pointed where the first place was before asking, "...Hold it, why is the first place blank? It almost seems like someone had the name removed deliberately."

"Ah, well, let's just say that the person in first place is very mysterious. Based on what my father told me, the person who was given first place had been near-invincible, even from a young age. Once he was older, he even dealt with several experts from the four major secret societies on his own! In the end, however, none of them could even come close to defeating him!"

"While many have tried to investigate his background, their attempts always failed since nobody could locate where the person even was! As my father said back then, as long as that person remained alive, nobody could be deemed more powerful than he was. Apparently everyone thought so as well, so it's become a tradition for the first place to always remain blank," explained Kaleb who was clearly very interested in things regarding the honor roll.

“I appreciate the explanation,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Speaking of which, since you spared my life and it’s almost noon, I wonder if I could have the liberty to treat you to a grand feast,” suggested Kaleb who was evidently trying to befriend Gerald.

Since Kaleb knew quite a lot, Gerald felt that he would be able to gather more information on certain things if he allowed the old man to treat him to lunch. As a result, he simply nodded before saying, “Sure. I’ll just call my friend first to update her on the situation. Give me a moment.”

Chapter 1009

Gerald then gave Misty a call to cancel their lunch plan. After all, getting more information from Kaleb was definitely his priority.

“Well? Is he coming along?” asked Lydia nervously the moment Misty hung up the call.

“He’s probably unwilling to join us since you scared him so much...” replied Misty with a slightly disappointed tone.

“That’s great to hear! Anyway, now that that’s out of the way, Jamie said that we’ll be having our lunch at Logan Grand Hotel! That way, we’ll simultaneously be able to have a look around the best hotel in the Logan Province!” cheered Lydia excitedly as Misty returned a bitter nod.

Upon arriving, however, they were immediately stopped by a waiter who was standing by the entrance.

“Apologies, but someone has booked the entire Logan Grand Hotel today. We’re afraid that you’ll have to choose another restaurant to have lunch in. Again, our sincerest apologies,” said the butler.

Hearing that, Lydia—who had earlier been quite eager to dine there—immediately became disappointed. Due to her earlier excitement, she had even prepared to snap photographs of the hotel’s interior through her cell phone! To think that they would end up getting prohibited from entering!

“For someone to book the entire hotel... How many people are attending? Being such a spacious hotel, there will definitely be seats to spare, right?” asked Lydia.

In response, however, the waiter simply shook his head.

Seeing that, she sighed before stomping her foot in anger as she said, "How annoying!"

"Let's just go elsewhere... Lunch is lunch no matter where we eat it," advised Misty.

Agreeing, the group then began leaving the place. However, Lydia herself kept turning back to look at the hotel, unwilling to just accept that someone had booked the entire place.

Soon after, several luxury cars could be seen stopping at the hotel's entrance.

Widening her eyes in shock, Lydia immediately recognized all the rich and prestigious people from the Logan Province as they stepped out of the cars. Making sure that there were no creases on their suits, the group of prestigious people seemed to be waiting for someone.

"H-hey! Look there! Isn't that Mr. Zander Lovewell? The president of the Lovewell family?" whispered Lydia in astonishment.

Following the direction of Lydia's gaze, Misty soon nodded before replying, "Indeed he is. So it was Chairman Lovewell who had booked the entire hotel! That explains everything! Still, Chairman Lovewell never hosted such grand feasts before at the end of the previous treasure exchange events... This means that there's a possibility that an extremely important guest is coming over!"

"An extremely important guest, you say?" said Lydia as she and the other members of their group curiously waited along to see who the distinguished guest could be.

They didn't have to wait long for the door of a car—that was parked in the middle—to be opened. Out stepped an old man before respectfully inviting what seemed to be a youth out of the car.

Chairman Lovewell himself took a step forward and respectfully shook hands with the youth.

Lydia, however, now looked extremely stupefied as she said, "...I-isn't that... Gerald?"

Misty found herself covering her mouth in shock as she replied, "Y-yes he is! He told me he was busy so he couldn't have lunch with us! To think that it was because he was coming over to Logan Grand Hotel!"

“Who cares about that? Look! Why are Chairman Lovewell and the others treating him so respectfully? Isn’t he just a loser?” asked Lydia, feeling as flabbergasted as she was humiliated.

After all, she disliked him a lot. To think that he actually had such powerful connections! For a moment, she even wondered if all this was simply a hallucination. Sadly, the thought only lasted for a short moment as reality dragged her back down to earth.

Now that she knew he was so influential, Lydia bit her lower lip as she regretted treating him like that earlier.

Sure, his attire was certainly still lowly by her standards, but looking at him now, he looked quite handsome, especially when he was standing together with all those rich businessmen.

Gerald himself had now entered the grand hotel with both Zander and Kaleb, completely oblivious to the fact that Misty and her group of friends had been staring at him in astonishment just seconds earlier.

He had thought that he was only going to have a simple feast with Kaleb. To think that Zander had been invited as well.

“Are you truly sure that this person holds great strength...? No matter how much I look at him, he seems to only be a normal youth!” whispered Zander to Kaleb after pulling him to the back for a brief moment.

“And why would I ever lie to you, Zander? Please be careful not to look down upon Mr. Crawford. His strength is beyond our wildest imagination. Do you understand?” replied Kaleb.

“Well, if he’s truly as strong as you claim, then perhaps the Lovewells will finally be able to resolve our current crisis peacefully. Should that happen, then know that our family will honor you with the highest respect possible for the rest of our lives!”

“Humph! If you’re willing to go through so much trouble just to give me respect, then you’d be better off begging for Mr. Crawford’s help. Should he be willing to stand on our side, then all our problems will cease!”

With that said, both of them re-joined Gerald before entering further into the hotel.

Contrary to a simple lunch, a party had been hosted and after a simple exchange of pleasantries, everyone drank three rounds of wine.

Chapter 1010

Eventually, Kaleb tapped on his wine glass, indicating Zander to speak to Gerald.

However, Zander was fairly reluctant to do it. After all, no matter how much he looked at Gerald, the youth still looked like a regular person. Knowing that he had to beg an ordinary person for help definitely caused a fair amount of distress to Zander.

As he pondered on how to proceed, a loud sound was heard as a middle-aged man—who had been sitting beside Zander—slammed his wine glass on the table.

The man then said, “I truly don’t understand what’s the motive behind today’s feast, Chairman Lovewell. Who exactly are you trying to entertain?”

It was clear that the middle-aged man’s question was indirectly referring to Gerald who had been sitting at the seat of honor this entire time.

While the person had already been annoyed by that fact, his annoyance ended up doubling since he knew that Zander had also been trying to please Gerald.

“Humph! The party today is being held since we’ve successfully invited Mr. Crawford over!” replied Kaleb with a faint smile.

“Forgive my insightfulness, but even after living for so long, I’ve never heard of a ‘Mr. Crawford’ before! Humph! Do understand that all of us who are present today have agreed to lend a helping hand to the Lovewells in their battle! We already have you, Master Merrett, the expert among experts! As if that wasn’t enough, I, Theo Zabinski, am also part of this! Because of that, I really cannot fathom why the Lovewells invited this youth here in the first place!” sneered Theo.

“I implore you not to be so presumptuous, Theo!” scowled Kaleb who was now slightly nervous, knowing that Gerald had heard all that.

While Zander said nothing, it was evident that he slightly agreed with Theo’s statement as well.

After hearing all that, Gerald himself was now looking at Kaleb. As was expected, there really was no such thing as a free lunch.

Noticing this, Kaleb simply lowered his head in an apologetic manner before saying, “...So, the situation is like this, Mister... See, I met up with Zander a few years ago, and back then, I promised him that I’d lend the Lovewells a hand if they were ever in danger. In fact, the only reason I’m here now is because I wish to fulfill that promise! Sadly I have to admit that the enemies are far too strong for me. I’m afraid that with our current power, we won’t even stand a fighting chance! To put bluntly, would you be willing to aid us?”

After hearing Kaleb's direct request, Gerald simply replied with a rather cold tone, "I apologize, but I do not wish to meddle in your dispute."

Hearing that, Zander found himself frowning as he lowered his wine glass.

Theo, on the other hand, said, "While you say that you don't wish to meddle, the truth is that you're just not daring enough to help us, right? Come on, show us what tricks and skills you have up your sleeve! Better yet, fight me right now so that Chairman Lovewell will get to see what actual skills you have as well!"

"Not interested in a fight either," replied Gerald rather bluntly.

By then, Zander had already crossed his legs. To think that he had even considered the fact that Gerald could actually be some powerful expert earlier!

"You know, I think that it's meaningless for me to continue having my meal here, Master Merette. I'll be taking my leave now. Thank you for treating me out for lunch," said Gerald as he briefly scanned through the room before smiling at Kaleb.

"Hold on for a moment, mister!" replied Kaleb as he immediately held on to Gerald who had just gotten off his seat.

"I apologize for not telling you about all this beforehand... In order to properly express my apology, I've ordered someone to prepare something that you need. Since you mentioned earlier that you had come all the way here just to look for the holy fox..."

Before continuing on with his sentence, Kaleb clapped his hands, cueing a subordinate to enter the room with a map in hand.

"This here, is the map of the paths in Everdare Forest. Since ancient times, people have rarely ever been able to make it through this primeval forest. However, the ancestors of the Merrett family once trained in that forest. To ease their training, they made a map of the area. Though it may not help tremendously, I believe that it may still come in handy in your search for the holy fox. Do accept it, mister..."

"...Kaleb, isn't that the map your family used to look for-"

Though the now wide-eyed Zander had attempted to ask something, Kaleb simply raised a hand, interrupting him. It was evident that Kaleb didn't want Zander to continue asking his question.

With that, Kaleb then turned to look at Gerald again before repeating, "Please accept it, mister!"

Since he was being offered the map, Gerald simply walked over to take it. After all, he wasn't about to turn down an item that was going to save him half the trouble once he actually traversed through the forest.

Before he was even able to get his hands on it, however, Theo immediately shouted, "Give that to me!"

He then stretched his hand out—from his seat—and snatched the map from the subordinate before turning to look at Gerald and saying, "So, you want this map, don't you, Mr. Crawford? It's mine now! If you want it, come snatch it back from me!"

Watching as Theo sneered, Gerald simply waved a hand at him before returning to his seat.

"...What do you mean by that?" asked Theo coldly.

Giving no reply, Gerald simply used his fork to casually lift a vegetable leaf off his plate. Holding onto the leaf, Gerald looked at it for a while before flicking his wrist extremely quickly.

As a result, the vegetable leaf flew directly toward the sturdy-looking wooden door of the private room...

And sent the entire door crumbling down as soon as the leaf hit it!

Chapter 1011

"...What?"

Theo was so shocked by what he had just witnessed that that was the only thing he was able to mutter as he immediately stood up.

Everyone else was equally as shocked, especially the poor waiter who had been standing right behind the door—ready to serve more dishes—when all that happened.

Zander himself had both his feet on the floor again at this point. While he had initially assured himself earlier that Gerald was definitely just an ordinary young man without any actual capabilities, he now knew how wrong he was.

To think that he would actually be able to smash a wooden door to pieces with just a single vegetable leaf! Just how much training did he have to go through to get that strong?!

The atmosphere in the room was getting increasingly stressful by the second.

Clearly feeling the pressure, Theo—who was currently drenched in cold sweat—mumbled to himself, “To think that one could actually inflict pain upon others simply by using a leaf!”

To attempt to ease the overwhelming awkwardness of the situation, one of the people from the Lovewell family—who had been standing at the side this entire time—smiled and asked, “M-master Zabinski, I couldn’t quite catch that... Could you repeat what you said...?”

Feeling more and more cold sweat dripping down his chin, the completely dazed Theo simply repeated, “I said, to think that one could actually inflict pain upon others simply by using a leaf!”

Now finally feeling the adrenaline of fear, Theo then added, “H-how eye-opening! To think that such a skill could even exist on this planet!”

Theo was now looking at Gerald in a completely different light. Realizing that the map was still with him, he immediately walked over to face Gerald and respectfully held out the item before saying, “M-Mr. Crawford! I apologize for not being an insightful person! Please have your map back!”

Seeing that, Zander and his family members exchanged glances with each other. In the end, all of them took turns standing up.

“Please forgive me for my earlier imprudence, Mr. Crawford. For Kaleb’s sake, please consider helping the Lovewell family to rid us of our current crisis,” said Zander before bowing deeply before Gerald.

Putting the map away, Gerald casually replied, “What’s the big issue? Can’t Master Merrett resolve it?”

Gerald was only prompted to ask now since he had been given the map which, in all honesty, was something useful to him. He wasn’t really interested in meddling in the Lovewell family’s affairs just for Kaleb’s sake either. He just didn’t want to feel like he owed any of them any favors.

“Well, the thing is...”

With that, Zander then began detailing everything regarding the incident.

As it turned out, the Lovewells had made themselves an enemy a while back. The enemy in question left them alone for a period of time, seemingly to return to his homeland.

However, upon his return, the Lovewells found out that even their most powerful bodyguards weren't able to take down the enemy. Though they had no idea how he had become so powerful during his absence, the more pressing issue was the fact that he had declared to kill a descendant of the Lovewell family every ten days until none of them were left.

Up till this point, two descendants of the Lovewells had already been both harmed and eventually killed despite Zander's orders that prohibited any of the younger generations from ever leaving their homes.

For now, the remaining younger generations of the Lovewell family remained hiding in their homes.

The enemy himself went by the name of Damian Wake, and his goal was simple. The man simply wanted the Lovewells to be completely wiped off the face of the planet, but only after he had driven them insane in fear.

Knowing that, the only thing Zander could do was hire a large group of experts to protect his family. It was also the reason why they had hosted the treasure exchange event a month earlier this year.

Their plan was to attract large groups of rich and powerful people to the event. The greater the number of participants, the greater their strength. Besides, strength in numbers would also encourage the Lovewells to remain vigilant and not just give in.

Hearing that, Gerald now understood why Haven and her siblings had to sneak out just to have some fun.

“While Damian was once one of the Logan Province's rich heirs, both he and his father were equally as wicked. Since they constantly behaved so viciously, all the rich businessmen in the Logan Province boycotted them back then, ultimately resulting in their family falling apart. However, being the extremely petty-minded person he is, we're all aware that Damian won't stop until he takes his revenge on all of the families that had boycotted them so many years ago, and I do mean all of them. Once his revenge on the Lovewell family has been sated, he'll definitely start going after the other families as well!” said Kaleb.

“Speaking of which, we’ve previously made an appointment with him. Essentially, it’s a challenge to a duel due tomorrow night... It's rather humiliating to admit it, but he’s so strong that I don’t think I’ll even be a match against him!” added the white-haired man as he shook his head with a sigh.

Looking at Gerald, Zander then respectfully said, “It would truly be a blessing to us should you decide to lend us a hand, Mr. Crawford...”

Since Gerald didn’t really have much of a good impression on Zander, he turned to face Kaleb before replying, “...Sure. I’ll go over to have a look.”

“How wonderful to hear!”

Chapter 1012

Once their meal was over, Gerald left the hotel together with Zander and the others. Upon arriving at the hotel’s entrance, they were promptly greeted by a butler who immediately said, “Some people from the Long family in Yanken wish to pay you a visit, Chairman Lovewell!”

“The Longs? Humph! For what reason have they come over to visit me? Who did they send over to be their representative?” replied Zander who was clearly much more confident now that Gerald had agreed to help him.

“They sent the second lady of the Long family! She’s currently waiting to meet you and she even brought along several great gifts to celebrate the success of the treasure exchange event!” explained the butler.

Upon hearing that, Gerald lifted his head slightly.

The second lady of the Long family? Could it really be...?

“Does the Long family’s representative bear the surname of Yorke, by any chance?” asked Gerald.

In response, the butler immediately smiled before saying, “She does, indeed!”

So it really was Xavia!

For some reason, Gerald felt rather peculiar the moment he heard that Xavia was here. After all, he hadn’t met her for over a year now and he had completely forgotten about her until today.

With the passing of time, it was natural for incidents of the past to slowly be forgotten. However, there was one incident that Gerald knew he wouldn't ever be able to forget.

That incident being the time when he was being pursued by both the Longs and the Moldells almost an entire year ago. While both families had desperately tried to kill him back then, Xavia had let him off, essentially saving his life.

'It's been over a year now... I wonder how she's doing now... Regardless, she deserves to live a peaceful life... In other words, it's better if we don't meet at all,' Gerald thought to himself before laughing slightly bitterly.

"Mr. Crawford...? Mr. Crawford..." whispered Zander beside him.

"...Hmm?" replied Gerald as he snapped out of his daze.

"Haha! I was just wondering where you're currently staying. If it's convenient for you, why not move into the Lovewell family's manor for now? I'll tell the others to arrange the best room for you if you agree," suggested Zander.

"Sounds good," replied Gerald with a nod.

With things decided just like that, all of them then returned to the Lovewell family manor.

Upon arriving there, Zander and Gerald parted ways. While Gerald headed for his new room, Zander himself headed to the reception area of his home to meet up with Xavia.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Yorke. I've seen the list of gifts you presented to us, and I must say that all of them are extremely expensive and valuable! Our family would feel bad for accepting all of them!" said Zander cordially.

"You're being way too modest, Chairman Lovewell! You've made some time to meet me despite your packed schedule! That alone is already a blessing to the Long family!" replied Xavia.

Hearing that, Zander smiled as he looked at Xavia. Since the Longs were allowing such a young lady to deal with such important things, Zander was sure that she had all sorts of tricks and skills up her sleeves.

Even though he knew that, the gracefulness that she expressed through the prudent way she spoke—as they exchanged pleasantries—overshadowed any wariness that Zander initially had. He was well aware of it too, and that made him respect Xavia even more.

“Since you’re a busy man, Chairman Lovewell, I won’t beat around the bush. I’ve come here today in wonder if you’ve read the cooperation proposal that the Long family drafted. If possible, the Longs from Yanken truly wish to have a strong cooperation with the Lovewells. If you agree, then the Longs will instantly provide the Lovewell family with a project worth a billion and five hundred million dollars. Consider it our way of expressing our sincerity.

Upon hearing that, Zander felt his eyelids twitch slightly. Though he was clearly moved, he kept his cool. After all, he was in no hurry to reveal what he was truly feeling.

“We appreciate your trust in us. Regardless, putting talk about cooperation aside for the moment, I heard from your people that you seem to have some cousins here in the Logan Province. I’m not sure if you’ve already heard from them about how we do things here in the Logan Province...”

The good relationship between the Longs and Moldells was no secret among those working in the business field. However, the same couldn’t be said about the relationship between the Moldells and Lovewells.

Due to that, it was natural for Zander to want to know more details about the affair since a Long representative was now at his door.

“You’re quite well informed, Chairman Lovewell. I do indeed have a few cousins and relatives living here. It’s their hometown, after all. However, we haven’t been in touch with each other for many, many years. As a result, you may as well just treat it as if it’s my first time here in the Logan Province. In other words, I’m afraid I’m not quite familiar with the procedures here that you mentioned.”

“Regardless, you can be assured of one thing. Once you gain the project, the Lovewells will definitely earn money. I feel that the bond between the Longs and the Lovewells will simultaneously also be strengthened, don’t you think?” replied Xavia with a smile.

In response, Zander simply nodded.

At that moment, the butler entered the reception area and said, “Everything has been appropriately arranged for Mr. Crawford, Chairman Lovewell. May I know if there’s anything else that you wish for me to do?”

“Nothing for the moment. Just be sure to tell the others to serve Mr. Crawford well. None of them are to slack off!”

Chapter 1013

“Ah, so it turns out that you have a rather distinguished guest here today! I apologize for taking quite a bit of your time... However, I do wonder who the guest could be for you to give him such high respect, Chairman Lovewell. After all, you’re an extremely powerful and influential person yourself!” said Xavia as she smiled while straightening her hair.

“Haha! Due to the undergoing treasure exchange event, there are currently plenty of other distinguished people in the Logan Province! However, the distinguished guest I have with me now is a little different from the others... Regardless, why don’t we discuss other things for the moment? Worry not, for I’ll definitely find the time to carefully read through your cooperation proposal. Actually, since the event won’t end until a few more days, why don’t you stay here for the meantime, Miss Yorke? Once the treasure exchange event is over, we’ll officially negotiate how things will go. What do you think?”

“It would be an honor, Chairman Lovewell,” replied Xavia with a smile.

The rest of the day was rather uneventful, and the next day soon came.

To start her day off, Xavia brought her subordinates along with her as she strolled around Lovewell Manor. The manor itself was huge and several villas and VIP areas existed within it.

Upon arriving at one of the VIP areas, however, Xavia’s walk was halted by a few guards who said, “Apologies, Miss Yorke, but no one is allowed to enter this area aside from Chairman Lovewell.”

“No, it was rude of me to attempt to enter this area in the first place. Still, I wonder how distinguished the guest staying here truly is... I happen to recall hearing about a ‘Mr. Crawford’ who seemed rather important to Chairman Lovewell... Could Mr. Crawford currently be residing within that room...?” asked Xavia as she flashed them a smile.

However, none of the bodyguards responded to her question.

Due to that, Xavia found herself frowning slightly as she then walked away.

“Please do not be saddened, miss. The Lovewells are known to have a lot of secrets,” consoled one of her subordinates as they walked on.

“Well, I’m just worried that that Mr. Crawford ends up being our competitor. Should that truly be the case, then won’t everything that the Long family has done so far come to no avail? That Zander truly is a cunning and secretive man... Even after

talking to him for so long yesterday, I still can't make heads or tails of what he truly thinks! How could he have remained so calm when we're presenting him with a contract worth a billion and five hundred million dollars?" replied Xavia as she crossed her arms.

"Well, for now, let's just wait until the event is over. We'll see what he'll say about it then. Speaking of the event, why don't you head there and have a look around as well? This could be a chance for you to get in contact with businessmen from various other places. Should that happen, then you'll certainly end up helping the Long family by a great deal!"

"While that may be true, I'm honestly not all that interested in that event."

"Where do you propose we should go then?"

"Humph! Well, since Zander did mention my cousins and relatives yesterday, I may as well use the opportunity to pay them a visit. After all, it's been a good... seven? Or maybe even eight years since I've last met them!" replied Xavia, a slight glint of contempt in her eyes as she said that.

Moments after she said that, a group of foreigners passed by her and her guards.

As Xavia nodded at them with a smile, she failed to notice the lascivious gaze of the other group's leader when he looked at her.

It was a little later when the sound of a doorbell ringing could be heard within a small neighborhood.

As soon as the door opened, a woman who looked to be around forty instantly forced on a smile when she realized who had come to visit.

"Oh my, and here I was wondering who was at the door! So it's you, Xavia! It's been what? Eight years since we've last met? You're all grown up now! Regardless, what business brings you to my door? We ceased contact years ago, didn't we?" said the woman, her words filled with contempt as she blocked the door, preventing Xavia from entering.

Xavia herself could hear quite a bit of noise coming from inside. It was evident that the woman currently had several guests.

"Dear aunt, it's exactly because it's been so long that I came over to visit. Is it wrong for me to miss you?" replied Xavia with a cold smile as she gently pushed her aunt aside and invited herself in.

“...H-hey! You can’t just do that!” scowled her aunt furiously

Just as Xavia had guessed, there truly were several guests inside. With both men and women of all ages, all of them were still talking and laughing with each other—while sitting on couches—until they finally realized that Xavia was present.

From that moment onward, the atmosphere instantly turned tense.

“...Well now, if it isn’t Xavia! And here I was wondering who had come over! What a rare guest! What a fine woman you’ve grown into!”

Chapter 1014

The simultaneously surprised and delighted voice had come from a middle-aged man who stood up as soon as he saw her.

“It’s truly been a while, uncle!” replied Xavia with a slight nod.

“Humph! It’s just as they say. When you’re poor, nobody looks for you even if you’re living in a bustling city! When you get rich, however, even the most distant of relatives will come running to meet you, even if you’re living in the middle of a forest! I do wonder if that saying applies to a certain relative of mine who just so happened to hear that my family’s Zion just got promoted!” sneered a woman—seated on one of the couches—before flashing a cold smile as she continued peeling an orange.

Hearing that, several of the other young men and women in the room took turns staring at Xavia contemptuously.

“It’s been so long yet your way of talking never changes, does it, aunt? Now that I think about it, this was also the place where you mocked and embarrassed my mother so much back then, right?” replied Xavia with a smile.

Clearing his throat, the eldest uncle then asked in a concerned tone, “Let’s not talk about the past right now... Regardless, I remember your father falling sick that year... We haven’t contacted each other in so long... How is he doing now?”

“He was cured ages ago,” replied Xavia as she recalled the incident that had taken place around eight years ago.

Back then, Xavia’s father had fallen sick. Due to being cheated of his money in the years prior, he didn’t have the money to cure his illness. As a result, Xavia and her mother had gone to the Logan Province in an attempt to borrow some money from her uncle.

However, no matter how much her mother begged, none of them extended a helping hand.

As if that wasn't enough, in the end, her eldest aunt kicked both her and her mother out of their home! It was akin to them chasing away a few stray dogs. Her aunt even went so far as to throw out all the local mountain products which Xavia's mother had so carefully picked.

Upon seeing all her mother's hard efforts scattered on the ground, Xavia had kept that painful memory within her heart till this very day.

In fact, the pain from that incident had been her motivation to try her best at studying. Her goal was to earn her respect so that she wouldn't ever be looked down upon again. Due to that, she eventually managed to get admitted into Mayberry University!

After getting in, however, she soon realized that no matter how hard she worked, she could never truly rid herself of her poverty.

Even after finding a boyfriend whom she truly adored, both of them ended up being looked down upon by everyone else.

She just couldn't endure it anymore. She wanted to be prestigious, to be a person with high status.

Today, Xavia finally had all that, and she had come here to finally achieve a wish of hers which she had kept in her heart this entire time.

"Humph! Then why have you returned? If it's your mother's turn to be sick now, then I'll save us all the hassle, right this instant. We don't have any money!" scoffed Xavia's eldest aunt as she haughtily walked over to her.

"If you haven't noticed, she's wearing some pretty nice clothes now, mom! I'm assuming she's here to show off! By the looks of things, she may have found herself a rich husband!" said another woman in the room.

Ignoring both their statements, Xavia then continued, "Speaking of which, I remember that it was Second aunt who had thrown that ten-dollar note at my mother while all of you were chasing us out. You called it a 'compensation' for the local mountain products, if I recall correctly. Do you remember any of that, Second aunt?"

Taking in a deep breath, her second aunt then replied, "So what if I did? Are you here to take revenge on us?"

As her second aunt then stood up in anger, Xavia simply said, “Oh no, I would never! I honestly came here today to return the ten dollars to you! You know, I swore to myself back then that I’d repay the money by a hundred- no, by ten thousand times the amount one day!”

“Well today is that day! Do look out the window, Second and First aunt. The money I intend to return to you is all downstairs,” added Xavia as she pointed toward the window.

Upon hearing that, both her aunts were instantly stunned. Looking out the window, both of them covered their mouths in shock as soon as they peered down.

“My god!”

Their eyes were practically bulging out from their sockets as they stared at all the luxury cars that had been parked outside. That, however, wasn’t what shocked them most.

No, they were flabbergasted by the sight of several extremely full bags that had been placed in front of the cars. Even from afar, they could see the tips of green dollar bills peeking out of each bag.

It was nothing short of dazzling, and Xavia’s second aunt ended up wobbling over to the couch before sitting down feebly with a loud gulp.

All of a sudden, the entrance door was opened and Xavia’s team of black-suited bodyguards swiftly entered the house.

“Listen closely now. While the money downstairs is all yours, you won’t receive it until you’re able to tell my men the correct amount. Also, you aren’t allowed to eat or drink until you get the exact amount right. Don’t try anything funny either since my men will be keeping a close eye on you,” said Xavia coldly as she glared at her second aunt whose legs had now gone weak.

Nobody in that house even dared to even say another word after seeing all that.

Chapter 1015

“...X-Xavia... W-we were wrong to treat you that way back then! Please, there’s just so much money here! It would be near impossible for us to get the exact amount down!” stuttered her second aunt who was no fool.

Knowing full well that Xavia was finally back for her revenge, she begged to be released from her imminent torture.

“Count it. Don’t make me repeat it a third time!” sneered Xavia as her second aunt instantly began crying out of fear.

Not knowing what else to do, she squatted down and began counting the dollar bills, one by one.

“Remember, I want the exact amount! No more and no less! Again, the money is yours once you get the final amount right. Get the amount wrong, however, then you can just keep on counting forever!” added Xavia with a smile before walking over to the side and drinking a glass of water that her subordinate had gotten for her.

At the same time, a youth wearing a cap frowned under his mask as he continued observing Xavia’s actions from a far corner.

He had just gotten into earshot, yet to think that the first thing he would hear was Xavia’s cruel order. For her to even think up of such a sadistic punishment, the youth wondered to himself how distorted her mind already was.

“How on earth did you end up like this...” muttered the youth to himself.

Of course, the youth in question was Gerald.

He had been stalking Xavia for a while now with two reasons in mind. Firstly, he wanted to see if the Longs were currently up to anything.

As for his second reason, Gerald had initially wanted to find out whether Xavia had any unfulfilled wishes. She had, after all, saved him back then. Before witnessing what had just taken place, Gerald had planned to repay that huge favor by granting a wish of hers.

To his disappointment, here she was using her money to take revenge on others again!

“Humph! Since she can have anything she wants now, she probably doesn’t even have any wishes that she can’t grant herself! Regardless, that won’t last for long once I’m done with the Long family. I’ll have my revenge on them sooner or later, so you best enjoy your power while you still can!” said Gerald as he shook his head.

Taking one final glance at her, he was just about to leave when he suddenly heard her say, “You know my family placed all their hope on you back then. Do you remember when my dad prepared the money for you back when you first came to the Logan Province? Despite that, you actually had the nerve to chase me and my mom away like we were stray dogs when we needed

your help! You didn't even allow us to enter the house! So how am I the cruel one now? After all, I'm only giving you this much money since you love it so much!"

As Xavia's eldest uncle and the others present in the room began begging her for mercy again, Gerald himself was left stunned.

So that was why she was exacting her revenge... To think that Xavia had endured through so much humiliation and pain as a child...

"You there, stay here and keep an eye on them! Don't let them leave until they give you the exact amount!" growled Xavia as she tossed the glass she had been holding to the floor, sending it shattering as the fuming woman left the house.

Xavia ended up standing alone by a riverbank, hoping to get some peace of mind.

Gerald himself had followed her there, and he was currently hiding behind a tree. Just as he was about to leave again, however, he suddenly caught a glimpse of a few tall, sunglasses-wearing foreigners walking toward Xavia.

"Greetings, Miss Yorke!" said one of the foreigners as he bowed slightly.

"What is it?" replied Xavia rather coldly since she was still in an extremely bad mood.

"Well, we couldn't help but catch a glimpse of what you had earlier done to those people in that house! Since they're obviously not nice people, we don't mind offering you our services to get rid of them for good!" added another foreigner.

"And who was it that said that I wanted to get rid of them? There's no need to meddle in my business. Regardless, who are all of you, and what do you want from me?" asked Xavia with a slight frown.

"We're here because our master deeply admires you, Miss Yorke! He's told us to personally invite you out to lunch"

"I appreciate it, but I'm not in the mood!" replied Xavia as she attempted to leave and reunite with her bodyguards.

After taking just a few steps, however, the foreigners stood in front of her, preventing Xavia from leaving.

“Miss Yorke, please don’t put us in a difficult position... If you don’t attend, our master will punish us terribly...”

“I beg your pardon? Are you going to force me to join him for lunch against my will?”

“We certainly don’t hope that it’ll come to that. To avoid such a scenario, please just cooperate with us...” said the same subordinate as the group of foreigners slowly began inching closer to her.

“Hold it! Don’t you know who I am? I’m one of the Longs from Yanken! You’re currently in Weston territory now, so you’d better not act rashly!” growled Xavia as she took a few steps back.

As she quickly fished her cell phone out to make a call, what seemed to be the leader of the group replied, “I hope you don’t blame us for being imprudent since you’re so adamant on making it difficult for us... It’s not all that bad, you know? After all, who’s to say that you won’t end up cooperating with my master in the future? Regardless, hurry up and bring her along!”

Waving his hand after his order, the other subordinates immediately grabbed on to Xavia’s arms.

Chapter 1016

Struggling with all she could, Xavia managed to momentarily break free. Immediately after, she pulled out a dagger from seemingly nowhere!

“Don’t move a step closer! My men are nearby! The way you said it, I’m assuming that you people have been following me for some time now!” warned Xavia as she waved the dagger around.

“Please trust us, Miss Xavia. Our boss is truly interested in working with you! Besides, you’ll also be getting something else in return!” said the foreigner maliciously as he casually began walking toward her.

As Xavia’s panic peaked, she heard a whisper of sorts saying, “Toss the dagger!”

Though nobody else seemed to have heard it, Xavia felt compelled to obey the order. As a result, she immediately tossed the dagger toward the foreigner!

The foreigner himself had been laughing while shaking his head before she tossed it. By the time the dagger left her hand, he was halfway through saying, “Miss Xavia, stop swinging that thing around! That’s rather rude of you, you kno-”

His sentence was cut short when the dagger—that he was sure he could easily avoid given how far it still was from him as he was talking—suddenly accelerated and punctured through the side of his stomach!

It was such a clean puncture that the dagger continued moving until it collided with a tree!

Grunting loudly as he held back from releasing a scream, the foreigner's eyes went cold as his side continued bleeding profusely.

As he knelt on the ground, pressing against his freshly inflicted wound, the other foreigners had finally caught on to what they had just witnessed. As a result, they were all now feeling increasingly nervous.

"R-retreat! Retreat immediately!" shouted their leader as his subordinates carried him away in a hurry.

Xavia herself was now panting heavily. Both frightened and confused, her eyes were glued onto the dagger she had just thrown.

"...Who... Who are you? I know someone helped me! Thank you for saving me!" shouted Xavia respectfully. She wasn't able to recognize the voice from earlier since Gerald had used his voice-changing device.

However, even after scanning through the area, she couldn't seem to find traces of anyone even helping her.

"...I'm sure someone helped me... But who could it have been...?" muttered Xavia to herself, curious.

She was so sure that someone had saved her since, for one, nobody else seemed to have been able to hear the voice. Secondly, there was no way in hell that she could have managed to toss the dagger that powerfully. Someone else had definitely been pulling the strings in secret.

But who could it have been? If it was someone from the Long family, then they had no reason not to reveal themselves...

As she pondered on, one of her bodyguards suddenly came running over before saying, "Here you are, miss! Master called just now and asked us whether there was any progress on our cooperation with the Lovewells..."

"I see. Let's head back first!" replied Xavia as she nodded her head somewhat unwillingly.

Soon after, evening came and by then, cars belonging to all the Lovewell family's family members could be seen parked outside the Lovewell Manor.

As Zander, Theo, and Kaleb waited respectfully within the manor, a girl—who had been staring at the three men from a distance—stopped a servant who was walking past her before asking, “What’s the big occasion? Did my father do anything?”

“I’m not too sure about what’s going on either, miss! All I know is that the master is waiting for some people!”

“Odd... He’s been hiding quite a bit from us recently... How mysterious!”

The girl in question was none other than Haven Lovewell, and just as she was about to ask something else, a troop of her family’s bodyguards made their appearance and began walking out the front door.

Since she was used to seeing scenes like these, she didn’t say anything about it. Upon closer inspection, however, she noticed that one of the people within that group wasn’t wearing the same clothes as the other bodyguards.

Squinting her eyes to get a better look, they immediately widened seconds later as she muttered, “...Huh? G-Gerald?”

Chapter 1017

Haven was utterly shocked to see him there. She naturally remembered him since he had been quite an interesting guy when they first met on the train.

In her disbelief, she opened the main door in her attempt to confirm whether she had really seen him. However, she could only catch a glimpse of ‘Gerald’s’ back as he stepped into a car before her father closed the door behind him.

“Gerald!” shouted Haven as the cars swiftly drove off, unable to hear her cries.

Scratching the back of her head, she wondered if it really had just been her imagination. After all, why would he be in her house? What more, her father certainly wouldn’t personally open a car door for someone like him!

“Is something wrong, Haven?” asked Xareni as she and Quentin walked over to her.

“You’ll never guess who I saw, sis!”

“Who?”

“I saw Gerald!”

“And who is this, Gerald person?” asked Xareni with a slight frown.

“Have you already forgotten? He’s the guy we met inside the train!”

“That disgusting guy? You’re still talking to him? Why’s he even here?” scorned Quintin.

“You probably saw wrong, Haven... After all, if even Quintin isn’t aware of this, then Gerald couldn’t have possibly entered our home all willy-nilly!” added Xareni as she shook her head.

Despite Xareni constantly advising Haven to be more aware of her identity, the girl simply never listened. Rather than getting along more with other rich heirs like the Warners and Scotts, Haven simply preferred talking to ordinary people.

“It’s fine if neither of you choose not to believe me... However, I know for a fact that father was holding the door for him, or at least someone that looked like him! I just have to know the truth! I’m going after them now to ask father how he got acquainted with Gerald!” declared Haven rather excitedly as she quickly ran off.

“Come back right this instant, Haven! We’re still undergoing a sensitive period!” shouted Xareni as she anxiously stomped her foot in place.

“...Huh? What sensitive period?”

“I asked father why we had to stay indoors all the time just now and he finally gave me the truth. It’s a long story but for now, just know that we can’t let Haven run off alone! We have to get her back before she runs into danger!” replied Xareni as she and Quentin immediately began chasing after Haven.

Meanwhile, darkness was slowly encroaching across the sky as night approached.

A group of people was standing before a single man in front of Benril Lake which was located in the outskirts of the Logan Province.

“You’re a true Lovewell, Zander! To think that you actually gathered a group of people to take me down! I’m the one and only Damian Wake! You’re ridiculous for thinking you even stand a chance!” said the lone man—standing opposite of Zander’s group—who was currently supporting the weight of his entire body with only a single hand.

Damian looked to be in his mid-thirties and his eyes reflected his immense bloodlust. A clear scar could also be seen on his unshaven face, and he looked generally unwelcoming as a person.

“I’ll make sure you’ll pay dearly for killing the two children of our family within the past month, Damian! You know very well why your family deserved to be banished! Don’t you remember all the dirty deeds all of you have done?” shouted Zander.

“Shut up! I don’t care about what you did and I don’t care who you brought along to fight me either! All I know is that everyone here except for you, Zander, will die by my hands today! Don’t worry, you’ll eventually get to die too once I make you witness the death of all the other Lovewell children!”

“You ignorant prick! Let’s see how you’ll even kill all of us!” roared Theo as he immediately charged at the arrogant man.

While Theo was both strong and fierce, he was nowhere near Damian’s level of skill.

Eventually, Damian got bored of blocking Theo’s attacks and launched a sudden punch at him! Caught off guard, Theo knew he was too late to block or avoid the incoming attack.

Before the hit could land, however, Theo heard someone shout, “Allow me to assist!”

Chapter 1018

The voice belonged to Kaleb and the old man managed to block Damian’s critical blow just in time.

“Would you look at that! He must’ve endlessly trained himself to launch such a perfected punch!” said Gerald as he continued observing the fight from the side-lines.

Gerald had arrived at that conclusion since Damian’s skills weren’t all that different from all the other people he had previously killed. However, Damian was different from them since his execution of each of those skills was extremely powerful!

If Gerald had to guess, Damian had probably become a champion much earlier than Kaleb. After all, a champion's inner strength naturally grew stronger the longer they had that title. In a way, it was just like wine. The longer it was left underground, the more exquisite the taste.

While both Kalen and Damian were akin to exquisite wine, Gerald knew that Kaleb wouldn't be able to take Damian down.

After all, Gerald's keen eyes had registered that though Kaleb was definitely more experienced in fighting, Damian's inner strength was much greater than the old man's.

By the time fifty rounds of non-stop battling had taken place, Kaleb was already stumbling slightly as he held a hand against his injured chest. He knew he wasn't going to be able to take much more.

Meanwhile, Haven herself had been hiding within the woods near Benril Lake as she continued watching the fight that had been taking place for quite a while now.

She soon got the shock of her life when she felt a hand being placed on her shoulder, followed by a familiar voice saying, "So here you are, Haven! What are you doing here?"

Covering her mouth as she turned around to see who had said that, she immediately replied, "...Sis? Quintin? What are both of you doing here?"

"We came over because we were worried about you! What are you even looking at...?" asked Xareni.

"Shh! Quieter! Look there! While I can't really see too clearly from here, isn't that dad and Gerald over there?" whispered Haven excitedly.

"Would you just quit it already with that Gerald person? Can't you see that a fight's going on now? Listen, dad told me earlier that our family has an enemy that goes by the name of Damian Wake. Since dad is here, one of the two fighting men must be Damian! Thank god we caught up to you in time! Otherwise, you could've ruined all his plans!" replied Xareni, shocked to find out that they were currently standing so close to their family's enemy.

Upon hearing that, all three of them exchanged glances before continuing to witness the fight. They didn't dare to leave for fear that they may get caught in the process, consequently ruining their father's plans.

“Master Theo doesn’t look like he can take much more, Mr. Crawford! You have to help him!” said Zander as he pointed at Damian.

Gerald simply took in a deep breath before resting his arms against his back.

“...M-Mr. Crawford? You can’t possibly be thinking about retreating now, right...? I’m betting my entire family’s life here tonight!” stuttered Zander who was getting increasingly nervous after noticing that Gerald didn’t look like he was going to make a move any time soon.

“C-could there be any other conditions that we could fulfill for you? Whatever they are, I’ll definitely do my best to get them done!” begged Zander.

“...I heard that the Lovewell ancestors used to be caretakers for beasts... Your family owns a manuscript called the Book of Beasts, correct?” asked Gerald.

Zander was momentarily stunned the second he heard that.

After looking briefly at Kaleb’s condition, Zander smiled at Gerald before saying, “Mr. Crawford, though my ancestors may have used that skill, it has unfortunately been lost to time. I mean just look at us, we clearly aren’t utilizing that skill anymore!”

Not hearing what he wanted to, Gerald simply slipped his hands into his pocket, refusing to move an inch.

Watching as Kaleb got thrown to the ground, Zander’s nervousness was now peaking.

Zander had initially thought that Gerald could easily be bought over by money and the Lovewell’s high status. In fact, he had even assumed that Gerald would continue helping his family in the future since Kaleb was their ally.

Now, however, he realized just how wrong he had been.

To think that Gerald had only been motivated to help them since he had something that he wanted from their family! Now that he thought about it, Gerald must’ve only stayed for so long since Kaleb had told him about the Lovewell’s ancestral history sometime before!

Regardless, it was true that the Book of Beasts was in his family’s hands.

By using it, the ancestors of the Lovewell family could understand the language of beasts! In fact, that was how the Lovewells started their family business. While the manuscript was passed down generation after generation, in the late nineties, the Lovewells finally abandoned the skill. After all, being able to understand beasts wasn't exactly as useful to them as it was for their ancestors. Regardless, the Book of Beasts was still a treasure from their ancestors so the Lovewells had always kept it safe with them.

It currently resided in the Lovewell Manor and though it wasn't really in use, Zander was well aware of how precious the ancient manuscript was. He also now knew that Gerald had been waiting patiently this entire time to force him to hand the book over.

"...Fine! I'll give you the book as a token of appreciation if you save my family!"

Chapter 1019

"Deal!" replied Gerald with a smile.

Gerald himself was done with doing favors for others. In order to get what he wanted, he knew that he had to become a selfish person. After all, at this point, there really wasn't a reason for him to do things that didn't benefit him anymore.

The moment Gerald finally agreed to help, Kaleb and Theo were flung over to his direction and both of them landed at his feet.

"Hahaha! Did you really bring these idiots over to defend you, Zander? Who else is there? Come on, now!" roared Damian before laughing hysterically.

Upon hearing that, Gerald began walking calmly toward him.

"...Hmm? What's this then? A little boy? Is there truly nobody else from the Lovewell family? Who the hell even is this?" said Damian as he shook his head while looking at Gerald.

"I've heard that you've been learning some skills that originated from Northeast Asia! Is that true?" asked Gerald as he looked back at Damian.

Hearing that, Damian was temporarily stunned. After all, he knew that he had concealed his identity extremely well. What more, he had been in hiding for the longest time. Despite that, this boy here almost sounded like he knew what he had been doing this entire time.

“...How do you know about that?” asked Damian as he raised a brow.

“Just a hunch. Speaking of which, could Sven Westmore be one of your disciples?” asked Gerald again.

Eyes now widened in shock, Damian instantly replied, “He is! Do you know him?”

“Well of course I know him. I was his killer,” replied Gerald.

“...What? You?” said Damian, more astonished than anything.

“...Humph! I guess looks can be deceiving! Still, know that Sven is just an outer disciple of the Tekken! Killing him is a piece of cake, so I hope you aren’t thinking that you’re anywhere near worthy in my eyes! However, the fact remains that you’ve killed my disciple! I’ll avenge his death by killing you!” roared Damian as he charged at Gerald.

In a flash, Gerald responded with his own punch, and both their fists met. As the sound of colliding fists was heard, the crunching of bones followed swiftly after as Damian found himself falling backward.

Roaring in pain, Damian held on to his arm as he turned to look at his elbow. Gerald’s punch had been so powerful that Damian’s arm bone was now protruding out of his skin! This was only from the force of a single punch! What kind of strength even was this?!

Kaleb and Theo themselves were now wide-eyed in disbelief as they stared at Damian’s terror-stricken expression.

“...You... You’re so young yet you’re already at the level of a champion! Even your inner strength is overwhelming!” shouted the horrified Damian.

“Cease this nonsense and end your own life to spare yourself the misery!” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

Upon hearing that, Damian’s gaze went dark as he clenched his teeth while enduring the pain. Nodding, he then said, “...Fine! I’ll do it myself!”

With that, the man took a dagger out and aimed its sharpened end at his chest.

All was silent for a moment... Until Damian tossed the dagger aimed straight for Gerald's face! Grabbing a handful of sand, he then tossed it in Gerald's direction as well before making a wild dash away from all of them!

Gerald himself simply took a step to the side, avoiding everything that Damian had just thrown at him.

Zander, on the other hand, anxiously began shouting, "After him, Mr. Crawford! He's getting away!"

In response, Gerald simply flicked his hand slightly toward Damian's direction, a slight whistling sound following immediately after.

Chapter 1020

Following that sound, a glimpse of something flying extremely quickly could be seen, and barely a second later, Damian's screams of agony filled the air!

Not even questioning the self-returning dagger, the moment Zander saw Damian's body flop lifelessly to the ground, he immediately started excitedly shouting, "H-he's dead! He's finally dead!"

Turning to look at Gerald, he then said, "Mr. Crawford, you've done a massive favor for the Lovewells! I must repay you properly on behalf of my family!"

"As was promised, all I want is the Book of Beasts!" replied Gerald as he returned a subtle smile to Zander.

Immediately after hearing that, Zander froze in place.

As he began trying to change the topic, Haven herself—who had been hiding with her siblings in the forested area this entire time—covered her mouth as she said, "D-did you see that sis? That really is Gerald! And... And he's amazing?!"

Xareni herself had been focused on him for a while now.

'To think that Gerald came over to the Logan Province to help father... What an unpredictable man!' Xareni thought to herself, now extremely impressed with Gerald.

Midnight came shortly after and it was then when several of the Lovewells met up in the Lovewell manor's meeting hall.

While the Lovewells had initially been overjoyed to know that Damian—their biggest enemy—was finally dead, all of them became glum again as soon as Zander told them about Gerald's request.

"No matter how great he is, at his core, he's still just some reckless peasant! How dare he even demand for the Book of Beasts!" shouted one of the family members as he slammed his fist against the table in anger.

Zander himself had been playing around a keychain for a while now, seemingly deep in thought. Closing his eyes momentarily, the moment he opened them again, his tone was serious as he said, "...Well, this is all my fault to begin with... I won't deny that I had initially thought that no matter how great he was, he was essentially just a killing machine. I had assumed that he would be pleased as long as we gave him money or women. I even went so far as to think about chances for him to work for us in the future! However, I failed to realize that in the end, what he was truly after was the Book of Beasts! And here I thought he was helping us because of Kaleb's status! To think that that man actually threatened me for the book during a life or death situation!"

"Master, the Book of Beasts is a treasure that belongs only to the Lovewells! We can't just give it to him!" shouted another family member.

"I'm well aware of that. However, I had promised to hand him the book and if we don't give it to him, he could grow upset! Unlike Kaleb, we can't just dismiss him easily. After all, he's even more dangerous than Damian! That itself is the biggest concern!"

"Hahaha! Have no worries, brother, for I have an idea! If all goes well, then not only will we be able to keep the Book of Beasts for ourselves, but we'll also be able to rid ourselves of this Gerald person!" announced a middle-aged man as he squinted his eyes.

"What's your plan, Zayn?" asked Zander.

"Heh, after hearing about Gerald, I ordered my men to investigate more about him. Granted, I didn't get many results. I did, however, manage to find out that he's currently carrying a very large secret!" replied Zayn.

"While we don't really have any connections with the Moldells in Logan, did you know that those from their family had ordered all the wealthy businessmen down South to kill a youth by the name of Gerald about a year ago? If I'm not mistaken, the Gerald who had taken Damian down also came from the south. He looks exactly like how the Moldells had described their Gerald back then as well! Do you think that he's the one they're looking for, brother?" added Zayn with a smile.

After hearing all that, Zander finally placed his keychain down, feeling that he had just learned a great deal.

“If everything you’ve said is true, then I can see where you’re coming from, Zayn! With the Moldells being so powerful and having so many great people in their family, being able to use that to our advantage would be great!” replied Zander as he laughed.

“But Master, for what reason would the Moldells have to help us? After all, we have nothing of interest for them! If things go south, we may even end up getting on their bad side! Then again, it’s no secret that the Moldells have always had plans to take over our family. They’ve only refrained from doing so since we have thousands of years’ worth of history in the Logan Province. They’re also well aware that challenging us here could very well affect the province’s economy. Regardless, with all that in mind, do you really think that they’d even consider lending us a hand?” said another person from the group as they raised their concerns.

“Of course they would! Don’t forget that we have the person they’re hunting for! Even if they’re not doing it for us, they’d still take Gerald away which is exactly what we want! The problem now is that we need to find someone to hold him back. If we manage to recruit him, then we’ll spare his life. If he chooses not to join us, then his fate will be decided by the Modells!” declared Zander.

As the meeting continued on without any signs of ending soon, the lights in Gerald’s room remained on as well.

He had been studying the map that Kaleb had given him, and from what he had learned, the map was definitely going to be very helpful for when Gerald actually traversed through the woods.

All of a sudden, a knock could be heard from the door.

Chapter 1021

“It’s me, Gerald!”

Before Gerald could even say anything, the door to his room was pushed open and Haven popped her head in before entering.

“Didn’t you head back to your room to rest, Haven? Why are you here again?” asked Gerald with a resigned smile on his face.

Haven had immediately looked for him the moment he returned to the manor, intent on finding out how he was so powerful.

Not seeing any reason to hide anything from her, Gerald had earlier chatted with her for a while before sending her off.

He truly hadn’t expected to meet her again so soon.

“Well, the more I thought about it back in my room, the more I felt that something just wasn’t right! Humph! You’re not being a very good friend at all! Have you already forgotten that we had agreed to be friends back when we were still on the train? It took me a moment to realize, but you never came looking for me in the end! How do you plan on explaining yourself?” said Haven as she took a seat.

“Haha... Guilty as charged!” replied Gerald with a wry smile on his face.

Staring at him for a while, Haven then smiled sweetly before asking, “Then answer me honestly. Do you truly treat me as a friend?”

“Of course I do!”

“Great! So... Could you please teach me how to throw daggers? I want to learn how to do that too!”

“What kind of society are we even living in now? Why would you even want to learn a skill that could be used to kill?”

“Well, it’s because by this point, I’ve already encountered several powerful and skillful people who have abilities that easily surpass the limits of ordinary people! I want to be like them too!”

“You’ll have your chance in the future... Fine, why don’t we do this? I’ll teach you a trick or two tomorrow under the condition that you’re fully energetic to learn them. In order for you to achieve that, you’d better leave now and get some well-deserved rest!” replied Gerald as he smiled.

“Deal! Remember to keep to your word, or you can’t call yourself a man anymore! Well, I’ll be taking my leave first!” said Haven before skipping happily toward the door to leave.

As soon as she opened the door, however, she immediately said in a surprised tone, “Sister? Why are you here?”

“So you were as well, Haven! I’ve come to discuss some things with Mr. Crawford, so run along first!”

Hearing that, Gerald realized that it was Xareni’s turn to meet him. Haven herself was too busy daydreaming about learning new skills tomorrow so she simply left without thinking too much about her sister’s motive for being there.

“And here I was worrying that you’d already be asleep by now, Mr. Crawford! After all, it is pretty late now,” said Xareni as she walked in with a smile.

Looking at her briefly, Gerald then asked, “Is there anything else you’d like to say?”

Well aware that she was a person who enjoyed scheming, Gerald didn’t really have a good impression of Xareni.

“Indeed! You know, I heard from my father that you’re here in the Logan Province because you wish to look for holy blood within the Everdare Forest, Mr. Crawford. Perhaps our family could help you with the matter since we’re already well acquainted by this point. Also, while this may feel out of topic, what are your plans in the future, sir?” asked Xareni.

Since Gerald had already proved his strength, Xareni herself no longer had any traces of contempt in her eyes.

“I’d very much prefer if you stopped beating around the bush. If you haven’t noticed, I’m ready to retire for the night!” replied Gerald casually.

“Alright, so here’s the thing, Mr. Crawford. The Lovewell family is willing to treat you as an honorable guest, just as we treat Mr. Merrett. If you join us, then all your descendants will also receive the same benefits as you will! What do you think of that, sir?”

It was obvious by now that Xareni had been sent over by her father to pitch the idea to Gerald. Though she looked to only be around the age of twenty-five, she was extremely witty and smart, making her a master at negotiating. Even if she were to face the most experienced businessmen in the world of business, seven out of eight of them wouldn’t be able to outwit her.

Regardless, after seeing how casually Gerald dressed, she was certain that he wouldn’t be able to resist the temptation of money and women.

“Are you trying to hire me to work for the Lovewells?” asked Gerald.

“That’s right! I honestly see absolutely no reason for you to turn down our offer, Mr. Crawford. After all, you’ll be able to live a luxurious and extravagant life if you agree, and you’ll also be respected by everyone!” said Xareni as she squinted her eyes slightly, feeling that it was going to be a piece of cake to get Gerald to join them.

“Who even are the Lovewells to want to hire me?” replied Gerald casually.

Xareni was instantly startled upon hearing that statement.

“Look, I get where you’re coming from, but I’ll say right now that anything you try to say beyond this point will be useless. Just bring me the Book of Beasts tomorrow so I can have a look through it. I’ll return it to your family once I’m done reading it. Now if there isn’t anything else, I’d like to get some rest!” added Gerald rather unceremoniously.

‘This man really doesn’t know what’s good or bad for himself!’ Xareni thought to herself angrily.

“Well, while the Lovewells may not mean anything to you, I wonder if you’ve heard about the Moldells from the Logan Province...?”

As soon as she said that, Xareni took a peek at Gerald’s face with her beautiful eyes. She wanted to see how horrified he was since she knew that the more frightened he was of the news, the easier it would be for her to talk to him.

To her dismay, Gerald retained his indifferent expression as he said, “The Moldells? Who even are they?”

Chapter 1022

Upon hearing Gerald say that, Xareni instantly retorted, “You!-”

Before she could say anything rash, however, she simply nodded before remaining silent for a while to calm herself.

A few seconds later, she smiled angrily before saying, “Well since you clearly look down on our small temple, then I guess the Lovewell family will just hand over the Book of Beasts to you tomorrow as our token of appreciation, sir!”

The moment she was done speaking, Xareni instantly turned around and left his room. Upon closing the door behind her, she took in a deep breath before glaring daggers at the room.

It was early the next morning when Haven pushed the door to Gerald’s room open before shouting, “Good morning, master!”

“Master?” replied Gerald as he couldn’t help but shake his head while looking at the girl who had brought a cup of ginseng tea along with her.

He didn’t even have a chance this time to remind her to knock first before entering this time. Despite her intrusion, Gerald still ended up smiling.

“Yeah, master! Hahaha! You said you were going to teach me some skills, so of course I’d call you that! Anyway, I brought along some tea to formalize our master and disciple relationship!” said Haven with a grin.

“Now you’re just exaggerating it... I’m just going to teach you some self-defense skills as a friend!”

Clearly ignoring what he had just said, Haven simply replied, “Please accept this tea as a form of respect from your disciple, master!”

Bowing before presenting the tea before Gerald, he simply shook his head before taking the cup from her.

After taking a sip, he gave her a wry smile before saying, “Will this do?”

“But of course! Now let’s go! Teach me something already!” squealed Haven as she hopped excitedly in place.

Smiling, Gerald then stood up to leave with her...

However, the moment he did so, he immediately felt an excruciating pain in his stomach! Holding on to his belly, his pale face scrunched up in agony as he shouted, “The... the tea!”

Getting increasingly worried as she watched Gerald get drenched in cold sweat, Haven instantly replied, stuttering, “H-huh? What’s going on? What’s wrong?”

“T-the tea... It’s been poisoned!” said Gerald in his extreme pain as he sat back on the bed before rolling back and forth, clenching tightly onto his stomach the entire time.

“P-poisoned? P-please don’t scare me, Gerald!” squeaked Haven whose anxiousness had peaked after seeing how much pain Gerald seemed to be in.

By the time her sentence ended, Gerald was already claspng onto his head with his hands.

“I-is your head not feeling well too? Please don’t scare me!” said Haven as she gently began shaking his shoulders.

It wasn't long after before Gerald stopped struggling. His eyes were now closed as his hands had gone limp!

"G-Gerald...? Gerald! Oh god, please, wake up! Men! Men! Get in here!" cried out Haven.

Almost instantaneously, the door to Gerald's room was flung open and the first person to enter was none other than Xareni.

"S-sister! Gerald seems to have been poiso-!"

Haven's sentence ended prematurely for a reason. After all, she had noticed by then that right behind Xareni was her father, Second uncle, and many others as they slowly entered the room as well.

"I have to admit, Second, the Scatter Pill really works its magic! Even the incredibly strong Gerald wasn't able to resist the pill's effects!" said Zander as he nodded while laughing.

"Hahaha! Truth be told, I was skeptical as well when the Moldells handed me the pill. After seeing Gerald's capabilities, I truly wasn't sure whether he could even be poisoned! What more, the Moldells told me that I didn't even need to use an entire pill to get him seriously poisoned! From what they said, as long as he takes a single sip of the tea, the poison would work its magic no matter how strong he was. Despite that, I slipped in the entire pill, just to be safe! Thankfully, he seems to have taken quite a big sip of the tea as well!"

"Based on what the Moldells said, Gerald will continue sleeping like this indefinitely, right, Second uncle?" asked Xareni while straightening her hair.

"Indeed!"

"Dad? Sister?! What are all of you talking about? Were you the ones who poisoned him?!" asked Haven in her disbelief.

"You have nothing to do with anything here anymore, Haven. Butler! Take Haven to her room so she can get some rest! And don't let her leave without my permission!"

"Dad! Gerald's our ally! He saved us!" cried out Haven as the butler quickly dragged her out of the room.

Seconds later, a subordinate walked in before whispering, “Old master, the Moldells are here!”

“Oh? Then hurry up and invite them in!” replied Zander excitedly.

Chapter 1023

“So I heard that you’ve successfully captured Gerald Crawford, Mr. Lovewell. On behalf of the Moldells, I really don’t know how to thank you enough,” said an elderly man—who was leading seven other members of the Moldell family—as he laughed out loud.

“You’re being far too modest, Mr. Yaster. After all, the Lovewells and the Moldells may as well be considered to be one big family in the Logan Province by this point. Gerald himself is a mere outsider. Why would we ever favor an outsider to someone from our side?” replied Zander with a subtle smile.

“Well I’ll be d*mned! That really is him! You have no idea how much effort we had to put in order to find him!” said Yaster, his voice overjoyed as he approached the unconscious Gerald.

Yaster himself was a senior figure within the Moldell family in Logan. In fact, his job was to manage the entire family in the province. Therefore, successfully capturing Gerald would definitely be a great achievement on his part. He was already wondering how his second uncle, Kort, would reward him for his achievement.

“It’s truly been a pain to track you down... Now that you’re finally unconscious due to the potent poison of the Scatter Pill, let’s see how you’ll worm yourself out of this one!” scoffed Yaster coldly.

“Still, even though you described him to be all-powerful, I really don’t see what’s so great about him, Mr. Lovewell!” added Yaster who was clearly in a very good mood.

“I’ll have to correct you there, Uncle Moldell... Most of the Lovewells have already witnessed his true strength and capabilities by this point, and just as my father had described, he truly is that strong. We were only able to subdue him today thanks to my younger sister’s help and the wonderfully potent poison of the Scatter Pill you gave us! Otherwise, it would’ve definitely taken a lot more effort to get him to his current state!” replied Xareni as she straightened her hair while smiling.

“Ah, my niece seems to be an extremely eloquent speaker! You’ve truly made a great contribution in this matter, Xareni! The Moldell family will never forget what you’ve done for us! Regardless, it’s true that anyone who consumes even a little of the Scatter Pill—regardless of how much they’ve previously trained—will end up falling unconscious with little chance of ever getting up again!” exclaimed Yaster.

Waving his hand, he then ordered, "Come over, men! It's high time we brought Gerald back to the Moldell Manor! Once he's there, we'll just wait for the second elder's instructions once he's returned from Northbay!"

"Right away, sir!"

Just as Yaster's men were about to carry Gerald away, a cold voice from behind them suddenly called out, "Hold it! What are you planning to do to Mr. Crawford?"

Turning back to see who had said that, everyone saw a white-haired old man standing behind the crowd.

"Oh? It's you, Mr. Merrett! Here, we've retrieved the Everdare Forest map for you. Still, the map is an ancestral heritage from the Merrett family! I still can't bring myself to believe that you actually gave it to that kid so casually! Gerald wasn't even content with just having that! To think that he'd eye on the Lovewell family's Book of Beasts as well! He really doesn't know how to behave till we force him to!" replied Zander, evidently shocked to see Kaleb there.

In all honesty, Zander had secretly been observing Kaleb's behavior for a while now. He had reason to since Kaleb seemed to be getting quite close to Gerald.

Still, he wasn't really all that worried in the beginning since both he and Kaleb had already been friends for so many years by now. As a result, he had believed that if something were to truly happen, then Kaleb would definitely be on his side!

However, he realized just how wrong he was after the events of last night. After all, it was then when Zander realized that Kaleb had told Gerald about the Lovewell family's Book of Beasts. From that point on, Zander found himself getting increasingly wary of Kaleb.

It was also the reason why he was trying to antagonize Gerald now in his embarrassment.

"Zander, do you honestly take me as nothing but a child? I've already heard everything that I needed to earlier. It's clear as day that you've colluded with the Moldells to betray Mr. Crawford! He saved the lives of everyone in the Lovewell family, Zander! To think that you'd actually repay his kindness with acts of evil! Do you even still have a conscience?!" yelled Kaleb as he pointed at Zander.

Though momentarily stunned, Zander's expression turned cold as he replied, "He tried to take the Book of Beasts from our family! He was certainly asking for all this to happen! Please, Mr. Merrett! Stay out of all this! I'm only saying this since we've been friends for so many years by now! Just go home and rest while the Moldells take care of the rest!"

Despite Zander's persistence to send him back, Kaleb simply said, "Go home? As long as I'm around, none of you will even be able to touch a single strand of Gerald's hair from here on out!"

Gulping, Zander then nodded with a heavy heart as he replied, "...Fine then, Mr. Merrett. Since you can't tell what's good for you, then don't blame me for being rude and ruthless!"

'Since the Moldells are here today, you won't be able to even touch me!' Zander thought to himself as he turned to look at Yaster.

Yaster could instantly tell what Zander was hinting at.

"If there's anyone to blame in all of this, it's yourself for meddling in other peoples' businesses!" shouted Yaster coldly as he immediately dispatched a few of his subordinates to fight Kaleb.

Kaleb, was a skillful man who had already achieved the title of champion. Due to that, he normally didn't have to take ordinary men seriously at all.

Chapter 1024

However, his current opponents were from the Moldell family.

Even so, he was ready to give it his all. After all, Gerald had saved his life during the decisive battle with Damian last night. His action alone had made Kaleb feel respected like never before.

It truly touched Kaleb, and from that moment onward, the old man felt as though he no longer had to suffer through any more humiliation.

As a result, Kaleb had pledged his loyalty and allegiance to Gerald back there and then.

It was the reason why he was fighting so hard now for Gerald's sake.

Even after fighting for a while, it seemed as though the Moldell family's subordinates weren't really Kaleb's opponents.

Seeing that, Yaster shook his head with a bitter smile on his face as he said, "He truly is worthy of the title of a champion! I guess this guest of the Lovewells isn't as simple as he looks!"

“Well that’s probably because you haven’t made a move yet, Mr. Moldell. Who in the Logan Province doesn’t know that you’re the top master in the entirety of Weston?” replied Zander with a smile.

“Haha! Is there even a need to fight so many rounds when your opponent is only Kaleb Merrett? Fall back!” shouted Yaster.

After everyone quickly made way for him, Yaster stared at Kaleb for a moment... Before suddenly firing up an immense aura from his body as he dashed toward Kaleb!

From Yaster’s initial analysis on the old man, he could tell that Kaleb’s injuries—that Damian had inflicted on him last night—had yet to completely heal.

Using that knowledge to his advantage, Yaster acted swiftly and immediately struck Kaleb’s head with a potentially deadly blow!

Unable to block it in time, the moment Yaster’s attack connected, Kaleb ended up flying backward as blood spurted out of his mouth.

“Hah! And here I thought that an old man like you would be more skillful and capable! It turns out that you’re nothing more than a piece of trash! Since you were clearly courting death by opposing us, I’ll gladly oblige to ending you right now!” announced Yaster as he slowly walked over to Kaleb’s limp body.

“Zander Lovewell... You’ll definitely receive the retribution you deserve one day! To think that the Merretts have always been kind and benevolent toward your family... You’re even more despicable than a beast, Zander! I, Kaleb Merrett, hereby vow that I’ll return to haunt you as a ghost if I have to!” growled Kaleb as he gritted his teeth in anger.

“Hahaha! No matter what you say, you won’t be able to worm yourself out of this one! You only have your bad luck to blame this time around! To think that you had trained and developed your strength and abilities all this time for nothing!” sneered Yaster as he stood before Kaleb.

Just as he was about to deal the finishing blow to end the old man for good, a voice suddenly shouted, “Pipe down! I barely slept last night so at least allow me to sleep a little longer!”

The moment everyone heard that, the room instantly fell into complete silence. Turning around in utter shock, everyone now had their eyes on Gerald who was still laying on the bed.

Xareni herself had gone fully red in her extreme anxiety.

“...Who... Who said that?” said Zander who was so stunned that he took a step back.

“...Could it be that he didn’t truly pass out?”

“You’re sure that you poisoned him, right, Miss Xareni?”

“How frightening! Could he just be talking in his sleep?”

As everyone continued discussing the current situation—with their eyes still glued on Gerald—they all froze in place the moment they saw Gerald sitting up and yawning.

Stretching as though he had just woken from a nap, Gerald then rubbed his sleepy eyes as he looked at everyone in the room.

Straightening his neck, Gerald’s voice turned frigid as he asked, “I’m assuming everyone is already here.”

“...W-what? You... You weren’t affected by the poison?!”

By this point, everyone was beyond horrified.

Chapter 1025

“You call that a poison? I used it as a sort of medicine to supplement my health over half a year ago! Did you truly just try to use that to poison me?”

After soaking his body so much in all sorts of medicinal herbs and other materials—that Finnley had provided him with—back then, Gerald was already immune to certain poisons. It was evident that the poison that they had tried to use on him was one of them.

In all honesty, Gerald could already tell that the tea—that Haven had served him earlier—was poisoned, long before he sipped on it. After all, he was an expert when it came to pharmacology.

He was also well aware back then that Haven would never try to harm him. With that in mind, he knew that it was definitely one of the Lovewells who wanted to harm him. But who?

Wanting to find out, Gerald pretended to pass out so that he could wait for the true culprits to show themselves.

“You brat! Have you any idea how hard the Moldells have been trying to find you this entire time? Though we failed to poison you, don’t think you’ll be able to escape easily!” sneered Yaster.

Kaleb, on the other hand, immediately stood up and smiled while holding onto his chest when he realized who had spoken.

“S-sir! You’re fine! What absolutely great news!”

“I am, Mr. Merrett! Also, I appreciate that you stood up for me earlier!”

In truth, Gerald had been planning to test Kaleb on whether he was sincerely loyal to him sometime after all of this was over. Now that he had personally witnessed Kaleb risking his own life to save him, Gerald knew that no further testing was required.

Touched by his actions, Gerald immediately brought Yaster’s attention to him when he saw how close Kaleb was to death.

“There’s no need to talk any longer with this brat, Mr. Moldell! Allow me to take care of him once and for all!” said one of Yaster’s young subordinates as he smiled contemptuously before rushing toward Gerald.

However, when he was only a step away from Gerald, Gerald swiftly stretched his hand out and grabbed him by the face! Immediately after, the man’s limbs froze as his entire body began twitching uncontrollably.

All it took was a simple tilt of Gerald’s wrist for a loud ‘crack’ to be heard from the subordinate’s neck.

With that, Gerald tossed the lifeless body before the seven remaining Moldells who were now all wide-eyed in shock.

They were rightfully stunned since the younger generation of the Moldell family all had excellent strength and capabilities. Despite that, Gerald had ended that man’s life so easily. It was almost as though that subordinate was nothing but a sheep to Gerald. A sheep incapable of defending itself that could only tremble when attacked.

“You... You brat! I would’ve never imagined that you’d become so powerful after just one year!” growled Yaster, his eyes still wide open.

Waving his hand immediately after, he then ordered, “Gang up and grab him!”

Hearing that, the remaining six Moldells obeyed and sprinted toward Gerald!

In response, however, Gerald simply raised his head brazenly as he glared intensely at all six of them.

All of a sudden, the air in the room suddenly felt much colder than it should have. Even the subordinates couldn’t help but slow down slightly as they felt chills run down their spines.

Gerald was now ready to fight.

These people were part of the family that had pushed him into such desperate situations before. The family that had forced him out of his own home. The family that had utterly humiliated him as though he was nothing but a deprived dog that only deserved to be treated harshly.

What more, their family was still trying to rob the Crawfords of their assets and properties!

An immense bloodlust filled his heart as he made his first move!

With his great skill and his hunger for revenge, Gerald was now practically invincible. As a result, the six men currently trying to attack Gerald were naturally no match against him.

One by one, the men approached him and promptly died without even getting a single chance to land a hit against him.

As blood splattered across the room, Yaster’s eyelids twitched violently as he said, “....S-so powerful...”

From the moment Gerald made his first attack, Yaster already knew that he was never going to survive a duel against Gerald. He needed to escape! And quickly!

The moment he turned around to flee, however, he felt a piercing feeling at the back of his neck.

It was a second later when he realized that a thrown dagger was now lodged there! Blood now flowing out of his mouth, Yaster turned around weakly and said, "...Y-you... you...!"

Those were the only two words he managed to mutter before falling to the ground, dead.

Seeing that, Xareni was now so terrified that she screamed while covering her mouth before rushing to a corner of the room to hide.

As for the other Lovewells, none of them even dared to breathe as they stared at Gerald, fully paralyzed in fear.

Zayn, however, was well aware that he was the one who had played the biggest part in the decision to call the Moldells over. As a result, he immediately stepped forward and, in an apologetic tone, he said, "...Hahaha... Ah... Um... So... Y-you see, Mr. Crawford, it was the Moldell family who forced us to do this..."

Hearing no reply, Zayn ended up touching Gerald's arm to see if he had heard his plea for forgiveness. The moment his hand came into contact with Gerald, however, Gerald revealed that the murderous intent hadn't left his eyes as he grabbed Zayn by his neck.

Snap.

As Zayn—who was now spurting blood all over the place—found himself being tossed out the window, he could only twitch a few more times after landing before finally moving no more.

Chapter 1026

"P-please spare our lives, Mr. Crawford!" cried out Zander as he immediately knelt in fright. Seeing that, all the other Lovewells did the same.

Taking in a deep breath, Gerald closed his eyes for a brief moment before opening them again. The rage in his eyes was no longer present.

Since Gerald was still enraged earlier, Zayn had made the fatal mistake of touching him while he was still in an extremely hostile state.

Now that he was much calmer, Gerald turned to face Zander and walked toward him before saying, "...Spare your lives? After you've gone against your promise to hand the Book of Beasts over to me? And don't even get me started on the fact that you colluded with the Moldells to harm me..."

Upon saying that, he gently grabbed onto the top of Zander's head. Zander himself already had a face filled with tears and snot as he stared at the demon of a man standing before him.

Just as Gerald was about to amplify the force of his grip, Haven suddenly rushed in while shouting, "G-Gerald! Don't!"

"H-Haven! You're here! P-please save me!" wailed the terrified Xareni as she instantly ran toward Haven and hid behind her.

As Xareni stared at Gerald with fearful eyes from behind Haven, Haven herself said, "G-Gerald... I know what my father did was wrong... But he wasn't in the right mind when he agreed with the plan! Here, I've brought the Book of Beasts along with me! You can have but please, please let my family go..."

Now already in tears, she then walked toward Gerald with the book in hand.

"D-don't, Haven! He'll kill you!" pleaded Xareni as she grabbed on to her sister's arm.

"It's fine, sister. Gerald already told me that we were friends, so I'm confident that he won't hurt me!"

With that, she loosened Xareni's grip on her arm before continuing to walk over to Gerald. Once she was standing before him, she held the Book of Beasts out before saying with teary ears, "...Gerald... If you really have to kill my father just to relieve all your hatred, then please kill me instead... Once you've done that, I hope you'll be willing to let my father and everyone else go... Though you're not obligated to do so, please consider my wish as a friend, okay...?"

Upon hearing that and seeing Haven's trickling tears, Gerald felt a sudden pain in his heart. He had initially planned on killing off the rest of the Lovewells. After all, they were no better off than the Moldells at this point.

However, he could see that Haven truly regarded him as a friend. After all, the girl had been extremely nervous earlier when she found out that he had been poisoned. Knowing that, Gerald couldn't bear to break her heart any further.

"...I'll be taking the Book of Beasts for the time being. I'll return the book once I'm done reading it!"

With that, Gerald took the book from Haven's hands and immediately left. Seeing that, Haven jogged after him to see him out.

Zander himself remained in his kneeling position, still too terrified to even feel his legs. At that moment, a young man suddenly rushed in, shouting, "M-Mr. Lovewell! Something bad is happening! There are many people outsi-"

His sentence ended prematurely the moment he saw the carnage that Gerald had left behind in the room. After a brief moment of silence in his shock, the young man finally snapped out of it.

Gulping, he then continued, "...A... A lot of men in black suits are here..."

Haven herself—who was already at the door since she had seen Gerald out—was already staring at the many men standing in her family's courtyard.

They were Welson's subordinates.

"Let's head out!" said Gerald casually as he got into one of the cars and left.

Once the cars were gone, Haven found herself taking a few steps backward.

To think that she had once thought that Gerald was a restrained young man... She realized just how wrong she had been as she recalled all of Gerald's cruelty and ruthlessness today.

If she had looked down on Gerald just as her sister had done, then her entire family would've probably already been wiped out by this murderous demon by now.

'...So it turns out that this is who you truly are, Gerald... Now I finally know...' Haven thought to herself.

It was sometime after Gerald left that Xavia came along with her bodyguards. Seeing Haven standing at the door, she approached her before saying, "What a coincidence, Miss Haven! Your father should be rather free now, right? I plan to visit him..."

Xavia's sentence trailed off the moment she realized that Haven wasn't even listening to her. Instead, the girl was simply muttering what seemed to be the same word over and over again in a tiny voice. Seconds later, Haven turned around to leave without ever looking back.

“...W-what did you say...?” asked Xavia nervously, finally finding her voice as she watched the girl slowly walk off into the distance.

“The second young lady seems to be in a bad mood today, Miss. I propose that we go visit Mr. Zander directly,” suggested the bodyguard standing beside Xavia.

Seemingly ignoring her guard’s comment, Xavia then muttered under her breath, “...No... She couldn’t have said his name... right? Haven... Were you truly muttering Gerald’s name...?”

Chapter 1027

‘But... There’s just no way she would even know who Gerald is... Unless... Could he truly be in the Logan Province...? Hold on, she may not even be talking about the same Gerald!’ Xavia thought to herself.

With so many questions swimming in her head, Xavia couldn’t hold herself back from chasing after Haven. She desperately needed answers.

Fast forward to two days later, Gerald found himself in the hinterland of Everdare Forest which was located at the border of the Logan Province.

With a heritage that spanned over thousands of years, the trees within Everdare Forest grew extremely densely atop the many mountains that also grew particularly close to each other. Aside from the immense variety of flora that could be found there, several species of predators were also known to lurk within the forest.

“Careful when plugging the hole! We can’t let the beast escape again with how cunning it is!” said one of the many men standing in front of a hole that the holy fox had been cornered in.

With Welson being in charge of the operation, it was evident that the group consisted of Gerald and his men.

Since Kaleb had given Gerald the map of Everdare Forest, they had made twice the progress with half the effort in their search for the holy fox. After all, the map was quite detailed and having it alone was akin to having a seasoned navigator of the forest.

While Gerald and the others were successful in locating the holy fox’s tracks at dawn yesterday, to their dismay, the fox managed to slip away from them.

That marked the beginning of a series of confrontations they had with the extremely cunning fox. None of them could have ever anticipated how truly capable the holy fox was.

After all, even after working hard to catch it throughout the night, their restless endeavors seemed to be pointless. Though they had confronted the fox for well over a dozen times by then, the fox always seemed to be a step ahead of them!

Eventually, however, they were finally able to trap the holy fox within the hole it was currently in.

Finally getting some results, Welson was now extremely excited.

Gerald himself nervously said, “Don’t allow the beast to escape again! From what I’ve read in the Book of Beasts, not only is the holy fox extremely fast, but though its body is completely white, it’s an expert at concealing itself as well! However, the most worrying thing is the fact that it’s capable of quickly seeing through plans and routines. Once that happens, it’ll easily find a way to escape! The book specifically states that its IQ is even higher than most human geniuses!”

Since Gerald had thoroughly studied the Book of Beasts the night before they began their hunt for the fox, he had learned everything he needed to know about the holy fox alongside other beasts.

As a result, he knew that if they were to allow the fox to escape their grasps this time, tracking it down again would be near impossible

“The beast is about to show itself! Everyone, hush!” ordered Welson as he gestured for the rest to be silent.

Hearing that, everyone held their breath as they surrounded the hole’s entrance. Gerald himself could already see hints of a white tail squirming out from within the narrow hole.

From the moment the fox entered the hole, their plan had been to smoke it out from the other end. Due to the subordinate—who had been stationed on the other end—constantly fanning smoke into the hole, the fox was finally showing signs of exiting it!

However, when the fox was about half a meter away from the entrance, thick, suffocating, green smoke suddenly began pouring out of the hole!

Since Gerald and the others had been lying in wait right in front of the hole, only Gerald managed to retreat and cover his nose in time. Everyone else there, however, ended up getting smoked!

Squeaking could soon be heard as everyone turned to look at the fox. It was almost as though the fox was laughing at them!

With one final squeal, it dashed out of the hole with lightning speed, running past Gerald's men and making its escape!

"D*mn it! It escaped again!" shouted Welson in his frustration.

"After it!" ordered Gerald as he swiftly began chasing after the fox himself. Not wanting it to escape again, Gerald made sure to run as fast as he could.

Though Welson and the others were initially hot on their heels, eventually, they lost sight of both Gerald and the holy fox! They couldn't find any traces of him at all!

"What should we do, Mr. Welson? We've lost sight of him!" said one of the subordinates.

"We'll try our best to locate both of them first! If we still can't find them, then we'll just have to return to base and wait for him there!" instructed Welson.

Meanwhile, the holy fox was making mocking cries as it bolted to the top of the forest, not unlike an arrow that had just been fired.

Chapter 1028

Despite that, Gerald wasn't giving in that easily.

Utilizing a skill that allowed him to tread extremely lightly, his feet almost never touched the ground as he sprinted after the fox.

After running for quite some time, the holy fox came to realize that Gerald didn't seem to be slowing down. Understanding that it wouldn't be able to get rid of him easily by simply running around, the fox dived into a bush.

The moment it entered the bush, Gerald lost track of it almost instantaneously!

"D*mn it all! Did you really just escape again?!" said Gerald to himself as he stopped running, feeling slightly depressed.

However, he hadn't given up yet. Holding his breath to remain silent, he quickly and carefully scanned through the area around him.

If he wasn't careful to pay attention while he could, Gerald feared that the fox would end up entirely leaving the area.

He was surprised, however, to suddenly hear voices shouting, "D-don't kill us! Please don't kill us!"

Looking in the direction of the shouts, Gerald saw a few people running toward him, screaming in horror as though they were running for their lives.

Gerald could only frown as he thought, 'Why at such a crucial time...? Why couldn't you have come earlier or even later?'

Seconds later, a few thuds could be heard as the screams of horror finally ended. Though it was evident that those screaming had already met their end, Gerald really couldn't be bothered about that right now.

"Since the few of you followed me all the way out here, what other choice do I have but to kill you all?" sneered an old man as he approached the fresh corpses with his hands against his back.

While he was inspecting the bodies, however, the corner of the old man's eyes caught a glimpse of Gerald who had been staring off into a distance for a while now.

The old man felt his eyelids twitch after realizing who the person standing there was.

'So it's you! It seems that you're stupid enough to choose your own doom when there are obviously better alternatives!' Thought the old man as he sneered.

"If it isn't Gerald! Or should I say, Mr. Crawford! I believe you've been well since we last met?" said the old man with murderous intent in his eyes as he approached Gerald.

Gerald himself had been completely focused on detecting any sounds of movement he could register from the environment when he heard his name being called out. Turning around by reflex to see who had called out to him, Gerald was startled to see who it was.

"Oh, it's you."

Realizing that Gerald was no longer focused on it, the hidden holy fox—which had been lying silently in wait this entire time—knew it was high time to make its next move.

Sprinting off, it took one leap after another as it quickly disappeared into the valley.

The valley itself was constantly brimming with miasma, making any sight-based navigation attempts a nightmare. Adding that to the holy fox's immense speed, Gerald couldn't even see it anymore by the time he realized where the fox was escaping to.

"Don't run!" shouted Gerald as he gritted his teeth with resentment before jumping into the valley as well.

'...Oh? So it seems that he's become pretty skillful now! Since the kid is a rich young master and I've already obtained most of the necessary ingredients I need to make the elixir, using his heart as the final ingredient will definitely make the elixir more potent compared to using the hearts of these small fries! It's decided then. I'll kill him!'

With his mind made up, the corners of the old man's lips curled into a smile as he swiftly began following Gerald's tracks.

Gerald himself was now anxiously pulling his hair as he sat atop a rock that he found in the valley.

'Should it successfully make a full escape, I don't even know when I'll be able to catch the beast again!'

As he tried recalling everything he had read in the Book of Beasts in hopes that something useful would come up, he suddenly came to a realization.

Blood essence. That's right, he could still use blood essence!

He had been so anxious and in a hurry that he had almost completely forgotten about the method.

Smiling as he stood up, Gerald remembered reading about how intelligent the holy fox was, even when compared to human geniuses. However, it had one fatal flaw, that being its greed.

According to the Book of Beasts, the holy fox loved drinking human blood, especially if it came from a person who had had incredible abilities and a well-trained body.

Regardless, as long as Gerald was able to get his hands on some human blood and refine it through blood essence, the beast would certainly be unable to withstand the temptation to drink it.

Blood essence, in this case, was an extraction method that also doubled as a way to purify blood.

While getting the idea had certainly excited him, soon after, Gerald became dejected again.

After all, he had already run quite a distance from where he had last stood. He now realized that he could've just used the blood of the people that the old man had killed earlier!

Since the distance from where he currently was to the corpses was anything but short, the idea of gathering blood from the bodies didn't seem too appealing to him. After all, by the time he got there, he wouldn't even know if the cunning fox would still be within the valley!

He couldn't injure himself just to draw the holy fox out either.

Could it truly be that he was fated to never get his hands on the holy fox? Was he doomed to end up becoming a bloodthirsty demon in the future?

As the depressing thoughts filled his head, Gerald suddenly heard faint rustling not too far away...

Chapter 1029

Turning to his side, Gerald noticed that the one making the sounds was a puppy that was slowly limping toward him! Upon closer inspection, the puppy seemed to have a broken leg. What more, there were visible scars all over its body as well.

When it finally reached Gerald's side, it lay at his feet before promptly starting to lick the tip of his shoe.

Gerald was more startled than anything. After all, he hadn't expected to bump into this little one so deep inside the forest. In a way, it was a miracle that this puppy was still alive with so many predatory beasts lurking within the forest.

"...Could you be asking me to save you?" asked Gerald.

Barking twice in response, it then continued licking Gerald's shoe.

While Gerald's first thought—upon seeing the puppy—was to extract its blood to make blood essence, after the puppy started licking his shoe, he realized two things. First of all, the puppy was simply too small to make a worthwhile blood essence extraction.

Secondly, he realized that the puppy had a somewhat spiritual nature. After all, it had managed to survive this long in the hinterlands of the forest. What more, it was now begging for his help! With all that in mind, Gerald now knew that killing it would be near unbearable for him. After all, he wasn't that cruel.

"How pitiful... I've no idea who abandoned you here, but you're fortunate that you happened to bump into me!" said Gerald as he shook his head while patting the puppy's head.

"Unfortunately, I can't spend too much time idling around here, though I will help to bandage your wounds up first. From there on out, however, we'll be parting ways. I simply don't have the time to help you escape the forest, understand?" added Gerald as he swiftly began patching the puppy's wounds up.

Not long after, he successfully managed to stop the puppy's bleeding and bandage any open wounds he could find.

"How nice it would be if Grandpa Welson and the others were able to catch up to me now... After all, since the fox prefers human blood anyway, each of us could just contribute a little of our blood! We'd then be able to lure the fox out again for sure! But who knows how long I may need to wait for them to arrive... If I wait any longer, the fox could very well escape the valley and I wouldn't even know it!" muttered Gerald to himself in a depressed tone as he did one final check on the puppy.

The now bandaged puppy, on the other hand, crawled in front of Gerald and simply rested its head again on Gerald's food.

"Hey now, I told you that I didn't have any further time to worry about you, right? I'm sorry, but there's just something important I have to do now..." said Gerald as he smiled bitterly while watching the little puppy latch onto him.

However, the puppy simply refused to leave Gerald alone.

At that moment, Gerald's ear twitched slightly. Someone was coming toward him. The puppy itself instantly got up and began barking in the direction the sound was coming from.

After a few barks, it began wagging its tail excitedly as it looked back at Gerald before blinking its eyes.

Turning to look at the puppy—whose tongue was now hanging out—Gerald simply asked with a wry smile on his face, “So you’re as alert as I am! Still, aren’t you afraid of the possibility that the person who comes over will kill you after you’ve attracted their attention?”

Oddly, the puppy simply raised its head a bit higher while continuing to look at Gerald, a strange clarity in its eyes.

“...Hmm? Could it be that you were listening to my mumbling earlier...? Do you know that I require human blood? Is that why you’re deliberately trying to attract that person over?”

Gerald was only making such a bold claim since after reading through the Book of Beasts, Gerald could now more or less tell what most animals meant by their actions.

Upon realizing that its message got across, the puppy instantly nodded before wagging its tail happily.

“Well I’ll be d*mned! You truly do have a spiritual nature!” said Gerald as he patted the puppy’s head.

It wasn’t long after when a figure could finally be seen from afar. Swiftly making their way toward Gerald, the person who finally emerged from the miasma snorted coldly before saying, “No wonder I couldn’t track you down no matter how hard I searched for you! So you had escaped here this entire time!”

Naturally, it was none other than the old man from earlier.

Gerald himself was extremely delighted to see the old man. Rubbing the puppy’s head gently to indicate that it did a great job, Gerald then replied, “Oh? You were hunting me down? I really hadn’t noticed!”

Chapter 1030

With that, he laughed. While he was excited to find a source of blood, he was also genuinely surprised by the old man’s statement.

“Indeed! You’ve been a huge waste of time and effort, you know? Regardless, since I managed to bump into you while looking for one final essential ingredient for my medicine, I believe that both of us were destined to meet here. While it was a pity that I wasn’t able to kill you back then in the Salford Province, it seems that you’re just itching to die since you brought yourself right to my doorstep this time! It’s high time we settled all our past grudges and grievances today, Mr. Crawford!” replied the old man, his gaze frigid.

“Ah, yes, you were still working for the Schuylers back then in the Salford Province if I remember correctly. We didn’t even hate each other yet at the time. Sometime after that incident happened, however, I was surprised that you weren’t even present when I returned to the province around six months ago. So it turns out that you had moved to the Northern region!” said Gerald as he stared back at the old man.

The old man quite literally had both halves of his face painted black and white respectively. It made his face look like the symbol of yin and yang.

Back when both of them had first met, the old man—who went by the name of Julian—had been under the guise of Yael’s butler. From the moment they met, Gerald could already sense that Julian wasn’t an ordinary person.

His gut feeling eventually turned out to be right, and Julian had left a deep impression on Gerald ever since that incident. Gerald had also found it odd that Julian wasn’t present back when he destroyed the Schuyler family for good.

“Well, I was initially under the impression that the Schuylers would eventually be able to overtake the Fendersons. If all had gone according to plan, then the Schuylers would’ve easily and consequently used their newly acquired power to destroy the Crawfords! However, from the moment I realized that Noah had secretly tried to curry favor the Crawfords under the pretense that he was going to destroy the Fendersons, I knew from that point on that even if Noah managed to eventually take over the Fenderson family, he would never have the balls to actually go against the Crawfords! After all, I understood him far too well by that point. That was the main reason I left them!”

“Wanting to continue improving my strength, I ended up coming to Everdare Forest in search of ingredients for me to brew an elixir to grant me just that! After searching for so long, I’ve finally managed to gather all the necessary medicinal herbs that I need to brew it. However, there is still one last ingredient I need that is essential to perfecting the elixir. And that’s a heart! Since I actually managed to meet up with you here, I’ll definitely be using the heart of a Crawford to complete the elixir! What perfect timing for you to show yourself at this moment! Hahaha!” explained Julian with his hands still behind his back.

“What did the Crawfords even do to you for you to hate them so much? For you to resort to all sorts of trickery and make endlessly attempts to get me?”

“Heh, it’s simple really. Did you know that the Crawfords are far too powerful? Your family holds so much power that even a single order that they give is enough to wipe out an entire clan. Even though those from the Laker family only hurt one of the Yalman’s young masters back then, your family retaliated by taking the lives of hundreds of the Laker’s family members! And just like that, my family was almost completely wiped out, despite the fact that we were one of the four major families in Yanken at the time!” growled Julian, his rage reflected in his eyes.

Upon hearing that, Gerald was finally able to see the bigger picture. Recalling what his grandmother had told him, there were once four major families in Yanken. Since his mother had eloped with his father back then instead of going through the

arranged marriage that the Yalemans had promised with the Lakers, the Laker family had expressed their dissatisfaction by attacking his fifth uncle who was still in a vegetative state today because of them.

In retaliation, his father then exterminated most of the Laker family. It was now evident that the old man now standing before him was a descendant of the Lakers.

“Hahaha! God truly is on my side this time! I guess my trip to the Logan Province wasn’t a wasted decision after all!” added Julian with a booming laugh.

“...I’m sorry!” replied Gerald.

“Heh! How ridiculous! Do you think apologizing will help you evade death?” scoffed Julian as he pointed at Gerald while shaking his head.

“Well, it’s less to do with that and more to do with the complicated feelings I’m currently experiencing... After all, I don’t even know whether I should thank or sympathize with you!”

“...You want to thank me?”

“Indeed. After all, I’m in dire need of human blood now since I wish to lure the holy fox out. Not only are you human, but you’re also fairly capable and well-trained! You’re the perfect sacrificial candidate to get it to show itself! I don’t really know how else to express my gratitude since you’re going to be dead soon anyway, but I’ll promise to kill you quickly and painlessly! I’ll also be leaving your body fully intact so don’t worry about that!” said Gerald extremely sincerely.

Immediately frowning, Julian then retorted, “You... You brat! Did it only take a year for your mental state to regress that much? Do you honestly think you can even lay a finger on me?!”

“You’ll see in a second. Please understand that I have no better choice!” replied Gerald.

“That’s enough nonsense! You’ve clearly gone bonkers! Regardless, I’ll be taking your life now, Mr. Crawford! I really want to see the look of Dylan’s face once he receives your corpse! Hahaha!”

Upon ending his sentence, Dylan immediately made a mad dash toward Gerald, aiming a punch at him!

Gerald himself retaliated with his own punch, and as their fists collided, the sound of snapping bones could instantly be heard.

It took Julian a second to register the pain, but when it finally hit, he realized a second too late that he was already falling to the ground. Spurting blood in between screams of anguish, the old man had a terrified expression on his face.

It was as though he had come face to face with the most powerful force he had ever encountered in his entire life.

Not giving in that easily, Julian immediately got up again—albeit a bit wobbly—as he attempted to make another punch! However, the moment his fist collided with Gerald’s chest, it felt akin to him punching an immovable mountain. In fact, the impact of the blow probably hurt Julian even more!

“...Y-you... You...!” growled Julian, spurting blood the entire time as he looked at Gerald in utter disbelief.

All the paths to his vital energy flow had been severed by this point, just because of a single punch from Gerald. It had only been a year since they had last met.

How was he this strong now? It was simply impossible, right?

Chapter 1031

Whatever the case was, Julian now finally understood why Gerald had been so happy to see him rather than being frightened.

So Gerald was already this strong... Not only that, his moves were also highly unpredictable and his body was near invincible!

It was evident that Gerald already knew that Julian was never a match against him from the very beginning. Thinking back, Gerald had even thanked him for presenting himself!

Regret was now coursing through Julian as he wondered if things could’ve gone differently if he hadn’t decided to chase after Gerald earlier. If he had just gone home after murdering those few people, then he could’ve brewed the elixir and possibly gained the opportunity to enter the mysterious realm of inner strength.

However, it was much too late for regrets now.

“What... What are you planning to do with me...?” said Julian in between pants, already on his last legs.

“I’ll be drawing your blood now. Worry not, for I’ll keep your body intact just as I’ve promised! May you enter the afterlife with peace of mind!” said Gerald as he gently grabbed hold of Julian’s neck...

With a loud snap, Julian’s eyes widened before finally going vacant. The old man was dead.

After gathering sufficient blood, Gerald looked around for some herbs to use in order to further refine the old man’s blood essence.

Once he was done, Gerald placed the bait in clear view before bringing the puppy along with him and hiding, lying in wait for the fox to make its appearance.

Gerald held on to his black dagger tightly the entire time, an extremely tense expression on his face as he and the puppy continued lying in ambush.

He was sure that the fox would eventually make an appearance. It had to. After all, the fox was only facing extinction due to its inherently greedy nature.

As Gerald thought about that, the puppy’s eyes suddenly widened. Realizing that, Gerald held his breath as well as the holy fox slowly walked over to the bait! It was finally here!

Though the fox was clearly approaching the bait extremely cautiously, it was also evident that it was now already blinded by greed.

After scanning through the area multiple times, the holy fox finally decided to make a quick dash toward the blood, squeaking loudly in greed!

Now was his chance!

He wasn’t going to allow it to escape anymore!

Raising his dagger, Gerald swiftly tossed his dagger at the holy fox! A split second later, the blade connected with the fox’s Achilles heel, sending it squealing loudly for one final time before flopping to the ground, dead.

The deed was done!

Rushing over to pick up the lifeless fox's body, Gerald was overjoyed as he said, "Hahaha! You've truly helped me a great deal today, Julian! Your blood was the perfect bait for the holy fox!"

Even the puppy was barking while wagging its tail happily.

"Don't worry, I haven't forgotten about you! To express my gratitude, I'll lead you out of the forest with me once I've drunk the blood. After that, you can eat whatever you want to your heart's content!" added Gerald as he smiled.

Following that, he hugged the puppy and carried it over to a nearby cave with the holy fox's corpse in his other hand.

Now that he had acquired the fox, he needed to drink its holy blood quickly.

After all, according to the Book of Beasts, the holy blood would only remain holy for a short amount of time after the fox passed away. If he continued dragging on for too long, the holy property would cease to exist, resulting in all his efforts being for naught.

As he prepared himself to drink the blood, Gerald remembered the properties of the holy blood based on what his grandfather had once told him. From what he remembered, the blood itself was holy since it had slowly accumulated holiness from both the heavens and the earth, thus filling the blood with an immense amount of energy.

Not only would the blood help nourish and supplement one's heart and temperament, but it would also greatly improve the drinker's inner strength. However, in order to fully utilize the blood, Gerald had to use a special breathing method that, in accordance with how much he had trained and the extent of his current abilities, would take him about three days to complete the fusion.

"Alright puppy, listen here. I'll be blocking the cave's entrance for the next three days. During that period, I'll be in a deep sleep. Your job will be to make sure no insects or small beasts come near me during my sleep. Do you understand?" said Gerald as he gently patted the puppy's head.

Barking in agreement, the puppy then hung its tongue out as it happily followed Gerald into the cave.

Meanwhile, another group of people—which consisted of well over a hundred men—seemed to be searching around for someone within the dense Everdare Forest.

All of them were fully equipped with weapons, and among them, a young man in his twenties could be seen walking with the group, his hands behind his back as several elderly men walked by his side.

“Has he not been found yet?” asked the young man with a frown.

“We still don’t have any leads on him!” replied his subordinate.

Chapter 1032

“Bring the Lovewell over!” ordered the young man as his frown deepened.

Hearing that, the man’s subordinates brought a severely injured Zander and Kaleb over to face him.

“Are you absolutely sure that you didn’t lie when you said he was coming over to Everdare Forest?” asked the young man.

“Why would I even lie to you about such a thing, Mr. Moldell? He truly did say that he was headed to this place! Also, I do hope that you realize that it wasn’t the Lovewells who killed the eight Moldell family members! Please keep that in mind...!” replied Zander, a fearful expression on his face.

The young man who had been asking the questions went by the name of Yuvan Moldell, and he was the second son of the Moldell family’s head. Zander himself had already heard tales about him long ago. Tales of how cold and ruthless that man’s methods were.

Being a businessman, Zander knew that he couldn’t afford to further offend either Gerald or the Moldells. However, when the Moldells sent people over to investigate once they caught wind of the eight Moldell family members’ deaths within the Lovewell Manor, he had no other choice but to truthfully tell them where Gerald was.

It was the reason why Yuvan and his subordinates were currently conducting their search for Gerald here.

“The Moldells have always deeply resented Gerald, and it’s already been over a year since the Moldells have actively gone against the Crawfords. Therefore, I truly hope that you’re not lying to me for your sake. After all, it would be better for you not to get involved in our battle!” replied Yuvan casually.

“B-but of course, of course!” replied Zander hurriedly.

“Second young master, we may have found traces of him!” reported one of Yuvan’s subordinates at that moment as he walked over to face the man.

Long story short, they had located a few corpses lying on the ground who were dressed like villagers from the foot of the mountain. What more, their corpses were still quite fresh and there were some signs of a struggle at the scene. They were also able to locate a faint trail of trampled greenery that led deeper into the forest.

All of a sudden, the search dogs that the Moldells had brought along with them suddenly began barking while facing a particular direction!

“...Hmm? ...There are people in the vicinity. If the dogs are barking, then he mustn’t be too far off! Double your search efforts!” ordered Yuvan.

Hearing that, his subordinates immediately obeyed.

“Still, I recall going to the Crawford family’s mansion about a year ago... Back then, Gerald was still living there, and as far as I can remember, he was just a fragile young lad at the time! It truly makes one wonder what the boy had gone through during his year of absence.

After all, he managed to kill Yaster and the seven other Moldells! A group of people who could be considered to be masters in our family! How could he have grown so strong to be able to defeat them so easily? How incredible!” said an old man who was walking behind Yuvan as he frowned.

“So what if he managed to end Yaster’s life? After all, he has yet to face the true experts from our family...” replied Yuvan, a wry smile on his face.

It was a little while later when from within a valley that lay ahead, a person shouted, “We’ve found him!”

Upon hearing that, Yuvan hastened his steps as all of them arrived at a cave’s entrance. Beside it, was a large stone that must have been used to block anyone from entering.

Though one of Yuvan’s men was desperately holding onto his profusely bleeding neck as he lay on the ground, Yuvan’s full attention was on the pale and lifeless-looking man who was lying motionless inside the cave.

“I... I’ve finally found you, Gerald!” declared Yuvan as he knitted his brows before turning to look at his injured subordinate.

“What’s wrong with him?”

“He was attacked by that fierce dog over there, second young master! Seeing that the dog serves as Gerald’s protector, I’ll kill it immediately!” explained Yuvan.

With that, the subordinate began approaching the puppy with a rope in hand. Upon managing to lasso the puppy, it immediately growled before barking wildly, all the fur on its body standing upright as though it was ready to launch an attack!

Hearing the fearsome barks, several of the subordinates couldn’t help but back away from it. The puppy was so intimidating that some of the men even ended up messing up their pants!

“...Hmm? Interesting... Don’t kill it first. Bring it back to the Moldell Manor together with Gerald!” ordered Yuvan when he saw his subordinates’ reactions toward the puppy.

Obedying his orders, a few of the subordinates then began transferring Gerald out of the cave. After bringing him out, an old man—who had been standing beside Yuvan—checked Gerald’s pulse and upon realizing that it was very weak, he said, “Didn’t everyone say that this lad was all-powerful and capable? He seems half-dead to me! Though that’s honestly a good thing. Otherwise, he’d definitely try to escape again!”

His comment on Gerald’s situation clearly wasn’t anything crucial. The old man had simply stated it without giving it much thought.

However, upon hearing that, Yuvan turned to coldly look at him before replying, “Escape? He’s already in my hands now. Even if he were to wake up, do you honestly think he would be able to escape under my supervision?”

“N-not at all, second young master!” said the old man hurriedly.

Knowing that he had just dodged a bullet, the old man then lowered his gaze to look at Gerald again. Though it only lasted for a split second, the old man was shocked when he saw a sudden flash of red on Gerald’s pale face as the subordinates began carrying him away.

Chapter 1033

‘...Was that my imagination?’ Thought the old man to himself, feeling slightly suspicious.

While he wanted to warn Yuvan about it, the old man knew how arrogant he was. What more, Yuvan had already given him an angry glare of dissatisfaction earlier. If he were to say anything else, Yuvan’s anger would most definitely grow.

'...I must've just seen wrongly!'

Regardless, the Moldells had finally been able to capture Gerald after an entire year of searching for him. In other words, they now had the ultimate bargaining chip to use against the Crawfords of Northbay.

With that in mind, it was natural for all the Moldells of the Logan Province to feel extremely excited.

"That kid really knows how to hide! We had to burn through so many financial resources and use endless connections but it all paid off. We've finally captured him today!"

"Hahaha! The Moldells of Logan will finally be able to rule over the region now! Since Gerald is the only heir to the Crawford family and he's also Dylan's most beloved son, it won't be long before we finally get our hands on the Crawford family's assets!"

As the Moldell family members continued discussing the matter, a guest bodyguard—who was mainly working for the Long family—happened to hear everything they said.

After hearing what they had to say for a while, he swiftly ran toward a room before opening the door and saying, "Miss, I bring important news!"

The 'miss' in question, was none other than Xavia who was carefully applying makeup at the time her guard entered.

Since something big had happened between the Lovewells and the Moldells, the Longs naturally had to cancel their negotiation plans with Zander. Due to that, Xavia had to leave Zander's manor which explained why she was temporarily staying in the Modell family's home for now.

"What's the news?" asked Xavia.

Gulping, the bodyguard then replied, "It's about Gerald from the Crawford family! I heard that the Moldells have finally been able to locate and capture him today after trying to find him for over a year!"

The moment she heard that, the powder box in Xavia's hand fell to the ground with a loud 'clang' as the trembling woman turned to look at her guard.

“...W-what did you say? Gerald? So... The Gerald who had been active in the Lovewell family in the past few days truly was the Gerald from the Crawford family?” stuttered Xavia as she abruptly stood up, completely stunned by the revelation.

“Undoubtedly so, miss! All the other Moldells are currently discussing the matter! What more, I heard they found Gerald in a terrible state! They described him as being, ‘half-dead’!” replied the bodyguard.

Hearing that, Xavia found herself clenching her fists tightly. She was facing a cocktail of complicated emotions now.

Did she hate Gerald? She did. She hated him a lot. After all, if Gerald had simply been willing to stay together with her, then she wouldn't have needed to go to the Longs in the first place. What more, he had dumped her the moment he found out that he was rich!

No matter what happened, Xavia could never deny that she was filled with hatred for Gerald.

...Even so, Xavia couldn't help but feel distressed after hearing that Gerald had been caught and could very well already be dying.

Besides, no matter what had happened between them, she couldn't deny that he used to love her unconditionally once upon a time ago.

The exact same thoughts had run through her mind back when she had allowed Gerald to escape back then.

Pacing back and forth in her frustration, Xavia then muttered to herself, “What should I do... What should I do?! If I don't do something then the Moldells will definitely kill him!”

“Even if they don't, I personally feel that he won't survive for much longer anyway... From what I heard, he was already almost out of breath when they found him! Regardless, he's currently been thrown into the Moldell Manor's dungeon!” replied the bodyguard.

Upon hearing that, Xavia's anxiety only grew worse. It was a brief moment later when she closed her eyes and took in a deep breath. When she opened them again, there was a resolute look in her eyes.

“...Humph! I already told myself that I wouldn’t have anything else to do with him once I let him off back then! Whether he lives or dies, that no longer has anything to do with me!” declared Xavia as she sat down again.

Hahaha... She couldn’t believe that she had almost forgotten the reason she had been working this hard for the past few years. Was it all not for her to be able to live a better life than him?

Chapter 1034

Due to that reasoning, wasn’t it a good thing that he was dying now?

“...If you truly wish to see him for one final time, I may have a solution for you, miss...”

“What’s your plan?!” replied Xavia immediately upon hearing that.

However, she quickly realized her gaffe and said, “...W-who the hell would even want to see him? Actually, hold on, I’d really love to see the miserable state he’s currently in before he dies! Hahaha!”

“...I see. Regardless, the key to the dungeon has always been in the hands of the Moldell family’s butler. Since I’m acquainted with the butler’s chance, there exists a chance that he may help us!” replied the bodyguard.

“Please help me contact him then!” said Xavia.

A little while later, the duo stood before the butler’s son that Xavia’s guard had mentioned. The lad himself had a crooked back and he immediately began shaking his head rapidly upon hearing Xavia’s request.

“Now hold on! Do remember that Gerald is currently the most wanted person by the Moldells! Even my father isn’t qualified to meet him at this point! What more, the security within the dungeon is extremely strict to the point where several of the Moldells themselves aren’t able to pay him a visit! Imagine what that would spell for a Long!”

“There must be a way for you to get me in! State your condition!” replied Xavia as she looked at him right in the eye.

Hearing that, the butler’s son momentarily stared at Xavia before a wretched expression formed on his face. Seeing that, Xavia couldn’t help but take a few steps back.

“...With all due respect, Miss Yorke, I’ve heard that your husband is a little slow in the head, correct? You must be lonely if that’s the case...” said the butler’s son as he slowly walked forward and gently held onto Xavia’s wrist.

“To be quite honest, from the moment I met you, I’ve been fascinated by your beauty... From that moment onward, I swore to myself that if I ever got the opportunity to get intimate with you, I’d be more than willing to die for your sake!” added the butler’s son.

“Please restrain yourself, Mr. Quillan! If you truly like me, then please be magnanimous with me and allow me to meet Gerald! If you do so, then I’ll be plenty grateful to you!” replied Xavia as she pulled her hand back.

Frowning, he then replied, “You seem rather reluctant to leave that Gerald... What is your relationship with him? Why do you insist so much on seeing him?”

“I won’t lie that Gerald used to be my boyfriend back in university, Mr. Quillan. In short, I wish to meet up with him to exact my revenge one final time. After all, I won’t ever be able to do such a thing again once he’s dead!” said Xavia as a hint of resentment momentarily reflected in Xavia’s eyes.

“Hahaha! I see... So you had such a past with Gerald... Alright then, Miss Yorke. I’m willing to risk my life to get your request done. However, I do hope that you’ll eventually repay my favor once the matter is over, right?” said Quillan rather maliciously as Xavia turned around to leave as soon as she heard that he was agreeing to do it.

Not even looking back at him, she then replied, “The next few days will be highly inconvenient for me. I’ll thank you sometime in the future, Mr. Quillan.”

“That’s completely understandable! After all, inconvenient days will always exist for girls!” replied Quillan with a wry smile after hearing that he would eventually get his way.

“Regardless, I’ll retrieve the key from my father tonight. However, do note that you’ll only have five minutes with him! Otherwise, I’ll truly be as good as dead!” added Quillan.

“Five minutes is all I need! Thank you, Mr. Quillan!”

“Ah, speaking of which, Miss Yorke-”

Though Quillan had initially planned to take advantage of Xavia, his sentence ended up hanging since Xavia had already walked off in a hurry at that point.

Smiling coldly at himself, Quillan then thought, 'Ah, young lady... I've been interested in you for the longest time, you know? To think that I'll finally be able to get my hands on you in a few days... Hahaha!'

Soon enough, night fell and Xavia entered the dungeon sporting sportswear and a cap.

"Remember! Five minutes! I'll stand guard over the door!" whispered Quillan as Xavia sneaked deeper into the dungeon.

Eventually, she caught sight of Gerald's body that was sprawled on the dungeon's floor.

"G-Gerald!" said Xavia, unable to hold herself back from calling out to him.

It had been an entire year since she had last met him. To think that they would meet again under such circumstances.

Seeing the terrible state he was in, all the hatred Xavia had in her heart simply melted away as she added, "G-Gerald, wake up! Are you truly going to die soon...?"

Getting no reply, she then ran over to him, gently shaking his weak body. No matter how much she shook, however, his pale face remained unresponsive.

Chapter 1035

Seeing him in such a state made Xavia feel extremely uncomfortable. After all, her feelings toward him were still quite vague. However, she knew for a fact that though she hated him, she still loved him even more.

"Please... Please wake up now...!" wept the distressed girl as she slowly slumped to the floor to sit beside Gerald.

This person had once given her the most beautiful thing in the world... He had given her selfless love. A love that meant that he didn't mind losing everything just for her, and Xavia was well aware of that this entire time.

"Gerald... I know you hate me... After all, I, of all people, ended up bullying you like the others back then... I... I just couldn't help it at the time... I didn't want to continue living a life where I had to constantly be despised and belittled... You know, even as a child, my biggest fear had always been others looking down on me! I... I just want others to envy and adore me...! But none of that matters anymore because regardless of how much fame I gain, I've come to realize that you'll always be the only one in my heart, Gerald... So please... Please don't die, Gerald!" said Xavia as she laid her head against Gerald's chest while sobbing her eyes out.

At that moment, the unconscious Gerald suddenly began scrunching his face into a slight frown.

Seconds later, Gerald's body suddenly began emitting a red glow!!

Lifting her head in surprise, Xavia watched in shock as a scorching surge of energy suddenly burst out of Gerald's body! Since her hand had still been on his chest when that happened, Xavia quickly retracted it in pain. It felt as though she had just touched a hot iron!

Yelping in surprise and pain, she immediately got up and took a few steps backward as she stared wide-eyed at Gerald.

'...W-what...? What the hell was that? Why was his body so hot?'

As Xavia tried to rationalize what had just happened, the red glow quickly faded and Gerald's face turned pale again.

Still extremely confused as to what had just taken place, Quillan walked over to her out of the blue before saying, "Time's up, Miss Yorke! Should the next person in shift arrive, it'll become increasingly difficult for you to leave then! It's high time you left!"

Not noticing Quillan's wretched smile as she continued staring worriedly at Gerald, she simply nodded before replying, "...Got it..."

"Heh, that person's as good as gone, Miss Yorke. There's nothing else you can do for him. Also, I hope you remember your promise with me. Once your business is over in the next few days, you'll have to give me what I deserve! Understand?" said Quillan, as he tried to take advantage of her again.

"Let's just leave this place first, Mr. Quillan!" replied Xavia as she quickly dodged his advances and left the area.

Scratching his chin, Quillan felt that the more he looked at Xavia, the more he wanted to get his hands on her.

"You'll be mine for sure...! Heh!" muttered Quillan to himself as he failed to notice Gerald's slowly intensifying frown.

Fast forward to the morning three days later, the Moldells seemed to be extremely busy.

Decades ago, Kort had secretly established his own power in the Logan Province, unbeknownst to the main Moldell family. He had done so due to his greed for worldly wealth and prosperity.

Slowly but surely, the Moldells continued growing and annexing till it became the largest family in Weston to date. While all appeared to be going well, their main goal had always been to take over the Crawford family in Northbay.

Once they acquired the Crawford family, then the Moldells would certainly have near-infinite strength. Now that they had finally gotten their hands on Gerald, they could use him as a bargaining chip to achieve their dreams! It definitely explained why the Moldells were all so excited now.

In relation to their plan, they were also busy preparing to relocate their family back to the south.

It was near noon when everyone finally relaxed for a bit to have a family luncheon.

“The head of the family will be arriving in the Logan Province around tomorrow night! I do wonder how he’s going to reward us! Hahaha!”

“How else could he reward us? Remember, the head once mentioned that Gerald could easily be traded in with at least half of the Crawford family’s assets! Once he achieves that, he can easily just hand us one of the many regions he’ll soon have full control over!”

“Hahaha! Just a region? I’m afraid that you’re seriously underestimating the true power of the Crawfords! Did you not know that the Crawford family’s industries are scattered throughout the world? A region to them could very well be equivalent to having power over an entire country!”

“How impressive!”

The Moldells were now discussing the matter among themselves rather excitedly.

Chapter 1036

“Second young master, I’ve no idea what’s wrong with your dogs today! They simply refuse to eat! As if that wasn’t odd enough, they keep biting onto their chains with panicked expressions on their faces! Could they possibly have encountered something when we brought them into the mountains three days ago?” said a housekeeper to Yuvan as the others were still enjoying their lunch.

“Encountered something? Nothing comes to mind. They could be ill, so call a vet in to have a look at them!” sneered Yuvan.

The moment his sentence ended, however, a servant came stumbling in next before saying, “S-second young master! Bad news! Two of your dogs have just died! I don’t even know what happened! One moment they suddenly started acting all crazy and the next, both of them were already foaming at their mouths!”

Since the servant was well aware of how much the second young master loved raising dogs, he had immediately told Yuwan about the discovery to avoid getting into any unnecessary trouble.

“What?! Take me to them!” replied Yuwan anxiously as all the other members of the Moldell family followed him into the backyard.

The backyard itself was home to nearly a hundred domesticated dogs. Unlike how they usually behaved, however, all of them seemed to have gone completely rabid today! Many of them were even struggling and gnawing onto their iron cages!

During the short period Yuwan was there, he witnessed the death of another three dogs to his dismay.

“Call a vet over immediately and have them have a look at what’s wrong with these dogs!” ordered Yuwan as many of the other Moldells started panicking.

What was the cause of all this? It was almost as though the dogs were sensing some sort of imminent disaster!

Since none of the dogs could be calmed down, the vet wasn’t even able to properly diagnose them since it was impossible to check on any of them without first getting severely injured.

By the time evening came, over half of the dogs there were barely alive.

Around that time, an acquaintance of Quillan’s saw him moving around rather sneakily. Raising a brow, he then called out, “Hey, have you heard of the dogs going crazy? The last place most of them went was Everdare forest so there must be a connection with that place! Regardless, nobody can even guess what could’ve triggered such a reaction among them!”

Despite him obviously talking to Quillan, Quillan himself simply ignored him, snickering as he continued walking down a hallway where the rooms were. Walking over to him, his acquaintance then patted him on the shoulder before adding, “Hey, I’m talking to you, Quillan!”

Jolting slightly, it was made evident that Quillan's mind was so preoccupied that he hadn't even noticed that he was the person his friend had been talking to.

"...Eh? They're just dogs anyway! What's the big deal even if they die? Speaking of which, where are you headed to, Luis?" replied Quillan quickly.

"Where else could I be going? I'm heading down the dungeon to see if that Gerald person is already dead! If he's still alive, I've been ordered to force-feed some congee to him! The congee itself has been laced with Scatter Pills, so even if he miraculously remains alive, he'll certainly still end up being demented!" explained Luis.

"I see. Well, then hurry up and get the job done! If there's nothing else, I'll talk to you later!"

"It's almost dark, though... And besides, where are you headed to...?" muttered Luis to himself as he scratched the back of his head while looking at Quillan who had bolted off as soon as his sentence ended.

After making sure that Luis was no longer there, Quillan rubbed his hands together as he knocked on Xavia's door.

"Who's there?" asked Xavia as she opened the door.

The moment she saw the wretched expression on Quillan's face, a hint of disgust was momentarily reflected in Xavia's eyes.

"...Ah, it's you, Mr. Quillan! What brings you here?" asked Xavia rather casually.

Quillan himself couldn't keep his eyes still at all. After all, Xavia was currently wearing a close-fitting short dress and her hair had been let loose.

Gulping as he continued looking at the alluring woman standing before him, Quillan then replied, "Since I've already done what you've wanted, I'm here to ask when you'll be fulfilling your half of the promise."

Hearing that, Xavia frowned slightly though she quickly hid her disgust behind a façade.

"Regarding that, Mr. Quillan, it's true that I've agreed to repay your kindness, and I definitely will. However, wouldn't it be best to let that discussion wait till morning? After all, it's already getting dark now and Mr. Yuvan is still very anxious because of his dogs. You should head over to console him!" said Xavia as she immediately tried to close the door behind her.

However, Quillan held onto the door with a chuckle before replying, "Now, now, I already knew you were going to say that... I'm well aware that you're not interested in me... Hell, you probably look down on me! However, that doesn't change the fact that I've liked and admired you for the longest time. I even risked my life just to allow you to meet up with Gerald, you know? So no matter what you say, I'm getting what I want, Miss Yorke!"

Her disgust now apparent on her face, Xavia glared at him as she replied, "Please be more respectful, Mr. Quillan! I hope you remember that I'm here as a representative of the Long family! Not only that, but I'm also a guest of the Moldells!"

"Heh! Guest? Miss Yorke, the Longs are nothing more than pawns to the Moldell family! So as I've said before, you're going to be mine today!" sneered Quillan as he immediately rushed toward Xavia!

Chapter 1037

"What the hell are you doing?! Help! Help m-"

Before Xavia could shout any further, Quillan covered her mouth with a white towel! Though she squirmed hard to escape his grasp, Xavia slowly felt as her vision blurred. Soon enough, she struggled no more.

At the same time, Gerald's ears suddenly twitched in his deep slumber. Still within the dungeon, he slowly opened his eyes.

The moment he did so, his eyes briefly sparkled a fluorescent green before returning to normal a few seconds later.

It surprised Gerald, to say the least, to know that he was now able to see even the tiniest of details within the dungeon cell, despite the fact that it was almost pitch black in there.

His greatly improved hearing capability was a pleasant surprise as well. As long as he wanted to, he could now apparently hear things clearly, even if they were far away!

Sitting up, Gerald slowly got to his feet before hopping in place to get his muscles moving.

Upon looking at his skin, he realized that there were several trails of black stains oozing out of it. From what he could guess, they were impurities that had been cleansed from his body.

'I guess they don't call it holy blood for nothing... Not only did it stabilize my heart and temperament, but I now feel stronger than ever!' Gerald thought to himself, overjoyed.

It wasn't even a stretch at this point to assume that his inner strength had now doubled from what it had been three days ago.

'And here I was planning to pay the Moldells a visit and deal with them once and for all after drinking the holy blood... To think that they actually saved me the trouble by bringing me right into their home!' Gerald thought to himself as he sneered.

Oh right, he still needed to save Xavia!

Though Gerald was mostly immobile in the past three days, his mind was far from unconscious. In fact, he was well aware of everything that was happening around him throughout that period of time. It was the reason how he had heard Xavia's earlier scream for help.

Thinking about Xavia, he recalled everything that she had told him that night. Gerald knew he would only be lying to himself if he claimed that her words hadn't touched him at all.

Adding the fact that she had risked her life just to visit him in the dungeon with her actions a year ago that ended up saving his life, Gerald was well aware of how difficult it was now going to be for him to even come close to repaying her kindness.

Knitting his brows slightly, he knew those thoughts could wait. For now, he needed to save Xavia first!

Staring briefly at the iron gate before him, Gerald placed a hand on the gate and tugged on it.

A loud crumbling sound followed as the surrounding walls supporting the gate collapsed with it! Seemingly unfazed by his inhuman strength, Gerald walked out just in time to catch a person running down into the dungeon.

When their eyes met, the person immediately stuttered, "...G-Gerald...? You... You're awake?!"

The man holding the bowl of congee was naturally none other than Luis.

"M-Men! Men! Get in here!" shouted Luis as he immediately attempted to run out of the dungeon to get some help.

Luis had been one of the people who had seen the carnage that Gerald had left behind at the Lovewell manor. It was exactly because of that, that he now had an innate fear of him. Adding that to the fact that he was well aware of how weak he was, there was no way in hell that he was going to stay within Gerald's presence any longer than he needed to!

However, before he could even make it far from where he had once stood, the disgusting sound of flesh being ripped apart could be heard.

It took Luis a second to realize what had just happened. Thankfully, he was dead by the time his body split in two.

Climbing up the stairs, Gerald casually walked past the corpse as he slowly exited the dungeon. His ears were perked as he attempted to pinpoint which direction Xavia was in.

From what he could hear, a few members of the Moldell family were currently in the backyard. There were also quite a few people in the guestroom area.

Walking along as he continued trying to locate Xavia, he swiftly and efficiently dealt with anyone that ran into him.

When he finally found her not too long after, he stood by her door before kicking it open!

Gerald was immediately greeted to the sight of Quillan tearing Xavia's clothes apart.

Shocked to hear the door being flung open, Quillan immediately turned to look at the mud-covered visitor who looked like he had just crawled out from the earth.

"W-who are you?" asked Quillan, clearly at a loss of how to even register the situation.

Though Xavia was currently still extremely weak, she was easily able to tell who the person at the door was.

"...G-Gerald... hurry... Please hurry and save me...!" cried out Xavia.

Stunned, Quillan then said, "...Gerald? He... He's escaped?!"

Frightened beyond words, Quillan then ran toward the corner of the room, his eyes alternating between Gerald and the exit. Before Quillan could even start planning his escape, Gerald was already standing in front of him!

“Hmm...?” replied Gerald as he lifted the terrified man by his neck.

Chapter 1038

“P-please! Spare me! Don’t kill me!”

“...Spare? You’re a Moldell, aren’t you? And all Moldells deserve to die!” growled Gerald as he tightened his grip until the—now familiar sound of—snapping bones could be heard.

As Gerald dropped Quillan’s lifeless body to the ground, Xavia weakly sat up on the bed before asking, “G-Gerald... You’re... You’re fine?!”

“I am, indeed!” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Before anything else, I’ll need to borrow your room for a quick shower!”

It was sometime later when all the members of the Moldell family were gathered in their manor’s main hall.

“Trash! All of you! Can you not even take good care of a few dogs?!” roared Yuvan who had already lost his temper at this point.

Yuvan had spent a lot of time and effort to train each of his dogs, so they were all equally important to him. Due to that, everyone in the family understood where his immense anger was stemming from. However, it’s not like they could do anything about it.

“Get lost! All of you!” scowled Yuvan as the group of vets immediately fled in fright.

As Yuvan tried to keep his cool, an old man walked up to his side before saying, “Something seems to be very wrong!”

The old man went by the name of Yash, and he was the chief butler of the Moldell family. Not only that, but he was also one of the strongest and most experienced masters among the other members of the Moldell family in the Logan Province.

“What is this time...?” grumbled Yuvan in his bad mood.

“I’ll be frank and say that I’ve been feeling this unease ever since we returned from Everdare Forest. The feeling has only amplified with the fact that over half of our family’s dogs have already died of madness within the past three days. All of these are ominous signs... Would you mind if I expressed my thoughts on all this?” replied Yash quickly.

Waving his hand, Yuvan then said, “Hurry up and say it.”

“...Well, I just have this strong premonition that something terrible is going to befall the Moldells soon, and Gerald will be the cause of it! Whenever I end up thinking about him, I can neither eat nor sleep well at all... You know, I’ve been instructing the servants to add Scatter Pills into the congee they feed him just for extra measure-”

Before the old man could continue saying anything, Yuvan interrupted him by replying, “Butler Moldell, I believe that all this only stems from your fear of him... While it’s true that Mr. Yaster and the others have all suffered terrible deaths, we can’t just take the Lovewell family’s word by word description of the event as pure fact! Think about it! Mr. Yaster has been training for the longest time and he was already considered to be one of the Moldell family’s top masters from a young age! How could Gerald possibly have had the power and ability to kill him off so easily? The way I see it, the Lovewells must have colluded with Gerald to deceive Mr. Yaster! After all, that’s a much more plausible scenario, no?”

After saying that, Yuvan simply shook his head.

Yash himself sighed before saying, “I really hope that that’s the case... It would truly be for the best if everything remained as peaceful as it currently is before the family head arrives!”

The moment his sentence ended, a servant stumbled into the hall while shouting, “T-terrible... S-something terrible has happened!”

“What the hell is it this time? Did more dogs die?!” growled Yuvan as he slammed a hand against the table.

“N-no! It isn’t the dogs this time! It’s humans! I-I found Luis cleaved in half in the dungeon! What more, seven other members of our family have also been killed in the VIP guest area! All of them look like they were killed without any chance of retaliation at all! T-the most worrying thing is, the dungeon is now empty!”

“What?!”

By then, everyone who had heard the servant's announcement was panicking.

Though Yash himself didn't say anything and was only quivering slightly, the fact that his forehead was now dripping with cold sweat signified that the calmness he expressed was merely a façade. All his worries and unease from the past few days were now mercilessly assaulting his mind.

"Who dares commit such a serious crime within the Moldell Manor no less?! And what of Gerald?" asked Yuvan, his anxiety evident in his tone.

"Gerald's gone missing!"

As everyone's panic peaked, a cold breeze blew the fallen leaves in the courtyard. Within the darkness of night, the leaves themselves fluttered aimlessly, unable to leave the actual yard. In a way, the same could be said for all the other members of the Moldell family who were now trapped in with Gerald.

Even the barks of the remaining dogs in the backyard seemed to intensify at that moment. The deafening barks were nothing short of unnerving for the Moldells who were still alive.

Throughout their thousand-year history, members of the Moldell family had always lived without fear for their lives. Though all of the family's members had been trained to not be unnerved by the corpses of others, the ones that were currently in their home were corpses of their family members! It didn't help that they had been killed in their very own manor!

As a result, it was really no question why the members of the Moldell family were all panicking now!

'Nothing like this has ever happened to our family before within our thousand-year history!' Thought one of the Moldells to himself.

"I want everyone to be mobilized immediately! Use every means possible to locate the murderer and for the love of god, someone recapture Gerald for me!" ordered Yuvan furiously as he slammed his hand against the table again, this time splitting it in half!

Yash himself—who had been staring out the window at the dark of night for a while now—suddenly whispered, "S-second young master... it... it seems that he's here!"

Chapter 1039

"...Huh?"

Startled by what they had heard, everyone immediately turned to look out the courtyard. In the darkness, the faint silhouettes of two figures could be seen approaching their home. One of them appeared to be a man while the other—that followed closely behind the man’s silhouette—seemed to belong to a puppy with somewhat glowing green eyes.

The moment moonlight shone upon the duo, everyone ended up taking a deep breath when they realized who it was.

“G-Gerald Crawford?!”

“How the hell did he get out there? Wasn’t he in a coma of sorts?!” said one of the Moldells.

“Who cares? Rather, isn’t it perfect that we already know where he is? We don’t have to waste any time locating him now!” added another member of the Moldell family in a cold tone.

As everyone continued discussing the situation, the main entrance’s door creaked open. Walking over casually, Gerald then asked with a smile on his face, “Well then, I assume everyone from the Moldell family is here today, no?”

Though he was smiling, everyone who saw him felt chills run down their spines. The Moldells knew the face of evil when they saw it.

“Aren’t you being a bit too arrogant, young lad? Tell you what, I don’t believe any of the rumors regarding your immense powers and abilities. Now stop acting so cocky as I show you the true power of the Moldell family’s lineage!” shouted a young Moldell as he bolted toward Gerald to attack!

Before his fist could even reach Gerald’s face, however, Gerald clasped his hands over the young man’s hand. Frozen in place, the young man found that he couldn’t move a muscle! It was a second later when a loud thud could be heard.

Gerald had used his palm to smack the man directly in his face! The immense force caused all the man’s bones to simultaneously shatter as his body immediately flew backward.

Anything that lay in the falling body’s path ended up getting knocked over until finally, the dead man stopped moving when his body slumped against the wall on the far end of the room.

“...W-what?!”

Their eyelids twitching frantically, everyone found themselves taking a few steps back.

So it seemed that the rumors had been true. Gerald truly had been the one who had killed all eight of the Moldells back in Lovewell Manor!

Taking in a deep breath, Yash then said, "...Impressive, Mr. Crawford... It seems that you've certainly experienced quite a bit in the past year... However, I have to advise you to calm yourself and tone it down a bit... Take it as advice from an elder... After all, I'm sure that you know the Moldell family's background extremely well by now. Since you're the only one the Crawfords can depend on, do you honestly think that you'll be able to take on the many other Moldells alone? You've already killed several of my men today. Aren't you afraid that that'll bring misfortune to the Crawford family?"

"Hahaha... Bring them misfortune, you say? The existence of the Moldells is, in itself, a disaster for my family! I'll say it right now that I've been waiting for the longest time to settle the score with the Modells! It's high time I did just that!" replied Gerald with a subtle smile as he turned to look at everyone in the room.

"Again, I must say that you're being way too arrogant, Mr. Crawford! While I do admit that you're certainly extremely skillful and powerful, I hope you don't forget that there are hundreds of masters from the Moldell family standing before you today. It's impossible for you to defeat all of us on your own!" persuaded Yash.

Though he said that, Yash was well aware that they were completely helpless against Gerald. All he could do was try to delay and hopefully stop Gerald from causing more bloodshed among his other family members.

There were hundreds of Moldell masters gathered here today, and Yash wasn't going to allow all those years of being trained by the head of the family to go to waste. He had to deter Gerald some way or another!

"I don't care how many of you there are... I'm dealing with all of you once and for all! No Moldell is going to make it out alive tonight!" declared Gerald as his eyes turned scarlet and a violent aura began surging out of his body!

"Do you think you're that incredible?! I'll kill you right here and right now! Bring it on and show me what you're capable of!" roared Yuvan who was now beyond furious.

Yuvan had been a perfect inheritor of all his father's teachings and from the moment he had gained power in the Moldell family, he had been nearly invincible.

Despite that, to think that Gerald would actually claim that he would exterminate the entire Moldell family alone! The clearly insane Crawford had simultaneously humiliated his entire family as well!

Clenching both his fists, Yuvan channeled his anger into them as a gush of inner strength coursed through his body.

With a giant leap, he prepared to land a roundhouse kick aimed at Gerald! However, though he was extremely fast, Gerald was faster.

Raising his own leg, Gerald's kick clashed against Yuvan's!

As the sickening crunch of bones filled the room, everyone stared wide-eyed as Yuvan was kicked back to where he had leaped from. Crashing into a stone pillar, Yuvan's body had been flung back so hard that he ended up destroying it!

Amidst the debris, Yuvan was already breaking out in cold sweat as he said, "...W-what?!"

From the moment he sensed that he could no longer move one of his legs, he deduced that it was broken. That also told him that among everyone present today, none of them were even close to being capable enough of evading or even blocking any of Gerald's fearsome attacks.

Chapter 1040

"Everyone! Attack in unison!" ordered Yash aloud.

With many of the Moldells already seeing red now, they all obeyed Yash's order, rushing forward to besiege Gerald!

The truth was that the masters who were currently present weren't the true top masters within the Moldell family. They had simply mastered more skills and fighting abilities than the regular Moldell. As a result, it was evident that none of them were even close to being proper opponents to Gerald.

Gerald himself was now attacking and killing everyone in sight as easily as though he was simply cutting through vegetables.

Anyone who stood in his way instantly met a violent death.

“H-He’s strong... He’s simply too strong!” shouted Yash as he gulped down hard. Having more people meant nothing if none of them were even capable of dealing damage to Gerald!

Taking advantage of the chaos, Yash rushed over to Yuvan—who was still lying on the same spot he had landed in—before anxiously asking, “S-second young master! How are you feeling?!”

“T-they’ve been severed... All my meridians have been severed!” yelled Yuvan as he endured his pain.

Scream after scream followed as more of the Moldells were slaughtered.

Though some of the Moldells had experienced more ups and downs in life compared to the others, none of them had ever encountered such a large scale massacre. Knowing that they weren’t going to survive the night, many of them simply continued screaming in horror as they held on dearly to their children.

“We can’t hold on much longer! We simply aren’t Gerald’s opponents! He’s too powerful! I need to lead you away from all this, second young master! My priority is to save your life!” declared Yash who was more anxious than ever as he continued watching as more members of his family flopped to the ground, lifelessly.

“N-No! I refuse to accept that!” growled Yuvan as he gritted his teeth in protest.

“There is simply no other way! The third young master is already gone so nothing should befall you as well! We’ll decide our next move once the family head returns but until then, we should leave first, second young master! Everyone! Try your best to provide cover for the second young master!” shouted Yash as he immediately began making his move.

Hearing that, the Moldells deliberately made themselves blind with anger as they all roared, “We’ll kill you!”

As they all rushed toward Gerald, Yash took the opportunity to carry Yuvan out to safety amidst the chaos.

“No! I can’t leave like this! All the other Moldells are still inside! I refuse to leave without first killing Gerald!” yelled Yuvan as he held on to his pain.

Yash however, held on to the flailing man, ignoring everything he said until he knew they were in a relatively safe spot. A few other bodyguards were the only ones to follow, eager to escape with their lives intact.

Panic ran rampant within everyone as horrified screams and the cries of suffering children filled the air!

Not long after, Yash and the guards finally stopped running once they reached the top of a hill.

Turning back to look at the Moldell Manor, they found that it was already erupting in flames! What had happened to the rest of the Moldells was more than evident by this point.

“Butler Moldell, your concerns truly were spot on! Bringing him back to the Moldell Manor truly did spell the ruin of the Moldell family! We’ve brought this calamity and misfortune upon ourselves!” cried out the few guards that had followed them out.

While Yash was filled with regret for not trusting his gut more, he was also feeling extremely bitter. After all, while they had finally managed to capture Gerald after an entire year of searching for him, bringing him back with them was synonymous with bringing catastrophe to their door!

Gerald truly was a cruel and ruthless person! He didn’t even spare the young, old, or even women despite their inability to fight back!

“B-Butler Moldell! Look there!” said one of the bodyguards as he pointed at the Moldell Manor that was still ablaze.

Turning to look at the exact spot the bodyguard was pointing at, Yash saw a large group of at least three hundred people dressed in black approaching the manor.

The moment they stopped moving, it became evident that their task was to completely block all the entrances of the manor. By doing so, anyone still alive in there who tried to make it out of the flames would still end up meeting a terrible fate.

“...It’s over... It’s truly all over for our family!” wailed Yash as he watched as the remaining Moldells who tried to escape the fire get brutally murdered the moment they got out of the manor.

Kneeling on the ground as he grabbed a fistful of dirt, Yash then added, “...He came prepared... All his men are top masters as well! It’s all over for us! Wait, inform the family head about this immediately! Tell him that the Crawford family’s influence and power is no longer the same as it was before!”

As the veins on his forehead rose, one of the bodyguards cried out, “It’s no use! I’ve already tried calling but it seems that all methods of communication have been cut off! We can’t call anyone at all!”

Hearing that, Yash frowned as he racked his brains to think of their next step.

“...This isn’t good. We need to withdraw for now! Quickly!”

Chapter 1041

Upon saving Xavia after waking from his brief coma, Gerald had immediately ordered Welson and his men to rush over. Gerald also told him to utilize the Soul Palace’s skynet technique which was the fastest way for them to trap all the Moldells within their home once the fire started. Gerald wasn’t taking any chances of any of them leaving alive.

“While a few people have managed to slip through us, we can roughly estimate all of their current locations, young master,” reported Welson.

“Excellent. Be sure to hunt down every last one of them. I want them to experience what true despair feels like...” replied Gerald, his body drenched in fresh blood as he turned to look at the burning manor. Watching the flames, Gerald couldn’t help but curl his lips into a malicious smirk.

It was at that moment when Welson’s heart skipped a beat.

‘...Since the young master consumed the holy blood, he should, by right, be able to control his temperament with ease... So why do I still feel that something is off about the young master...? The aura he’s currently emitting feels... different from what he usually has... How terrifying!’

Welson’s train of thought was cut short by Xavia’s screams of fear that pierced the night sky as the inferno continued burning all night long...

Since winter had just ended in the Logan Province, the weather was freezing when morning finally came.

“Here, Mr. Yuvan... Have some water...” said Yash as he handed the severely injured Yuvan a bottle of water along with a sleeping bag.

The pale-faced Yuvan himself was now too weak to even argue.

Yuvan and his men had been on the run throughout the night. As if having all means of their communication being cut off wasn't bad enough, there had been an incomprehensible lack of cars within the Logan Province that night as well. That was a problem for them since they had initially planned to hail a car in hopes of getting a ride away from this forsaken place.

Eventually, they finally came across an expensive-looking luxury car and the moment Yash saw it, he immediately attempted to stop it in its tracks.

They were in dire need of shelter, anyplace to take cover while awaiting the family head to return.

To everyone's surprise, the person who stepped out of the car was Xavia!

"So it's you, Miss Yorke! How wonderful! The second young master is severely injured so please hurry and take us someplace safe!" said Yash as he looked at the slightly pale woman.

"...I... I apologize, but that would be slightly inconvenient for me..." replied Xavia.

"...Come again?"

As Yash was left stupefied, the droning of several helicopters caught his attention. Looking up, over ten helicopters were hovering above them!

"There's a restaurant not too far ahead... You may seek refuge there..." said Xavia as she secretly handed them some money before re-entering her car and immediately driving off to the restaurant without them.

"...So they're just trying to torture us to death, huh? If I had earlier known about their plans, my dad and I would've definitely exterminated the Crawfords a long time ago..." growled Yuvan who was so pissed at this point that he ended up vomiting a bit of blood.

"Please refrain from talking too much, second young master... Let's just head to the restaurant first... Your body is in dire need of nourishment... I'll bandage your wounds as well once we're there..." replied Yash.

Before long, all of them arrived at the restaurant Xavia had told them about.

Xavia herself—alongside several of her subordinates—were already inside by the time they entered. This time, however, she didn't seem to even dare to speak with any of the Moldells anymore.

“Let's have a quick meal while we can... Looking at the time, the family head should be reaching the Logan Province soon. After successfully enduring through all this pain, we'll surely be saved!” said Yash as the other Moldells agreed and immediately began dining on whatever food they could get their hands on.

As they continued eating like their lives depended on it, the restaurant's door swung open again sometime later.

When the Moldells saw the group of people who had just entered, several of them instantly began trembling. Some of them were so terrified that they didn't even dare to swallow the food in their mouths.

“Please take a seat, young master...” said one of the subordinates from the group that had just entered.

After the subordinate pulled a chair out for him, Gerald took a seat as Xavia—who had been sitting close by—turned to look at him.

Though her eyes were teary, her lips remained sealed tight.

The Gerald sitting before her now was no longer the same person she used to know. After going through immense change, he now resembled a master. A filthy rich master who only knew how to do things cruelly.

It truly was ironic since back when she was still Gerald's lover, she had often fantasized about Gerald getting rich one day. She had yearned for the day when he would suddenly gain near-endless wealth, enabling him to do whatever he pleased.

‘He's no longer a humble and inferior loser... But... Though he's turned out exactly as I've always wanted him to be... Why am I feeling more afraid than anything...?’

Chapter 1042

Xavia continued remaining silent as she lowered her head, not even daring to say a word.

“While I admit that the Moldells have definitely crossed the line for some time now, was there truly a need to go so far in your retaliation, Mr. Crawford? Did you truly have to torture and humiliate us like this? You've done enough to us so please just let us off already...” negotiated Yash as he stood up.

Gerald, however, gave no response, choosing instead to simply fiddle around with a teapot.

“That’s it! I’m killing you if it’s the last thing I do!” shouted one of the Moldell’s men as he rushed toward Gerald, unwilling to go through any more mental suffering.

However, the man was promptly taken care of by one of Gerald’s own subordinates upon receiving Welson’s order.

“You know, from what I’ve been told, Kort has just arrived in the Logan Province... I’m sure it won’t be long before he rushes over...” said Gerald with a smile.

Upon hearing that, both Yuvan and Yash couldn’t help but feel slightly moved. At long last, the moment of hope they had been looking forward to was finally coming.

The family head was going to be here soon, and if anyone was to even come close to having a fighting chance against Gerald, it was Kort.

“If that’s the case, then you’ll definitely have to face the Moldell family’s grand second master who is also the master of our family, KortMoldell! After slaughtering so many of our family members, I do wonder how you’ll explain yourself...” replied Yash.

Yuvan himself had already grabbed onto Yash’s hand in his excitement. His reaction was to be expected since he had sworn to himself that he would make the Crawfords pay the price a hundredfold of what Gerald had made the Moldells suffer through.

“Eventually. Unfortunately, the rest of you won’t be able to witness that fight. Have you heard of ‘last meals’ that death row prisoners receive before getting executed? Well, I hope you’ve eaten to your heart’s content... With that out of the way, go ahead and end yourselves now. None of you are leaving this restaurant alive,” sneered Gerald coldly.

Hearing that, Yash felt his eyelids twitching intensely as Yuvan fell into complete despair.

All Yuvan needed was a bit more time... If time was on his side, his father would definitely arrive sooner or later to save him... Yet here Gerald was, ordering them to kill themselves!

Regret enveloped Yash as well. If only he hadn’t led his subordinates into Everdare Forest that day... None of this would have happened.

Regardless, since Gerald had allowed them to take their own lives, they weren't against the idea. After all, they were well aware that death was the only answer to their current situation. At least they would still be able to go with what little dignity they still had...

Once the deeds were done, Gerald and his men simply walked out of the restaurant.

Before they could get far, Xavia rushed out before calling out, "Gerald!"

"What is it?"

"You... Could... you be planning to deal with the Long family now...?" asked Xavia as she began sobbing slightly.

In response, Gerald simply grunted before nodding.

"Please... I'm begging you-"

Before Xavia was even able to complete her sentence, she was interrupted by Gerald as he raised his hand before saying, "I've already ordered one of my men to purchase a large property for you within the Salford Province. You and your family should be able to lead a peaceful life there without too many worries for the next few generations. There's no need for you to bother about the subsequent affairs."

Walking over to her, he then gently wiped her tears away before adding, "In exchange for all that, I only ask that you live a good life. I, for one, am no longer able to live the lifestyle I once did..."

"With that, I bid you farewell!"

Having said that, Gerald then turned to walk away with his men.

Xavia wanted to call out to him. To tell him that she wanted to stay by his side.

However, after hearing how resolute Gerald was, she could only cover her mouth as she burst into tears while watching Gerald's back slowly disappear into the distance.

Meanwhile, an extremely capable-looking team of men had just arrived at the entrance of the Moldell Manor's burnt remains.

"No... No!" roared an old man, his voice filled with agony after witnessing the state of the manor. Clenching his fists tightly, the veins in his arms were immediately revealed as extreme murderous intent coursed through them.

"...Who did this...? Who?!" howled the man as he grabbed one of the survivors in his rage.

"I-It was Gerald Crawford! He was the one who ruined the Moldells! I-I was only able to escape the crisis since I jumped into the well!" cried out the terrified youth.

"...Gerald?How... How is that even possible?!"

Chapter 1043

"I-It's true! Gerald's become truly horrifying!" cried out the youth, evidently scared to death.

"...That... That b*stard! It's only been a d*mn year! How could he have accumulated that much power in such a short amount of time?! Regardless, the Crawford family will definitely pay a heavy price for this! Where's Yuvan?!" roared Kort as he trembled in his immense anger.

"S-second master!" shouted a subordinate as he staggered over.

"I... I found them... I found the second young master's and butler Moldell's corpses!" announced the subordinate in between pants.

"What?!" yelled the pained Kort in such a loud voice that his shout could probably be heard reverberating across the entire Logan Province.

Meanwhile, Dylan was in the main living room within the Crawford manor in Northbay.

Feeling the urge to frown all of a sudden, he muttered, "...Could something have happened...? I've been feeling flustered a lot for some time now... I just feel as though something is about to happen!"

"What on earth could happen? The way I see it, you're just feeling that due to all the pressure you've accumulated ever since Gerald's disappearance..." replied Yulia in a saddened tone as she walked over to him, feeling sorry for her husband.

Sighing, Dylan then said, “To think that a year has already passed since then... If things had gone according to plan, then Gerald would’ve gotten married to Lyra this year! Everything was going so smoothly too at the start! It’s all ruined now...”

As she looked at his grief-filled eyes, Yulia replied, “Speaking of Lyra... Hasn’t she been acting a bit strange ever since she returned from that event in the Salford Province about half a year ago? I remember Bea going with her back then, and she’s been acting equally as strange as Lyra has! From what I’ve seen, the two girls seem to enjoy being in each other’s company, frequently sharing secrets with each other and laughing from time to time. Whenever I enquire them about their topic of conversation, they simply say that it’s nothing!”

“Now that you’ve mentioned it... I remember that before attending that event, both of them had cried quite frequently... Especially Lyra. From what the servants told me, Lyra would hide in her room to cry whenever she didn’t have any other tasks to do. It explained why her eyes were always so red whenever I saw her back then...”

“Right? They changed slightly after returning from the auction, though! We’ve been with Lyra for the longest time and though she’s never really lived with Gerald, I’m sure you can agree that she loves him dearly. Bea loves him a lot as a cousin as well. Because of that, it doesn’t really make any sense for both of them to suddenly change—albeit, for the better—after attending some event!” added Yulia.

Clearing his throat, Dylan then said, “There’s no need to start theorizing... Let’s just ask them directly to get the entire picture!”

With that said, he ordered his servants to call both the girls over.

“Mom? Dad? You were looking for us?” asked Lyra with a smile once both of them stood before Gerald’s parents.

“Yes, it’s regarding the auction both of you attended in the Salford Province about half a year ago... Though it may feel strange that I’m asking now of all times, I’ve just been so busy with the investigation team that I haven’t had the time to properly ask you about it! Regardless, I remember that both of you went there to buy the Ginseng King... Why did you return empty-handed? Also, while we’re at it, did anything else happen while you were there?” asked Dylan in return.

“...A-ah... About the Ginseng King...” replied Lyra as she instantly blushed.

Back then, Gerald had won against the other bidders. As a result, he was the rightful owner of the Ginseng King. However, Gerald had made Lyra and Bea promise not to tell anyone that they had met him there for fear that exposing his whereabouts would end up burdening his family.

Lyra had kept to her promise since she was well aware that what Gerald had told her to do made sense. She understood that Gerald's parents would definitely be unable to resist the urge to double their search efforts for him once they found out that he was safe. Should any of the Moldells catch wind of that news, the Moldells would probably enter high gear as well, further endangering Gerald's life.

"...While we did manage to purchase it, it ended up getting stolen!" replied Bea quickly, knowing full well that Lyra was a terrible liar.

"...I see. Did you happen to meet anyone else there?" asked Dylan with a frown.

"A-ah... Not at all!" replied Lyra as she shook her head.

At that moment, the butler approached the group before saying, "Pardon my intrusion, master, but Mr. Parker Moldell has just arrived with his investigation team. They're currently waiting at the door."

"...Oh? Well hurry and invite them in then," replied Dylan as he immediately stood up.

Due to Parker's secret assistance, the Crawfords hadn't suffered too much suppression from Kort in the past year. Due to that, Dylan treated the man quite respectfully.

Chapter 1044

"Greetings, Mr. Moldell!"

"Chairman Crawford, it's been a while!"

"It has indeed... Since you've come today, could it be that you've gained some clues about the shipwreck incident in Northbay, Mr. Moldell?" asked Dylan rather excitedly.

Taking a seat once they were inside, Parker then replied, "Nothing is impossible for a willing heart! After all that hard work in the previous year, I'm proud to say that our efforts haven't been for naught! We've finally managed to gain some clues regarding the work of that enigmatic Sun League!"

Hearing that, Dylan and the others happily exchanged glances as Parker took a long map out of his bag.

Revealing its contents, the map was drawn so beautifully that it almost felt like the area that was mapped was one that had achieved utopia. Though the mountains and rivers painted across the long map were certainly eye-catching, everyone eventually had their eyes on the symbol at the top left corner of the map.

It was the symbol of the Sun League!

“What’s this then?” asked Dylan, bewildered.

“Haha! You see, the details of this map were found on a stone tablet that I managed to locate. Since it would be a hassle to bring such a large slab of stone around, I had an artist redraw the contents of the tablet onto this map. I’m sure all of you have noticed the symbol on the top left corner by now, and yes, it really is the symbol of the Sun League. Thus, it’s almost certain that the tablet had been left behind by them!” explained Parker.

“I see... Pardon me, Mr. Moldell... but doesn’t the map feel slightly incomplete...? It feels sort of... deformed? If you get what I mean,” replied Yulia.

“Quite insightful you are, Madam! Unfortunately, the stone tablet was already in poor condition by the time I found it. While we were successful in recreating the utopian-looking part of the map, we weren’t quite able to finish it since we couldn’t locate the parts of the stone tablet that had chipped off,” explained Parker with a slight frown.

“Such a pity... Still, while I’ve visited several famous places—that have mountainous areas and rivers—all across the globe, I’ve never come across such a mystifying-looking place like the one on your map...”

As Dylan and Parker continued discussing the map, Lyra simply peered at it while listening to their conversation. While the places on the map certainly felt utopian, the dense forests surrounding the area felt rather mystifying to her.

After looking at it for some time, Lyra pointed at a spot on the map before saying, “...Um... Mom? Dad? And Mr. Moldell as well... Have any of you noticed the landmark atop this mountain...?”

“...Hmm?”

As everyone instantly focused their gazes on where she was pointing at, even after a brief moment, none of them seemed to be able to tell what she was hinting at.

“...Can’t you see it, dad? It appears to be a broken stone statue of a woman! It’s toppled over around the waist area...”

Hearing that, Dylan and Parker looked at each other. From what they could see, it was merely a white rock. Why was Lyra insisting that it was a statue?

As she watched the two men shake their heads, Lyra took in a deep breath. How odd... While the image was slightly blurry, Lyra was confident that the picture portrayed a statue of a woman. After all, she would definitely be able to tell what a woman's silhouette looked like.

Even Bea and Yulia were unable to see the stone statue that Lyra was talking about. Both of them simply saw an object resembling a white rock.

"Haha! Perhaps Miss Lyra's eyes are more unique than ours! Who's to say that she can't see things that we can't?" joked Parker with a smile.

"Please don't laugh at me, Mr. Moldell... I may have been mistaken..." replied Lyra as she shook her head, not wanting to say anything anymore.

"Ah, speaking of which, Chairman Crawford... There's something I'd like to ask you about..." said Parker as he looked like he had just recalled something.

"Go on..."

"Well, aside from the Moldell family, have you asked for any external help? I'd like you to answer as frankly as possible!" asked Parker, his tone oddly cautious.

"Not at all! You're the only one I've hired!" replied Dylan as he shook his head.

"...How curious... I wonder who that person could be then..." muttered Parker with a frown.

Chapter 1045

"From what you've just asked, I'm assuming that something happened, Mr. Moldell?" replied Dylan after thinking about it for a while.

Hearing that, Parker nodded before saying, "You see, quite a mysterious incident happened to me and my team while we were looking for clues on the Sun League. It's rather shameful to admit, but for the longest time, my team and I were unable to

locate any relevant leads. The Sun League truly is extremely mysterious and powerful to be able to cover up most, if not all, of their tracks!”

“Regardless, just when I felt that we had reached a dead end, a mysterious person made his presence known... I say that since we’ve never personally met before... Regardless, from that moment on, he’s provided us with necessary hints on where to go next whenever we got truly stumped. His assistance led us to find the exact clues we needed to proceed. He’s the only reason how we were able to make so much progress in the past half-year. Due to his assisting nature, I assumed that you were the one who had sent him over, Chairman Crawford, which is why I’m currently enquiring you about it, just to make sure.”

“If I truly had sent someone over to help you, then I would’ve definitely informed you about it first. Still, that person does indeed sound mysterious... Did he at least give you a name...?” replied Dylan, finding the situation peculiar as well.

“None to speak of. Nobody even knows what he looks like. However, call it a gut feeling from my experience over the years, but I believe that he’s an extremely powerful person. In fact, it wouldn’t be a stretch to say that even the most powerful members of the Moldell family wouldn’t be able to take him on!”

“Has he truly never shown himself before?”

“As I’ve said, none of us have seen him before. He simply places coordinates near the head of my bed whenever he feels that we need the extra help. While I’d like to call myself a vigilant person, never have I been able to catch him in the act. Haha! To be more specific, he’s only made his presence known twice up till this point.”

Thinking about it, Parker remembered how frightened he had been about half a year ago when the man left the first set of coordinates near the head of his bed. After all, the person who had left the hint there definitely could’ve killed him in his sleep if he wanted to. Should that have happened, Parker wouldn’t even have known that he had been murdered, and the thought of it alone was enough to send shivers down his spine.

Dylan himself was currently racking his brains, wondering who could be helping his family out in secret.

“...Either way, to summarize, since that person has been helping us in secret, then we can assume, at the very least, that he isn’t hostile toward the Crawford family. While we did manage to gather more clues on the Sun League, the more pressing issue now is where the area drawn on the map actually is. Since the mysterious person led us to it, I’m assuming that there’s a reason behind his actions. For all we know, the secret of the Sun League could very well lie within the dense forests as seen on the map!” said Parker.

Nodding in agreement, Dylan then replied, “Very well. I’ll immediately gather my family’s apprentices and subordinates after this. Since many of them are quite knowledgeable and our family has men all across the globe, some of them may recognize where the map points to!”

“That would certainly be for the best!”

With that, Dylan signaled one of his subordinates to spread the order around and in almost no time at all, people working under the Crawfords from all over the world assembled within the Crawford manor.

Once everyone relevant was present, Dylan led them to a large viewing hall where he projected the map onto a massive screen, enlarging it for all to see.

However, even with so many great minds who had seen so much of the world, the results were barely satisfactory for Dylan. As it turned out, nobody there seemed to have ever come across such beautiful mountains amidst sprawling forests.

It was exactly because of how mystifying the place seemed that everyone there knew, at a glance, that they didn't know where the place was.

After realizing that, Dylan immediately commanded his subordinates and apprentices to look all over the world for a similar landscape.

Seconds after announcing his order, a servant rushed into the large hall before shouting, “M-master! Something's wrong!”

“What is it?” asked Dylan with a frown.

“I-It's Kort! He's brought several of his men onto the island and he's currently leading them here! He's also already killed over ten of our bodyguards!”

“What? Could he have gone mad?!” exclaimed Dylan as he turned to look at Parker.

Parker himself was frowning as he said, “Unless that old man has gained some information that could be used against the Crawfords, he wouldn't do such a drastic thing... That's just not his style of doing things. I propose that you let him in, Chairman Crawford. Let's see what he's planning to do!” replied Parker.

Meanwhile, Winnie looked at Kort as she asked, “Second master, what are you doing? Why did you kill off so many of the Crawford family's people?”

Instead of heading into the large hall with the others earlier, Winnie and her sister had been taking a stroll by the beach—at the side of the island—to relax themselves this entire time. That is, until they noticed Kort rushing toward the manor in a great fury, killing anyone who happened to be in his way!

“That’s none of your business! I’m massacring the entire Crawford family today if it’s the last thing I do!” growled Kort as he turned to look at the two girls with his bloodshot eyes, a hideous expression on his face.

With that, he continued leading his people over to the manor as Winnie began chasing after him while muttering to herself, “Oh god, has Kort gone insane?! Something big is going to happen soon... I can feel it... I need to see what he’s planning to do!”

Chapter 1046

“Sister...!”

By the time Yselle called out for her, Winnie’s figure was already a tiny speck as she swiftly continued following Kort and his men to the manor.

“With so many things brewing, I guess I should go take a look as well...” muttered Yselle to herself as she began walking toward them.

Before she could even take a step, however, she was utterly stunned by a black figure dashing past her extremely quickly!

“...What the hell was that?” said Yselle as she frowned. Whatever it was, it could wait, and Yselle continued heading toward the manor.

A brief moment later, the doors to the large hall within the Crawford Manor were swung open as a fearsome and old-sounding voice roared, “The entire Crawford family is to pay a bloody price today if it’s the last thing I do!”

The shout was so loud that everyone could feel their ears ringing as an ominous wind blew into the room.

Following that, Kort led his powerful-looking men into the hall as Parker took a step forward before asking, “What do you hope to achieve by doing all this, Kort?”

“Step aside, Parker! Don’t meddle in this! I’m here today to settle a bloody grudge I have against the Crawfords!” growled Kort as he clenched both his fists while glaring daggers at Dylan.

As he did so, however, Kort became slightly stunned when his eyes caught sight of the large map projected behind Dylan.

However, his shock was short-lived. Anything other than exterminating the Crawfords could wait for now, and he was delighted by the thought of it alone.

“Humph! You say you’ve come to settle a bloody grudge, but what has our family ever done to you to deserve that?” replied Dylan with a frown.

“So you’re still feigning ignorance, Dylan? As far as I’m concerned, I’ve given you sufficient respect in the past year... Never had it occurred to me that such a terrible disaster would happen just because I treated you mercifully... There were over three hundred people in the Moldell family within the Logan Province, Dylan... Now almost all of them are dead! The entire Moldell family within the Logan Province is no more!” growled Kort, each word he said even colder than the last.

“...What? Someone ruined the Moldells living in the Logan Province?” asked Dylan, his eyes wide in shock.

Parker himself felt his eyelids twitching rapidly.

While Kort appeared to not approve of the Moldells living in the Logan Province, a few of the Moldells were well aware that Kort himself had established the family thereafter disobeying the Moldell family’s rules and regulations.

Parker also knew that there were many powerful people in Kort’s family. To think that someone had actually managed to ruin the Moldells living in the Logan Province...

“While the Moldell family in Logan isn’t a secret society, there were quite a number of powerful people in their family, right? Who could’ve taken down the entire family? What sort of power would one even need to have to pull off such a feat? Whoever it was, don’t you think that the Crawfords lack the capabilities to even come close to performing such destruction...?” whispered the surprised Winnie to her grandfather.

“She’s right. In the end, while the Crawfords may be filthy rich, they’re still just ordinary people. Don’t you think that there could’ve been a misunderstanding somewhere along the line? After all, the Crawfords clearly don’t have the strength to take out over three hundred of the Moldells!” added Parker as he took another step forward.

“A misunderstanding you say? Tell Dylan to hand over that rich heir of a son he has, then! Everything will surely be crystal clear once we’ve interrogated him! I don’t need to explain anything else! Until Gerald shows himself, I’m killing anyone who dares to stop me!” retorted Kort coldly.

“Now come! Kill them all! Nobody leaves this room alive!” roared the maniacal man.

“Right away!” shouted his subordinates in unison as they rushed toward the people of the Crawford family!

Chapter 1047

Sensing the immense murderous intent from the Moldell subordinates—who were already starting to take action—Dylan felt his expression change drastically.

All this time, he had been extremely reluctant to have any forms of contact with secret societies unless he was absolutely forced to. After all, for all he knew, secret societies were usually both unruly and overbearing.

In the end, he did so in order to find out more about the Sun League. Unfortunately, all his worries were now presenting themselves before his very eyes.

He remembered, at that moment, that his father had once told him that the Crawford family would always face the risk of getting exterminated. Was what his father had said finally going to happen today?

Were they going to meet their end being slaughtered by the Moldell family’s people? The thought of it alone made Dylan gulp slightly.

It was at that moment when a loud and rather wild-sounding voice shouted, “I’d like to see for myself who dares to even harm the people of the Crawford family!”

The commanding voice was so loud that any surrounding glass ended up shattering!

As a gale of wind blew across the hall, the Moldell family’s subordinates—who had initially been prepared to slaughter any Crawford they could get their hands on—immediately held on to their heads.

Each of them felt like their heads were about to explode, and within seconds, most of them vomited blood before dying on the spot!

Seeing that, Kort frowned but he didn’t make a move.

Seconds later, a massive group of mysterious-looking people donning black robes swiftly made their way into the large hall, surrounding Kort and his few remaining subordinates.

There were at least a thousand of them, and as Kort looked at them with doubtful eyes, he coldly shouted, "I've no idea which force you belong to. However, know that I've come here today to settle a bloody debt with the Crawford family. You better not meddle in this!"

"Even if I were to meddle, it's not like you could stop me. You're just another trivial person to be dealt with, after all," said an old man as he strode into the hall.

The moment he said that, the people donning black robes immediately knelt in line, forming a pathway in the middle as they shouted in unison, "Lord!"

"...Hmm...?" said Kort as he furrowed his brows while staring at the old man.

"I believe we've never met before, no? Since you're still planning on meddling even after I've said that I have a bloody grudge to settle with the Crawfords, pray tell what your relationship with them is, sir," added Kort.

Before anyone else could say a thing, Dylan, who had earlier been momentarily left stupefied, muttered, "...Dad?"

True enough, the person currently walking toward him was his father who had disappeared for a few decades by now. After not meeting for so long, Dylan felt himself getting slightly agitated.

"...Grandpa?" said Jessica next.

Jessica had never met Daryl before, and if anything, she was quite astonished to learn that he was even still alive!

"I assume that this is my granddaughter, Jessica. Am I correct, Dylan?" said Daryl as he stood before Jessica and gently held onto her hand, his face full of adoration for her.

"She... Yes, she is... Regardless, where have you been all these years, dad?" replied Dylan who was still utterly shocked.

"I'll tell you all about it once I get rid of these scoundrels!" sneered Daryl as he turned back to look at Kort.

“So it appears that you’re Daryl! The master of the Crawford family who went missing a few decades ago! I see, I see! Well that’s just perfect that you’ve finally decided to show yourself again today! I’ll slaughter you along with the rest of the Crawfords! That way, truly zero of the Crawfords will continue to exist!” replied Kort with a frigid laugh.

“Hah! You plan to slaughter all of us? I’m afraid that even Christopher Moldell wouldn’t talk so arrogantly before me!” said Daryl as he rested both his hands behind his back while smiling coldly.

“...What did you say?”

Chapter 1048

Upon hearing that name, both Kort and Parker were left momentarily stupefied.

“... From what you’ve said, I’m assuming that you’re acquainted with my third uncle, Christopher, who’s also the Moldell family’s elder, correct? Still, I find it odd that he’s never mentioned a ‘Daryl’ before,” replied Kort, feeling his heart skip a beat.

Even among the other secret societies, few men knew much about the mysterious Christopher who was, in a way, the totem of the Moldell family.

As far as Kort knew, the Crawfords were simply a regular wealthy family. How on earth could Daryl have gotten acquainted with that old man?

“If I recall correctly, ‘secret societies’ like yours each have their own strict rules to abide by. A universal rule for all of you is that fact that you can’t get involved with the ordinary world all willy-nilly, no? Yet that’s exactly what you scoundrels did! What more, you even built your own family from the ground up, just to be able to meddle more with the ordinary world! You’re even bold enough to declare wanting to destroy the Crawford family! Don’t you scoundrels think that you’re looking down too much on the Moldell family’s rules?” said Daryl, ignoring Kort’s question as he headed over to the seat of honor and sat there while laughing heartily.

“...Old Master Crawford, which force do you belong to, exactly? You’re just a powerful and rich businessman, no? How is it that you know what happens within secret societies like the back of your hand?” asked Kort.

“Humph. I belong to the Soul Palace. Then again, I wonder if Christopher ever even mentioned the society to you.”

“...S-soul Palace...?” replied Kort, feeling his eyelids twitch extremely rapidly.

“I-it’s the people from the Soul Palace!” stuttered Kort’s remaining men as they looked at each other in utter dismay before each taking a step back.

For anyone within a secret society, it was rather impossible to not have heard of the Soul Palace’s reputation. For context, there were once quite a few major secret societies in Weston. However, one of the more developed and prosperous secret societies—at the time—was completely wiped out by the Soul Palace in a single night.

Those from the Soul Palace usually left traces of their involvement behind so that others could come look for them if they wanted to avenge the deceased. However, nobody was daring or foolish enough to do so.

Due to that well-known incident—among the secret societies—it was natural for Kort and his men to be slightly intimidated.

“So you’re the master of the Soul Palace as you are of the Crawford family, Daryl... So that’s what you’ve been doing in the past few decades... I admit that I was unaware of all this, but I guess I finally see the bigger picture now...”

“What exactly did the realization of who I am, reveal to you?”

“Well, half a year ago, my beloved third son, Jett, was kidnapped by a mysterious and powerful person in Mayberry. Up till this point, I still have no leads on where he could be or whether he’s even still alive! Adding that to the extermination of the Moldells in the Logan Province, I wonder it’s safe to assume that you were the one in charge of all that?” growled Kort as his eyes turned bloodshot, filled with resentment.

Hearing that, the infuriated Daryl roared, “You b*stard!”

Even though Daryl didn’t move an inch, Kort could feel his cheeks being slapped hard, twice! He didn’t even have a chance to fight back!

“Mind you, I’ve already lived a long life! Your third son and family members are nothing more than trivial scoundrels in my eyes! Being as trivial as they are, why would I ever wish to waste brain cells thinking of how to properly deal with them? How frustrating!”

Kort himself simply cupped his hurt cheeks, not daring to say another word for now.

Seeing his reaction, Dylan and the other Crawfords got particularly excited.

“...I never thought that you’d have this much power, dad... Speaking of which, was it truly not our people who slaughter the Moldells in the Logan Province then?” asked Dylan who had gained near-infinite confidence now that he had seen how powerful his father truly was.

As Daryl watched as his son sat down beside him, he sighed before replying, “How do I even say this... Well, I, for one, didn’t do it... However, it truly was a Crawford who did the deed. Honestly, I would’ve done so myself if I cared any less for seniority. After all, those b*stards are nothing but robbers who’ve been having thoughts about acquiring the Crawford family for over twenty years by now. With all the wicked tricks they’ve been using throughout the years, I’m genuinely surprised that they’re still so dissatisfied, even after slaughtering the Morningstar family,” explained Daryl, his anger apparent in his tone.

Kort felt the corner of his lip twitch when he heard that.

“...Oh? So it truly was done by someone from our family? But aside from you, who else has such great power?” asked Dylan, confused.

“I wonder as well, grandpa. Speaking of which, why didn’t you appear earlier? Our family wouldn’t have to face so much danger today if you had just done so! Regardless, kill them all today and make sure none of them escape!” exclaimed Jessica.

“Hahaha! I never thought that my granddaughter would take after my personality! I like you a lot more compared to that cowardly grandson of mine!” replied Daryl with a hearty laugh.

“Well, let’s just say that I didn’t come over earlier due to some personal issues that I’d rather not share at the moment. Anyway, I’m not even needed to deal with these mere scoundrels, my good granddaughter... Now come over here...” added Daryl as he turned to look at the black-robed men.

“Go check if the young master has returned,” ordered the old man.

Chapter 1049

“The young master’s left the Logan Province hours ago! He’s already arrived at the island!” reported one of Daryl’s many subordinates.

“...Young master? What sort of young master, dad?” said Dylan, baffled.

“Haha! You’ll know once he arrives,” replied Daryl as he shook his head with a bitter smile on his face.

“...Speak of the devil...” added Daryl as he raised his head to look out of the hall.

Hearing that, everyone turned to look in the direction Daryl was staring at. Walking toward them from the main square, was a young man donning a black suit.

As soon as he got close enough, all the previous subordinates—who were still standing by the door—bowed respectfully as they greeted, “Young master!”

“G-Gerald!” shouted both Dylan and Jessica in unison.

While Dylan’s lips twitched, overjoyed, Jessica herself was so moved that she ended up covering her mouth. As for the rest of the Crawfords, all of them stared at Gerald, excitement building within them.

“It’s been a year, mom... Dad... Sister... I’m finally back!” announced Gerald as he knelt by his father’s side.

“...That’s... I’m... I’m so glad that you’re back... It’s been a whole year... And I... I even thought that you had...”

Unable to hold back her tears anymore, Yulia wailed as she finally got confirmation that her son was still alive and well.

“How... How absolutely marvelous! To think that my son would end up becoming even more promising, mature, and strong throughout your disappearance! It’s fantastic...!” added Dylan who was now crying as well.

After wiping his parents’ tears away, Gerald turned to look at Daryl before saying, “It appears that at long last, I’ve finally lived up to your expectations, grandpa...”

“Indeed you have, Gerald. I can sense that your aura is several times stronger than before as well. Your innate condition is so much better than mine...” replied the old man before turning to look at Kort.

“That scoundrel over there pressured you so much last year that you ended up in a pretty tight spot, correct? Go ahead and take your revenge on him today. Make sure not to go easy on him!” added Daryl with a smile.

“Oh, but of course I will! All our past grudges will be settled once and for all today!” replied Gerald as he stood up to look at Kort.

“So it was you, Gerald... Tell me, are you the one responsible for capturing Jett?” asked Kort as he gritted his teeth.

“Yeah, that was me. I left him in the Poisonous Mosquito Valley where he promptly got eaten alive by millions of mosquitoes swarming him. I made sure that no bones or remains were left, so I’m sure it must’ve been difficult to track him down,” replied Gerald.

“What?! You... I truly regret not killing you long ago, Gerald! Now that you’ve admitted to killing two of my sons, I’m ending you today no matter what! I’ll avenge my boys if it’s the last thing I do!” roared Kort as he leaped into the air, ready to pounce on Gerald!

Kort’s inner strength was powerful and overbearing, which matched his temperament well. However, no matter how strong he was, at the end of the day, he was just a regular powerful champion.

Though Gerald had been terrified of him just a year ago—as he was with anyone from the Moldell family—Kort was nothing but a trivial person to him now.

Mimicking Kort, Gerald leaped into the air as well, but he was faster and had more control.

The moment Gerald’s fist collided with, Kort’s stomach, everyone watched in amazement as Kort’s body was flung backward! Crashing into a stone pillar, Kort’s body fell to the ground as a deep indent in the middle of the pillar revealed itself.

“W-what immense inner strength! Now I see how you did all that to my family!” scowled Kort as his old face scrunched up in disbelief.

As Kort readied himself to launch another attack, Dylan—who was now filled with both excitement and pride—turned to look at his father before asking, “Did you teach him that, dad? When did Gerald become this powerful?”

“Haha... Well, I only taught him half of what he knows,” replied Daryl with a slightly bitter smile as he shook his head.

Dylan himself continued watching his son’s fight in delight.

Chapter 1050

Even Jessica was happy as she shouted, “Come on, Gerald! Kill that old b*stard! Beat him to death!”

Parker, on the other hand, turned to look at Daryl before respectfully asking, “Judging from your aura, could you perhaps be one of the legends like my third uncle, Christopher?”

He was asking since he had been stunned by how much of a disadvantage Kort had actually been placed in despite fighting the young Gerald. Parker could only imagine what level of strength Daryl truly had as Gerald’s mentor.

“Hah! Are you saying that Christopher hasn’t been wasting his time in the past few decades? What, has he arrived at the realm of legends as well?” asked Daryl in return.

“He has!”

“What? Didn’t you say that Great Old Master Moldell passed away, grandpa?” asked Winnie—who was still in a state of shock—as she continued watching Gerald and Kort fight.

“Nonsense! That was just a rumor. After all, how could we expose Great Old Master Moldell’s identity so casually? Still, you’re just a junior so it’s natural for you not to know a thing about this,” replied Parker.

“...Then... Is Gerald a champion as well now? He’s extremely strong!” asked Winnie again, her heart brewing with complicated emotions.

After all, Gerald had been the one who had saved her back when he had first gone to the Moldell family in search of help. Back then, Winnie was severely injured and suffering from anemia. Thanks to Gerald’s blood donation, she made it out alive.

Even so, she had always looked down upon him since she just considered him to be a regular person from the ordinary world.

Now that he was so strong, however, Winnie was having complicated thoughts.

“...How puzzling... Correct me if I’m wrong, but after observing Gerald for a while, I’m assuming that he’s no champion, sir. Could my guess be correct?” asked Parker who wasn’t making any effort to hide his slight agitation as he turned to look at Daryl in disbelief.

“Hahaha! You seem to be quite insightful!” replied Daryl with a proud smile.

“... My god...” mumbled Parker as he staggered a few steps backward, his face now extremely pale.

Thankfully, Winnie managed to support him in time. Finding it odd, she then asked, “What do you mean, grandpa? Despite his rapid growth in terms of strength, I see no issue with him having the title of champion. After all, he must have gone through extreme training to get to where he currently is!”

“He isn’t one! Now that the elder has answered my question, I can safely say that Gerald is no champion!” replied Parker.

“...Are you suggesting that he has an even higher title...?”

Holding his breath, Parker then stared wide-eyed at Gerald as he trembled while muttering, “...He... He’s a great master...”

The realm of legends was the most mysterious of realms when it came to ancient martial arts. Many have failed to get there even after spending their entire lives trying to achieve it, and this included people from within secret societies.

“...W-what...? You can’t be serious, can you, grandpa?” stuttered Winnie as her jaw dropped.

“He truly is a great master!” replied Parker, still trembling all over as he nodded.

“Still... A great master at his age... Aside from that man, Gerald’s the only other person to achieve the title of great master at such a young age!” added Parker.

“What’s a great master, dad? Gerald’s one now?” asked Dylan who had no idea what a great master was. However, from what he heard, he knew that it must have been an extremely high achievement.

“Haha! Indeed, Gerald truly has arrived at the realm of legends! It’s the reason why I was so surprised when I met him earlier. From what I had estimated, Gerald needed at least a decade or two in order to achieve that realm, and that was only if he was extremely talented and had exceptional biological advantages!” replied Daryl who appeared to be carefully hiding key facts in his explanation, despite being able to see everything clearly.

“Yes, lord. Ever since the young master drank the holy blood, he seems to have rapidly progressed in his training. From what I can personally see, he’s already arrived at the realm of legends. Even at his worst, he’ll still be at the level of half a great master. How truly rare! It seems that the holy blood worked like a charm!” said Welson who had been standing at the side this entire time.

“...No. It’s not only due to the holy blood,” replied Daryl as he shook his head.

“I’ve been observing Gerald from the moment he entered the hall... I’ll say it right now that the holy blood would’ve only helped him control his temperament better. In no way would it have helped him increase his training speed! Understanding that, I’ve come to a conclusion as to how he became a great master so quickly!” added Daryl with a slight frown.

“What have you concluded?”

“Well, it seems like someone has instilled a lot of potential within Gerald... I’m afraid that his body hasn’t been normal from half a year ago...”

Chapter 1051

“...So it turns out that the young master’s body was no longer normal for a while now! No wonder!” said Welson, feeling enlightened.

‘Still... Who exactly was Gerald’s first master...? This Finnley person...? I’ve never heard of him... If Gerald’s body was able to transform this much in just half a year, I wonder what level of training Finnley himself has...’ Daryl thought to himself.

A scream brought Daryl’s attention back on Kort as everyone watched the old man fall from mid-air before vomiting blood.

“You... You’ve already entered the realm of legends... How... How is this even possible?!” shouted Kort, his shock evident from his tone.

As the title suggested, only legends could enter the realm of legends.

From what Kort knew, Christopher himself—who had undergone such immense training—had barely been able to enter the realm of legends. Yet here Gerald was! A young man who had managed to achieve the status of great master despite Kort previously deeming him as a person who lacked common sense! Gerald was now multiple times stronger than Kort’s strongest opponents!

Kort was truly unable to reconcile with the truth, and he would rather die than accept it willingly!

“Well, you’ll get to die content, Kort. If there’s anyone you’d like to blame, let it first be yourself for acting out of line that day! For barely leaving me any leeway to even save myself! I’ll finally have my revenge today!” shouted Gerald as he clenched both his fists tightly.

Gerald had been waiting for this day for an entire year.

After all, he had been on the run for most of that period, not even able to return home. What more, even though he knew that his family was constantly in danger, all Gerald could do back then was watch helplessly and pray for their safety.

All this happened because Kort acted out of line and refused to leave any leeway. Because of that, Gerald had suffered so much in the past year.

However, now all that suffering was going to be worthwhile.

Sensing how immense Gerald's murderous intent had become, Kort couldn't help but gulp slightly.

Kort had lived his entire life dealing with powerful businesses. He was close to uniting all the powerful people across the globe as well. To think that his life was going to end at the hands of a young man...

...No! He couldn't just die like this!

"W-wait! You can't kill me today, Gerald! I'm... I'm the second master of the Moldell family! A powerful secret society! How... How dare you even think of killing me!" shouted Kort, slowly crawling away as he covered his injured chest.

"Parker! Parker! He's going to kill people from the Moldell family! Say something!" added Kort as he turned to look at Parker.

"...When two parties start a fight with death being the indication of who the loser is, if Gerald doesn't finish you off today, then he may as well be considered to be as good as dead!" replied Parker coldly.

If Parker wanted to be even franker, he would've just told Kort that he truly hoped that Gerald ended his life today. With Kort's death, Gerald would've essentially gotten rid of one big issue.

"Haha! Even your fellow Moldells aren't willing to help you! I guess that shows what kind of conduct you usually display before those under you! Worry not, I'll give you a quick death!"

Hearing how cold Gerald's tone was, Kort continued walking backward as he pleaded, "N-no! You can't kill me, Gerald! You'll regret it for the rest of your life if you do! "

Eventually, both of them arrived at a flower bed and the pale-faced Kort ended up stumbling before falling on his buttocks. Due to Gerald's punch to his chest earlier, all his strength was nearly gone.

"Regret it, you say...?"

"That's right! I know that you've been investigating the Sun League due to your fiancée and second uncle's disappearance! I even saw the projected map earlier, and I can assure you that it's definitely related to the Sun League!" replied Kort with a gulp.

Hearing that, Gerald turned to look at his grandfather. Daryl himself frowned slightly before eventually nodding at Gerald.

With that, Daryl walked over to the two before saying, "If you truly know where the location on the map is, I'll consider letting you live. Now spit it out!"

"Haha... You see, sir, Gerald... I've seen the mountain on the map before... It's called Warhill Mountain, and it's an extremely mysterious location! For starters, everything within that area constantly changes formation! What more, if you don't have a special wooden token, you'll never be able to find the place, even if you search for it your entire life!" explained Kort, quickly.

"...A wooden token? What sort of wooden token? And how are we to locate this Warhill Mountain?" asked Gerald.

If they were able to find that place without much trouble, then uncovering the secrets of the Sun League wouldn't take much longer either.

Chapter 1052

With any luck, that would greatly increase his chances of finally being able to find Mila and his uncle again!

Moved by the realization that there was a higher chance that he would be able to reunite with his girlfriend, Gerald then asked, "...So, about the wooden token-"

Gerald's sentence ended prematurely since he noticed that Kort was smirking instead of displaying his fearful expression just seconds ago. However, the realization had come a second too late since the next thing Gerald knew, there were already two beads in Kort's right hand!

Before anyone could make a move, Kort tossed the two beads at Gerald and Daryl's feet, causing the beads to explode with ear-shattering loudness!

Taking advantage of the chaos, Kort then made his escape!

"That scoundrel of an old man truly is as cunning as they say! Send people in pursuit of him, Welson! Don't let him escape!" shouted Daryl as the Soul Palace subordinates immediately obeyed.

"It's useless to do so, sir! While he's known for both his cunningness and strength, his greatest skill is his ability to make himself lighter! Even Christopher has praised his adeptness with that skill! No matter the situation, once he's made his escape, it's extremely difficult to re-capture him due to how stealthy he is," said Parker as he took a step forward while shaking his head.

With an apologetic look on his face, Gerald added, "It's my fault, grandpa... My mind wandered for a bit the moment he mentioned Mila and uncle just know... Leave it to me, I'll get him back!"

Though he knew that Gerald regretted his lack of concentration on the enemy, Daryl simply raised his hand before replying, "No, it's better if we don't press a cornered enemy too far... Even if he gets away this time, we'll catch him again sooner or later. If my guess is correct, he should be returning to the Moldell manor now. After all, I'm sure he's well aware that only Christopher is capable of saving him now! Until we go after them again, try not to be too anxious, Gerald."

Hearing that, Gerald simply clenched his fists before nodding slightly in defeat.

"Christopher... Kort..." muttered Daryl to himself at the moment.

After a brief silence, Daryl seemed to recall something, thus he added, "Come with me, Gerald. You and the others should come along as well, Dylan."

Meanwhile, Kort himself was running as swift as an arrow. As Parker had said, Kort's ability to make himself lighter truly increased his speed tremendously.

However, Kort was still severely injured from his fight against Gerald. Despite that, he continued rushing back to the Moldell manor in Yanken, refusing to stop moving his legs till he reached his destination.

Soon enough, the next dawn came, and with loud 'flop' Kort knelt as he wept with grief in front of the secluded courtyard within the Moldell manor that was located near the back of a mountain.

Catching his breath, Kort then cried out, "I, Kort, am an ungrateful descendant of the Moldell family! I kneel here today to beg my third uncle to meet me! I have some urgent issues to report to you!"

With that, Kort bowed deeply, his forehead touching the ground.

Since nobody replied even after some time passed, Kort simply lifted his head before pushing his forehead deeper into the ground, making sure to make a louder sound.

Despite that, there was still no reply.

After a few more bows, Kort's head was already bleeding. Understanding that what he was doing was futile, Kort finally got up before saying, "...I see you're reluctant to meet me, uncle... Does that mean that I won't ever be able to avenge my two children, even on my dying bed? With or without your help, I'm heading over to the Soul Palace to fight both Daryl and his grandson with all I have! At the very least, I'll die and protect the honor of our family that's existed for over a thousand years!"

"...Hold on a minute... That name... Did you say Daryl from the Soul Palace...?" said an old voice out of the blue from within the courtyard.

Eyes-widened, Kort watched as the cobweb-covered door to the room he was bowing in front of slowly creaked open.

Out stepped a trembling old man who had snowy-white hair and a body that was all skin and bones.

Chapter 1053

"Regardless, the sun's not even fully up yet, you b*stard! Crying out so loudly here... Were you planning to cry out here till I eventually died?" grumbled the old man.

Though Christopher looked like a senile old man, both his eyes seemed extremely sharp. Aside from the many cobwebs that stuck to his bony body, he didn't seem to look all that out of the ordinary. If anything, all that simply emphasized how old Christopher was.

Even so, Kort respected him deeply. Thinking back, it had been over twenty years since he had last met his third uncle.

Gulping, Kort then pleaded, "...I apologize, but moving on, please save me, Third uncle! Both Daryl and his grandson are hunting me down with murder in mind! What more, both of them also killed two of your grandsons! Both of them met truly terrible ends!"

"I see... I've come across Daryl during my earlier years... To think that he'd actually return to the ordinary world! Humph! Interesting... Well, not that interesting but note-worthy... Speaking of which, I know what he's like so I'm sure that he wouldn't argue against a junior like you. It's even more improbable that he'd kill both of your sons! He's not one to go that far! Based on what you told me, could it be that your sons went looking for trouble first and, as a result, got killed because of that?" replied Christopher rather placidly.

"While I agree that my two sons are mischievous, they didn't have to die so terribly just because of that! Just so you know, my third son, Jett, was left to die within the infamous Poisonous Mosquito Valley! Not even bones remained after the mosquitoes were done with him! As if that wasn't enough, my other son, Yuvan, was forced to commit suicide! You can't just sit back and continue watching all this happen so indifferently! Daryl's probably the most powerful person in the world right now! I, for one, certainly can't even dream of winning against him! With nobody powerful enough to defeat him, I hope that you'll step forward to beg him not to kill me! If you refuse, then it's better that I just die before you now in order to protect the Moldell family's reputation!"

After saying all that, Kort eyed a large tree before rushing toward it with the intent of bludgeoning his forehead against it till he died!

Before he knew it, however, Christopher's body had vanished from where he had initially stood, reappearing right beside Kort!

The old man then grabbed Kort's head with a single hand before shouting, "You b*stard! While it's true that the Moldells under me are all scared to death of Daryl, what do you mean he's the most powerful person there is? I'm still here, aren't I? Bold of you to say he's undefeatable... Bolder still that you even dared to suggest for me to beg Daryl to forgive you! Ridiculous!" growled Christopher as he narrowed his eyes that reflected his sheer fury.

"...Humph. With me here, that grandson and grandfather won't be able to lay a finger on you, so don't worry, Kort! In fact, rather than go on the defensive, I'll do you justice and deal with Daryl!" added Christopher in a frigid voice.

"T-thank you, third uncle!" shouted Kort as he burst into tears and leaped at Christopher to embrace him.

However, the moment both of them got into contact, Kort immediately realized that something was off. Left stupefied, Kort ended up taking a few steps backward and falling to the ground as he said, "T-third uncle! Where's your arm?"

"...Hmm? Haha! Ah yes, I forgot that you didn't know about me losing my right arm..." replied Christopher with a firm nod.

As the old man had said, his right arm was no longer there. Kort was caught by surprise by this since the long robes Christopher was wearing perfectly concealed the nub of his right arm.

“But... You still had it the last time we met some twenty years ago! When did this happen?”

“Haha! I broke my arm about ten years ago, so it’s no surprise that you wouldn’t know!”

“...I see... Then...”

Hearing Kort’s dispirited voice slowly trail off, Christopher immediately replied, “Hahaha! What, are you worried that I can’t defeat Daryl anymore since I’ve lost an arm?”

“I’d never doubt your strength, uncle! After all, I’m sure the way you present yourself is vastly different from what you’re truly capable of!”

Upon hearing that, Christopher simply shook his head before raising his remaining hand and gently touching the trunk of a large tree beside him.

From what Kort could estimate, the trunk was so thick that it would require at least three people hugging it in order to fully surround it.

A brief silence later, Christopher unleashed an immense force that sent a loud shockwave across the area! Immediately after, Kort’s eyes widened as he watched the large tree wither from its roots to the tips of its branches.

After a few seconds, the entire tree split cleanly in the middle! While the tree’s surface area was mostly still intact, its innards had completely festered.

“M-my god, third uncle!”

Chapter 1054

As Kort gulped loudly, clearly terrified by what he had just witnessed, Christopher let out a chuckle before saying, “So, are you still worried about those two?”

“N-not at all! You’re definitely the most powerful person in the world! With you clearly being undefeatable, we can avenge your two grandsons! I’ll escort you off the mountain!” said Kort excitedly.

“Haha! Still, you honestly didn’t have to come looking for me all the way up here. After all, I was going to leave the mountain before long anyway,” replied Christopher with a smile.

Hearing that, Kort seemed to remember something.

“...Now that I think about it, right before you went into seclusion twenty years ago, I remember you telling me that you wanted to make preparations for the pledge of the holy water... I also recall that the pledge is held once every thirty years... From what I can tell, that day is swiftly approaching! Since you seem to have gained the title of great master for at least ten years by now—judging from your strength—you can definitely represent our family to join the pledge!”

“You remember correctly. You know, my father died when he was participating in a pledge of the holy water. On the day that happened, I swore to myself that I’d one day arrive at the realm of legends and undergo the pledge of the holy water before I died,” replied Christopher as he reminisced.

“Speaking of the pledge of the holy water, I remember you showing me a picture of Warhill Mountain back before you entered seclusion. I saw it again yesterday at the Crawford family mansion. Apparently, the Crawford grandfather and grandson wish to solve the mystery behind the Sun League!” said Kort.

“Haha! Do they, now? They can certainly try! After all, nobody’s been able to unravel the mysteries behind the Sun League for almost a thousand years by now! The league itself almost feels imaginary, and at this point, I think it wouldn’t be far-fetched to say that there’s some cursed law that prevents anyone from ever finding them! Despite my dad being so powerful back then and even going so far as to devote much of his life to solving the mystery behind that group, in the end, he still failed to do so! I must say that Daryl truly is overestimating his abilities now...” replied Christopher as he laughed loudly.

“However, according to a clue that great grandfather had left back then, the pledge of the holy water is closely linked with the Sun League...”

“Indeed it is. I had a chat with my father in a secret room before he passed away that year. He told me that those who gained the status of great master would be granted tokens of the holy water that would be used for the pledge. My dad himself had doubted that the Sun League was the true provider of the holy water which, according to rumors, granted one immortality! To prove his point, he headed out to solve the secrets behind the Sun League. However, when he finally returned, he was a shadow of his former self. It was as though he had lost all his wits, and he remained silent most of the time. Less than a month later, he passed away, leaving behind only a map of Warhill Mountain that he brought back with him!” replied Christopher in a melancholic tone.

“If that’s the case, then you’d better not go, uncle... After all, the Moldell family can’t lose you! I mean... You know, just in case any accidents happen to you... Once you’re gone, the Moldell family members will be sitting ducks!” said Kort, evidently worried.

“Haha! Life and death are ruled by fate! What more, I’ve already worked so hard for so many years just to participate in the pledge of the holy water... I can’t just give up now! Don’t worry, I’ll get rid of all the Moldell family’s obstacles before I leave. Regardless, the sun is barely even up yet and you look exhausted... Go get some rest first,” said Christopher as he smiled subtly.

“Thank you, uncle!”

Back in the Crawford Manor, Gerald was currently meditating on the floor of his room while simultaneously practicing his breathing method.

During the previous day, Gerald’s grandfather had called any relevant Crawfords over into the manor’s secret room. Once inside, he asked them to try comprehending the Crawford family’s heirloom, the picture of the sun.

After seeing that nobody was able to gather anything from the picture, Gerald tried deciphering the picture’s deeper meaning as well.

While he did manage to decipher a few things, it was only a few techniques he could use to exert his power of the blessings of the dragon.

Back in the present, Lyra herself was fast asleep on her bed. Due to how exhausted she had been, she had turned in early.

Both Gerald and her were in the same room since his grandfather already treated her like his granddaughter-in-law, similar to Gerald’s parents and sister. Knowing that they had to share a room no matter what, Gerald simply opted to remain on the floor.

Turning to look at her, Gerald was surprised to see Lyra shaking her head in her sleep.

“...Hmm?”

As he went over to check on her, he could see that she was also sweating profusely.

Realizing that she must be having a bad dream, Gerald smiled bitterly as he asked, "A nightmare...?"

Just as he was about to cover her with a blanket, he heard her nervously say, "...Who... who are you...?"

Surprised, Gerald turned to look at her, only to find that her eyes were still shut tight. Even though she was just sleep talking, her voice seemed utterly terrified. What could she be dreaming about...?

Chapter 1055

Lyra found herself walking amidst a dense forest on a large mountain. The air was filled with a thick miasma and everything felt gloomy and eerie.

The fact that there didn't seem like there was anyone else around made her feel all the more terrified.

After walking through the forest for some time, Lyra's ears twitched as the sound of a flowing stream could be heard. Looking around, she eventually came across a lit area where the stream was. However, that wasn't the only thing she saw there.

Standing beside the stream was a woman wearing white clothes. It was a no-brainer that anyone who saw such a long-haired woman standing in the middle of nowhere would be rightfully terrified.

"...Who... who are you...?" asked Lyra meekly as she looked at the woman's back.

"...Save me... You're the only one capable of leading him here to save me...!" replied the woman.

Though Lyra was terrified when she heard that, she could sense the melancholy in her voice, and it seemed that the woman was weeping as well.

"...W-who is this, 'he' you speak of...?"

"...Save me...! You're the only one capable of leading him here to save me...!" repeated the woman as she wailed on.

To Lyra's horror, the woman then slowly began turning around. Lyra felt her eyes widen in fear as she saw the woman's extremely pale face. That wasn't the worst part either. The woman was shedding tears of blood!

Lyra instantly let out a blood-curdling scream and it took her a while to finally realize that Gerald's voice was present.

Opening her eyes, she saw that Gerald was sitting beside her, and he currently had a concerned look on his face as he asked, “What’s wrong, Lyra?”

Throwing herself into his arms, her heart continued pounding rapidly for a while. Eventually, she managed to calm down slightly.

“Was it a nightmare...?” asked Gerald.

“It... It was... It was terrifying... I dreamed that I was stuck in a dense and gloomy forest with nobody else around... However, the moment I finally bumped into someone, it was a woman who cried tears of blood! She... She told me to send someone over to save her!” replied Lyra as she explained what she had dreamed of.

Slowly shaking his head, Gerald then said, “Maybe you’re just too tired due to the stress of everything that’s been happening recently... Regardless, it’ll still be a little while before dawn... Take the time to rest, and try not to worry too much about it. I’ll be by your side...”

“I... I don’t think I’ll be able to... Ever since I saw that picture of Warhill Mountain, I’ve constantly felt insecure... It’s like I can feel that something is about to happen... Also, the more I think about it, the more I feel that that woman’s back resembles someone...”

“Hmm? Do you have any idea who...?”

“...Yes. Remember that statue of a woman that I was talking about? Back when we first saw the map? That statue—that had been broken waist-down—resembled the white-clothed woman in my dream a lot! In fact, they look exceedingly similar!” replied Lyra who was so scared that her cheeks became flushed.

“I see... Regardless, everything’s fine now... It’s normal to get nightmares of unnerving images... Again, I’ll be here so do rest for a little longer...”

After some persuasion, Lyra eventually lay down on her bed again. Gerald himself didn’t take the incident to heart.

Once dawn came, both of them got up separately. A little while later, a servant knocked on the door before saying, “Young master and young lady, the old master ordered everyone in the family to get themselves cleaned up at the break of dawn. After all, you’ll all be studying the picture of the sun again.”

“Very well!” replied Gerald with a nod.

Even from the previous day, his grandfather had prioritized the picture of the sun above all else, telling the other Crawfords to study it.

After all, he was well aware that alone, one’s power was limited. With so many family members there, they were bound to eventually find out more about it.

Gerald knew that his grandfather was simply worried about the prophesized curse of the sun picture. The curse where the Crawford family would eventually end up getting wiped out for good. It was why they had been making preparations to face the calamity from time to time.

Regardless, by the time Gerald and Lyra arrived at the secret room after cleaning themselves up, they found that though it was still very early in the morning, many, if not all, of the Crawford family members were already gathered there.

The room was so silent that Gerald felt that even a toddler would be pressured to study along silently if one was present.

Deeper inside, Gerald’s grandfather could be seen studying the map with many others. They seemed to have been doing so for a while now.

Seeing that, Gerald pulled Lyra along to the side before sitting down beside her. He then whispered, “That picture of the sun is our family’s heirloom, Lyra. Do have a look at it too since grandpa called you over as well.”

“Will do!” replied Lyra as she nodded firmly.

The picture itself was as cryptic as ever, and nobody had been able to discern anything meaningful from it.

As Gerald started studying the image as well, several other thoughts were swimming in Lyra’s head. Essentially, she was just feeling pleased that Gerald was finally starting to accept her more.

It was great news for her, and quite honestly, nothing else was more important to Lyra at the moment.

Chapter 1056

However, upon seeing how seriously Gerald was already studying the image of the sun, Lyra leaned toward Gerald's side and held on to her beautiful chin before observing the picture as well.

In general, once people placed their other thoughts aside, they would be able to concentrate much better. That applied to Lyra as well.

As she continued looking at it, Lyra paused for a brief moment before a frown began forming on her face.

"...Hmm?"

Squinting her eyes, Lyra's eyes slowly widened, fear reflected in them as she sat upright before shouting, "No... No!"

Everyone instantly became terrified as they watched Lyra—who had placed her hands on the side of her head—scream hysterically.

"Lyra? Lyra, are you alright?" asked Gerald.

"What's wrong, Lyra?" asked Daryl next as he stood up and walked toward her.

With a quivering finger, Lyra then pointed at the picture of the sun. In a terrified voice, she then muttered, "I... I saw it..."

She was simply too frightened to even say anything beyond that.

After Daryl and Gerald exchanged glances with each other, both of them asked in unison, "What did you see?"

Slowly turning to look at Gerald, Lyra then replied, "I... I saw... I saw Gerald getting murdered by others!"

The moment her sentence ended, Lyra immediately burst into tears.

"...What? Gerald was being murdered? Calm yourself Lyra, and tell us everything that you saw!" said Daryl.

From the moment he had first met Lyra, Daryl had sensed that his granddaughter-in-law was quite good, and not just in terms of her beauty and disposition. However, he couldn't quite put his thumb on why he felt that way.

As it turned out, his granddaughter-in-law had such a high level of understanding that she was able to comprehend the picture of the sun!

After calming down a bit more, Lyra slowly relayed everything she had seen in the picture.

It had started when the picture of the sun suddenly began transforming the moment Lyra paid closer attention to it.

Instead of a sun, the picture now portrayed the opening of a cave and in it, was a high stone platform. As if that wasn't strange enough already, Lyra swore that she could hear the eerie sounds of a flowing creek on the mountain as well.

Moving back to the platform, she saw a woman dressed in white climbing up its stone surface. On the platform itself was a youth that had been tied down by five large iron chains. Surrounding the platform were several people wearing hideous masks, and all of them were pulling the iron chains outward, stretching the poor youth's limbs further and further.

Of course, the youth was none other than Gerald, and Lyra watched in horror as he began screaming in pain due to his limbs slowly getting extended by the chains.

She had to stop them! However, no matter how desperately she tried to rush over, Lyra simply couldn't budge an inch.

Eventually, the disgusting sound of something being ripped apart could be heard... That was the moment when Lyra watched as Gerald's body got torn into several pieces, fresh blood gushing wildly out of his tattered body!

Lyra ended her explanation there, choking between sobs.

"...How... How could any of this be? Are you truly sure that that was Gerald, Lyra?" asked Dylan in disbelief.

As Gerald's face turned serious, Daryl himself was already portraying an extremely ugly expression.

“...I... I don’t think that these are all mere coincidences... After all, I had a nightmare of that exact same woman earlier... It can’t be just a coincidence for me to see her again so soon!” said Lyra as she began tugging her own hair.

“...Unfortunately, the picture never lies to anyone! The event Lyra saw will probably happen in the near future! Gerald will also be powerless to fight back once the time comes since Lyra saw him being torn to shreds!” replied Daryl, his worry prominent in his tone.

“Why... Why would you say that, dad? Didn’t you say that Gerald has already entered the realm of the legends...? Ordinary people shouldn’t be able to lay their hands on him! Shouldn’t the scenario Lyra saw be impossible?”

By then, even Yulia and Jessica were getting increasingly frightened as they saw the slight anxiousness on Daryl’s face.

Chapter 1057

“Alright Lyra, listen to me. I want you to take in a deep breath and focus on the picture again. I need to know whether you see the same scene again,” said Daryl hurriedly.

Hearing that, Lyra nodded before reluctantly turning to look at the picture of the sun once more.

After furrowing her brows for a while, she eventually covered her mouth before replying with a nod, “...It’s exactly the same... Upon closer inspection, the five people were even making threatening gestures... I... I can’t bear to look at the picture anymore... Grandpa, please! You have to save Gerald!”

Watching Lyra cry out to his father, Dylan himself said, “Is there a possibility that the sun picture could have prophesied wrongly, dad...? After all, Gerald is much stronger than before. There’s no way such a scenario could take place, right?”

Shaking his head, Daryl then replied, “As I’ve said, the picture of the sun never lies. If it predicted that Gerald would die being torn apart, it’ll surely happen sooner or later. Still, I wonder what their motive is... Or who they even are...”

As everyone fell silent, Gerald turned to look at his family members.

While Gerald was definitely pained to find out that the picture had predicted a horrible death for him, he didn’t want his family members to feel the same grief that he was.

Clearing his throat, Gerald then flashed a slightly bitter smile before saying, “Dad, mom, grandpa, sister, and Lyra... There really isn’t a need to worry! After all, aren’t I in perfect condition now? Besides, grandpa’s already said that I’ve entered the realm of

legends! Though I'm sure that there are still people who are stronger than me out there in the world, it definitely won't be easy for them to kill me!"

Daryl, however, shook his head as he replied, "I know what you're thinking about, Gerald. While it's true that you've managed to transcend the realm of champions and enter the realm of legends, you still can't truly be considered to be a great master. From what I've observed, you seem to only be at half the level of a great master. A semi-great master, if you will. You still require more training before you can truly enter the realm of legends."

"A semi-great master?"

"That's right! As a result, if you bump into a true great master who wishes to harm you, there's a high chance that you won't have the sufficient power to fight back. After all, there's still a vast difference between a semi-great master and a great master who's completed his training," explained Daryl.

"Then what should we do, dad? We can't just wait and watch as Gerald gets mercilessly murdered by those mysterious masked people! There has to be some way to avoid that outcome, right?" asked Dylan anxiously.

"Of course we won't! As long the tiniest chance of evading that scenario exists, we'll definitely give it a try! Still, too many things have been happening recently... I have a gut feeling that something major will happen next... Call it a hunch, but I have a feeling that the incident will be related to the token of the holy water..." replied Daryl with a frown.

"The token of holy water?" asked Gerald.

"...Dylan, tell everyone to leave first. I've something to tell Gerald. Personally," said Daryl.

Hearing that, the others obeyed and soon enough, only Gerald and Daryl remained in the secret room.

"...So... What's this token of the holy water, grandpa? What's happening to it? And why haven't I ever heard you talking about it before?" asked Gerald in confusion.

"Well, I received a legendary token of the holy water not long after you headed to the Logan Province. The token itself was given to me by a force that invites great masters from all over the world to an event known as the pledge of the holy water. On that day, limited holy water will be presented to the great masters and in order to obtain it, the great masters will have to fight each other for it. The holy water itself is worth fighting over since it's said that whoever drinks it will be granted immortality!"

After a brief pause, Daryl then continued, “While the pledge of the holy water is held once every thirty years, up till this point, nobody has actually consumed any before. After all, everyone who’s ever returned after participating in the event either ends up going missing or turns insane. For the ones who become deranged, they end up passing away soon after.”

“You should know that even Christopher’s father participated in the pledge of the holy water before. However, after returning, he only lived less than a year before passing away. While I’d like to say that it’s only a mystery for the Moldells to solve, in the end, it’s something even the rest of us—who’ve entered the realm of legends—need answers to.”

Chapter 1058

Daryl then added, “With great masters already existing so few and far between, you may wonder why such a powerful force would and could summon so many of them from all across the globe. Well, you see, nobody would know about the truth behind the event if they didn’t partake in the pledge of the holy water in the first place! Regardless, I told you to stay since there’s a very important clue to all this that I wanted to tell you.”

“What is it?”

“Well, I know that you’ve constantly been investigating the Sun League. There was a picture that was etched on the stone tablet that was dug up, and I find it to be quite similar to the place that was described on the token of the holy water. I want to study it together with you. Call it a gut feeling, but I feel that it’s closely linked with the pledge of the holy water.”

“From what you’ve said, it truly does seem relevant. If one manages to participate in the pledge of the holy water, there’s a chance that the secrets of the Sun League—which have remained an enigma for nearly a thousand years—may finally be solved!”

Despite knowing full well that those who participated in the pledge either went missing right off the bat or went insane before dying, Gerald was still very excited to have a lead.

What sort of life did those from within the Sun League live? Who even were their members?

After suffering for over a year, would he finally be able to solve those questions?

Regardless, Gerald finally understood why Finnley had claimed that it would be better to just kill himself when Gerald told him that he was going to investigate the Sun League a year ago. Finnley must’ve been aware that only great masters would be able to uncover their secrets, and even if they managed to do so, no answers would ever return with them—to the ordinary world—once the event was over. After all, the participants either disappeared or went insane!

“For a while now, I’ve noticed that something seemed to be weighing on your mind. You even summoned all the family members to observe the picture of the sun! So this was what it was...”

“Indeed... As you can already tell, I may not be able to return once I head out on this journey... If I don’t leave the picture of the sun with you, then I’ll truly be a great sinner to the Crawford family!” replied Daryl as he shook his head.

“...How do you feel about me representing you to participate in the pledge of the holy water, grandpa? After all, since the picture of the sun predicts that I’ll die soon anyway, I may as well participate in the pledge of the holy water in a final attempt to solve the secrets of the Sun League. Who knows, I may even succeed and find out where Mila and uncle are. If I’m able to do that, then I’ll at least be able to die content,” proposed Gerald with a slightly bitter smile.

“Rejected. First of all, my name was the one that was engraved on this token of the holy water, so they’d surely be expecting me. Secondly, once they find out that you’re only a semi-great master, that’ll give them even more reasons not to allow you to participate. I know how much you love me, Gerald... After all, you’re always so obedient... However...”

At this point, Daryl, one of the strongest to ever live, suddenly burst into tears!

“...I ...I just can’t find a way to save you...! I’m uncertain how things will end for me as well once I go on this journey... Gerald, know that you’re the future of the Crawford family... If you die, then our family will sink together with you!” cried out Daryl.

While he had claimed that he would look for a way to solve things, after being notified of the picture of the sun’s prophecy, what else could be done?

Hearing that, Gerald started weeping as well. While he wasn’t afraid of death, since he was now aware of what was to come, he knew that he needed to start staying away from everyone. That alone was enough to fill him with grief.

“...Please don’t be saddened, grandpa... When that day comes along, I’ll be sure to fight them till my very last breath!” declared Gerald as he clenched his fists tightly.

Looking at his grandson, Daryl then nodded firmly before replying, “...Either way, that woman in white clothes that Lyra keeps mentioning seems to have a lot to do with you! How cryptic... Regardless, I have to say that Lyra truly surprised me this time... I’ve heard from your dad that she was the only one who was able to see a broken stone statue on the map that was traced from the stone tablet! She was the sole person to be able to see through and decipher the sun picture’s prophecy as well today! What exactly are her origins? You know, I even secretly investigated her when your parents picked her up by the beach, yet I found nothing at the time. Regardless, it never occurred to me that she would have such capabilities...”

Hearing that, Gerald fell silent, feeling both flustered and confused.

While some revelations seemed to have made things rather complicated, Gerald could sense that he was also getting closer to the truth now.

Chapter 1059

As both of them continued pondering in the secret room, Dylan suddenly shouted from outside, “Dad!”

“What is it, Dylan?”

“One of the servants found an ancient-looking box in the manor earlier... Attached to it was a letter with Gerald’s name on it!” said Dylan as he entered the room with the box.

Just as Dylan had said, a letter addressed to Gerald had been placed atop the square box.

“Is there any indication of the sender?” asked Daryl.

“None that I know of. According to the servant, he found it by accident. Even after enquiring Welson about it, none of his security systems were able to capture any clues!” replied Dylan, his tone slightly anxious.

He had reason to feel so. After all, his father belonged to the Soul Palace, and everyone who was part of that secret society was the best among the best! Since someone was actually able to infiltrate their manor—even after Welson and his men had taken charge of the Crawford family’s security—of course he would feel nervous!

“...How odd... I wonder why so many weird incidents are occurring recently... Could something big be about to happen...?” muttered Daryl who was also starting to get worried.

“...Regardless, take a look inside the wooden box, Gerald. It’s meant for you anyway,” added Daryl after a brief pause.

“Alright!” replied Gerald as he doubtfully opened the box.

Upon opening it, an ancient-looking scroll was revealed.

After inspecting it a bit closer, it seemed to be a route map in a desert. The few grains of sand that were present on the scroll confirmed their deduction.

Every point on the map was marked clearly, and Gerald found himself surprised when he realized that the final destination appeared to be some underground palace. What more, there was a large sarcophagus in the middle of that palace!

Though the scroll was rather compact with rather crudely-marked details, the sarcophagus clearly stood out the most.

“...Well, it’s definitely a map of sorts...” said Gerald after looking at it for quite a while, still feeling slightly baffled.

Who exactly could have sent him such an oddity?

“...Based on the coordinates, it appears that the desert in question should be the Death Desert located northwest from here. It puzzles me as to why our anonymous sender even sent Gerald such a map... Also, that sarcophagus was definitely meant to stand out among the other details on the map... From the looks of it, it could be an eternal coffin...” replied Daryl.

“An eternal coffin?” asked Dylan, confused.

“Indeed. I’ve seen such coffins before in the picture of the sun... The coffin itself is a patent belonging to one of the countries in the Western Regions, and it has a history of at least a few thousand years by now. According to legends, people who are buried in such coffins will be able to keep their appearance and bodies fully intact,” replied Daryl as he took a deep breath.

“There used to be a lot of people who wanted to get their hands on the eternal coffin, but even after so long, nobody’s truly seen it before. How queer... Why could have sent you such a large gift? What even is the meaning behind all this...?” added Daryl.

“...You know, Parker said that someone aided him secretly while he was looking for leads to locate the Sun League. Now that someone’s sent us this map, I wonder if the sender is the same person who helped Parker... Could it be that the person has been helping us behind the scenes this entire time?” said Dylan as both he and Daryl turned to look at Gerald.

Daryl knew for a fact that there wasn’t such a person in his life who would do something like that for him. Dylan was thinking the same thing.

As a result, Gerald was the only possible person with such a connection.

“...Could it be my master, Finnley...? Though there’s little reason for him to do things behind the scenes... If he truly wished to help me, he’d definitely make himself known!” replied Gerald, still feeling perplexed after giving it quite a bit of thought.

In the end, Finnley seemed to be the only one that made sense. However, there really was no reason for Finnley not to just show himself, right?

“...Regardless, that issue can wait. For now, why not open the letter first and see what it says,” said Daryl.

Upon opening the letter, Gerald was greeted by only a few lines of words. However, when all three of them read the letter’s contents, they ended up feeling rather stunned.

‘When the bright sky erodes the moon,’

‘And water flows in the opposite direction,’

‘The Golden flower will wither as soon as it falls.’

Chapter 1060

When the bright sky erodes the moon? Why would there even be a moon in the middle of a bright day? And why on earth would water flow in the opposite direction?

While Gerald found the first two sentences to be extremely peculiar, the last one was relatively easier to grasp.

It signified that someone was going to die once the golden flower fell to the ground.

“...Could that be referring to me...?” muttered Gerald to himself.

“It seems that even the sender’s level of training is difficult to pinpoint. Whoever it is, they seem to thoroughly understand everything... Could there really exist such a powerful person in the world?” added Daryl in disbelief.

“...Regardless, what about Gerald, dad? Since this mysterious yet powerful person sent such a note to Gerald, doesn’t that signify that the prophecy of the sun picture is most likely going to come true? What could all of this even mean?” asked Dylan anxiously.

“Hmm... Well, aside from the scroll we received, we don't really have any other options to deal with the current situation. Since that person wants us to look for the eternal coffin, a wild guess would be that the coffin will be used to keep Gerald's body intact should something truly happen to him. However, Gerald will die being torn to shreds according to the sun picture's prophecy!” replied Daryl as he shook his head.

“Again, we have no better options at the moment... Besides, based on the previous incidents, the person who's been secretly helping us doesn't seem to hold any animosity against us. Whatever the case is, the person seems to want you to locate the eternal coffin for a reason only he knows. What do you think?” added Daryl.

“Heh, I won't be living for much longer anyway so I may as well go look for it. Since I want to improve my strength to hopefully be able to truly become a great master anyway, this will be the perfect chance for me to head out and gain more experience. Should everything go smoothly, who knows, I may even be qualified to participate in the pledge of the holy water!” replied Gerald.

Gerald had a strong gut feeling that the pledge of the holy water was the key to unlocking the secrets of the Sun League. He simply felt that all the questions he had would finally be answered once he participated in the pledge.

Since he was already a semi-great master, he knew that he needed to train as much as he possibly could in order to attain the title of a true great master. With any luck, once that happened, he would still be able to participate in the pledge. The thought of that motivated him to try his best. After all, if he was able to uncover the Sun League's secrets, then all this would be worthwhile, even if the prophecy of his death ended up becoming true.

“I see... Well, I guess it's settled then. Then again, looking for the eternal coffin is the only thing we can do now,” said Daryl with a helpless sigh.

With that, all three of them chatted late into the night.

The very next day, all the members of the Crawford family gathered around a helicopter, ready to bid Gerald farewell.

Gerald himself was ready to depart.

Meanwhile, Welson was on the beach, busy giving orders to a few subordinates.

“Pay extra attention to everything that happens on the island! The lord said that it's currently a critical moment for the Crawford family, so all of you have to be even more serious than you've ever been!”

After receiving their orders, Welson told them to leave before placing his hands against his back as he stood by the beach, looking out at the vast ocean.

Recently, he couldn't help but constantly feel that something was wrong. Though things still appeared to be peaceful, he always felt a lingering feeling that something major would happen soon.

That feeling was particularly strong the moment he woke up today. It was so overbearing that he felt both flustered and extremely anxious, even now.

As he continued thinking about it while looking at the ocean, he suddenly heard faint footsteps walking up to him from behind.

"...Hmm? What's the matter?" asked Welson as he tilted his head slightly, thinking that it was one of his subordinates.

"Could this place be where the Crawford family lives?" asked an unexpectedly old-sounding voice.

Feeling his heart skip a beat, Welson immediately turned around, only to be greeted by a white-haired old man who was all skin and bones.

With his face filled with wrinkles, the old man had plain white clothes on and he appeared to have lost an arm as well.

Despite how frail the old man looked, Welson couldn't help but feel nervous.

'How did he even get here? And when did he appear behind me?'

"...May I know who you are, sir? And why have you come to search for the Crawford family on this island?" replied Welson as he bowed slightly, understanding that this old man was no ordinary person.

"I'm the great master... Christopher Moldell!"

Chapter 1061

A little while later, Gerald was about to board the helicopter when he saw Welson slowly limping toward him.

“...Welson?” said Gerald.

It was evident that something was wrong with the old man. Even from afar, everyone present could see how dull and gloomy Welson’s eyes were, and he was also walking somewhat zombie-like. It was odd, to say the least.

While Gerald frowned, he decided not to make a move for now.

Since Dylan was from the same generation as Welson, he called out, “Perfect timing, Welson... Since Gerald’s about to head on a long voyage, I’ll call him over to bid you farewell.”

However, Welson didn’t seem to have heard what Dylan said, and he simply continued limping slowly toward them.

“...Welson...?” said Dylan.

“Back off, Dylan!” shouted Daryl out of the blue, his gaze appearing extremely vigilant.

“Welson, are you alright? Did something happen?” asked Daryl, still staring at the old man.

The rest of the Crawfords began peeking at Welson as well, curious as to what was happening.

Without warning, Welson suddenly began vomiting blood! Following that, blood began gushing out from both his eyes, and nose as well!

It wasn’t long before his entire face became a dark-purplish shade and the old man finally collapsed to the ground.

Seeing that, both Daryl and Gerald simultaneously shouted, “Welson!”

Repeatedly shouting Welson’s name as Gerald ran over to the old man, by the time Gerald got there, Welson was no longer among the living.

“...Welson has immense strength so few people in the world are able to defeat him... There’s a threat on this island!” growled Daryl coldly as his eyes turned fierce.

“...H-huh? Who’s that?” asked Dylan who instantly became nervous.

“With such high vigilance, you truly are the same Daryl from back then... It’s been thirty years since we last parted ways... Long time no see, Daryl!” shouted an old man—who looked to be in his declining days—as he walked over to them.

Despite how frail he looked, his steps were light and his voice was extraordinarily loud and clear. Knowing how unnatural that was for someone his age, the rest of the Crawfords began growing nervous as well.

“Who are you? Are you Welson’s murderer?” asked Gerald, his voice filled with hatred.

While Gerald had only known Welson for half a year, after how well Welson had treated him for so long, Gerald already saw the old man as his own grandfather.

Gerald had also heard from Daryl that Welson’s family had been servants to the Crawford family for many generations now, and each generation of servants was extremely loyal to his family.

With all that in mind, how couldn’t Gerald be furious about what had just happened?

“Retreat, Gerald! That person is none other than the Moldell family’s Christopher!” said Daryl as he took a step forward, maintaining an extraordinarily calm composure.

“As expected of your grandson, Daryl... Gerald truly is as talented as Kort said... Quite honestly, I didn’t believe it when Kort told me that Gerald had managed to enter the realm of legends. After all, who on this planet would be able to change the laws of nature and train up a young great master? With doubt in mind, I came over to have a look myself. To think that what Kort had said was all true!” said Christopher as he nodded several times.

“Actually, I take it back a little. From what I can see, you’re only somewhat of a semi-great master... Such a pity... If things had gone a bit more smoothly, you would’ve definitely achieved the title of the second young great master in the history of legends! Pity, pity, pity...” added Christopher.

“And why exactly are you pitying him, Christopher? Surely you couldn’t have come all the way here just to congratulate my grandson, correct? Also, I couldn’t help but notice that you’ve lost your right arm. How did that happen, I wonder...” replied Daryl.

“I’d rather not talk about my missing arm. And no, of course not. I simply came over to take Gerald away! Well, I won’t deny that I initially thought of killing him as soon as I got here. If I had gone with that, then after taking part in the pledge of the holy water, the Moldell family would remain and be able to take control of the dragon veins of the entire world! Haha! However, after seeing Gerald, I just couldn’t bring myself to do it! Instead, I’ve now decided to take him away, just to see how he’ll even end up becoming a great master!” said Christopher.

“You’re speaking so seriously and confidently, Christopher. I don’t suppose you’ve forgotten our fight thirty years ago, have you? Do you not recall how difficult it was for you to stand against me, even with both your arms intact back then? While it’s true that both of us arrived at the realm of legends at around the same time ten years ago, you now only have your left arm left! It won’t be easy for you to take my grandson away from me, you know?” replied Daryl who had already begun channeling his inner strength into his hands.

“As they say, change is the only constant. I’d like to know as well whether I’ll be defeated again this time!” said Christopher with a faint smile.

Chapter 1062

Upon ending his sentence, a gust of wind blew past the old man’s body, sending his plain clothes fluttering in the breeze.

“Very well. Just so you know, I’ve long known that you’d leave your seclusion sooner or later. I’ve been looking forward to this match for a long time myself!” replied Daryl with a loud laugh.

The others then watched as the two of them slowly began approaching each other... Before leaping into the air!

Standing by the side, Gerald watched as both of them displayed equal amounts of strength and skill as they exchanged blows. So this was a fight between great masters...

Powerful. Truly powerful...!

However, what surprised Gerald even more was the fact that though Christopher only had one arm, he didn’t seem to be fighting at a disadvantage. In fact, even after exchanging over a hundred blows in the blink of an eye, neither of the two old men had gained any sort of advantage over each other.

“It would appear that you’ve been suffering in silence throughout these thirty years, Christopher. To think that you still have so much power even after losing an arm!” said Daryl, a hint of fear in his voice.

“Now you’re just flattering me!” replied Christopher with a bitter smile.

“Regardless, it won’t be easy for you to capture Gerald and take him away!” added Daryl.

“Oh, I’m well aware, Daryl. That’s why I’m going to be showing you a little stunt I’ve prepared. I do wonder if you’re capable enough to withstand it!” said Christopher as he smiled.

“A stunt?” asked Daryl as he frowned.

As soon as Daryl’s sentence ended, he watched wide-eyed as Christopher’s body turned somewhat translucent. Realizing that it was an after image, Daryl immediately got into a defensive position as Christopher rushed toward him with extreme speed.

Since Daryl had been expecting an immediate attack, he failed to notice in time that Christopher had a mirror in his hand. The moment the mirror was revealed, a white light shot out from it, hitting Daryl right in the chest!

The moment that happened, Daryl’s mind immediately fell into disarray, giving Christopher a chance to slam his palm into Daryl’s chest!

Too dizzy to break his fall, Daryl ended up being flung backward before crashing onto the ground!

“Grandpa!” shouted Gerald as he immediately began rushing over to help his fallen grandfather up.

Christopher, however, wasn’t having any of that. With a wave of his hand, a surge of energy was launched toward Gerald!

Despite using all his strength, Gerald found himself unable to withstand the immense force. It was at that moment when he finally realized that though he was already a semi-great master, there was still a vast difference between his current power and the power of a full great master.

Defeated in just a single blow, Gerald could feel his blood surging wildly within his body. With the force in his body rushing all over the place, Gerald ended up vomiting blood!

“Gerald, retreat!” shouted Daryl as he fumbled up.

“Still, I wasn’t expecting you to be cruel enough to break your right arm just to be able to control the power of the mysterious mirror!” added Daryl as the fear in his voice continued to grow.

“How insightful! No wonder you’re the lord of the Soul Palace! As you probably already know, only a few among the Moldell family’s ancestors have been able to control the power of the mysterious mirror! Naturally, I’m included in that group! Mind you, the Christopher you defeated thirty years ago was still a young and inexperienced person. After that defeat, I was deeply ashamed. As a result, I did my best to improve my strength every day. At one point, I attempted to comprehend the mysterious mirror, hoping to master its power. Unfortunately, I soon came to the conclusion that I wasn’t able to fully control the mirror’s power. Upon finding out that sacrificing my right arm would help me gain full control over it, I did just that as my final resort. As you’ve seen, that final resort worked!” replied Christopher.

Just as the picture of the sun was the Crawford family’s magic artifact, the mysterious mirror was the Moldell family’s own version of that.

“I must say, however, that I currently don’t have much interest in defeating you, Daryl. Rather, I’m more fascinated by your grandson. After studying his secrets, who knows, I may be able to utilize them for myself so that I’ll be able to take another step further during my remaining days,” added Christopher as he shook his head.

Just as he was about to take Gerald away, an infuriated Daryl shouted, “Over my dead body! I hope you know that the Crawford family’s blessings of the dragon isn’t anything ordinary either!”

Immediately after saying that, Daryl’s body began glowing. As a layer of colorful lights enveloped Daryl, his strength seemed to peak as he rushed toward Christopher!

Chapter 1063

“The blessings of the dragon?” muttered Christopher as he immediately took a few steps back, his eyelids twitching rapidly.

Seeing that the old man was momentarily stunned, Daryl shouted, “Gerald! Leave now!”

The pilot himself took the cue to immediately start up the helicopter.

While Gerald was extremely reluctant to leave, he was also well aware that his grandfather had used all his strength for his sake. If he remained here any longer, his grandfather’s efforts would all be for naught.

With that in mind, he rushed into the helicopter.

The moment Christopher attempted to pursue the youth, Daryl immediately clung on tightly to him, preventing the old man from proceeding any further.

“You called me cruel earlier, but aren’t you even more so? To think that you’d actually use your blessings of the dragon to take the blow of my mysterious mirror’s power! While I know that I can’t kill you, you’ll still be terribly injured! There are still three more months till the pledge of the holy water takes place. I’m afraid that you won’t be living long!” said Christopher, feeling that he was left with no further options now that Daryl had suddenly risen again.

Him, feeling cornered was warranted. After all, Christopher knew for a fact that the blessings of the dragon wasn’t something that could be looked down upon.

Adding that to the fact that he still wanted to participate in the Pledge of the Holy Water, Christopher knew that giving it his all to fight against Daryl now wasn’t going to be worth it.

What more, if Gerald managed to escape, then the possibility of further improving his strength before the pledge would be completely out of the question.

With that in mind, after some struggling, he managed to break free from Daryl’s grasp.

As Christopher ran toward the helicopter—that had already lifted up by now—Daryl knelt on one knee as he began vomiting blood. Knowing that he no longer had the strength or energy to pursue Christopher, Daryl could only look at the helicopter with worried eyes.

After flying quite a distance away from the island, the pilot said, “Worry not, young master, for the helicopter is already quite high up now! I doubt that he can continue pursuing us from up here!”

“That’s good to hear... Still, I wonder how grandpa’s condition is right now... I had initially thought that he was perfectly capable of dealing with Christopher. To think that Christopher had such a powerful magic artifact with him!” replied Gerald, his voice filled with worry.

“The lord is extremely powerful so you needn’t worry about him. No matter how strong Christopher’s magic artifact is, I believe that he won’t be able to do any serious damage to the lord. Just so you know, the lord was probably distracted earlier since you still hadn’t taken off. Now that we’ve escaped Christopher, the lord can fully focus on him,” said the pilot.

The moment he said that, however, the helicopter suddenly shook slightly. It felt like something weighted had just attached itself to the bottom of the airborne vehicle.

Shockingly, a second later, a head could be seen peeking through the helicopter’s window! It was Christopher!

“Where do you think you’re running off to, little boy?” asked Christopher with a cold smile.

Before Gerald could even react, the old man shook his wrist slightly, sending a white light flashing into the helicopter!

Following that, the sound of an explosion could be heard, and after shaking violently, the helicopter began plummeting!

It wasn’t long before it collided with the ground, and upon impact, rocks were sent flying all over the place as a blazing fire engulfed the helicopter!

Debris was everywhere as the injured Gerald slowly sat up before getting to his feet. Since he was a semi-great master now, his body could withstand more than what regular people could. The same couldn’t be said for the dead pilot, however.

“There really isn’t any reason for you to continue running, you know? Come with me. With you, I’ll obtain the possibility of further increasing my strength before the pledge of the holy water,” said Christopher—who had been standing at the side—with a faint smile on his face.

“Over my dead body!” growled Gerald as he gritted his teeth before immediately using all his energy to toss his short blade at the old man!

Aimed at Christopher’s chest, the short blade whistled as it swiftly flew across the air... only for the blade to be caught by Christopher with only two of his fingers!

“I see you used a hidden weapon... While impressive, you’re still too weak to defeat me, boy!” replied Christopher, his smile broadening.

Seeing that, despair swept through Gerald. He had thought that he would at least have a slim chance of survival. After all, even though he knew he was going to die based on the sun picture’s prophecy, he still wanted to participate in the pledge of the holy water before that.

To think that Christopher would end up cornering him like this.

In his mind, Gerald felt that ending his own life there and then would be much better instead of getting captured and most probably tortured by Christopher.

With his mind set, Gerald's eyes became filled with murderous intent as he slowly lifted his hand, ready to commit suicide.

However, the moment his hand was raised, a whistling sound could be heard.

Looking at the source of the sound, Gerald was stunned when saw that the short blade—that was still pinched between Christopher's fingers—was now vibrating in place.

The old man himself was even more surprised. However, he quickly regained his composure and began increasing the force his fingers had on the blade.

Suddenly, the shiny black short blade emitted a red flash of light! Upon closer inspection, it now looked like it had just been taken out of a forge...

Chapter 1064

Evidently, however, it didn't just appear to be hot. This was confirmed when Christopher instantly began screaming in pain as he let go of the scalding-hot short blade.

The moment he did so, the short blade instantly flew back into Gerald's hand.

"It's... It's a magic artifact?!" yelled Christopher, still recovering from the shock.

Shortly after, his gaze went feral as he muttered, "So the picture of the sun wasn't the only magic artifact that the Crawford family owned... How surprising... If I get my hands on that short blade and learn how to control it, my power will easily be doubled! I'll be invincible! Once I obtain it, I'll surely be able to further demonstrate my great skill and talents during the pledge of the holy water!"

Seeing that the old man had started mumbling like a mad person, Gerald slowly began taking a few steps back.

"The heavens have truly blessed me this time... Not only do I already have control over the mysterious mirror, but I'll soon be able to get a hold of both Gerald—who has a special body—and a new magic artifact! I'll truly be invincible!" said Christopher aloud as he began walking toward Gerald, his eyes now lit up.

However, after just a few steps, his left arm started trembling violently as the rest of his body stiffened!

Gerald watched as the veins on Christopher's arm swelled up, their sheer redness making them resemble numerous worms. The old man's face, on the other hand, had an expression of agony as his face slowly turned purple.

"...Could it be a backfire?" muttered Gerald under his breath, realizing that now was his chance to escape.

Immediately tossing his short blade at Christopher, the old man—who was in massive pain—used his mysterious mirror to deflect it.

Upon seeing that, Gerald knew it was now or never. Taking advantage of Christopher's backfire, Gerald instantly began running away.

"You b*stard! No matter how far you run, I'll definitely catch up to you! I'm determined to examine your special body and gain that magic artifact!" roared the still paralyzed Christopher as he continued glaring daggers at Gerald's back.

Gerald himself didn't stop running and eventually, he got to a forest. Running through it, he had no idea where he currently was or how far he still was from the desert.

Knowing that the desert was in the northwest, however, he gathered his bearings and began running in that direction.

It was three days later when Gerald came across a stream. Feeling extremely thirsty, he decided to stop to drink some water.

"So it seems that choosing you was the right choice after all... I guess you've finally decided to reveal the holy spirit in you..." said Gerald, a hint of happiness in his tone as he took his short blade out.

"...Hmm? What's this?" said Gerald the moment he realized that the short blade looked slightly different from before. Looking closely at it, it seemed that peculiar lines and words had appeared on both sides of the blade.

On one of the sides, the word 'Dawnbreaker' could be seen engraved on the blade in ancient-like handwriting.

'Dawnbreaker... I guess that's your name, huh. What an overbearing name!' Gerald thought to himself.

Turning to look at the other side of the short blade, Gerald saw that there were many more tiny lines and pictures on this side.

As he squinted to make sense of the images, to his surprise, the pictures on the blade seemed to be able to communicate with him!

The moment his gaze fell upon a small, black figure, it instantly became animated and began repeatedly performing a few movements.

“...Could Christopher have awakened a dormant power within Dawnbreaker when he touched it earlier...? Regardless, based on the figures’ actions, it seems to be showing me the proper way to use the short blade!”

Understanding that, Gerald began seriously observing the animate figure’s actions. After repeatedly watching the black figure’s movements, Gerald was able to discern four different attack patterns.

The baffling thing was, only one of the four attacks felt like they were meant to be used by the Dawnbreaker. The other three felt more like attacks suited for a long sword.

While that was what he initially thought, the more Gerald observed the black figure’s movements, the more he was able to imagine himself doing all four of the attacks.

Once he felt he was ready, Gerald gripped the short blade’s handle tightly. His strength appeared to trigger something within the blade, causing it to start whistling. Following that, the weapon seemed to begin chanting.

Hearing that, Gerald then tossed the blade with one swift movement. As it flew forward, it produced a terrifying noise that sounded like it was tearing through the air around it.

What more, the blade’s power seemed to have increased as well, slicing through any trees and destroying any large rocks that stood in its path. Eventually, the short blade began flying back to Gerald.

However, instead of catching it, he used his mind to control the short blade to make a second attack.

The short blade obeyed, and since it did, Gerald knew that he now had an extremely handy assistant on the battlefield that was able to fly all over the place and look for flaws on his opponents.

So this was the true way of using the Dawnbreaker...

Chapter 1065

Gerald was so immersed in his new discovery that he ended up training for days to master all four of the techniques made by the black figure. By the time he realized it, a week had already passed.

Tossing the short blade again, an explosive sound was soon heard as a large stone crumbled to pieces.

As the blade hovered in the air, Gerald used his mind to command the Dawnbreaker to return to his hand.

Once it did, Gerald thought to himself, 'The Dawnbreaker truly has immense attack potential... From what I can tell, it's probably as strong as a great master! While I may still be a semi-great master, since I now know how to properly use this short blade, I should be able to even up the fight should I bump into Christopher again!'

Throughout that week, Gerald had mastered the other three methods as well. However, since he disliked using long swords as a whole, he didn't really bother practicing too much on the other three moves.

Regardless, he knew that he had delayed his search for the eternal coffin for a bit too long at this point. Thus, he decided it was high time to leave the forest and continue heading northwest.

Thankfully, Gerald made it out of the dense forest by evening.

Stumbling across a small town close to the forest's edge, the dry atmosphere there hinted to him that a desert could be nearby. After enquiring a few of the townsfolk, he realized that he had arrived at the border of the Death Desert.

He was pleased that the desert was extremely close to where he had initially predicted it to be while navigating through the forest. He was also thankful that the helicopter had crashed quite close to the desert, otherwise, he would've surely had to walk much longer.

After finding a hotel to stay the night in, Gerald went off to buy some suitable clothes for himself, well aware that he needed a temporary break.

Once he got everything he needed, he was just about to head back to his hotel when his sharp ears heard a scream coming from nearby.

"W-what do you intend to do?"

“Oh, nothing much... We saw that you two beauties came from out of town so we just want to treat you to a drink! You know, to express our admiration for you!”

“Step aside!” said one of the women as she pushed the men aside, intent on leaving.

“Hey, now! Don’t leave yet, beauty!” said another man as he—alongside a few other men—blocked her path.

It was evident that after seeing how beautiful both of them were, the men were having all sorts of cunning thoughts.

While such incidents were common, Gerald found himself stopping dead in his tracks.

‘...Why did it sound so much like her...?’

The more Gerald listened, the more he thought that her voice resembled that girl’s. Now intrigued, Gerald followed the voice till he arrived at a corner of the street.

The moment his eyes fell on her, Gerald felt his eyelids twitch slightly.

‘So it truly is her! Why did she come all the way out here?’ Gerald thought to himself in surprise.

However, he quickly shook the surprise off the moment he saw the men beginning to take action. Frowning slightly, he began walking toward the harassing men.

The youths themselves were just about to forcefully drag the women away when two of them felt a hand being placed on their shoulders.

Turning around to see who it was, they were greeted by the sight of a man who was wearing a cap and mask.

“Huh? Where the hell did you come from, you b*stard? Mind your own business! If you don’t leave now, I’ll kill you!” warned the youth coldly.

Making sure to alter his voice slightly, Gerald then said, "Let them go!"

"Oh? Do you truly wish to act like a hero and rescue these beauties? You're just--"

Before the man could even say anything else, Gerald grabbed him by the wrist, and a split second later, the sound of snapping bones could be heard.

Hearing their ally's screams of pain, the rest of the youths instantly went on the attack!

However, after taking turns punching Gerald's chest, all of them ended up yelping in pain as they held onto their hurt fists. All of them were now staring at Gerald, deeply afraid.

Punching him felt like they were punching a mountain rather than an actual human... Feeling that their bones would get fractured if they continued punching him, they all simultaneously wondered what kind of body he even had.

"If you don't want to die, leave this instant!" growled Gerald in a frigid tone.

Gulping, all of them then held on to their hurt hands as they ran away rather pitifully. After all, upon seeing the murderous intent in his eyes, escaping was the only logical answer! How utterly frightening!

Once the men ran off, the two women looked at their savior, feeling extremely grateful.

"Thank you for saving us, mister!" said one of the women as Gerald lowered his cap even further.

Shaking his head, Gerald then looked down before replying, "It's fine. Now head back!"

Chapter 1066

After saying that, Gerald was about to turn around and leave when he suddenly heard one of the girls saying, "Ouch! My leg!"

Turning back to look, he saw that girl who had yelped was currently holding on to her ankle. It was most probably hurt when she was struggling to free herself earlier.

"Are you alright?" asked Gerald and the other girl simultaneously as they both squatted down.

Momentarily surprised by their similar reactions, the girl then replied, "My ankle hurts pretty badly... I don't think I can walk!"

"Hmm... Well I'll support you then!" said the charismatic bespectacled girl.

Despite her friend's help, the injured girl's leg was too hurt for her to walk more than a few steps at a time.

After watching them stop to rest a few times, Gerald simply said, "...This is taking far too long... Just let me have a look!"

"Of course! But... Wouldn't it be better if you had her ankle checked back at our place? I'm afraid that those hooligans will return!" replied the bespectacled girl in a gentle tone.

"Sure thing," said Gerald as he carried the injured girl on his back. Carrying her like this again, Gerald felt rather nostalgic.

"Speaking of, where are all of you headed to?"

"Ah, we're staying in Bacht Hotel!"

"Oh? What a coincidence! I'm staying there too!"

"I see! Are you here for a trip?"

"Indeed! What about both of you? Are you reporters or something?" replied Gerald with a slightly bitter smile.

Shocked, the girls then asked, "H-how did you know?"

"Well, let's just say that your character sort of gave you away!" said Gerald.

"Haha! You're quite funny aren't you?" replied the charismatic girl with glasses.

"If you don't mind me asking, where are you from?" asked the injured girl.

"...Hmm? That's not important, is it?"

"Oh no, it's just that I find you slightly familiar with an old friend of mine... He isn't as great or as strong as you thought!" replied the girl rather nervously.

Following that, she then added in a softer tone, "...You know, I sprained my ankle once and that was the first time we got to properly get to know each other... I can still clearly remember him carrying me on his back, just like you are now!"

"You sound pretty emotional when you talk about him... Was he your boyfriend?" asked Gerald, his face slightly flushed at this point.

"Hehe! I wasn't lucky enough to be his girlfriend..."

"There's no luck in love, you know? He probably just didn't know how to appreciate you! Since you're so pretty, I'm sure you can get all the guys you want!" replied Gerald.

"He's right, you know? It's already been over a year since both of you last talked, so you should really forget about him already and move on!" said the bespectacled girl.

"He isn't someone that I can just let go of that easily!" replied the injured girl as she shook her head.

Sighing, the bespectacled girl then replied, "It's pointless arguing with you..."

Hearing that, Gerald himself remained quiet. Soon enough, the trio arrived at the hotel.

There was a restaurant on the hotel's first floor, and upon all three of them entering, a group of people who were eating there immediately noticed the two girls. Seemingly acquainted with them, the group of people immediately ran over to them.

"Are you alright?"

“What’s this then? What happened? How did you injure your leg?” asked what seemed to be the leader of the group in a concerned tone as he walked over.

Just as his question ended, another of the men—who looked rather charismatic and wore a suit—ran straight for the injured girl before asking, “Are you alright, Giya?”

Before she could even reply, the same guy turned to look at Gerald rather jealously.

‘...Who is this guy? And why is he carrying her on his back...’

Chapter 1067

“This man saved us, Mr. Lockhart!” said Giya as she slowly got off Gerald’s back.

“I’ve told you time and again not to call me that, Giya... Just call me Wynn... Calling me Mr. Lockhart feels so strange!” replied Wynn.

Choosing not to reply to that, she then turned to look at Gerald before saying, “...Anyway, we still don’t know your name, so... Could you please share it with us?”

For some odd reason, Giya had felt extremely close to this person from the moment she first met him. She couldn’t tell why either. It almost felt unreal how close he felt to her.

Aside from him, it had been the longest time since she had last felt such a way toward any guy. If she had to put the feeling into words, it felt somewhat similar to meeting a long-lost relative again.

“She’s right, we still don’t know your name!” added the bespectacled girl with a smile on her face.

“There’s no need for that, I just helped with a small matter!” replied Gerald as he further lowered his brim before heading upstairs.

Seeing that, the bespectacled girl pouted slightly.

“Who even is he, Meredith? Why’s he wearing a hat and mask in bright daylight? And more importantly, who does he think he is?” scoffed Wynn scornfully.

After hearing how Meredith had talked to Gerald, he was certain that the masked man had saved the girls like some kind of superman. Wynn himself had been waiting for a chance to do such a thing. Now that someone had beat him to it, he was feeling both nervous and envious toward Gerald.

“How could you talk bad about our lifesaver, Wynn?” replied Meredith, upset.

“I’m just saying the truth! I’m sure he’s just putting up an act!” replied Wynn.

“Both of you, stop fighting! The only thing that matters now is that the girls are both fine! Also, since both of you are now back, go ahead and grab some food. We’ll be heading into the desert once the Master of the Desert arrives!” said their leader.

Upon hearing that, everyone fell silent.

There were over twenty people in Giya’s group, with thirteen of them being men and the rest being women. The group itself was there to conduct research in the desert, with Meredith and Giya acting as reporters.

Wynn, on the other hand, was the son of the research’s sponsor. Being both rich and powerful, he had fallen for Giya from the moment he first saw her at an event. Since then, he had constantly been trying to win her heart over, even going so far as to come along on this research trip just to continue wooing her.

As their leader returned to his own seat, he said, “Speaking of him, I wonder why he isn’t here yet... How odd! Regardless, we won’t be able to survive in the desert for long without him. Some say that the Master of the Desert knows the desert like the back of his hand since he grew up there.”

While the other members of the group began discussing it, the sounds of bells—which were common for camels to wear around these parts—could be heard ringing away as they got closer and closer to the hotel.

Eventually, over twenty camel-pulled carts came to a halt in front of the hotel.

Standing at the entrance, a tanned old man with a contrasting white beard and a face full of wrinkles shouted, “Alright, let’s go!”

He was the one guiding all of the camels, and after hearing his shout, almost everyone in the hotel headed out.

Aside from the researchers, there were also other tourists who had hired the Master of the Desert for both his carts and his guiding service. Once everyone had mounted their bags and bottles onto the camels, the Master of the Desert would begin transporting them across the desert.

“Come on, Giya. I paid him extra since you injured your leg. We can get on the cart together with Professor Yale so that we don’t have to walk!” said Wynn as he turned to look at Giya.

However, when he noticed how hesitant she was and how she kept looking up at the second floor, he immediately became jealous and added, “...Don’t tell me you’re waiting for that dude, Giya...”

“I-I’m not! We don’t even know each other!” replied Giya.

“Good to know. Regardless, we should get going now. Here, I’ll help you up!”

“It’s fine, Meredith can do that!”

Chapter 1068

Once everyone was ready, the tan man began leading all of them into the desert.

It was only after they had left quite a distance when Gerald walked out of the hotel.

He truly hadn’t expected to bump into Giya here of all places after an entire year. Regardless, she had started working and she had also become so much better.

While Gerald had been tempted to reveal his identity to Giya, it had been over a year and he now knew that she still hadn’t truly forgotten about him back when he had tested her.

He was well aware of how bad he had treated her back then, and knowing that them being together was going to be impossible anyway, Gerald decided not to delay her from moving on any longer.

Regardless, Gerald had noticed that Wynn had been very nice to Giya earlier. While Gerald didn’t particularly like Wynn, he trusted that Wynn only wanted the best for Giya. It was the reason why Gerald hadn’t stayed back to treat her injured ankle back then. After all, he could see that there was already someone who would take good care of her.

Shaking his head, Gerald then grabbed his luggage, fully prepared to leave. With the pledge of the holy water due in three months, it was impossible for him not to feel anxious about it. After all, he still needed to train enough to become a full great master and also locate the eternal coffin before then. Not a single second could be wasted.

Not long after entering the desert, Gerald eventually bumped into Giya's group. However, their route forward had been blocked by several people who were wearing clothes with red sleeves.

"Hey now, why are you preventing us from proceeding? You don't own the desert!" scolded a few of the tourists.

"Our sincerest apologies, but a few bodies had been found in the desert a few days ago, and all of them showed signs of facing horrible deaths. We suggest that you refrain from entering the desert for the next few days. It truly isn't worth giving your life up for a mere vacation!" explained one of the red-sleeved men.

"And you think we didn't already know about this? We're here on an adventure and nothing's stopping us! Don't bother about those red-sleeved men! Let's just proceed on!" shouted one of the female tourists as several of them broke through the cordon.

With the group of tourists being so adamant on proceeding, the red-sleeved men weren't able to stop them. Just as the woman had said, these tourists were here for an adventure!

Immediately walking over to the red-sleeved group next, Professor Yale said, "We truly appreciate your work, young men... Regardless, while they're here on vacation, my group is here to conduct some research. I hope you'll allow us and our carts to pass..."

"...Well, your group seems pretty serious with the carts and all... I suppose we can't stop you from proceeding either! Regardless, I hope all of you succeed!" replied one of the red-sleeved men as the others with him allowed Giya's group to go through.

As Professor Yale and the other researchers proceeded, Meredith saw a few of the tourists backtracking, probably afraid after hearing what the red-sleeved men had said. To her surprise, she saw a familiar figure walking behind them as well.

Waving at him, she said, "I guess you came along too!"

Nodding in response, Gerald simply continued walking on in silence.

Upon realizing that he was present, Giya kept staring at the young man. The more she looked at him, the more she felt like she knew him from somewhere. While she had a wild guess of who it could be, the person she had in mind didn't have such a sturdy-looking figure...

"Speaking of which, I think you should join our group... As those men back there said, this desert seems to be particularly dangerous. Sticking with us should be much safer since we have so many tourists in the group. Safety in numbers, as they say. How about it?" suggested Meredith from atop the cart.

"Hah! This dude looks like he's here on a broke trip! I mean he doesn't even have a camel to provide him with water! With that tiny bottle of his, he'll die of thirst first before even getting halfway through the desert!" sneered Wynn.

"Please, join us! I can pay for you!" added Meredith, now getting increasingly worried.

Shaking his head, Gerald simply replied, "I appreciate your help, but I'll have to refuse!"

"Heh! You don't need it, you say? You have no idea of how easy it is to get lost in this desert, do you? Without my help, nine out of ten people don't make it out alive! Mark my words, you'll regret not joining us! Also, since you said that, even if you change your mind and someone else pays for you, I still won't allow you to join us!" scoffed the Master of the Desert as he glared coldly at Gerald before gulping on his can of beer.

Since nobody had ever told him that his help wasn't needed, the Master of the Desert was quite egotistical.

With that, he slapped the sides of his camels which led to his carts moving faster.

Meredith and Giya could only stare worriedly at the walking young man who slowly disappeared behind them.

Chapter 1069

Though the journey through the desert was both long and hot, the researchers and the tourists did just fine with the help of the Master of the Desert.

After two days of traveling, the group arrived at the center-point of the desert. As was expected, from where they currently were, not a soul could be seen within the sandy lands.

At the time, dusk was setting in soon so they decided to make a stop at a shelter that was half-broken. Thankfully, it was still nice enough for them to stay the night.

"I wonder how that man's doing... Do you think he headed back to town...?" muttered Giya as she sat next to the fireplace, thinking about the man who had saved her.

"I doubt it. He just doesn't seem to be that kind of guy! The way he presents himself, he's both mature and reliable! Actually, hold on... Why do you keep thinking about him anyway? Didn't you say that you loved Gerald...? Could it be that you're obsessing over him because he both looks like, and reminds you of Gerald...?" replied Meredith in a rather displeased tone. The way she said it, it was as though Meredith could see through Giya.

"What? No! I'm just worried since he did save our lives after all! Besides, aren't you constantly thinking about him too, Meredith?" said Giya with a smile.

"Well I do admit that I like mature people... He certainly fits the bill in that department! What more, his eyes suggest that countless stories lay hidden behind them... He's the exact kind of mysterious boyfriend that I'd love to have!" replied Meredith without a doubt.

"Is... that an indirect way of saying you like him...?" asked Giya, her curiosity piqued.

"Well... I don't know, alright? Maybe... I mean I just can't stop thinking about him! I really want to meet him again, you know?" replied Meredith as she cupped her hands on her cheeks while looking up into the sky.

Hearing that, Giya looked up at the sky in silence as well.

'Same here... I really want to meet him again too!' Giya thought to herself.

A brief moment later, Wynn walked over to them before saying, "Giya? Meredith? What are both of you doing? Here, have some hot water. Once the sun sets, things are going to get super chilly here!"

"It's fine, I'm not thirsty!" replied Giya as she shook her head, knowing full well what he was up to.

While she had to admit that Wynn truly had an aura of royalty surrounding him, he just wasn't the kind of person she liked.

Despite his constant efforts to woo her, Giya knew that it was impossible for them to be together. As a result, the more he did for her, the guiltier she felt about it.

“Well, if that’s the case, why not come over and listen to the Master of the Desert’s storytelling? So far, all his stories have been pretty scary!” suggested Wynn.

He then pointed at the professor before adding, “Look, even Professor Yale is interested in his stories! Come on!”

Hearing that, both Giya and Meredith exchanged glances with each other. Since they were here as reporters and they needed to write articles once they returned anyway, perhaps listening to an interesting story or two would help them with their writing.

With that in mind, the two girls then re-joined the crowd of people who were listening to the Master of the Desert’s tale. The tale itself went by ‘the Legend of Capra Nanny,’ and the bearded man made sure to use his most serious tone while sharing the story.

Essentially, the tale was about an old grandmother who lived in the desert. Nobody knew whether she was a human or a ghost, but the important thing was that for sustenance, she sucked humans dry of their blood! In fact, all those previous murders could’ve very well been committed by Capra Nanny! Not only was she scary, but she was also very powerful and bulletproof. Nobody could even dream of killing her, and some accounts even said that any normal person who saw her would end up dead on the spot!

“...Is she truly that terrifying...? If something like that really is out there, then it would’ve been made public by now!” muttered one of the people huddled before the Master of the Desert. Many others, however, remained silent, feeling quite spooked by the story.

“But of course, she is! I’ll let you in on something even more shocking! Capra Nanny truly does exist, and I’ve seen her before with my own eyes!” whispered the Master of the Desert.

As chills were sent down almost everyone’s spines, Professor Yale simply laughed before saying, “You truly are an excellent joker, Master of the Desert! Don’t scare the children too much!”

“But I jest not! I truly did see her before! I was only seven back then and I saw her when I was following my father into the desert!” replied the bearded man in a serious tone, a hint of fear in his voice.

Seeing how serious the Master of the Desert’s expression was, even the Professor couldn’t help but to stop laughing.

Chapter 1070

“It was a little after dusk back then... Just like how it is now! The sun had already set by then and it was getting increasingly dark... At the time, we came across a river and my father told me that we were going to set up camp there. Once everything was set up, we headed to the river to gather some water for the next day... Approaching the river together, it was then when we saw her!”

As everyone stared wide-eyed at the Master of the Desert, he continued, “Capra Nanny was drinking water by the riverside, and though I wasn’t able to properly see her face under the moonlight, I remember clearly that she had an extremely long tongue and her hair was long and messy.”

“Stopping in our tracks, the old woman raised her head and made eye contact with us. It was only a brief moment, but both her eyes were green! Thankfully, my father snapped me out of it in time as he shouted, ‘Don’t look at her, Billy! Turn around, right this instant!’”

“Upon saying that, my father immediately turned around and knelt on the sand. I did the same, remembering that he had once told me that should one ever come across Capra Nanny, they have to turn their backs against her and never look behind!”

“...What happened after that?” asked one of the tourists.

“Well, she slowly walked over to both me and my father. However, her footsteps were so light that they were barely audible, save for the soft rustling of sand. At that point, childlike voices from behind us began whispering, “Don’t look at her, Billy~! Turn around~! Right this instant~! Of course, I didn’t listen to those sinister-sounding voices. Afterward, my father told me that it was Capra Nanny’s attempt to speak in our language through mimicry!”

“And then? What happened next?” asked someone else.

“And then... Silence. My father and I continued kneeling there without a word...” replied the Master of the Desert.

Following that, everyone in the shelter went dead silent. This was especially so for the girls who were all drenched in cold sweat.

It was thanks to that silence that everyone could suddenly hear the faint sound of feet dragging across sand slowly approaching the shelter!

As everyone turned to look at the entrance, they all stared in horror as a figure slowly got closer and closer!

Anxiety peaking, several of the girls immediately began screaming!

However, the moment they realized that it was just a young man wearing a mask and a cap, the same girls instantly yelled, "You... You scared the living daylight out of us!"

Meredith herself stood up in surprise as she said, "It's you again!"

True enough, the person who had just made his appearance was none other than Gerald.

Without removing his mask, Gerald then replied, "Well, what a coincidence!"

"It truly is! I was just thinking about you earlier!" said Meredith as she smiled happily while blushing.

Wynn, on the other hand, simply sneered, "Well if it isn't you again! What happened, huh? Didn't have anywhere else to go, did you? Or maybe you're already out of water! I bet you were overjoyed once you saw our carts, right? Haha! What's wrong, I thought you didn't need our help!"

"Again, it's only a mere coincidence!" replied Gerald as he headed to a corner and sat quietly.

"...Hmm? Are Minnie and Juan not back yet...?" asked someone from that group at that moment.

"What? When did they head out?" asked the Master of the Desert.

"Around half an hour ago, I think! They headed out to take some pictures!"

"It's dangerous to be out there at night! We have to look for them immediately!" ordered the Master of the Desert as a few other people headed out with him.

After searching around while shouting out the names of the two missing people for a while, a few girls suddenly began screaming hysterically!

Chapter 1071

Surprised, everyone immediately began gathering around the screaming girls as they asked, “What happened?!”

However, the answer to that question was immediately made clear the moment they looked in the direction the screaming girls were staring wide-eyed at.

Lying on the dune were two dead bodies! Under the moonlight, the corpses looked like they had been sucked dry, with their skin clinging on tightly to their torsos after having all their internal fluids sucked out.

“Those... Those are Minnie and Juan!” cried out someone from within the search party who recognized the clothes the corpses were wearing.

“How could this have happened...? It’s only been half an hour!” said Professor Yale.

Though the professor had a lot of experience in his field, he couldn’t help but feel that the current turn of events was absolutely incredulous. The sight of the two dead bodies alone made his hair stand on end!

“...It’s... It’s the Capra Nanny... She’s here!” stuttered the Master of the Desert in horror before gulping.

Hearing that, everyone grew even more frightened, prompting them to huddle closely together.

“Come to me, Giya! Stay by my side!” shouted Wynn, fear in his voice.

Meanwhile, the Master of the Desert—who was now already kneeling—began praying, “We’re just passing by, Capra Nanny! We have no other intentions, please forgive us!”

Hearing that, everyone else immediately began mimicking his actions, repeating the exact same words that the bearded man used.

Gerald, however, simply walked over to the two corpses and after taking a look, he said, “What Capra Nanny? This was done by a mere beast!”

“...W-what did you say? Nonsense! You’re just a young lad who doesn’t know any better! You’d best watch your tongue or you’re going to be the first person Capra Nanny kills!” reprimanded the Master of the Desert in return, clearly feeling that Gerald’s words were too careless.

“Watch your tongue or you’re going to be the first person Capra Nanny kills~!”

As soon as the Master of the Desert said that, a faint voice—that almost blended seamlessly with the wind and sand—was heard

Everyone listened in horror as the sinister-sounding, childlike voice was repeated. The fact that all this was happening under the night sky only served to make the atmosphere feel even more surreal.

At that moment, Professor Yale and the others held on to their breaths as they stared wide-eyed behind Gerald.

“B-big brother! Careful! Something’s behind you!” warned both Giya and Meredith as they simultaneously stood up, immense fear in their voices.

Gerald already had a good hunch of what that ‘something’ was. He had already bumped into her earlier, and after turning around to glare at the monster, his guess turned out to be right.

The monster itself had green eyes and messy hair, and it was currently crawling out from a dune. Standing upright, she looked similar to a human at first glance. Closer inspection, however, anyone would definitely know that she was anything but.

Still repeating the same line from before, Capra Nanny began slowly crawling toward Gerald with her long tongue—which was filled with rows of barbs on it and was occasionally dragged across the sand—hanging out.

“C-Capra Nanny!” stuttered the Master of the Desert in fright as he instantly began kowtowing before her.

“I’ve been looking for you for an entire night and day, you know? So you’ve finally decided to show yourself again!” shouted Gerald, coldly.

Quite honestly, with Gerald’s speed, he had earlier made it long past the center-point of the desert. However, not long after, he discovered the existence of Capra Nanny.

Under normal circumstances, Gerald would've just walked past it so that he could be on his way. However, these weren't normal circumstances. After all, Giya and her group were still behind him.

Gerald had feared for Giya's safety since for one, the beast seemed to prefer attacking tourists. Secondly, he could also tell that the beast wasn't something ordinary people could deal with easily. With that in mind, he could only turn back around to look for Giya.

When the beast finally realized who Gerald was, rage filled its green eyes as green saliva dripped from her gaping mouth.

"Leave! All of you! I'll deal with her!" ordered Gerald as he turned around to look at Professor Yale and the others.

While Professor Yale and the others instantly nodded, Wynn himself took out a pistol from his pocket before saying, "It's just a beast, isn't it? What are all of you so afraid of? Worry not, Giya! I'll protect you! Watch me kill her!"

Being the egoist that he was, Wynn was definitely not letting his rival steal his spotlight. With that, he took aim at the monster and pulled the trigger!

Though the bullet hit its mark, Capra Nanny was barely fazed by the attack.

Chapter 1072

As the Master of the Desert had earlier said, the monster was near bulletproof due to its extremely tough skin.

"What?!" shouted Wynn, stunned.

Even though the bullet didn't hurt it, the beast was enraged by Wynn's attack! Rushing toward him, the beast then got on its feet and grabbed Wynn by his collar before tossing him into the air!

Seconds later, Wynn found himself crashing back down onto the sand. After a brief moment, he began spurting out blood from his mouth as well!

"H-how strong!" stuttered Professor Yale who had gone pale from fright as he led his group of researchers toward the back.

With Wynn now out of the way, the beast turned to face Gerald again, its main target from the very beginning. Just by looking at him, she could already sense how strong and vicious Gerald was.

The moment she rushed at him, Gerald sent her flying back with a strong kick! Though the beast had thick skin, Gerald was still a semi-great master. In other words, there was no way it could handle Gerald's inner strength. Falling to the ground, Capra Nanny then released a horrifying scream.

Now feeling much more anxious, the beast began clawing into the sand with all four of her limbs.

At that moment, Giya—who had stayed back along with Meredith instead of running away with the others—nervously shouted, “B-big brother! Please be careful!”

Hearing her voice as well, the beast suddenly turned to stare at Giya. Within a second, the beast seemed to make up its mind as she grabbed a handful of sand and threw it directly at Gerald!

While Gerald was evading the attack, the beast dashed toward Giya! The next thing Giya knew, Capra Nanny was already standing before her!

Gerald truly hadn't expected the beast to be this clever. To think that she had manipulated him into thinking that she was about to attack him when in actuality, she was going for Giya!

By the time Gerald realized all this, both Giya and Meredith had already been captured by the beast!

Seeing that, Gerald dashed toward Capra Nanny before tossing an extremely fast black object straight for her chest! However, the beast didn't look too affected and hurriedly sprinted away, abducting Giya and Meredith in the process.

“Giya!” shouted Gerald, feeling his heart clench as he watched the beast escape into the dark of night.

From what he knew, the beast was extremely bloodthirsty. Was there even a chance that Giya and Meredith would survive after falling into her hands...?

“W-what should we do? Giya and Meredith have been taken away!” cried out several of the researchers nervously.

At that moment, Gerald turned to look at the Master of the Desert—who was still kneeling—before walking over to him and lifting the bearded man with a single hand!

“Answer me this. Do you know where the beast’s lair is? Or anyplace she frequents?” asked Gerald coldly.

“I-I’m not too sure... What do you intend to do? Please remember that you were the one who had angered Capra Nanny in the first place! Once she gets mad, her intention to kill drastically rises!” replied the Master of the Desert?

“Kill, you say? Well if that’s the case, I’ll kill you as well!”

“Please don’t act rashly, young man! Calm yourself!” yelled Professor Yale, attempting to calm Gerald down.

After that, he turned to face the Master of the Desert before saying, “Master of the Desert, you saw how he fought against that beast earlier. He clearly has the ability to take on the beast and potentially kill it! Besides, Capra Nanny now has two living humans within her grasp! We can’t just leave them to die! So please... Please be merciful and tell us where the beast’s lair is! Otherwise, there’ll truly be no chance for those girls to be saved!”

“...I can tell you where it is... But first, please tell him to put me down!” replied the Master of the Desert who was currently more terrified of the extremely angry-looking Gerald.

Hearing that, Gerald frowned before tossing him to the ground.

Following that, the Master of the Desert dusted the sand off his clothes before saying, “...Many people say that you should never head toward the ancient well located within the Thousand Sand Ridge... People are forbidden from going there for a reason. After all, anyone who heads there will most definitely get eaten alive by Capra Nanny! Due to that correlation, I assume that that’s where her lair is! Despite the warnings not to go there, nobody truly knows where it’s located! Nobody can confirm where it lies either since nobody who’s entered has ever made it out alive!”

“The Thousand Sand Ridge you say...?” murmured Gerald under his breath.

Looking at his watch, he then turned to find the Big Dipper constellation in the night sky. Once he got his bearings, Gerald shouted, “I know where it is!”

With that, Gerald instantly began running in a certain direction.

Since the Thousand Sand Ridge had been marked on the map that the mysterious man had sent to him, Gerald had no difficulty locating where it was.

As he ran on, members of the research team began calling out, “Brother, wait for us!”

After seeing how strong he was, they knew that sticking with him would be their safest option. They were also following him since it was way too terrifying to stay in their current position.

With all of them thinking more or less about the same thing, they all began chasing after Gerald.

Chapter 1073

After running for quite a while, Gerald finally arrived at the Thousand Sand Ridge. Upon arriving, he quickly found out why the area had been named the way it was. With probably no less than a thousand sand dunes overlapping each other, the inspiration for the area’s name was evident.

However, even after looking around for a while, he still couldn’t find the ancient well that the Master of the Desert had mentioned about.

It was sometime later—after walking around for quite a bit—when his nose picked up an odd scent, prompting him to look down. At his feet was a pool of blood!

Squinting his eyes, he saw that the blood had traces of dark green in it. That alone was enough to tell him that the blood belonged to the beast.

While Capra Nanny hadn’t initially reacted much after Gerald’s Dawnbreaker struck her chest, Gerald was sure that he had successfully harmed the beast, consequently causing it great discomfort.

After all, no matter how strong the other party’s defenses were, they’d still get seriously injured once they were hit by the Dawnbreaker!

By following the trail of blood, it wasn’t long before Gerald finally found where the ancient well was. If it hadn’t been for the blood, it would’ve been extremely difficult to locate it. After all, the well—located north of the Thousand Sand Ridge—was very well hidden, not unlike an obscure cave entrance.

As he approached the well, a horrendous stench filled his nostrils!

“The beast is here!” shouted Gerald as he stared down the well.

Though the smell was truly terrible, Gerald didn't really have any other choice if he wanted to save Giya. Holding his breath, he then leaped into the well!

Noticing that there was water at the bottom, Gerald readied himself for impact before diving straight into it. The well water ran deep and after coming out from the other end, Gerald realized that he was now in some sort of river.

Seeing that the river had an edge, Gerald had a hunch that he was currently in an underground river of sorts.

The moment he swam up to the edge of the river, he quickly realized that the beast was present. At the time, Capra Nanny was staring at both Giya and Meredith's unconscious bodies, her barbed tongue hanging out!

The moment she noticed that someone else was present, she turned around to look. Upon realizing that it was Gerald, she instantly bared her fangs at him, simultaneously exposing her badly injured chest that was now bleeding profusely.

Gerald's first reaction, however, was to call out, "Giya! Giya, are you alright?!"

Getting no reply and seeing how pale the unconscious girl looked, Gerald turned to look at Capra Nanny next before angrily yelling, "You beast! Let's see you try to escape me again this time!"

With that, he tossed the Dawnbreaker at Capra Nanny while simultaneously dashing toward her for an attack! With two dangers to suddenly keep track of, the beast was caught off guard!

As a result, the Dawnbreaker easily pierced through the beast's thick skin and directly stabbed her heart!

With the beast now screaming out in pain, the Dawnbreaker then hovered over to its neck before slashing through it!

Even after that, the monster simply held onto her neck, continuing to scream.

Feeling increasingly anxious about Giya's safety, Gerald then commanded the Dawnbreaker to return to his hand as he held onto Capra Nanny's head and personally decapitated the beast!

Once he was done, Gerald continued rushing over to Giya while shouting, "Giya!"

After quickly examining her body for any injuries, Gerald was relieved to find out that Giya had only gone unconscious due to lack of oxygen. As it turned out, Gerald had thankfully arrived before the beast could do anything to the two girls.

However, now wasn't the time to be optimistic just yet. Both the girls were severely out of breath after traveling through the dunes for such a long time. Unfortunately, there was only one method Gerald could use to cure that.

"...I'm sorry, ladies! But I have to do this in order to save you!" muttered Gerald to himself as he began performing CPR on Giya. Naturally, he had to do the same for Meredith. While he didn't like doing it, it was the only way to save their lives.

It was around ten minutes later when Gerald held Giya in his arms. Shaking her slightly, he then said, "Giya...? Giya, how do you feel...?"

A few seconds later, Giya's eyelids twitched as the girl finally woke up.

"...Gerald...?" said Giya as her eyes instantly widened.

As she clung onto his arm tightly in disbelief, Gerald himself came to realize that he had tossed his mask aside earlier due to how anxious he had been! Due to that, she now knew who he was!

"I-it really is you, Gerald...!" added Giya, now so excited that she looked like she was ready to burst into tears.

Refusing to let go of his arm, she then continued, "I... I'm not dreaming, am I...? To think that I'd finally be able to see you again, Gerald... Did you know that I've been thinking of you every single day throughout your absence...?"

From how tightly she was hugging onto his arm, it almost seemed like she was worried that this truly was all just a dream, and that he would disappear again once she loosened her grip.

Understanding that, Gerald felt an acute pain in his heart.

He could only let her down so much in this lifetime. Gerald simply couldn't bear hurting her any further than this.

Momentarily at a loss of what to even do, he thought to himself for a moment as Giya continued clinging onto his arm.

A short while later, he formed a surprised expression on his face before saying, "...Um... Miss? I'm afraid you've mistaken me for someone else... My name isn't Gerald!"

Chapter 1074

"Lies! I would never mistake you for someone else!" replied Giya almost instantaneously as she clung on tighter while wiping the tears off her face with her free hand.

"Miss, my name is Xadrian... I truly have no idea who this Gerald person is! Could he be the person who carried you that you mentioned before...? Do I look that similar to him?" asked Gerald in an indifferent tone.

Gerald had plenty of time to practice his poker face since he had been doing so from the moment he first bumped into Giya that day.

After looking at how indifferent his expression was, she slowly began feeling that she truly was unfamiliar with the strange man. What more, his voice was different from the Gerald she knew.

The Gerald Giya had fallen for was rather thin, quiet, and had fair skin.

While the person before her resembled him a lot, he was a lot more muscular, stronger, and slightly tanner than Gerald.

Still, could two people living on the same planet truly look so alike...?

"...Well, yes... Both of you resemble each other a lot... Are you sure you aren't lying to me...?" asked Giya.

"Again, my name is Xadrian, and I know not of any Gerald, especially not one that looks like me. Still, from how shocked you appear, I guess I must really look like him, huh..."

"You truly do!" replied Giya with a nod.

However, after looking at you for a while, I've noticed a few differences between you and him... For one, Gerald is quite weak and probably nowhere near as strong as you are... Aside from that, he isn't as skillful as you are either... Regardless, were you the one who saved us, big brother?" asked Giya as she wiped the remaining tears off her face, her slight disappointment reflected in her eyes.

She was finally able to convince herself that this truly wasn't Gerald. Even though both of them looked so alike, there was no way that Gerald could become this powerful and skillful in just a year...

So this truly wasn't him after all...

"Indeed. After the beast captured both you and your friend, I went after it! Thankfully, I rescued you in time! Speaking of which, I'd like to see a picture of this Gerald once we're out of this place... Even I'm curious as to how similar we look like now!" replied Gerald.

"Hmm... Alright..." said Giya as she continued staring at Gerald in disbelief. Though her mind was convinced that he wasn't Gerald, her gut was telling her otherwise. In the end, she chose her rationality over her feelings since he truly did seem more unfamiliar than not now.

At that moment, Meredith herself slowly awoke.

Seeing that, Giya instantly supported her up while asking, "Are you alright, Meredith...?"

"I'm fine... I just had a very weird dream earlier..." replied Meredith as she scratched the back of her head.

"A weird dream...?"

"Yeah... I dreamed that someone was kissing me!"

"Are you for real? Are you even aware of the situation we're currently in? To think that you're still in the mood to joke around when we almost just lost our lives!" replied Giya, feeling speechless.

"But I really am serious!"

Hearing their conversation, Gerald couldn't help but blush slightly.

"...Huh? Could... Could you be big brother?!" said Meredith aloud, now realizing that Gerald was present.

Pleasantly surprised, her eyes widened and her face instantly turned red as she shyly stared at Gerald with a rather silly expression.

Before this, she had occasionally wondered what he looked like. After all, who's to say that he couldn't be an old uncle?

Now that his mask was off, however, Meredith truly hadn't expected him to be this handsome.

Watching as the girl breathed heavily, Gerald simply replied, "Indeed I am. You can call me Xadrian."

"Thank you for saving us, Xadrian!" said Meredith as she continued staring at him.

Giya herself had also been staring at Gerald this entire time. When he had blushed earlier, she couldn't help but feel that even his blush resembled Gerald's.

"There's no need to thank me! Regardless, there may still be other beasts or monsters lurking nearby, so let's get both of you out to safety first!" replied Gerald as he stood up before scanning through their environment.

He paused when he saw what seemed to be the faint outlines of a stone door that was slightly concealed behind some rocks.

"...Does that look like a stone gate to you girls?"

"It does!" replied Giya, nodding in agreement after looking in the direction Gerald was.

Chapter 1075

"Well, the only way to find out is by trying to push it open, right?" added Meredith.

"Indeed. While I do so, you girls should back away a bit!" replied Gerald with a nod.

Based on the rumors his grandfather had heard from around the world—and subsequently told Gerald—treasures could usually be found hidden in places guarded by strange beasts or monsters.

The picture of the sun itself was discovered by his family's ancestors within a cave that was located in a dense forest. It was guarded—at the time—by a large, man-eating white ape, and many of his ancestors lost their lives before finally succeeding in retrieving the picture.

Since Gerald was already here anyway, he may as well just go in and have a look.

Gerald had told the girls to back off earlier since with how heavy the stone gate looked, he knew he needed to use his inner strength to open it. He was afraid that if they stood too close to him, they could end up getting hurt.

Once they were at a safe distance, Gerald began feeling around the stone gate for a weak spot. After managing to find it, he took in a deep breath before focusing all his energy on that spot... And launching it all out in one go!

With a mighty rumble, any surrounding rocks started dancing in place as the area shook slightly! Seconds later, the sound of stone dragging against dirt could be heard as the gaps on the door began to widen! It truly was a stone gate!

Upon confirming that, Gerald continued pushing the stone gate open and once it was wide enough, a tunnel revealed itself to the trio!

"...This... couldn't be an ancient tomb... Could it?" asked Meredith excitedly as she ran over to Gerald's side.

Giya herself was feeling slightly uneasy after witnessing the scene before her.

"...It sure looks like one!" said Giya.

"Well, let's head in and have a look around then! You girls can follow me from behind!" replied Gerald.

Gerald honestly wasn't all that interested in whether it truly was an ancient tomb or not. After all, he was in no dire need of money.

As the trio proceeded deeper into the tunnel, it slowly turned into a corridor which, in turn, led them to a lobby area of sorts. While the corridor itself was completely empty, a stone platform stood in the center of the lobby area. On it, lay a rectangular stone box that Gerald hadn't the slightest idea what it could've possibly been used for.

Through the aid of the girls' flashlights, all three of them realized that the lobby's walls were adorned with oddly-patterned frescoes that would make anyone feel unnerved when viewed under the light of a torchlight.

Upon noticing that there were also oil lamps within the room, they lit them up, brightening the lobby quite a bit.

“...Rather than an ancient tomb, this looks more like a storage area, to be quite frank!” said Giya while pointing at the stone box.

Since she had been traveling with the group of researchers from the north all the way to the south in the past year, Giya had quite a bit of experience in her field.

Hearing that, Gerald himself nodded in agreement while saying, “Yeah, I think so too!”

“Hey, Xadrian! Come check this out! The things painted on these murals look extremely weird!” shouted Meredith.

Chapter 1076

Upon walking over to have a look for himself, he had to agree with her on how strange they looked.

From what he could see, the murals depicted how the people living here back then went about with their lives. However, some of the people that were painted looked extremely odd.

To put it simply, the murals seemed to be telling a story. Upon closer inspection, they seemed to tell the tale of the items that had been hidden in this stone room.

Noticing the Giya was also looking intently at the murals, Gerald then asked, “Do you understand what the murals are trying to say, Giya?”

“...W-what? What... did you just call me?” asked Giya as she immediately came to her senses and stared at Gerald, a blank expression on her face.

“...Why, Giya of course! I didn't get your name wrong, did I? After all, I've heard quite a few people calling you that by this point!”

“...Y-you got it right... My name's Giya, yes...” replied Giya as she felt her heart quivering slightly.

Shaking the feeling off, she then replied, “...I'm able to understand some of them... But the tale they tell is rather odd... The first mural here seems to say that something... incredibly odd happened, to say the least... From what I can gather, apparently strange corpses fell from the sky!”

“All the corpses were wearing odd-looking clothes as well, and they each bore strange appearances. The corpses seemed to have suffered a miserable death before falling from the sky... Regardless, it caused quite a stir back then since the locals were all superstitious. They believed that the corpses were heavenly soldiers, so they planned to build them a tomb in order for the locals to make offerings to them!” explained Giya.

“Unbelievable, right...? As if corpses could just fall from the sky... I’m guessing that all this was just some fairy-tale they came up with!”

“Anyway... The second mural talks about the heavenly soldiers as well. Among the corpses, one of them seemed to be particularly more mysterious than the others. This heavenly soldier seemed to have received very special and different treatment from the locals. Based on the murals, it appears that they worshiped this particular corpse like a king, even going so far as to kowtow before him while they were transporting his corpse! Actually, after taking a closer look, they seemed to worship the dead body like a god more than a king!

“This corpse was apparently more special than the rest since they found his body on a big tree that had fallen from the sky with all the other corpses!” added Giya, feeling that the story was getting a bit too unrealistic, even by fairy-tale standards.

“Aren’t there two coffins being transported though?” asked Meredith.

“Well, the third mural seems to explain that... According to the mural, a woman dressed in white should be buried in the other coffin... She was supposedly extremely beautiful, and everyone who saw her would end up feeling shocked. Apparently, she looked extremely beautiful even though she was as dead as the other corpses! What more, she was found lying on top of the heavenly soldier who was found on the same big tree I mentioned earlier. From what the locals could tell, the two of them were lovers who wanted to be buried with each other! Because of that, the people of that country held a very grand burial ceremony for the two spiritual beings on the day they found them!”

“As for the fourth mural... I only understand the former part... Apparently, the mysterious heavenly soldier had a weapon with him, though it was placed someplace else... Also, both he and the woman dressed in white ended up not getting buried together... This was supposedly because some old beggar had stood in their way, preventing them from proceeding with the plan. Due to that old man’s interference, the mysterious heavenly soldier ended up being placed inside a very special coffin before being stored in a secret room... As seen on this part of the mural, the ones present at that particular scene were the king, the ones burying the mysterious heavenly soldier, and also... that old beggar. From the looks of it, the old man was laughing the entire time!”

“...I see. And the latter part of it...?” asked Gerald, feeling extremely confused as he was bewildered.

"I... don't quite get the latter part... It mentions something about the old beggar knowing black magic...? Apparently, the moment the burial ceremony was over, he laughed a few times before disappearing into thin air! Right after that, a massive object appeared that shrouded the entire royal city! It's... improbable to say the least, but it looks like a battleship! I... can't make sense of this part either..." replied Giya as she shook her head.

How the hell could such a huge battleship even exist thousands of years ago?!

Meredith shook her head as well before saying, "I guess this is all just the result of people of old's exaggerated imagination... From what I can see, the heavenly soldier couple must have been the prince and his most beloved concubine. It would make sense for the people of that time to paint the mural this way to symbolize their deep love for one another. What more, the prince theory also explains why everyone in the murals is bowing to him! He's a noble after all! As for the corpses that fell from the sky... I'm assuming that they're the prince's personal soldiers. Since the countries in the western regions were constantly at war in the past, the prince could've died while leading his soldiers into battle..."

Hearing Meredith's theory, Giya couldn't help but laugh before saying, "Though the love story you came up with sounds a little unrealistic, it still makes sense, in a way. At the very least, it's by far the most logical conclusion we've arrived at! I'm guessing most of what you said was right!"

"Still... The ancients must have had really amazing imagination for them to even draw such a huge battleship thousands of years ago!" chimed in Gerald without putting too much thought into it.

After saying that, he turned to look at the stone platform before adding, "So... the item hidden within that stone box should be the weapon the heavenly soldier carried, right?" said Gerald as he gently touched the stone box.

Luckily, he was easily able to open the stone box!

Chapter 1077

As dust flew right into Gerald's face, both Meredith and Giya walked toward him—once the dust settled—before peering into the box as well.

Inside, lay a long, dust-covered sword. Despite the coat of dust on it, that wasn't enough to hide the sword's brilliant gleam. It was so shiny in fact, that all three of them felt that even people who saw it from far away would feel shivers run down their spines once they saw the sword's sheen.

"...Despite it probably being thousands of years old, the sword still looks pretty sharp!" said Meredith as she tried picking the sword up with a smile.

Giya herself—who didn't look particularly interested in the sword—simply returned to look at the murals.

"H-heavy...!" groaned Meredith as she continued attempting to lift the sword. It almost felt as if the sword was stuck to the bottom of the stone box.

"Let me try!" said Gerald as he reached out to grab the sword's hilt. Applying a bit of strength, Gerald was able to lift the sword out quite easily.

"It's really not that heavy!" added Gerald with a chuckle as he shook his wrist slightly to shake the dust off the sword. While it didn't look particularly special, just as Meredith had earlier said, the sword appeared to be extremely sharp.

Upon closer inspection, the word 'Lightbane' was etched on it, and Gerald couldn't help but feel that the sword was somewhat special despite its mundane appearance.

"Could... Lightbane be a magical artifact as well...?" muttered Gerald to himself in surprise.

While that was his assumption, he was unable to find any real spiritual traces on the weapon. Regardless, he was still very excited about his find.

The fact that he had already learned three longsword style moves—from the Dawnbreaker—made the find even better. Coincidence or not, he now had a perfect new weapon to accommodate his skills.

"...Hey, both of you... Come look at this! There seems to be something off with this mural!" called out Giya out of the blue.

"Oh, stop looking at that fantasy mural, Giya! Why don't you come over and see whether this sword had any monetary value!" replied Meredith.

"No, you don't understand! After looking a bit more closely at the latter part of the mural, I don't think all of this is strictly just fantasy anymore! Just come over and look already!" said Giya as she pointed at the second half of the mural.

"If you just imagine that this huge building—that the ancients painted—was a battleship that could fly, then everything starts to make sense! Nearing the end of the mural, it's shown that on the night before the heavenly soldiers' burial, this huge battleship appeared and took three hundred young men and women away! See the king and the others bowing there? Don't they look like they're seeing them off? And then in the next panel, the battleship suddenly disappears!"

“Take note, however, that while everyone was kneeling, the mural made sure to highlight the old beggar’s face! Among all the painted people, only the beggar held his face up high while portraying an ugly grin. The ancients even made sure to make him look like he was trying to hide his sinister smile! Doesn’t everything make a lot more sense now by looking at it this way?” explained Giya.

“Hahaha! You surely have an active imagination, Giya! No wonder Professor Yale accepted you as his student! Giya, the mural was painted like, what? Tens of thousands of years ago? Whenever it was, the time period had to be ancient! With that in mind, how could your theory possibly make any sense? Battleships? Girl, if the ancients truly drew all this exactly as you had imagined, then I have to say, their imagination really is something else!” replied Meredith.

“I know it sounds bonkers but this mural just gives me a very weird feeling!” said Giya.

“You’re not alone there!” replied Gerald as he stared at the mural as well.

Hearing that, Giya turned to look at Gerald before flashing a smile.

Feeling uncomfortable by the way Gerald and Giya were looking at each other, Meredith immediately stood between them before asking, “Speaking of which, Giya, where was the corpse of the young woman in white transferred to?”

“That... Isn’t stated in the mural, unfortunately... The mural only says that both of them were separated! Regardless, do you think that all this is just a fantasy the ancients had, Xadrian?” asked Giya as she looked at Gerald.

Before Gerald could even reply, Meredith interrupted him by saying, “Y-you know, why don’t we discuss this once we’ve left this place? It feels a little hard to breathe in here anyway, don’t you think, Xadrian? Why don’t you get us out of here first?”

“Agreed!” replied Gerald with a nod.

Chapter 1078

By the time all three of them got out of the ancient well, it was already late at night and the moon was high in the sky. Gerald then led the two girls back to the dilapidated building.

Upon arriving there, they saw that the crowd of people had regrouped again. Ever Professor Yale and the other researchers were there. They had earlier returned to the building once they realized that there was no way they would be able to catch up to Gerald.

Aside from the two deaths, the only other person seriously injured was Wynn, and he was also suffering from a high fever. Though the others had made it out fine, all of them were equally feeling uneasy out of fear.

Now that Gerald was here, however, all of them could finally rest a bit easier after going through so much today.

As the others rested, Gerald himself remained awake. After lighting a bonfire, he kept guard over the others while making sure to toss firewood into the warm flames from time to time.

Meredith and Giya, on the other hand, stayed awake as well. Both of them had their eyes peeled as they continued staring at Gerald—who was currently sitting by the entrance—for quite some time.

Under the moonlight, his tall and muscular silhouette gave them a sense of peace and security.

Eventually, Meredith rolled to her side to look at Giya before whispering, "...You aren't asleep either, Giya?"

"Not at all..." whispered Giya back.

"Say, ever since we woke up in that monster's lair, I've noticed that you've been constantly staring at Xadrian... Do you like him?" asked Meredith, slight jealousy reflected in her voice.

"...No... Of course not..." replied Giya.

After all, the person she liked was Gerald and Giya knew for a fact that she would never be able to forget him for the rest of her life. While it was true that Xadrian and Gerald looked extremely similar, Xadrian wasn't the person she was truly in love with! At least that was what Giya kept reminding herself.

However, Giya couldn't deny that she just couldn't take her eyes off him. Both Xadrian and Gerald really looked too similar!

"Look, I'm just staring at him a lot since he looks a lot like Gerald!" added Giya in a soft tone.

"Well they may look alike, but remember that he isn't Gerald!" whispered Meredith in return.

Hearing that, Giya rolled slightly to her side before asking, "...Well, what about you then? You probably like Xadrian, right? I can tell..."

Giya was well aware that deep down in her heart, she was feeling slightly jealous when she asked that question.

"I do. While I've encountered many, many handsome and great guys before, I've never met someone who could impress me like Xadrian! I've already waited so many years for such a person to appear... Due to these feelings, I believe that I've finally found the right person for me!" replied Meredith.

"...I see," said Giya, feeling a cocktail of emotions brewing in her heart. She just couldn't help but feel upset upon hearing that.

"So... Since we're both good sisters and all, I'd like to ask you something, Giya. Since Xadrian isn't the person for you, would it be alright for me to try pursuing him? After all, I've waited so long for my heart to be moved by someone!" whispered Meredith as she gently squeezed Giya's hands.

Giya hadn't the slightest clue how to even describe her feelings after hearing that.

While she had convinced herself that Gerald and Xadrian—despite looking so similar—weren't the same person, she couldn't help but feel that Xadrian's subtle behaviors were far too similar to Gerald's as well.

This was especially apparent when she had just woke up in that monster's lair earlier. Back then, she remembered Gerald calling out her name.

Though she couldn't really tell if it was all just an illusion, she was sure that she had heard Gerald's voice! For more solid evidence, when Xadrian had blushed earlier, he blushed the exact same way Gerald did back when they had first gotten acquainted during their university days!

As if that wasn't enough, the way Xadrian pursed his lips—back when they were still in that stone room—was also very similar to how Gerald used to do!

Was Xadrian really Gerald? Was he deliberately hiding something from her?

He may have wanted to deceive her, but whenever she saw him looking at her, Giya could sense that those were the eyes of someone who had finally reunited with an acquaintance after a long absence.

Girls were usually extremely observant, and Giya herself was no different. In addition to that, her feminine intuition was also very strong.

Understanding that, the fact that she had been able to find so many similarities between Gerald and Xadrian made her unsure of how to even answer Meredith's question.

Chapter 1079

"I'll be taking your silence as approval for me to chase after Xadrian then! I'll start going after him starting tomorrow!" said Meredith.

"...Fine," replied Giya in a soft tone.

Taking in a deep breath, she reminded herself again that Gerald was the person she was in love with. So what if Xadrian looked like him? In the end, he still wasn't Gerald.

If Meredith truly liked Xadrian, then Giya knew she had no right to prevent her from pursuing her own happiness.

'You can't be so selfish, Giya!' Giya thought, attempting to comfort herself.

Regardless, neither of the girls slept a wink that night due to how preoccupied they were with their own concerns.

Early the next morning, everyone was packing up—preparing to leave—when Meredith walked over to Gerald before saying, "Are you thirsty, Xadrian? I have some water with me if you want!"

Hearing that, Gerald's first response was to take a peek at Giya through the corner of his eyes. Realizing that Giya herself was secretly staring at him, Gerald turned to look at Meredith, flashing a gentle smile before replying, "...Sure, why not? I am a little thirsty now!"

"Hehe... Since you were so focused on saving and protecting us last night, you probably haven't gotten sufficient rest at all! So drink up to make sure you don't get overly dehydrated as well!" said Meredith as she smiled back.

Taking a sip of the water, Gerald then said, "...Hmm? Why's the water sweet...?"

“...Huh? Sweet? How could that be?” replied Meredith, surprised. However, she quickly caught on to what he was implying.

Once she did, she couldn't help but blush as she added, “Oh, come on, Xadrian! Now you're just teasing me!”

As the two of them continued bickering playfully, Giya—who was still standing at the side—couldn't help but clench her fists slightly. She wasn't even sure what expression to make, evident by how she occasionally scrunched her face up.

In her mind, she wondered if she truly had been overthinking everything. Perhaps Meredith and Xadrian truly were a perfect match. Just by looking at them, she could tell how good they looked together!

Even after leaving the building, Giya saw that Gerald occasionally ended up chatting with Meredith as they continued on with their journey.

Gerald, of course, was deliberately doing all this in front of Giya. Since he was well aware that it was impossible for a relationship to bloom between them anyway—regardless of whether he was Gerald or Xadrian to her—by flirting with Meredith, he hoped that Giya would just give up and forget all about him already and try starting a new relationship.

What more, there was no way Gerald could return to his previous life anyway after all that had happened. Knowing that, he really had no other choice but to do what he was currently doing. He just couldn't bear hurting Giya any more than he needed to.

The group had set off early in the morning, and it was near midday when the Master of the Desert suddenly shouted, “...Hmm? What's that in front?”

As he said that, he stopped his camels from proceeding on for the moment.

“...It looks like a crashed vehicle! I can see a few human figures lying on the sand!” shouted one of the tourists.

“Nonsense! We're in the middle of nowhere! Why would a vehicle be out here out of the blue?” replied Professor Yale.

By then, Gerald himself squinted his eyes to look at the wreckage. Slowly frowning, he then said, “...That's not just any vehicle. It's a helicopter!”

Upon saying that, Gerald began running toward the crash site.

To the others, Gerald was now as much of a guide as the Master of the Desert was. As a result, they all chased after him, surrounding Gerald once they arrived at the scene.

Now up close with the helicopter wreckage, everyone could see several of the vehicle's parts scattered all over the place. Since any flames from the crash had long been put out, Gerald estimated that the incident had occurred in the early hours of yesterday.

"Look there! I think those are corpses!" yelled out Meredith as she pointed at a sand dune.

Hearing that, Gerald ran over to where Meredith was pointing at. All in all, Gerald found that there were four corpses lying around the initial crash site. That, however, wasn't what caused Gerald's eyelids to twitch after getting a good look at all four of them.

"Why are all of them wearing black robes...?"

"Could they be tomb robbers? You know, like the ones they usually show on film and television dramas...? Why else would they be dressed like this?"

As the others began discussing the current situation among themselves in between gulps filled with worry, nobody was able to notice the shock on Gerald's face.

Checking for all four of the men's breaths—just for double measure—Gerald confirmed that all four of them were dead as he thought to himself, '...How could this have happened...? Why are they even here in the first place...?'

Chapter 1080

The bodies didn't belong to just anyone. The corpses were all his brothers from the Soul Palace!

Gerald already had a bad feeling earlier when he saw how familiar the helicopter looked. After finding out that his assumption had been correct, Gerald couldn't help but feel extremely upset.

After all, those from the Soul Palace were essentially also part of the Crawford family!

From the looks of it, they must have come to the desert to look for him. Gerald was well aware that the helicopters from the Soul Place had been specially designed to be near impossible to crash. Looking at all the many spots of spilled gasoline that had darkened the sand, however, it was made evident how the culprit had gotten the helicopter to crash in the first place.

Still, who could've been the murderer?

After carefully checking each of the four corpses, he finally found a clue on one of them.

This person, in particular, had managed to crawl quite a distance away from the helicopter after it crashed. Gerald was sure that he had crawled since there was a faint trail of him dragging his body along the sand before eventually dying.

Lifting the corpse's robe up, Gerald immediately saw an imprint of a palm on his chest. This person didn't die from the helicopter crash... He was murdered after it crash landed!

Shocked by his discovery, Gerald muttered, "This palm print..."

Since the people from the Soul Palace were all champions, ordinary people would definitely have been unable to kill them at all. Only people stronger than he was would be able to do the deed. In other words, the murderer had to be a great master!

Since the palm print on the chest was of a left palm, it wasn't hard for Gerald to put two and two together.

A left-handed great master... This could only have been the work of Christopher Moldell!

With that in mind, Gerald immediately heightened his vigilance.

Of course it was that old man. Gerald had personally witnessed Christopher crashing his helicopter. Only he would have the ability to commit such a heinous crime.

Could Christopher already have chased him all the way out here?

While Gerald now had the power of the Dawnbreaker, he knew that he was still far from being able to deal with someone like Christopher.

Regardless, what an utter b*stard! To think that that old man wanted to capture him so much!

“...Are you alright, Mr. Xadrian...? Could you perhaps know these people...?” asked Professor Yale the moment he saw how serious Gerald’s expression was.

“...I do,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“I see... It’s such a pity that they had to die in an aerial accident like this...” said the professor as he sighed.

“Oh, it wasn’t a mere accident. They were murdered!” declared Gerald as he stood up.

The moment the others heard that, the other members of the group began panicking.

“M-murdered...? Who could’ve been so powerful to do such a thing...?” asked one of the tourists.

“I’m afraid that I won’t be able to summarize the entire situation in a sentence or two. Regardless, the murderer is after me. Because of that, I believe it would be wisest for us to split paths from now on. Professor Yale, until you leave the desert, you have to make sure that everyone is careful in everything they do!” replied Gerald with a solemn look on his face.

From what Gerald had learned from Christopher’s character, the old man wouldn’t allow anyone to remain alive as long as they got in the way of him and Gerald. With so many people within that group, Gerald really didn’t want to be the reason all of them came to any harm. This was especially so for Giya.

Upon hearing that, Meredith’s eyes grew slightly red as she asked, “Are... are you leaving now, Xadrian...? You’re not traveling with us anymore...?”

“Yes, I have to... Following me will only result in all of you getting hurt!” replied Gerald.

At that moment, he thought of something. Retrieving the map of the desert from his pocket, he used his secret inner power and concentrated hard on the image of the eternal coffin. Somehow, he managed to erase the location of the eternal coffin right off the map! Following that, he seemed to ponder for a bit before walking over to Giya—who had been staring at him this entire time—with the map in hand.

“...Here, take this map. Use it if you wish to thoroughly research this desert. I’m sure it’ll be a great help to both of you in terms of work. If needed, it’ll also help you get your bearings and help all of you leave this place!” said Gerald as he looked straight into her eyes while handing the map out to her.

Giya herself was slightly stunned, but not because of what he had just said. Rather, it was because the way he was currently looking at her truly felt reminiscent of how Gerald usually did.

“You’re a fine girl, so always protect yourself until you find a suitable man to protect you. I recall you saying that I look a lot like this Gerald person... After listening to what you had to say about him, I believe that Gerald feels the same way as you do. Regardless, I hope you’ll live a happy and blessed life,” added Gerald as he gently placed the map in her hand.

As Giya’s breathing grew rapid, Gerald turned to look at Meredith and after giving her a nod, he turned around before saying, “Well, it’s time to go our separate ways then, everyone! Take care!”

With that, he began walking off, leaving them behind.

Chapter 1081

Gerald had already memorized the map.

Therefore, it would not be difficult for Gerald to find the eternal coffin.

Gerald had a faint intuition in his heart that there might be a bigger secret hidden with the eternal coffin.

This world was not as simple as he thought it was.

Gerald felt that everything seemed to be even stranger especially after he had seen those murals.

How could he describe it?

It seemed as though two hands seemed to be secretly manipulating everything in the dark.

It was already very dangerous in the desert, and it would be even more dangerous as he got to the outlands of the desert.

Of course, Gerald, who was already a semi-master, did not take some of the beasts that he had encountered so far to heart.

As it got closer to the evening, Gerald had already reached the deepest part of the outlands.

He reached a place called Ullerwood.

It was not yellow sand everywhere now, but instead, it was filled with black sand.

Moreover, the wind was very strong here, and it seemed as though a gust of wind could break a human skeleton apart.

'This is strange. Based on the mark on the map, the location of the eternal coffin should be at this spot, but this is just a piece of barren land!'

Gerald could not help but feel surprised.

'The map could not possibly be wrong!'

Gerald endured the strong wind as he continued looking around.

Fortunately, Gerald found a deep and terrifying hole beside the mountain valley.

As expected, it should be here!

Gerald recalled the location of the map, and he could not help but feel a little pleased.

At this time, Gerald was about to go in and take a look.

Suddenly, a voice rang from above the mountain valley, startling Gerald.

"Young boy, I am truly very curious to find out why Daryl Crawford wants you to risk your life just to find this ancient tomb. What is so mysterious about it that the entire Crawford family is so interested in it? Could it be that there is some sort of treasure inside? Is that the reason why Daryl Crawford is working so hard for it?"

“Christopher Moldell!”

Who else could the old man above the mountain valley be if it was none other than Christopher Moldell?!

At this moment, Christopher jumped down from the top of the mountain valley, and he stood in front of Gerald with a joking smile on his face.

However, at this time, Christopher looked a little more haggard compared to the outstanding sage-like behavior that he had before. There were also bruises on his face.

“I have always felt very curious about the reason why your grandfather wanted to send you all the way to the North Desert. Luckily, I followed you here secretly. If it weren't for this map, I wouldn't have been able to arrive here one step ahead of you. However, there is some incomplete content on this map. What is it? Is it the secret of this ancient tomb?” Christopher asked as he frowned.

“You... what did you do to Giya and everyone else?!”

Gerald was so angry that his eyes flashed red in an instant.

This old fox had suffered a backlash the other day, and Gerald had taken advantage of that opportunity to slip away.

At first, Gerald had thought that the old fox had not caught up to him yet. That was the reason why Gerald had been wearing a mask in front of everyone else all the time—because he did not want to reveal his identity.

Unexpectedly, the old fox had already caught up to him.

Moreover, Gerald could have caused harm to Giya by handing the map over to her.

A murderous intent instantly stemmed up from within Gerald.

“Hahaha! Don’t worry, young boy. I did not do anything to them. Although I would usually use all kinds of means possible to get what I want, I do not need to use my strength against a few ordinary people. They are simply asleep at this time, and they will naturally wake up after sleeping for a day and night!” Christopher said as he laughed.

“The reason why I did not kill them is because I am giving you face. So, you’d better tell me the secrets in this ancient tomb before you die now! That way, I will not hurt any of your acquaintances, then. Otherwise, you can already guess how their fate will turn out to be!” Christopher said.

“You are so despicable even though you are a great master!”

“There is no other way. Since there is something in this world that I do not know of, but Daryl Crawford actually attached such great importance to, I will have to find out what it is so that I can get it! Okay, Gerald, that is all that I am going to say to you. So, why don’t you tell me whether you are going to speak up or not?”

At this time, the expression on Christopher’s face suddenly turned cold.

Gerald sneered. “The more you want to find out about it, all the more I will not reveal the truth to you, then. Besides, I would not feel any sadness if you were to kill anyone else after I die. So, are you honestly trying to threaten me with that?”

Chapter 1082

“You brat! You are indeed very witty and eloquent, but let’s see how long you can carry on like that! I am going to kill you now!”

Christopher’s eyelids twitched slightly before he rushed forward to attack Gerald.

Gerald wanted to defend himself and avoid Christopher’s attack, but he was no match for Christopher at all.

Gerald was hit directly by Christopher’s punch, and he vomited blood in an instant.

“You will not be able to avoid my attacks! Okay, I will give you one last chance. I will spare your life if you tell me the truth now!” Christopher said coldly.

“Hahaha! Mr. Moldell, did you honestly think that I am a three-year-old kid you can trick so easily?” Gerald said as he wiped the blood off from the corner of his mouth.

“I think that you are really courting your death!”

Christopher was furious, and he lifted his palm as he struck a move, and Gerald’s entire body was lifted into the air.

After pulling Gerald’s body directly toward himself, Christopher struck him once again.

This time, there was white smoke coming out of Gerald’s back after he got hit, and he was instantly thrown about ten meters away.

Gerald was bleeding internally, and he spurted out a lot of blood.

“Are you going to say it... or are you not?” Christopher asked as he ground his teeth angrily.

“I am not going to say anything. I want you to feel impatient and anxious all the time!”

Gerald replied and smiled mockingly as he wiped the blood off his mouth. He could barely support his own body as he stood up.

“Do you honestly think that I will not kill you? I can kill you first before going to Daryl Crawford directly to ask him about it! You can die now!”

Christopher was further enraged and tried to pull Gerald toward himself using his left palm again.

However, this time, Gerald suddenly raised his eyes as he tried to get out of the suction force from Christopher’s wrist.

At the same time, he also drew out the Lightbane from his waist, and he prepared to use the water dripping skill that he had learned from the Dawnbreaker.

Why was it called the water dripping skill? This was because Gerald had come to an understanding and enlightenment that the water dripping skill matched the blade from the Lightbane perfectly. He could use offense as a defense, and the aura blade was getting higher and higher every layer, just like water dripping through rocks.

Therefore, this was called the water dripping skill.

At this moment, Gerald's figure was very swift and violent as he counterattacked with unrestrained sword moves, piling up one after the other.

Christopher could only get busy avoiding the penetrating power of the Dawnbreaker right now.

However, when he turned around, the sword was already striking him.

Christopher panicked as he responded to the attack.

Yet, it seemed as though the short blade was alive, and it focused on attacking all of Christopher's flaws instead.

Christopher's eyes opened wider and wider in utter disbelief.

At this moment, he could not respond in time, and he got hit in the chest by the Lightbane.

He rolled over as he fell to the ground, and a bloodstain quickly spread on the ground.

"Mysterious mirror!"

Christopher was shocked, and as he shook his wrist slightly, the mysterious mirror quickly appeared in his hand.

As for Gerald, he turned around and went past Christopher as he ran directly into the cave.

This was because Gerald knew very well that the only reason why he had managed to strike Christopher earlier was simply because he had caught him by surprise. If he wanted to confront Christopher directly, there would simply be a very big gap between the both of them.

Gerald's only glimmer of hope was to run into the cave.

This was Gerald's plan when he had been enduring those two initial attacks.

Every movement had gone according to plan, and everything had happened all at once.

When Christopher finally got up from the ground with his eyes wide open, Gerald had already escaped into the cave.

Christopher muttered to himself in disbelief as he stared at Gerald's back, "He truly has a special physique. He is surprisingly strong! I nearly lost to this young boy!"

At this time, Christopher suddenly raised his head with a spiteful expression on his face, "I cannot allow him to stay alive! Otherwise, the Moldell family will not be able to escape a calamity in just five years! I absolutely cannot allow him to live!"

Chapter 1083

As he thought about it, Christopher was about to chase after Gerald.

Halfway through, he suddenly stopped in his tracks again.

Christopher touched his cheek that had been scratched, and he had a terrifying expression on his face at this time.

"Young brat, let me give you a word of advice. It would be better for you to come out of the cave obediently now. Otherwise, after you go into this cave, even if your strength increases greatly, you can forget about coming out of this cave alive!" Christopher shouted out loud as he stood at the entrance of the cave.

Not long after that, a faint voice came from within the cave saying, "Old man! That would still be better than getting killed by you outside!"

Christopher frowned. "Little b*stard! Don't blame me for not reminding you if you were to die inside!"

It would indeed be very dangerous and risky to step into the cave. He was already a great master, and it could be said that he was invincible in this world. However, Christopher could not help but feel a lingering fear when he thought about the huge beast he had encountered in the cave just now.

This was the exact reason why he had wanted to investigate the matter thoroughly first.

He wanted to understand clearly whether it would be worth risking his life for the thing that was hidden within the cave.

If it was not worth it, Christopher would not take that risk!

This was precisely the reason why Christopher had waited for Gerald to appear.

'That stinky brat will not be able to go too far. When the time comes, he will either run out of the cave or get killed inside the cave anyway. I should not be risking my life just because of this young brat. It would be better for me to just wait for him outside the cave. Either way, it would still be very advantageous for me!' Christopher thought to himself.

After thinking that, Christopher immediately sat down by the entrance of the cave as he listened to the movements inside the cave.

On the other hand, Gerald initially thought that the sly old fox, Christopher, simply wanted to scare him so that he would come out of the cave.

However, as Gerald walked further into the cave, he could smell a strong odor coming from within the cave.

Gerald instantly felt that something was not right.

At this time, he suddenly recalled that Christopher had looked a little haggard when he had first seen him earlier.

He had even had some minor injuries on his face.

Since the old man knew that this was an extraordinary ancient tomb, according to his temper and characteristics, there would be absolutely no reason why he would refuse to come in to take a look for himself.

'Could it be that there was something inside the cave that hurt him, and that was the reason why he did not dare to enter the cave to continue chasing after me?'

Gerald thought to himself as he continued walking in.

It was a very short and flat corridor.

Gerald could finally see some light after walking for quite some time.

A tall stone cave appeared in front of him, and it was pitch dark inside the cave.

Moreover, there seemed to be another two big holes in the innermost part of the cave.

The two big holes were as tall as a man.

What surprised Gerald was the fact that it seemed to be a completely different area within the big holes as bright green lights were shining from within it.

It was also because of the shining bright green light from these two holes that Gerald could see some conditions within the holes.

There were carved samurai statues on both sides of the holes. It was very majestic and solemn, and there were dozens of them.

'Could this be the heavenly soldiers that descended from the sky as mentioned in the murals?'

'Their dressing looks just like the clothing worn by the heavenly soldiers in the murals.'

'So, could it be that the mysterious heavenly soldier was actually buried in the eternal coffin inside?'

Gerald thought to himself.

When Gerald saw the candlesticks around him, Gerald walked over to the candlesticks before he lit the oil lamps, one by one.

It was finally bright inside the stone cave.

Gerald finally saw everything inside the cave clearly at this time.

There were many bones scattered on the ground. Based on the equipment that they had brought with them, it seemed as though they were tomb robbers.

However, when Gerald raised his head to look up at the two big holes with the bright green lights, he was stunned.

Those were not green holes!

It was... it was....

Gerald suddenly felt both of his legs going soft, and he was also feeling a little hesitant at this time.

This was the head of an extremely big anaconda! The anaconda was astoundingly big, and the two green holes were its eyes!

At this moment, the anaconda was holding its head up high as it stared coldly at Gerald.

“F*ck!”

Gerald took a deep breath.

He could feel goosebumps rising all over his body as he turned around to run away.

Hissss!

Chapter 1084

There was the sound of the anaconda hissing from behind him at this time.

However, Gerald stopped in his tracks.

If he were to run out, he would certainly be killed by Christopher.

It was no wonder why that old man had seemed to look so haggard earlier. It turned out that there was this behemoth inside this cave.

Gerald hurriedly drew out his Lightbane.

He was already breaking out in cold sweat, and he was feeling very entangled and confused at this time.

There had been no mention of this huge anaconda on the map at all.

Gerald swallowed his saliva.

However, at this time, Gerald realized that the anaconda did not seem to be malicious.

It was simply staring at him, not showing any intentions of attacking at all.

In the end, the anaconda slowly lowered its head.

Looking at this scene, it felt as though the anaconda was a puppy that was behaving well and obediently when it saw its owner.

“You’re not going to kill me?”

Gerald asked tentatively as he finally felt some strength in his legs again.

Unexpectedly, the anaconda actually nodded slightly.

After that, the anaconda dropped his temple-like head directly on the ground again.

The anaconda’s body was blocking the entire pathway leading further into the cave. It seemed to be preventing others from breaking into the cave.

Gerald walked over to the anaconda gently.

Gerald did not know why he suddenly felt a very special and tingling sensation in his heart. He felt as though he could understand the anaconda's inner emotions simply by looking into its eyes.

Gerald instantly developed an inexplicable affection for the anaconda after looking into its eyes.

He felt as though he was meeting an old friend.

Gerald was no longer afraid of the anaconda, and he tried to touch its head.

The anaconda did not resist his touch, and it was very obedient.

"You have been guarding this cave all this while? It seems as though you have never gone out of this cave before, right?" Gerald asked.

The anaconda nodded again.

After that, it moved.

As the anaconda moved its entire body, Gerald felt as though the cave within the mountain would collapse at any time.

The anaconda continued shrinking its body inside as it seemed to be making way for Gerald.

Gerald had already left his personal safety out of consideration at this time, and he boldly walked into the cave.

It did not look like an ordinary cave anymore inside.

It seemed more like a big palace-like building!

It was simply too huge!

Gerald could not help but exclaim when he saw this underground palace!

It must have taken so much manpower and material resources to repair and build such a majestic building. Even if modern technology was so advanced now, it would still be impossible.

Inside the underground palace, there were many large stone statues that looked just like the stone statues outside.

There were also thirty-six large stone pillars that were surrounded by seven to eight people.

A colorful crystal platform was set in the center of the palace. There was a large coffin that was floating like a crystal in the middle of the platform.

'That is the eternal coffin?!'

Gerald was shocked.

As he looked around him again, Gerald could see very detailed murals all around him.

Hissss!

The anaconda hissed at this time as it looked at the mural.

"You want me to finish looking through all of these murals?" Gerald questioned in surprise.

The anaconda nodded.

"Okay!"

After swallowing his saliva and taking a glance at the eternal coffin, Gerald immediately walked toward the murals.

After listening to some of Giya's explanations in regards to murals before this, Gerald could roughly understand what was painted in the murals.

The murals were very detailed.

This was the burial spot of the mysterious heavenly soldier. The king had held the most prestigious state funeral for the heavenly soldier that descended from the sky, incurring a huge amount of manpower and material resources to build this underground palace. Only a deity would be worthy of such a majestic palace!

This had been built for future generations to admire!

It was all explained in the murals.

The murals at the back made Gerald feel even more interested at this point.

This was because it described in detail the events behind the big tree falling from the sky...

Chapter 1085

That big tree was known as the sacred tree to the people of this country.

This was because the big tree had fallen from the sky.

At that time, the people in this country thought that God was sending this heavenly soldier here to invite and bring them up to heaven. However, something had happened along the way, and the mysterious deity and all of the other heavenly soldiers that he had brought here with him had died.

The king felt that since this was a request from heaven, he should not lose his etiquette.

He felt that he would also have to try to go up and explain what had happened to the deity here.

Therefore, the king had sent the best three hundred warriors in the country to start climbing up the sacred tree.

However, even after waiting for a long time, the three hundred warriors did not return.

The king was not content, and every year thereafter, he would select a new group of warriors to climb the sacred tree.

It was only until the eve of the completion of the deity's burial palace that something strange happened when they were about to proceed with the grand burial of the deity.

Lightning struck the sacred tree, and the sacred tree burst into a huge fire. The huge fire lasted for more than a month before it finally disappeared.

The king was very annoyed and frustrated, and he felt that God was blaming them for not cherishing the opportunity that He had given them.

However, at this moment, the deity's burial was the most important.

After that, there was a detailed story of how the king was going to proceed with the grand burial of the deity and the woman. In the end, an old beggar had stopped them from doing so.

The murals said that the old beggar had looked at the king with a serious and solemn expression on his face as he told the king that the couple should not be buried together.

The king did not believe him at this time.

Therefore, the old beggar had used black magic. He had pointed at the wall, and a scene had appeared on the wall in an instant, and it was a scene of their country being destroyed!

The mural said that all of the ministers in the palace were shocked when the old beggar had used this method.

They had started bowing before him, one after the other, and even the king had bowed before him.

In the end, the king finally heeded the old beggar's advice.

The king wanted the old beggar to become their national teacher so that he could guide him on how he could continue keeping his country safe.

However, the old beggar turned down the king's request, and he simply drew two pictures for the king instead.

One of the pictures was just a symbol.

However, Gerald could clearly tell that this was the symbol of the Sun League.

The other picture was even more mysterious.

'Why does it resemble... the picture of the sun, which is the Crawford family's magic artifact?'

Gerald scratched his forehead, and he could not help but felt very surprised.

After that, the mural simply stated that the country had become remarkably prosperous for a few years after receiving the two pictures, and the country had nearly unified with hundreds of its neighboring countries.

The king had then honored the old beggar as a holy treasure.

Gerald could not help but take a deep breath when he saw this.

'Could it be that the picture of the sun, which is the Crawford family's heirloom, and the Sun League are connected? Moreover, the person who came up with the picture of the sun is actually none other than this old beggar!' Gerald thought to himself.

The curiosity that Gerald had forced him to continue looking through the murals.

After that, the tomb had been sealed up.

It had taken more than ten years to build this underground palace, and it had also taken them several years to seal it up.

During this time, something strange had happened to this already prosperous country.

The strangest thing was a large corpse that had fallen from the sky!

The appearance of this huge corpse was carved out in detail.

Gerald took a closer look at the mural, and he realized that this... this was actually the corpse of a dragon!

A dragon?!

Gerald's eyes widened in surprise.

He was even more shocked at this time that the mural had stated that a dragon had fallen from the sky.

The dragon was about thirty meters long, and it had claws as tough as steel which could easily tear people's heads apart.

The mural also explained that the huge dragon corpse was covered in hard scales.

Some of these scales were golden-yellow in color, and some of them were jet-black.

This was a dragon with a mixture of golden-yellow and jet-black colors.

When the dragon's corpse had fallen, its body was already rotten, and everyone had stayed away from it.

Chapter 1086

They had initially been planning to bury it, but the dragon's corpse caused a plague at this time.

Many people had died from the plague.

Just as the king was completely at a loss for what to do, the old beggar was mentioned again.

It seemed as though the old beggar had finally come back three years later.

However, when the old beggar came back this time, he no longer looked like an old beggar, but instead, he was dressed very formally.

The old beggar told the king that he had only been pretending to be an old beggar back then so that he could get things done easily, but he was not really a beggar.

The king was naturally overjoyed when he heard this, and he gave him the best and most luxurious treatment.

The king then asked him how he should deal with the dragon's corpse.

The old beggar proposed that the dragon's corpse should be immediately cremated without any further delay.

The mural also stated that the old beggar had excellent medical skills. He healed the people who had been infected by the plague at that time, and he also healed the prince, who had been infected because of the plague.

However, he also brought up one condition.

He wanted to go and take a look inside the underground palace.

Not only that, he wanted to go in and take a look at the underground palace on his own. He wanted all the craftsmen and workers who were responsible for carving the murals at that time to stay away.

The king was overjoyed, and he had agreed to these requests.

The old beggar had stayed in the underground palace for more than ten days. He even brought a bag with him when he went in.

After that, the people across the country knelt and worshipped him again as they welcomed him back, hoping that he would stay.

Yet, the old beggar turned down their request again.

The mural depicted that when night came, the old beggar was standing on the wall as he faced everyone in the city who was bowing before him. At this time, the old beggar pointed at the moon that had just been exposed.

Everyone had looked up at the moon, and when they finally reacted, the old beggar had already disappeared.

At that time, to commemorate him, the people had set up a temple to worship and admire him.

“Heavenly soldiers who fell from the sky, the sacred tree, the strange and mysterious old beggar, the dragon, and also that sky battleship!” Gerald murmured.

The more information Gerald got from the murals, the more he felt as though he could not understand it.

These murals and the events depicted in these murals seemed to feel so lifelike.

Was it really just the imagination of the people from ancient times?

Gerald could not help but felt a little doubtful and suspicious at this time.

Before this, he had still been doubtful, but at this point, Gerald was already ninety percent convinced that all of this could possibly be true!

Could an entirely different civilization truly have existed in this world ten thousand years ago, or even tens of thousands of years ago?!

Although the legend of the existence of dragons was already long history... were dragons truly just a legend?

Gerald was surprised.

He took a deep breath as he tried to look for the whereabouts of the woman dressed in white from the murals.

However, there was no mention of the woman in white at all.

Gerald could not help but feel a little disappointed.

'This old beggar seems to have had the ability to understand ancient and modern times. Could there possibly be such an enchanting being and existence in this world?' Gerald thought to himself again.

At this time, Gerald looked at the anaconda.

"By the way, when did you come here? I believe you were not so big when you first came here, right?" Gerald asked.

The anaconda hissed before it spat on one of the murals.

It was a mural of the scene when the old beggar had entered the underground palace with a bag in his hand.

Gerald was stunned for a moment as he thought to himself.

At this time, he could not help but tremble all over.

Gerald stared at the anaconda before he said, "Do you mean to say that the old beggar brought you into the underground palace in that bag back then?!"

Gerald felt as though he was running out of breath.

The anaconda nodded.

Oh, my God!

Gerald was in a state of shock and disbelief.

"You have already lived for tens of thousands of years?!"

Chapter 1087

The anaconda nodded again.

If this had not happened in front of him, Gerald would never have believed that this was true!

This anaconda was even older than his ancestors!

“Why didn’t you kill me? The old beggar brought you into the underground palace back then. Therefore, he must have wanted you to guard this ancient tomb. You would have to kill anyone who breaks into this ancient tomb, right?” Gerald could not help but ask curiously.

The anaconda hissed as it spat and pointed at the mural from earlier.

After that, the anaconda turned around as it glanced at the eternal coffin.

The mural that the anaconda had spat at was the one where the old man had stayed in the underground palace for ten days after bringing the anaconda in, and the anaconda was pointing at the eternal coffin at this time.

It seemed as though the ten days that the old man had spent in the underground palace had something to do with the eternal coffin.

There were no other clues on the mural, and it seemed as though the anaconda was trying to tell him that the answer lay within the eternal coffin.

“You want me to open the coffin?” Gerald asked tentatively.

The anaconda nodded.

Gerald took a deep breath before he walked toward the colorful platform.

The entire platform was made out of many colorful stones.

The eternal coffin made out of crystal jade was suspended in the air above the colorful stones.

It was like a beautiful work of art that made people wonder and marvel at it.

After walking up and observing the eternal coffin from a close range, Gerald could vaguely see a dark figure lying inside the coffin.

That should be the corpse of the deity from back then.

Although Gerald could not see the figure clearly, he could see the outline of the figure being reflected on the crystal coffin.

It was indeed the eternal coffin, and the corpse was not rotten even after being preserved for such a long time.

Could this deity indeed be a deity that had descended from heaven?

Gerald suppressed his curiosity as he slowly pushed the coffin board open.

Upon pushing it away, the corpse of the deity was unreservedly displayed in front of him for a moment.

Gerald was stunned as soon as he looked at the body properly.

He felt as though his heart had stopped beating at this point.

'How can this be possible?!

Gerald's eyes widened in the next moment, and a trace of shock and terror filled his body in an instant.

He could not help but tremble uncontrollably.

This was because... the corpse lying inside the coffin was none other than himself?!

To be precise, the figure lying inside the coffin looked exactly like him.

He was wearing a golden armor with a white robe, and he had long hair.

However, his face was the exact copy of Gerald's face!

'How could this be possible?!'

Gerald could not help but exclaim in his heart again as he subconsciously took two steps backward.

At this time, Gerald looked at the anaconda, which was looking at him respectfully.

It was no wonder why the anaconda was treating him with such respect instead of killing him! It turned out that the anaconda was regarding him as the master of the underground palace!

The anaconda hissed before it motioned for Gerald to look beside the corpse.

Gerald looked in that direction.

It turned out that there was a scroll next to the corpse.

There was also a round jade pendant next to it.

The anaconda wanted Gerald to open up the scroll.

Gerald suppressed the horror that he was feeling as he picked up the scroll.

After opening the scroll, Gerald saw some ancient writing densely recorded on it.

Gerald had asked Professor Yale about these ancient writings just a few days ago.

Therefore, Gerald could understand the content of the scroll briefly.

‘This should be the life record of this corpse!’

‘His wife was mentioned in the scroll, and the words, Sun League, were also mentioned, followed by humans, and it seems as though the last few words are talking about destruction!’

Gerald could only effectively understand these words.

The deity’s wife and the Sun League were both mentioned. Could it be that the death of this deity could be directly related to the Sun League, then? What destruction could he be referring to? Would humanity be destroyed?

Gerald could not help but feel confused and frustrated.

“This is not a suicide note left behind by the corpse, right?” Gerald asked the anaconda.

The anaconda shook his head.

“I understand now. The old beggar who brought you in here was the one who placed this scroll inside the eternal coffin, right?” Gerald asked.

The anaconda nodded.

“Who is that old beggar? Why does he know so many secrets, and why does it seem as though he has supernatural powers?”

Gerald was truly surprised.

Chapter 1088

The anaconda shook its head again.

“What does this mean? What exactly is the Sun League?”

Gerald was already sweating profusely at this time, especially since he was seeing someone who looked just like him, lying inside the eternal coffin at this time.

Could it be possible that there was such a thing as reincarnation?

Everything was filled with doubts.

Moreover, it seemed as though the mysterious man who had led him here had probably known everything, then. Yet, who was he?

Gerald was filled with doubts, and he picked up the round jade pendant as he looked at it.

There were many complicated lines painted on it.

Gerald did not know if he was hallucinating or whether it was just an illusion, but he felt as though he saw those lines move.

At this moment, Gerald stared at those lines even more intently, and it seemed as though the lines were moving even faster.

This made Gerald feel giddy, and he became very dizzy at this time.

Gerald shook his head, and he suddenly felt everything turning black before his eyes as he passed out.

However, Gerald was still conscious.

He could feel that his hands and feet were cold, but he could not open his eyes at all.

Suddenly, a huge hole appeared in front of him.

There was a bright line coming out from the hole.

There was also a stream that was flowing out smoothly.

A black shadow was standing at the side of the stream with his hands behind his back.

“You’re finally here?” The dark figure asked with his back facing Gerald.

“What do you mean by that? Who are you?” Gerald asked in surprise.

“I have been waiting for you for such a long time!” The man said.

“Always remember that the greater your abilities, the more people you will need to protect. This is especially so for the person that you love so deeply. Make sure you do not let her down!” The black figure said again.

Gerald felt even more confused at this time as he said, “Sir, I do not know what you are talking about. I simply want to ask why the deity in the eternal coffin looks exactly like me. Also, are you that deity?”

“You will find out eventually!”

The voice of the black figure sounded very bleak.

“What is the Sun League? It seems as though my lover has been captured by the Sun League, and there is completely no news on her at all!” Gerald said.

“Everyone will die because of her. Everyone!” The black figure said.

“If you are not going to tell me anything, shouldn’t you at least tell me how I can protect the people that I love?” Gerald asked in surprise.

As soon as he was done speaking, he suddenly felt the giddy and dizzy feeling in his head again.

However, it felt completely different than it did before.

It seemed as though countless pieces of information were pouring into his brain at this time.

Gerald felt as though his brain was about to explode.

Too much information!

'My head... it hurts! Ahhh!'

Gerald held tightly onto his head as he screamed and rolled on the ground in pain.

He could no longer tell the difference between north, south, east, and west at this point.

He felt as though his head was about to explode from the pain.

However, the black figure kept talking.

"From now on, you have to be even more careful, especially of the people around you! This is because I am you, and you are me!"

"I am dying! Hurry up and save me!"

Gerald was foaming at his mouth, and the whites of his eyes were showing as he continued struggling on the ground.

Boom!

Eventually, it felt as though the information in Gerald's mind was forming a medium which suddenly exploded,

Gerald started spurting out blood as he stopped struggling before he fainted...

Drip, drip, drip...

Gerald did not know how long he was out for, but he gradually awoke when he heard the sound of dripping water.

When he stood up, Gerald discovered that he was still in the underground palace.

The anaconda was staring at him with a concerned look in its eyes.

"I'm not dead yet?"

Gerald was a little surprised.

However, his smile froze immediately afterward, because Gerald suddenly realized that there seemed to be something more in his mind as this time!

Chapter 1089

There was an extra memory in Gerald's mind. It was a memory that did not belong to him.

There was simply too much information in his mind.

He had too many martial arts skills and powers. It was just way too much!

It felt as though Gerald had already mastered all of these skills and abilities thoroughly. This was especially so for the breathing technique.

When Gerald breathed now, he felt as though he could automatically activate this technique in an instant.

Gerald felt skeptical.

Moreover, it seemed as though there were many more memories in his mind, but these memories seemed vague.

No matter how much Gerald thought about it, he could not remember anything at all.

Was it because of that jade pendant?

That was not all.

Gerald also discovered that his strength and physique seemed to have improved greatly.

He stretched out his palms to activate his inner strength, and a rush of heat and energy was released through the palm of his hands.

“Inner strength and outer physique! The great master realm!” Gerald was overjoyed.

Moreover, his inner strength and breathing technique was growing at a spectacular speed! Furthermore, Gerald’s inner strength was unmistakably different as compared to before.

He was even more powerful and strong as compared to before.

Gerald drew out his Lightbane and performed a set of swordsmanship.

His aura blade was invincible.

Before his sword arrived, the edge of his aura blade had already arrived.

Gerald could split a large rock from more than ten meters away.

Moreover, the more he activated his inner strength, the faster it was growing within him.

‘Could this be the great master realm?!’

'Why do I feel as though one of my random hits is several times stronger as compared to grandpa or even Christopher Moldell?'

'If I were to use all of my strength to attack, it would certainly be difficult for Christopher to resist my attack even with the help of his mysterious mirror.'

It was not that Gerald was being arrogant.

However, he truly felt this way at this time.

'Grandpa said that the most mysterious realm in this world is the great master realm! However, I have a feeling that I have already surpassed the realm of the great master!' Gerald thought to himself.

Gerald took the jade pendant and looked at it.

The dark figure had told him a lot just now, but it was still not complete.

Furthermore, it seemed as though his tone had been particularly hesitant and desolate.

The dark figure had passed all of these onto him. So, it seemed as though there was something that he wanted him to do. Also, Gerald recalled that the last thing that he was shouting seemed to be "I am you, and you are me!".

Could it be that Gerald was the reincarnation of this deity?

Gerald looked at the corpse lying inside the eternal coffin once again.

'I will hold onto the jade pendant first. I still have too many doubts about the eternal coffin that I simply cannot resolve overnight. I will seal up this cave after I go out later, and I will come back again after getting all the answers that I need.' Gerald thought to himself.

After that, he kept the jade pendant away.

After all, there was a person from tens of thousands of years ago who looked just like him lying inside the eternal coffin. This made Gerald feel completely at a loss, and he did not dare to act rashly.

At this moment, it seemed as though the anaconda had something to say to him.

It started hissing as it approached one of the murals.

After that, it pointed at the mural of the eve of the burial, where the old beggar had come out to block the deity from being buried together with the woman in white.

The anaconda was specifically pointing at the woman in white.

“What are you trying to say? Do you mean that you want me to find this woman in white?” Gerald asked.

The anaconda nodded.

After that, the anaconda looked at the eternal coffin and the jade pendant in Gerald’s hand.

“Is this what the dark figure wants me to do? He wants me to find her?” Gerald asked.

The anaconda nodded again.

Hm?

At this point, Gerald suddenly remembered the strange dream that Lyra had had before he came to the desert.

Chapter 1090

Warhill Mountain, the collapsed statue of the woman in white, and the prophecy of the picture of the sun. He thought of the woman in white that had appeared when he had died.

A woman in white again?

Could both of them be the same person?

'This matter seems to be getting more and more troublesome. I will have to go back and see whether I can find some answers from the picture of the sun!' Gerald thought to himself.

At this time, Gerald closed the coffin again.

At the same time, Gerald arranged a seal formation around the coffin following his memory.

It would be better for him to preserve and keep this body well.

"Thank you for your help. It will not take too long, I will come back as soon as I figure everything out!" Gerald said as he patted the anaconda's head.

The anaconda nodded.

After that, Gerald left.

In truth, Gerald did not notice it himself, but even though he was still the same person as he was before, he was already portraying a completely different kind of temperament.

Gerald slowly went out, following the low and steady corridor.

Gerald also sealed up the corridor completely as he left.

Gerald stretched his body slightly and sighed as soon as he walked out along the corridor.

The black wind had already stopped outside.

'I should move some boulders here!' Gerald thought to himself.

Gerald walked to the side before he moved some rocks to seal up the entire corridor.

Suddenly, a whistling sound came from the sky.

"Hahaha! Stinky brat! It has already been ten days! You are finally willing to come out after I have waited for you for ten days!"

Immediately afterward, a figure jumped off a low cliff and landed directly in front of Gerald.

"Ten days! I initially thought that you had already died inside, but I felt a little hesitant and reluctant to leave. Fortunately, I decided to wait a little longer! Otherwise, you would have already slipped away just like that!" Christopher said as he laughed.

Gerald was startled as he said, "So, it turns out that I was unconscious for ten days inside the cave. I honestly thought that it had just been one night!"

"You must have been so scared and terrified inside the cave, right? Stinky brat, you are truly very fortunate! You actually did not get killed by that huge anaconda!"

"It seems as though this is surely God's will! It is God's will for me to get my hands on you and your physique!" Christopher sneered.

Gerald realized that Christopher looked even more haggard as compared to how he was when he had met him ten days ago.

It seemed as though Christopher had had a very difficult time waiting for him at this place where the black wind was howling.

"Hmm? Why did you block the entrance of the cave? Is there any big secret inside this cave?" Christopher queried.

“Well, it is full of mysteries. I cannot crack all of them at once, but I am not entirely without a clue. That is why I am going to seal up this cave first so that I can come back here again in the future!” Gerald replied frankly.

“What? If that is the case, does that mean you have already found the secret inside this cave? What is it?”

Christopher was very excited, and a trace of greed flashed through his eyes.

Immediately afterward, he turned around abruptly as he tried to move the boulder.

However, no matter how hard he tried, he could not move the boulder at all.

“How can it be so heavy?”

Christopher’s face had already turned purple.

“I have already blessed the boulder with some secret technique. Therefore, using strength alone is completely useless!” Gerald said as he smiled.

“Secret technique? What secret technique are you talking about?” Christopher asked in surprise.

“To put it simply, I am using some profound energy that exists in nature. Let’s put it this way, it is simply like the power of a magnetic forcefield. Can you oppose the power of a magnetic forcefield with your strength alone?” Gerald asked.

“What? You... how did you learn how to do that?! Inside the cave?” Christopher asked with his eyes wide opened.

“Yes!”

“Now I know why Daryl Crawford wanted you to come here even at the risk of your own life. It turns out that there was actually this kind of secret technique inside the cave! God is indeed blessing me! God is truly on my side!” Christopher said as he grinned.

After that, he stared coldly at Gerald.

“It is no wonder why I felt as though your breath and aura seemed to be so different as compared to before. It turns out that you have had such a fortunate encounter! Unfortunately for you, you have told me everything. It is such a pity that from now onward, I will be the only person in this world who will know of this secret! Gerald, no matter what it is, I will not allow you to keep your life today! Don’t blame me for being cruel and ruthless! Give me your life!”

As soon as his voice fell, Christopher flew toward Gerald as he tried to strike Gerald in the chest with his killing palm...

Chapter 1091

Concentrating all his energy into a single strike, an explosive sound could be heard as Christopher launched himself toward Gerald with an attack aimed for the youth’s chest!

Seconds before his attack collided with Gerald, a loud buzzing sound could be heard. It was only when his fist arrived inches before its target that Christopher realized a split second too late that all his strength had suddenly been drained by some mysterious force.

Knowing that he wouldn’t be able to stop his punch’s momentum in time, Christopher immediately tried to intensify his force again.

When his fist finally collided with Gerald’s chest, however, he quickly realized that the amount of force he ended up exerting was only comparable to that of a new-born.

As if that wasn’t perplexing enough, Christopher found himself flying backward, unable to regain control of his movements! It felt similar to toppling down a steep mountain, and before the old man knew it, he had crashed harshly onto the ground!

“H-how... How is this even possible?!” groaned Christopher in utter disbelief as he sat feebly on the ground, his eyes wide open.

The old man was now holding on to his numb left arm that felt close to being broken.

How could this be? It had only been ten days since they last fought!

Back then, Gerald had only been able to make it out alive with the aid of some odd swordplay. Christopher was well aware that he could’ve killed Gerald back there and then as long as he had been a bit more alert, and he was certain that Gerald understood that as well.

In short, the only reason Gerald had won the battle was because of his sneak attack.

Knowing that Gerald didn't have any other tricks up his sleeve, Christopher chose to wait for Gerald to show himself again. If things had gone according to plan, he would've killed the youth once that happened.

Following that, Christopher would tell Daryl that he had his grandson before threatening to kill Gerald should Daryl refuse to tell him the secret of the ancient tomb. Once he got the information he needed, Christopher would then toss Gerald's corpse before Dylan!

The thought of how desperate Daryl would look at that moment brought endless glee to Christopher back when he was still waiting for Gerald.

It was a simple plan that—if everything had gone smoothly—would've resulted in Christopher gaining the secret of the ancient tomb for his own family.

Truly a simple plan... Yet it had never occurred to him that he would actually be unable to take down Gerald!

"Oh? Did you still have plans to kill me?" asked Gerald, flashing a cold smile.

"It's... It's illogical! How could you have gotten this strong in such a short period of time? There's no way you could've gone through that much training in only ten days!" shouted Christopher in his shock.

"Let's just say I got lucky!" replied Gerald.

"...What? Could it be the secret of the ancient tomb? Is it truly able to make others this powerful?" said Christopher, stunned.

Immediately after, however, the old man's eyes grew fierce as he grabbed a handful of sand before tossing it directly at Gerald's face!

Instantly getting to his feet, Christopher then leaped from where he stood, aiming a kick at Gerald's chest!

The moment his foot hit its mark, another explosive sound could be heard. This time, however, white smoke began gushing out from the spot Christopher's kick had landed, completely enveloping the old man's body!

Before Christopher could even question what the hell had just happened, the white smoke surrounding him—somehow—exploded, sending his body flying off into the opposite direction once more! The force itself was akin to standing before an exploding boiler, and it wasn't long before Christopher felt his back crash against the mountain's stone walls.

As the old man fell to the ground, a large indent was revealed on the spot he had been flung against. Now coughing blood, Christopher raised his head to look at Gerald, feeling completely stupefied.

“What... What exactly is the secret of the ancient tomb?! By god! How could knowledge of its secret increase someone's inner strength and training to such a frightening amount within only ten days?!”

Christopher had no doubts that he had managed to land that kick earlier. To think that Gerald's inner strength alone had managed to counter the impact, resulting in the old man getting hurt instead!

In order to achieve such a feat, Gerald's inner strength needed to surpass Christopher's. From the old man's personal experience just moments ago, he estimated that Gerald's inner strength had to be at least ten times more powerful than his own for him to get this hurt.

“If you had only left, I would've let it go, you know? Still, since you kill people like flies and you even waited so long for me here, I guess I truly can't allow you to continue living!” said Gerald, his cold gaze alone sending chills down the old man's spine.

Chapter 1092

After saying that, Gerald slowly lifted a hand... Through the force of his inner strength alone, Gerald slowly lifted the old man off the ground. Christopher wasn't even able to attempt to fight back due to some invisible force holding on to his entire body.

“P-please don't kill me, Gerald! T-the pledge of the hold water is coming soon! I'm still useful to you, so please don't end me yet! I-I know a major secret you know?!” shouted Christopher in both panic and fear as green veins began bulging from his forehead.

“What secret?” asked Gerald coldly.

“I-I know that your family has been investigating the Sun League for a long while now. I'll be honest with you and say that including the Moldells, all the other major secret societies—such as the Naplocks and the Fergusons—have never truly given up on investigating the Sun League even after all these years... I-I have an important clue to share with you, so please, please spare my life...! It wasn't easy for me to get to this level of training, so even if you still wish to end me, please do so when I attend the pledge of the holy water!” wailed Christopher as the old man burst into tears.

“...You’re truly a sly, old fox! You’re almost a hundred by now yet you claim to still fear death? Do you think I’ll spare your life just because you shed a few tears?” replied Gerald, starting to feel slightly awkward.

“I-I won’t be unreasonable and request that you just let me go, of course... However, aside from the fact that the pledge of the holy water is closely linked to the Sun League, do understand that my father died because of that pledge... Since then, my only wish in life had been to enter the realm of legends and gain access to the pledge of the holy water. Once I’m there, I wish to find out the reason for my father’s death. I also wish to find out what the pledge of the holy water truly is.”

“Regardless, I remember Kort telling me that the Crawfords managed to find half of a stone tablet out at sea. The map displayed on said tablet reveals a place called Warhill Mountain, which is where the pledge of the holy water takes place. Endless secrets lie within that mountain, you know?” explained Christopher hurriedly, knowing that he was no longer able to defeat Gerald no matter what he did.

Despite still resenting the youth, everything he had said was true. He didn’t dare to lie since he truly wanted to live to see the pledge of the holy water with his very own eyes. The way Christopher saw it, even if he was to die, he wanted to pass on in the mysterious way that many others—across the past ten thousand years—who had participated in the pledge had done.

“I already know that it’s going to be held in Warhill Mountain.”

“E-even so, you may not be aware of this next bit, and I’m willing to bet that your grandfather hasn’t heard of this either! I’m assuming that you still don’t know where Warhill Mountain is, and for good reason! See, the token of the holy water only provides a few details about the mountain itself. It doesn’t really tell you the location’s exact coordinates. To enter Warhill Mountain, you must first gather several great masters to team up with. I’ll be frank and say that attempts to even enter the mountain require a lot of human and material resources. As a result, only a small group of people usually make it into the mountain.”

“According to legends, Warhill Mountain is located on a large island that can be found deep within the ocean. While that may sound odd, rumors state that the island only appears once the token of the holy water is issued. The island itself is called Divine Island, and I know how to get there!” added Christopher.

“You’re not the only one who’s aware of all that, you know? After all, your father wasn’t the only one who returned from the pledge of the holy water that year. With the pledge of the holy water just around the corner, you should know that rumors like these are commonplace for those who are aware of the event. Also, since everyone knows that the pledge is extremely dangerous, no sane great master would choose to head there alone,” sneered Gerald.

‘What a slick b*stard he is!’ Thought the old man who was now drenched in cold sweat.

Just as Gerald had said, Christopher definitely wasn't the only one who knew about the 'secrets' he had just shared. In fact, the old man had already agreed to go there with the Naplocks and a few other great masters from other families.

"Fine, even if you already know all this, I have something else to tell you that you'll surely find interesting!"

"Spill it."

"Well, regardless of whether they've gone mad or not, I'm sure everyone agrees that great masters who are able to return from the pledge of the holy water are extremely powerful. After all, they were able to survive long enough in that perilous place! Due to that logic, my father should be considered to be a powerful person, no?"

"Indeed. My grandfather himself admires him a lot. From what I've heard, several of the secret societies back then treated the Moldells as their default leader," replied Gerald.

"Well, the thing is, those who managed to return alive are far from the strongest... In fact, they're the weakest who weren't able to remain there for long! You know, after my maddened father returned, he called me to his bed on the night before his death. The moment I was beside him, he immediately tugged my arm before shouting the same sentence three times in a row!" said Christopher with a gulp before displaying a solemn expression.

Frowning slightly, Gerald then lowered Christopher to the ground before putting away his inner strength.

"I... For the rest of my life, I'll never forget my father's expression when he shouted those words at me on that night...!"

"What exactly did he say?"

"With... an extremely terrified expression, he shouted, 'I don't want to go back!' three times in a row!"

Chapter 1093

"All his life, my father had been a hero to many, including me... You can imagine how shocked I was when I found out that instead of the powerful man I had always envisioned him to be, he was in fact, one of the weakest. I had never seen him cry out in fear the way he did that night... Once I did, however, I began to waver slightly. What exactly did my father experience for him to end up that terrified? What on earth took place during the pledge of the holy water? All these questions made me adamant about investigating the pledge! My fear of failure has been the reason why I keep wanting to improve my strength!" added Christopher, his eyes now bloodshot.

“...So what you’re saying is, according to your father, those who didn’t return aren’t dead? Are you saying that they were brought someplace else instead?” replied Gerald, bewildered.

The incident resembled Mila’s disappearance a lot. After all, the victims of both incidents had received some kind of item—the token of the holy water, in this case—before eventually going missing.

Instead of simply accepting that she was dead, Gerald had always believed that Mila had simply been captured by others and was still alive. What Christopher had just told him greatly increased his theory’s plausibility.

Was the Sun League—after handing out their items—truly responsible for all those disappearances? But the world was such a massive place... Where could all those who had been kidnapped been taken to...?

“Exactly... The place itself was someplace my father greatly feared and didn’t dare to head to! So... after telling you all that, please... I’m begging you...! Please allow me to die at the pledge of the holy water!” said Christopher as he knelt before Gerald.

“You truly are capable of doing just about anything in order to achieve your goals, aren’t you, old man?” replied Gerald, feeling speechless.

Shaking his head, Gerald’s voice turned cold as he added, “Fine, I’ll spare your life, under three conditions!”

“P-please, state them!”

“First of all, those from the Moldell family have to give way to any Crawfords they come across!”

“I... I agree to that!”

“Secondly, you’re prohibited from leaving the Moldell family manor before the pledge of the holy water officially begins. Should I find out that you attempt to leave before then, I’ll end you the moment I can. I hope you realize that you’re no longer anywhere near capable of defeating me!”

“Understood! I’ll remain indoors!”

“As for the final condition, I’ll be holding onto your mysterious mirror for the time being,” said Gerald as he stretched his hand out.

The moment he did so, the mysterious mirror—that Christopher had hidden under his sleeve—flew into Gerald’s hand!

“Speaking of which, I’ve inserted a venom-based poison into your body. I’m telling you this so that you know that should you disobey any of the three conditions, the poison will melt all your internal organs. Oh, and don’t even try to force it out. The result will be akin to you committing suicide,” added Gerald, his tone even more frigid than before.

“...W-what?!” replied Christopher as the corner of his lips twitched.

‘This Gerald... How vicious of him! He may as well just kill me right here and now!’

Despite feeling that way, Christopher was well aware that he had no other option than to obey. He needed to stay alive.

“...I... I promise!”

“Good. Now get lost!” sneered Gerald as he waved his hand, gesturing for the old man to leave.

Allowing Christopher to live till the pledge of the holy water was by no means an act of kind-heartedness. Rather, it was because his grandfather knew little regarding the pledge itself, seeing that it was his first time attending it.

Nobody knew for certain what would happen during the pledge of the holy water, so Gerald needed to ensure that someone who had confidence and deep knowledge of the pledge stayed by Daryl’s side.

Christopher was the perfect candidate for that.

Now that he had control over Christopher, Gerald knew that that old fox would be obedient no matter how cunning he usually was.

Regardless, at this point in time, the pledge would take place in less than three months. Knowing that, Gerald knew he needed to pick up the pace. Besides, he still wanted to investigate the secret of the eternal coffin as well.

Now that he had surpassed the realm of legends, he wondered if his death prophecy would still come true.

Shaking the thought off, he then quickly left the desert and began his journey back to the small town where he had first bumped into Giya again.

Speaking of Giya, he attempted to look for her throughout his journey back, though there were no signs of her or the other researchers. He was, however, able to find traces that Giya and the others had left the desert.

True enough, when he finally arrived at the small town, Gerald bumped into them upon entering Bacht Hotel. Well, what remained of the large group, that is.

Most of the people from before had already left, and only a few people from the initial tourist group remained. Them and a sole woman from the research team who now appeared to be working in the hotel.

Chapter 1094

The moment the woman saw him, she immediately teared up as she shouted, "Gerald! I'm so glad to be able to meet you again!"

"Why are you still here, Giya? And again, I told you that my name isn't Gerald! It's Xadrian!" replied Gerald, honestly feeling relieved that she was doing fine. Still, it was rather unexpected that she had chosen to remain here.

"You're still trying to lie to me? Give it up, I already know you're Gerald! You may have successfully changed your body figure and temperament, but you'll never be able to change those eyes of yours! You're Gerald and that's that!" replied Giya as she put down the plates she was holding onto before running over to Gerald.

Gerald himself took a brief glance at the plates before averting his gaze from Giya as he said, "Why would you choose to be a waitress here instead of remaining with the research team? I'm pretty sure being with them is a much nicer job than this..."

"I don't care about that anymore... Waiting for your return was more important. Even if it had taken you days or even years, I would've continued waiting here for you! I just want to know why you'd lie to me! It's impossible for two random people to look so alike, and you know it! You may continue trying to deceive me but I know those eyes! So tell me, why did you lie to me...?" cried out Giya who was now starting to attract the attention of several of the hotel's customers.

Gerald himself was feeling extremely moved by all that she had said.

'So you were planning to wait for me here for the rest of your life, huh... Giya... Giya, can't you see that I really can't bear hurting you anymore...? Why can't you just understand that?!' Gerald thought to himself.

“...Giya, you’ve truly mistaken me for someone else... Look, since you wish to meet that Gerald so much, give me a year. I promise to locate him for you by then... Also, even if I’m not actually Gerald, you were waiting for me this entire time, right? Now that we’ve met, I’m sure you’re finally satisfied... With that in mind, you should really return to your work, Giya...”

After saying that, Gerald turned around to leave, clearly uninterested in entering the hotel.

However, it only took him a few steps before he heard a soft ‘thud’ behind him. Turning around, Gerald saw that Giya had gone limp and fallen to the floor!

Seeing that, he immediately ran back to her side while shouting, “Giya!”

“T-there... Try saying you aren’t Gerald again... Even your voice had changed... I’m certain that it’s the same voice that used to always call me!” said Giya as she tried her best to hold on to Gerald’s arm.

“I... I won’t allow you to leave me anymore, even if I have to continue following you like this for the rest of my life! I’m willing to do so!” added the girl as she clung on tightly to him.

Gerald, however, frowned as he replied, “...Have you gone mad? I simply treat you as a friend! Regardless, how could you fake falling to the floor just to grab my attention? Forget it... Also, I’d rather not have a constant burden by my side. With that, I bid you Godspeed!”

With that said, Gerald quickly turned around and left.

“G-Gerald!” cried out Giya as she immediately got to her feet again to chase after him.

While Gerald was fast, Giya still tried her best to run in the direction she had last seen him head to. She ran, and ran, until eventually, she arrived at the small town’s border. Only a sandy road could be seen from that point onward, yet she continued running on, knowing that she would eventually reach the highway.

Aside from rows of pine and cypress trees, Giya hadn’t bumped into anyone up till this point. She didn’t even know how long she had trudged along that road. Despite her paling face and her cracked lips, she still continued heading in the direction that Gerald had left.

"I... I won't let you run away again... Why... Why do you hide from me like this...? Just why...?" muttered Giya to herself as the number of blisters on her soles continued to increase, causing her white shoes to slowly gradient into red, her fresh blood dyeing them.

She was feeling extremely dizzy, and this had been the case ever since she returned from the desert. With that in mind, it was evident that her falling to the ground earlier hadn't been just for show.

Feeling the last of her strength leave her body, she ended up kneeling on the road, exhaustion taking over her. Her eyes were filled with tears, yet she simply gnashed her teeth before crawling back up again.

Darkness soon began creeping in as the day slowly turned to night. After walking for an entire day, Giya could no longer feel her legs. At long last, she finally arrived at the highway and located there, was a tea stall.

Noticing her, the boss smiled before asking, "Well hey there, young woman! You have a terrible expression on your face! Would you like a cup of tea?"

"H-How much for a cup...?"

"Pretty cheap, honestly! Only two dollars!" replied the boss.

Feeling her pocket, Giya realized that in her hurry to run after Gerald earlier, she hadn't brought a single penny out with her...

Chapter 1095

"What's wrong, beauty? Don't you have any money with you?" said an idler as he and a few others began walking toward her.

The moment one of them attempted to touch Giya's chin, she immediately dodged. Seeing that, the other idlers immediately grabbed Giya's arms, intent on harassing her.

Realizing that struggling wasn't getting her anywhere, Giya found a chance to bite down hard on one of the idler's fingers!

A shout of pain was heard as the idler who was bitten held on to his badly injured finger.

Seeing that, none of the others dared to make any other moves on her. This was because all of them saw the murderous intent in her eyes.

However, due to her prior exhaustion and the sudden adrenaline rush, Giya was now feeling extremely dizzy. As a result, she soon ended up toppling to the ground, barely conscious.

Understanding that Giya barely had any energy left in her to even get up, the idlers turned around to face another person who was now walking toward them. One of them then complained, “Isn’t this a bit too cruel, boss? You didn’t warn us that this woman was going to be this vicious! My finger almost got broken, you know?”

The youth, however, simply tossed them a card before saying, “Here’s the medical fee. The password is today’s date!”

“H-holy sh*t! Thanks, boss!” shouted all of the idlers simultaneously in delight.

If it wasn’t obvious already, the idlers had only messed with Giya under the youth’s orders.

Recognizing that voice anywhere, Giya slowly lifted her head to see if it truly was him. As she had guessed, the youth in question was, of course, Gerald!

“I-I knew you wouldn’t abandon me...!” cried out Giya as she burst into tears.

While Gerald had easily outpaced her earlier, once he was sure that Giya had lost sight of him, he kept a close eye on her from there on out, worrying that something might happen to her before she got back to the hotel.

Unexpectedly, Giya had chased after him the entire day.

He had honestly thought that Giya would eventually give up once she could no longer see him. Of course, that didn’t happen. As a result, he had hired those idlers earlier to scare her back into town.

‘This girl...’ Gerald thought to himself as he sighed internally.

Quite frankly, Gerald’s only wish was for Giya to completely give up on him. She deserved to live a normal life without the pain of longing for him, which was why he was trying so desperately to end things right now rather than prolong her agony.

However, seeing how much Giya had suffered earlier—just to get a chance to meet him again—made him feel sorry for her.

Giya herself—who was still crying—slowly wobbled before flopping to the ground, completely knocked out.

Guilt-ridden, Gerald immediately ran over to her while shouting, “Giya!”

The moment he lifted her up, however, Gerald immediately sensed that something was amiss.

“...Hmm? You’re... You were this ill this entire time?”

While he had initially thought that she was merely bluffing back when she fell to the floor at the hotel, after checking her pulse, he now realized how terribly ill she was. With this realization, Gerald then quickly brought her elsewhere.

When Giya finally awoke again, she was immediately greeted by the droning of a helicopter. Her body felt suspended though it was much more relaxed now compared to earlier when the pain had been so excruciating that she felt for sure that she was going to die.

Looking around, she realized that she was lying on a lounge seat, and her body was covered with clothes. The moment she saw Gerald sitting beside her, however, her eyes immediately widened as she shouted, “G-Gerald?! A-am I dreaming now...?”

“You foolish girl! Did you know how seriously ill you were? If you hadn’t bumped into me, your life would be in danger by now!” replied Gerald with a slight frown.

“So you finally admit that you’re Gerald! Why did you have to lie to me? Were you really that reluctant to meet me? Just so you know, I previously had thoughts that if I still couldn’t find you no matter what, then I’d rather die!” said Giya as she ignored Gerald’s reply, her eyes now bloodshot and teary.

The Gerald sitting beside her now was so much more mature compared to the one she once knew a year and a half ago.

There was a lot that Giya wanted to learn about, and that urge stemmed from the need to always have a sense of security when she was by Gerald’s side.

“Where are we headed to...?” asked Giya.

“We’re returning to the Crawford manor in Northbay. I’ll have a few special doctors look after you once we’re there,” replied Gerald.

Quite honestly, Gerald was currently finding it difficult to look Giya in the eye. After all, it would be a lie for him to claim that he felt nothing for that woman now.

Whatever the case was, he truly wished her well.

“...So... Where have you been in the past year and a half...?”

Chapter 1096

The question had come from Giya.

“...It’s a long story. Regardless, just rest easy and focus on healing for now... I’ll tell you more about it in the future...”

Now that he had located the eternal coffin, it only made sense for Gerald to return to his family as soon as he could. After all, there were still multiple mysteries that had yet to be solved.

It was the second reason why he had called the helicopter over. The main reason, of course, was because he was extremely worried about Giya’s condition.

“We’re nearing the island now, Mr. Crawford. However, it seems that something is happening at the mouth of the island. Quite a lot of people are currently down there...” said one of the Crawford bodyguards who were present in the helicopter.

“...Hmm?” said Gerald as he immediately stood up and looked out the helicopter’s window.

Just as the bodyguard had said, his grandfather and many others could be seen standing at the mouth of the island. However, they seemed to be discussing something with a woman he couldn’t quite recognize, at least from his current height. As a result, he was at least sure that they definitely weren’t standing there to welcome his return.

“Take care of Miss Quarrington. I’ll be heading down there to have a look!” ordered Gerald as he slid the helicopter’s door open before jumping off!

“Gerald?!”

“Mr. Crawford!”

‘By god! We’re currently over two thousand feet above the ground!’ Thought both of them, feeling completely astonished as cold sweat dripped down their foreheads.

However, they had clearly forgotten that Gerald was now no longer an ordinary man. Due to that, he landed quite easily before the crowd, greatly shocking several of his family’s present bodyguards.

“...W-what... M-Mr. Crawford is back!” shouted several of the guards in both respect and fear.

How the hell had Mr. Crawford safely descended from the sky like that?!

Even Daryl and Dylan—who had been standing at the side—found themselves slightly shocked.

Quickly getting over his surprise, Daryl’s eyes lit up with excitement as he delightfully said, “Gerald! You’re back!”

“Indeed I have, grandpa. Were you worried about me?” said Gerald as he walked closer to the group.

At that moment, Gerald watched as the woman from before squeezed out from the crowd, a baby in her arms. The moment her eyes met Gerald’s, she immediately looked at her baby before saying, “Haha! Mable, look! Your father’s home!”

Hearing that, the dismayed Daryl and Dylan turned to look at each other, their expressions suggesting that they didn’t even know whether to laugh or cry.

“...Alice? What do you mean, ‘your father’s home?’ Whose baby is that?” said Gerald as he took in a deep breath, his eyes widened.

Ever since Alice had made him drunk—which caused him to fail to meet up with Mila before her disappearance—he hadn’t contacted her. After all, he honestly still resented her for that.

To think that she had managed to find out where he lived a year and a half later.

“Why, she’s our daughter, of course! She’s now six months old! Her name is Mable, you know?” said Alice with a smug expression on her face.

“...Our daughter? ...But... Back then, didn’t you say that we didn’t...?” replied Gerald, his eyes wider than ever now.

“Well, if I had told you the truth that morning, would you have let me go that easily? Knowing you, you certainly wouldn’t have allowed our daughter to be born in the first place!” said Alice as she tied her hair, now looking very much like a young mother.

“You... How despicable!” shouted Gerald, filled with remorse.

“...What... What did you say? Did you just call me despicable?” replied Alice, slowly getting anxious.

Turning to look at the slightly dazed Jessica, Alice then said, “Sister! Did you see how he treated me?!”

Jessica, however, simply turned to look away as she scratched the back of her head,

Seeing that, Alice then turned to face Yulia before adding, “Mom! Just look at how he’s treating both me and my daughter!”

Displaying a stiff smile, Yulia then replied, “I’d rather you refrain from calling me mother just yet, girl. Regardless, the most important thing now is for us to get to the bottom of all this. After all, Gerald has never told us about this incident before...”

“...You’re right! Since this child truly is a Crawford, go ahead and take as many paternity tests as you want!” said Alice as she turned to look at Gerald.

Looking at Dylan next, she then shouted, “Dad!”

“...Aye! Well, whatever the case is, don’t get too nervous first, child... It’s a bit windy out here so bring the child into the house first... I’ve already arranged for a few doctors to run the required tests...” replied Dylan as he shook his head, feeling a headache coming.

Gerald himself had yet to break free from his daze.

“...Have I truly become a father now...?”

Chapter 1097

“...No. This is too much of a coincidence! I’m not sure what sort of tricks Alice is up to now, but all I remember is me giving her a few hundred thousand dollars to let her lead the life she wished!” muttered Gerald to himself as he frowned slightly.

This sudden turn of events was honestly quite strange to him. After all, ever since he had gotten tangled up with the Moldells’ disputes, he had focused most of his life on training, rarely ever getting involved with city life.

To think that such an incident would happen not long after he finally returned to his old lifestyle... While it was already extremely hard for him to accept the fact that he now had a daughter, it was even harder to believe that the mother was Alice!

Knowing that both Giya and Lyra would become aware of this soon as well, Gerald found himself being cornered into an increasingly difficult situation.

‘...Bah! There’s no use thinking about it! I’ll just wait for the paternity test results!’

With that, Gerald entered the mansion and waited outside the door—where the test was being held—together with his grandfather and father.

Alice herself was in the room, holding onto Mable for the paternity test.

“I think it’d be better if you removed the jade charm from the baby, Miss Bradford... After all, it’s rather dangerous for a baby to wear such a thing around her neck,” said one of the doctors present in the room.

The doctors had told her to remove the charm—which looked similar to the one Alice was currently wearing—since they knew there was a chance that they were dealing with Mr. Crawford’s daughter. As a result, they were all well aware that they couldn’t afford to be careless.

“Humph! But I refuse! There’s no reason to, is there? Just hurry up and run the test already!” retorted Alice.

Hearing that, the doctors didn’t dare to refute and simply began running the test.

A short while later, the test results were finalized.

Upon hearing that, both Dylan and Daryl simultaneously—and anxiously—asked, “What are the results?”

“...Congratulations, old master, master, and Mr. Crawford! Based on the test results, this truly is Mr. Crawford and Miss Bradford’s child! She has the bloodline of the Crawford family!” replied the doctor respectfully as he smiled.

“...A-ah... She... She’s really my great-granddaughter...?” said Daryl, an expression of great joy on his face.

Jessica and Yulia, however, had slightly unpleasant looks. Quite frankly, both of them severely looked down on Alice.

‘Who even was she? How could she just become a part of the Crawford family all willy-nilly?’

Both the women also disliked the fact that Alice was so scheming. After all, it was clear that she had deliberately waited for the baby to be born before making her presence known to their family. Due to her meticulous planning and Mable being born, Gerald now had to marry Alice no matter what.

What about Lyra, then? Both Jessica and Yulia didn’t even know how to break it out to her.

“Look, Gerald! You now have a daughter!” said Dylan as he held the baby intimately while showing her to Gerald.

In response, however, Gerald simply frowned.

In fact, he continued doing so until his father and the others had left.

Seeing that they were now alone, Alice stood behind Gerald and said, “You need to take responsibility for me, Gerald!”

To her shock, Gerald instantly grabbed her by her collar and pulled her to the side before replying, “What exactly happened? There’s no way in hell that I could’ve had a child with you. You may be able to deceive everyone else, but I’m sure that she isn’t my child!”

Gerald's eyes were so ferocious that Alice instantly began trembling as he continued staring at her. It was almost as though glare could see through everything.

Gulping, Alice then cried out, "A-are you even still a man...? The paternity test results are out! It truly is our baby, even if you refuse to admit it! If you still choose to deny that she's our child, then I may as well just cease to live! After all, this is already the second time you've humiliated me!"

Chapter 1098

"Still unwilling to tell the truth? While I have no idea how you altered the paternity test machine's results, I know for a fact that you weren't even the one who had given birth to the child. Look, since we're ex-classmates, I'm willing to let you off if you tell me the truth," said Gerald coldly.

Hearing that, Alice immediately became stupefied, fear reflected in her eyes as she thought, 'When did Gerald get this powerful...?'

"Now that I think about it, could you be doing all this because you have some sort of motive?" asked Gerald.

Since he had been thinking about the death prophecy throughout his trip home, he couldn't help but be extra wary.

"I... I have no idea what you're talking about! Unhand me!" denied Alice.

"Still reluctant to tell the truth, huh? Fine, then! I'll treat this child as my own and raise her... But I'll toss you into the ocean to be food for the fish!" declared Gerald as he instantly lifted her up.

Alice was now extremely terrified. After all, the Gerald she once knew was both timid and weak. No matter how cruel the old Gerald was, he simply couldn't bear to look at crying women, which usually resulted in him instantly dropping his cruel façade.

However, despite the fact that she was now crying so much, Gerald's ferocity and murderous intent remained.

He had completely changed, and Alice was now more certain than ever that what he had declared was no joke.

"F-fine! I'll tell you! I'll tell you! Just put me down first!" squealed Alice in fear.

Hearing that, Gerald tossed her onto a bed where she promptly—and extremely bitterly—shouted, "Y-you're right! The child truly isn't ours!"

The moment she said that, however, she was instantly hit with immense remorse.

“So where did you get the child? Did you steal it? As far as I remember, I’ve already given you a lot of money. How could you still be so dissatisfied to the point where you’re even willing to do all this?” said Gerald coldly.

“N-no! I didn’t steal that child! Don’t look down on me, Gerald! While I may not be a nice woman, I wouldn’t do such a cruel thing! I simply adopted the child from an orphanage!”

“Explain how the Crawford doctors came to the conclusion that the child was ours.”

“That... I’m not too sure about that either... An old master taught me that tactic...” said Alice as she gently touched her hurt neck while getting off the bed before taking a few steps back.

“If that’s the case, then go clear things up with my grandpa and father. Once you do that, I’ll hand you a large sum of money that’ll be enough to comfortably sustain you and your family for at least three generations,” replied Gerald.

Hearing that, Alice immediately stood up anxiously as she said, “I... I don’t need money! Gerald, did you honestly think that I did all this just for money...? While it’s true that I once looked down on you for being a pauper, all of that is in the past now... Don’t you know that I’ve already fallen for you for quite some time, Gerald...? I wish to be with you! Even if you go penniless now, I still want to be yours!”

After saying all that, she immediately threw herself onto Gerald, attempting to hug him.

Gerald, however, simply used a hand to push her aside before calmly saying, “Cease your nonsense and tell me what you truly want already.”

“You!” shouted Alice who was so angry that she began stomping her foot.

“...Look, just let me stay, alright? You can’t just drive me away, Gerald! I mean, just have a look outside! Can’t you see that grandpa and dad are taking turns holding Mable? They’re already treating her as part of the family and they look so happy too!” added Alice as she pointed out the window.

“Besides, I’ve already heard that you and your grandpa are about to embark on a long journey and won’t be back for quite a bit... I’ve even been told that grandpa may end up never coming back... Now that he’s filled with hope after meeting his great-grandchild, don’t you think the beautiful lie should be kept alive?” cried out Alice.

“You’d better stop twisting your insincere words to sound beautiful. Tell me what you have up your sleeves or I won’t let you off that easily!” shouted Gerald, his voice now extremely frigid.

Just as he was about to pick Alice up to toss her out, Lyra’s voice could suddenly be heard saying, “Oh? Whose child is that, dad? Grandpa? She’s so cute! Speaking of which, I heard that Gerald’s back... Where is he? There’s something I need to speak to him about...”

Chapter 1099

“...Lyra? Ah...” said both Daryl and Dylan rather awkwardly.

Daryl himself now realized how uncharacteristically he had been behaving today, though it’s not like he could help it. After all, he was fortunate enough to meet his great-granddaughter before participating in the pledge of the holy water, an event which he knew he wouldn’t be able to return alive.

Since God had answered his prayers for a chance to meet Mable, one could easily imagine how excited Daryl had been once he found out that the baby was his great-granddaughter.

Now that Lyra was here, however, he instantly felt ashamed. After all, Lyra was the legal daughter-in-law of the Crawford family. From what he had heard, Lyra had even been the sole person who was in charge of all the Crawford family’s affairs—regardless of whether they were major or minor—for a great number of years.

“...Oh! I’m not too sure either... I just thought that this child was really cute so I brought her over!” replied Daryl in an increasingly awkward manner.

Hearing that, Lyra simply nodded silently.

As Daryl handed Mable to Dylan, he noticed that Lyra was holding onto a white scroll of sorts.

Reasserting his regular master-like attitude, he then asked, “So, why did you want to meet Gerald, Lyra?”

“Well, a few strange images appeared when I looked at the picture of the sun again a few days ago... Since Gerald had tasked me with locating the woman in white, I feel that the picture of the sun may have given us new leads...” replied Lyra.

Ever since Daryl had realized that—unlike regular people—Lyra’s eyes were capable of deciphering the picture of the sun’s predictions, he had made her responsible for the picture.

“Did the picture provide us with more guidance? Hmm... Alright, let’s head to the study to discuss this together!” said Daryl with a slight frown.

A little later, all those who were relevant found themselves in the study as Lyra spread the white scroll open, presenting a drawn picture.

As Daryl and Gerald looked at it, Lyra hurriedly said, “Yesterday, Gerald told me to ask the picture of the sun for the woman in white’s location. According to Gerald, the woman seemed to have some sort of connection with him... However, even after asking it several times, it only revealed the picture—which I drew—on that scroll... Since you’re so anxious to find her, I’m assuming you found some major clues during your trip in the desert, Gerald?”

“Indeed... I wasn’t able to tell you about all that happened there during the call, but just know that everything that took place throughout my trip in the desert felt incredibly weird. Somehow, all that I experienced there felt related to the woman in white, and this includes the prophecy of my death. Call it a gut feeling, but once the woman in white’s location is finally found, I feel that all the mysteries in my heart will be solved,” replied Gerald.

Just as Gerald was about to tell his grandfather about the divine general, Gerald couldn’t help but frown when the corner of his eye saw the picture on the scroll again.

“...How odd... Where have I seen this before...? It seems so familiar...” muttered Gerald.

Hearing that, Daryl then asked, “You’ve seen this image before, Gerald?”

Gerald simply remained silent, continuing to frown for a bit as he remained deep in thought. Eventually, realization dawned upon Gerald, prompting him to lift his head while shouting, “Alice!”

Upon hearing that name, Lyra gave Gerald a curious look.

“That’s it! That jade charm Alice was wearing! It looks exactly like the picture on the scroll!” added Gerald.

“You’re right! Mable seemed to be wearing a similar jade charm around her neck as well!” replied Daryl.

With that, Gerald immediately rolled up the white scroll and took it with him as he rushed toward Alice’s room.

“G-Gerald! You’re finally willing to come meet me!” cried out Alice.

Completely ignoring her statement, Gerald rushed in front of her before grabbing the jade charm that had been hanging around her neck. Now in his hand, he compared the charm to the picture on the scroll. As was expected, both of them were identical.

“So I was right! Alice, where did you get this jade charm?” asked Gerald!

“I-I don’t know!” squealed Alice anxiously as she immediately shook her head.

“Do I need to force the answer out of you?” growled Gerald coldly.

Chapter 1100

“I’ll tell you as long as you promise to take me in!” said Alice as she held onto Gerald’s arm.

“Just tell me already!” replied Gerald as he pushed her hands away.

Wiping her tears away, Alice then began by explaining, “...It... all began on the night when we were at the seaside hotel...”

After listening to her explanation for a bit, Gerald began seeing the bigger picture. Essentially, Alice had drugged him that night with the intent of sleeping with him to hopefully get pregnant. Her thought process at the time was that if she managed to conceive his baby, then she would definitely be able to be part of a wealthy and prestigious family.

Alas, her period came ahead of time so her plans instantly crumbled! At the time, Alice was so angry with herself that she badly wanted to slap herself senseless!

However, she did smear the bedsheets with some blood, under the guise of it being the result of her losing her virginity to him.

With that in mind, it was already clear that she had lied to Gerald about Mable being his biological child.

Regardless, Alice had been filled with resentment and anger the moment Gerald had told her that he needed to rush off to meet Mila back then. As if to add insult to injury, Gerald even gave her twelve million dollars and told her to live elsewhere before running off!

'I love you so much... How could you treat me like this...?'

Deeply saddened by all this, she decided to make a mountain out of a molehill. She would look for the Crawford family's island—which belonged to Gerald's sister—and take things into her own hands!

Though she immediately bought herself a ship that morning to locate said island, she simply couldn't find it no matter how hard she tried!

Soon enough, night came. Feeling the ocean breeze blow against her face as she looked out at the vast ocean, Alice was just about to return in disappointment when she came across an odd fleet of ships.

Deciding to ask them about the island before giving up for the night, Alice was delighted when the people aboard one of the ships promised that they would bring her to Jessica's island.

To her eventual dismay, she soon found that she had been lied to when they brought her to an unfamiliar coast, where the Minshall family resided.

The young master of that family went by IssacMinshall, and he had been charmed the moment he saw her while they were still out at sea, prompting him to lie to her so that she would be his.

While Issac definitely wasn't a nice man, he couldn't lay a finger on her upon hearing that she was pregnant. It was due to one of the many rules that had been set within that place.

"Of course, the part about me being pregnant was a complete lie... Regardless, I promised to marry him after giving birth to the child... That seemed to work since he gradually let his guard down around me."

Sometime later, Alice found a way to escape.

Thankfully, she had heard of an exceptional person who went by the name of Master Ghost during her stay there. The man was supposedly an expert in both astronomy and geology, and was famed for being able to make meticulous calculations to speculate events with extremely high accuracy. He didn't belong to any particular forces either.

With all those reasons in mind, Alice thought that he was the perfect person to seek out. Naturally, the price of hiring him was by no means a small amount. Nine million dollars, to be exact.

Once she paid that amount, however, she would be left almost penniless. What was the use of even getting away if she had to live like a pauper afterward? That made her think about Gerald, which sparked her interest in attempting to search for the island again.

Before making her escape, she met up with Master Ghost first. After hearing her monetary fears, Master Ghost shared a relevant thought with Alice. According to him, the Minshalls' ancestors had dug up a pair of jade charms from the king of the ocean's tomb many, many years back. The charms themselves were said to have the power to link bloodlines between three people.

Even if she managed to get the charms, however, she would still need a personal item of the person with the bloodline the charms were attempting to replicate. Due to Alice leaving the hotel in a hurry the morning after she had drugged Gerald, the only personal item of his that she had was his shirt. She had held on to it at the time to be used as proof of their intercourse when she eventually met Jessica.

Hearing that, Master Ghost told her that while the effectiveness would be slightly weaker, common machines wouldn't be able to tell the difference between bloodlines that easily.

Following that, Alice stole the jade charms before fleeing from the Minshall Manor. Once she managed to do that, she also adopted the most suitable baby she could find at an orphanage.

After Master Ghost managed to locate Jessica's island, he shared the information with Alice. Before ending his service, he also told her that she was born to become a distinguished and wealthy lady.

That was what drove her to continue on with her dreams till the events of today finally took place.

Though she had escaped a year ago, she spent about half a year hiding from the Minshall family who was still actively looking for her all over the place. Of course, she eventually made it to the island safely.

After hearing all that, Gerald finally understood most of the situation. However, there was now a new problem with the equation.

Lyra had earlier said that the picture of the sun had displayed the jade charm on multiple occasions whenever she asked it to tell her where the woman in white was.

Could the woman in white's location be where the jade charm was found? In other words, the ancient tomb?

Chapter 1101

Back when he first saw the mural in the Divine Tomb, Gerald had learned that the woman in white was inspired by the old beggar to separate the coffin from the deity. However, nobody knew where the woman in white's tomb was.

Now that Alice had mentioned an ancient tomb, Gerald couldn't help but make a connection with that. Had the woman in white's coffin been carried to the south of the ocean after the separation? Was it currently buried in the king of the ocean's tomb?

"...Where's the king of the ocean's tomb located?" asked Gerald after pondering for a while.

In response, Alice told him everything that she knew.

Gerald himself paid close attention to everything she said. After all, he honestly felt that it was quite necessary for him to head there to investigate for himself.

For all he knew, the woman in white could very possibly be buried within the king of the ocean's tomb. While Lyra had first dreamed of that woman standing by a river within that miasma-filled forest, Gerald remembered her later telling him that she wasn't really sure of whether it was a river or an ocean.

What more, the picture of the sun had directly hinted that the jade charms were the main clue to finding the woman in white's tomb. Based on the current turn of events, Gerald could safely say that the picture truly had given them a massive clue.

Following that, he relayed everything that he had just learned to Daryl.

In response, the surprised Daryl couldn't help but reply, "...Are you planning to look for the king of the ocean's tomb? The pledge of the holy water will take place in less than three months, you know?"

While Gerald was well aware that the pledge was just as important as finding the woman in white's tomb, he knew that he wouldn't be able to rest easy if he didn't at least try to get to the bottom of the incident regarding the deity. After all, there was a chance that he would gain another answer once he located the woman in white.

“Indeed I am, grandpa. However, once I’ve completed my investigation, I’ll immediately return. I won’t even think about delaying the pledge of the holy water. Speaking of the pledge, here. It’s the mysterious mirror!” replied Gerald as he handed the mirror to Daryl.

“...What? Didn’t this belong to Christopher?”

“The one and only. If you meet him there, you can order him around as you wish. Trust me when I say he won’t dare to go against you...”

Hearing that, Daryl’s eyes widened as he said, “...Gerald, you...”

Seeing his grandfather’s look of disbelief, Gerald then told Daryl everything that had happened back when he was still in the desert.

“...What? Your strength and training has already surpassed that of the realm of legends, my grandson? Is that true?” replied Daryl, feeling extremely delighted as he firmly patted Gerald’s shoulders with great pride.

The next day soon came and Gerald immediately prepared to set off to locate the king of the ocean’s tomb. Before his departure, he watched as his grandfather led all the people from the Soul Palace away.

Gerald himself made sure to order those from the Crawford family’s headquarters to stand by at all times. After all, there was no reason not for him to receive help from his family now that his current situation allowed it.

With that done, he then headed over to a place called Halimark City—which was on a coast located in Plymsend Bay—to have a look around.

By the time Gerald got out of the ship, night had already fallen.

Upon getting off, Gerald was immediately greeted by the sight of several passenger ships tied to the port. There also seemed to be a lot of tourists, mostly consisting of couples and a few groups of three.

Turning around to look at the vast ocean, Gerald squinted his eyes as the ocean breeze blew into his face.

Somewhere out there was a place called the Boundless Depths. According to the murals, the old beggar had separated the woman in white from the deity before burying her in that location.

How could that old man have been so cruel? If she truly was buried there, she was immensely far from the deity.

As Gerald turned to look at the beach next, deep in thought, he suddenly heard the person standing before him shout, "Gerald!"

Looking up, he saw that it was a woman who had probably arrived with the group of tourists who were currently standing in front of him.

Stunned that she knew his name, he brushed his previous thoughts aside while looking at the woman. She looked very much like someone from the city, and the woman—who was also wearing sunglasses and a sun hat—had dressed herself to look young. While Gerald found her to be slightly familiar, he simultaneously also found her to be quite odd.

"...Who are you again?"

"Haha! It's me, Yasmeen! Yasmeen Linford? I only graduated a year earlier than you! Don't tell me you've already forgotten about me?" said the tall and slim woman while smiling beautifully. She then removed her sunglasses, fully displaying her small face and charming appearance.

Now slowly recalling who she was, Gerald then replied, "Ah, it's you, Yasmeen!"

As the memories started coming back to him, Gerald remembered that Yasmeen was still a sophomore when he first started learning at Mayberry University. Later on, she would become the president of the university's student union. Since he was so poor back then, he had to work part-time and be thrifty, resulting in him also having to meet up with her quite a lot. Due to that, he was fairly acquainted with her.

Since she was wearing sunglasses earlier and the makeup she had on was quite exquisite—compared to what she used to wear—he hadn't been able to realize that it was her at first glance.

Now that he knew who she was, however, he could feel that she had grown to become a strong and independent woman. From the looks of it, she had gotten pretty good at socializing as well.

Chapter 1102

Then again, she had always been this way. After all, while it wasn't uncommon for the students in Mayberry University to date other students there, Yasmeen was on a whole other level. Back then, she had dated the president of one of the companies in Mayberry who had had a divorce.

Due to their relationship, the president arranged for fireworks to be placed at every corner of the university on Yasmeen's birthday. That night, the entire university was lit by the beautiful glow of fireworks, easily resulting in all the other girls there both admiring and envying her.

However, that wasn't what Gerald remembered most about the incident. No, what he recalled most about that event was the fact that Yasmeen had told him to clean up all the firework remains around the university—when morning came—for fifteen dollars.

That, however, was a lot to him at the time. Once he got the money, he immediately treated Xavia to a meal at KFC. He even remembered adding another seven dollars of his own to make their feast a little grander.

How the memory played out pretty much summed up how his relationship with Yasmeen used to be. After all, how could someone like the past Gerald even have the right to befriend her?

It was the reason why he was quite surprised that she was willing to greet him now.

"So why did you come over to Halimark City, Yasmeen?" asked Gerald as he looked at all the people—who were dressed like upper-class individuals—standing behind her.

The city itself was a place that had grown quite strong economic-wise throughout the years due to all the natural advantages its geographical features granted.

"Well, my chamber of commerce is holding functions here in the next few days. Because of that, my business partners and I have come over to seek some amusement! I've established a cosmetic company, after all! Haha!" replied Yasmeen as she smiled faintly while smoothening her hair.

"How truly impressive!" said Gerald as he watched her business partners begin walking over, one by one.

One of them was a middle-aged man who seemed to have quite an intimate relationship with Yasmeen. Frowning, the man then asked, "Who is this, Yasmeen?"

“Oh, him? He’s just a junior from university! I talked about him before, remember? The particularly poor student while I was studying there? That’s him! You know, he could barely afford to pay for his meals back then! I also remember his clothes being filled with patches, since most of what he earned—from doing part-time jobs daily and also from the many errands he ran for others—went into either his living expenses or his tuition fees! He didn’t have the money for anything else!” jabbered Yasmeen on and on without needing to even stop to take in a single breath.

Her friends, on the other hand, simply widened their eyes as they continued listening to her.

“How could such a poor person even exist!” said one of them as the others exchanged glances of both shock and dismay with each other.

“I know right? But that’s not even the most surprising thing! See, even though he was that poor, he still managed to get himself a girlfriend!”

As the others were filled with even greater surprise, Yasmeen turned to look at Gerald who had been silent for quite a while. Seeing how calm he looked, Yasmeen realized that she may have said a bit too much already.

Smiling rather awkwardly, she then added, “...Regardless, being able to bump into each other again must be the work of fate! Pray tell, are you here to attend Halimark City’s Enchanted Feast, Gerald?”

“Afraid not!” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

“Why are you even asking such an unnecessary question, Yasmeen? Didn’t you already tell us how poor he was back then? How could he even afford to attend the Enchanted Feast?” said a woman as she walked over.

“...That’s true... Since we’re ex-schoolmates, I’d have loved to invite you over to join us for the feast, Gerald... Sadly enough, I don’t have an extra admission ticket! Regardless, there’s an app you should really download on your phone later! You can find all my company’s products there! Speaking of my company, since it’s only recently been established, I’m in need of agents to distribute the products! You could try applying to be an agent! Worry not, one of the makeup sets I’m selling was designed for lower-income people, like yourself! Due to that, I’m sure you can promote it to your less wealthy friends!” suggested Yasmeen.

Following that, she instantly began detailing the steps required to apply to be an agent, leaving no room for Gerald to even say a word.

A little later, she handed him the contact number and business card of the regional manager before saying, “Alright, it’s getting a bit late now and I really should be leaving. After all, I still need to head to the city with my friends! Also, don’t worry about calling the manager, I’ll let him know in advance to take special care of you.”

With that, Yasmeen flashed Gerald a faint smile before leaving while waving her hand with her other friends.

Watching them walk off, Gerald could only look at their backs as he shook his head while smiling bitterly.

Yasmeen truly hadn’t changed in this aspect.

Tossing the card away, Gerald then continued walking by the beach, deep in thought.

He continued doing so for quite a bit, and the next thing he knew, it was already late at night, with very few tourists still walking around.

At that moment, he suddenly saw the faint outlines of five speedboats at the corner of his eye. Turning to get a better look at what was happening, he saw that all five of them were in hot pursuit of another speedboat that currently wasn’t too far off from them.

Chapter 1103

Though it was already quite late, Gerald could clearly see that the middle-aged man—who was currently being pursued by over ten gun-wielding individuals who were riding the five speedboats—was drenched in blood. The man was also currently headed right in Gerald’s direction.

When the few remaining people at the beach saw them, they immediately ran away, focusing so much on escaping that none of them even thought about calling the police! Soon enough, the already secluded beach became completely devoid of people, save for Gerald.

Gerald found himself frowning slightly the moment he saw the pursuers. After all, he had already been slightly irked after Yasmeen interrupted his train of thought earlier.

It wasn’t long before the bloodied middle-aged man arrived at shore. Seeing that there was nowhere else to run to, the man began running toward Gerald, the only person he could see! Waving his hands as he ran over, the man then shouted, “T-toss me your phone! Please hurry!”

Since Gerald was already unhappy, he wasn't about to take orders from some random middle-aged man. As a result, he simply ignored the man's pleas for help.

Seconds later, a few people suddenly rushed out from the dense forest that led to the beach. Those who were initially pursuing him on their speed boats had now arrived onshore as well. Seeing that he had no place else to run, all of them quickly surrounded him. One of the men—who appeared to be the leader of the operation—noticed that Gerald was still there. Walking up to the youth, he then shouted, "Get lost! The big boss is dealing with some things here!"

In response, however, Gerald simply looked at him coldly without saying a word.

Seeing how indifferently Gerald was treating his leader, one of the youths who were surrounding the middle-aged man immediately lifted his machete and slashed it at Gerald! During that split second, rage-filled Gerald's eyes. Since they were blindly attacking him just because he refused to move, it was evident that these were no nice people. It was also obvious to Gerald now that these people were definitely courting death!

Taking a step to the side, Gerald easily dodged the attack.

Before the youth could even react to his missed attack, he suddenly heard a buzzing noise. The next thing he knew, he had already been kicked into the air! The moment he collided with the ground, he heard a crack from his legs. Though he wanted to cover his mouth to suppress his screams of pain, he found that he could no longer move his arms! Not only that, he quickly realized that all his teeth had also been smashed! To his horror, he now understood that not only had Gerald's kicks resulted in all four of his main limbs being broken, but the bones in his right leg and hand had also ended up being completely shattered!

After seeing what he had done, the others—who had been watching from the moment they encircled the middle-aged man—were now looking at Gerald like he was some kind of monster. The leader himself already had a gut feeling that something was wrong when he first saw how indifferent Gerald's expression was. Now that this had happened, he knew that they had been placed in an extremely difficult situation, even before completing their goal! After all, he hadn't even been able to see how his subordinate had been taken out despite being so close to the two! The only thing he was able to catch was Gerald using both his legs to kick. The next thing he knew, all his subordinate's limbs were broken!

While Gerald certainly looked innocent and harmless enough, it was now evident to everyone else there of how cruel he could be. After seeing how he had broken all the youth's limbs without a second thought, they all knew that Gerald was even more vicious than their leader. As they continued thinking about how merciless he was, their leader failed to notice that Gerald's expression had barely even changed after inflicting such heavy wounds on the subordinate.

In truth, his expression wouldn't have changed even if he killed that youth. After all, Gerald had already killed endless numbers of people!

After considering for a brief moment, the leader bowed cordially at Gerald before saying, "...I apologize, mister. I admit that it was our fault this time around. Men, head out!"

As the middle-aged man from before looked at the leader—who was now ordering his machete-wielding men to leave—he felt blessed to have bumped into Gerald. After all, not only would he now be able to live to see another day, but the people pursuing him earlier were actually taking the initiative to leave! While he was pleased to be able to survive, what Gerald said next instantly sent chills running down his spine.

"Did I say you could leave?" said Gerald, his tone frigid.

Hearing that, the men who were already prepared to retreat slowly—and anxiously—turned around to look at Gerald, guns raised. They were right to be anxious. After all, they were only retreating now since they knew that Gerald was too powerful for them. To think that he would disallow them from leaving!

"What else do you want?" asked the group's leader who appeared to be the most anxious among his men. The leader himself appeared to be a sturdy-looking man with a dragon tattooed all over his right arm. While his other men were probably not aware of it, their leader knew that there existed families who practiced Ancient Martial Arts that allowed them to defy the orders of nature. People from these families were allegedly able to fight against dozens or even hundreds of people alone. With that in mind, the leader knew that he and his subordinates were severely outmatched against Gerald who had already shown what he was capable of.

"For ruining my mood, each of you can choose whether to break off an arm or a leg. Of course, you'll each be doing the breaking on your own," said Gerald as casually as he would've asked them for a piece of chocolate, each.

"...What? You may be an exceptional man, but don't you think you're pushing it? Humph! How insensible!" growled the leader viciously.

"'Insensible,' you say? Well, then lets up it to two--"

Before Gerald could even finish his sentence, he noticed a thin, young man—who looked to be around twenty—standing at the back forcibly breaking off his left arm with a loud 'crack'!

"...What the hell are you doing?!" roared the leader as he turned to look at the young man who simply remained silent.

The young man himself had fear in his eyes. After all, while witnessing the terrifying scene earlier, but he had also seen Gerald's gaze while doing the deed. It was the gaze of a man who had experienced a lot of murder. As if that wasn't enough, his aura was also filled with murderous intent.

As the others began shuddering with fear, Gerald stared at the youth a little longer before saying, "I can see you're sensible. Now step aside."

"Now then. For the rest of you, each of you will be breaking two limbs of your choice—"

However, Gerald's sentence was cut short once more when the group's leader immediately rushed toward him with his gun aimed at Gerald! Seeing that, all his other subordinates—except for the one who had stepped aside earlier—did the same as their leader.

Chapter 1104

Sneering contemptuously, Gerald then rushed toward them instead of retreating. Launching several swift punches and kicks, the cracking and snapping of bones filled the night air. It was only a few seconds later when everyone—who had gone for the attack—resembled the first person who had gotten all his limbs broken.

With their teeth smashed and limbs shattered as they lay on the ground, all of them felt like fainting from the immense pain alone. Despite that, they were all still staring wide-eyed at Gerald, looking at him like he was some kind of monster.

'What kind of person even is he...? How could we have offended such a person...?'

Gerald, however, couldn't even be bothered about those on the ground. Clapping the sand off his hands, he then continued his stroll, acting as if nothing had happened.

Before he could get far, the middle-aged man—who was still covered in blood—caught up to him before bowing respectfully as he said, "T-thank you so much for saving me, mister! I'm a local of Halimark City and I go by the name of Wagner Yarne! I was lucky that I bumped into you while they were chasing after me, otherwise I would've definitely been done for!"

While Wagner was seriously injured, he felt that he needed to at least show his immense gratitude to his savior first.

Hearing that, Gerald simply replied, "I wasn't particularly trying to save you, so there's no need to thank me!"

Following that, Gerald immediately turned around to leave. Looking at Gerald's back as he walked off, Wagner could already feel how extraordinary Gerald was as an individual, especially in terms of his aura and temperament.

“Please wait for a moment, mister! Did you perhaps come to Halimark City to attend the Enchanted Feast organized by the Minshall family?” asked Wagner respectfully.

‘...The Minshall family? Enchanted Feast?’ Gerald thought to himself.

The Minshall family was the family who was still searching for Alice. They were also the family who had previously owned the jade charms that they had dug up from the king of the ocean’s tomb.

Gerald’s purpose for coming here in the first place was to find the Minshalls and negotiate a deal with them.

“...You know, I’m familiar with this place, mister! If you’re interested in heading to the Enchanted Feast, or anywhere in Halimark City for that matter, I can-”

Before Wagner could even finish his sentence, he began coughing rather terribly.

Taking a look at the coughing man, Gerald replied, “Before anything else, you should find someplace to cure your injuries.”

With that, Gerald turned to look at the distant—yet brightly lit—Halimark City next before slowly walking over in that direction.

Wagner, on the other hand, simply waited for Gerald to move a bit further away before running over to a payphone.

“C-come pick me up immediately!” said Wagner as soon as the call connected.

“Could you be injured, Mr. Yarne?! Hold on, I’ll send someone over to you from the nearest hospital, right this instant!” replied the person on the other end of the phone, respectfully.

“My current injuries won’t kill me! Regardless, come quickly! I seem to have come across that person and I’m pretty sure it’s him!” shouted Wagner in return, his anxiety evident in his tone as he continued staring at the direction Gerald had walked off to.

Chapter 1105

Sometime later as Gerald was continuing to walk toward the center of the city, he suddenly stopped moving forward.

Turning around, he then coldly said, “Look, I really didn’t intend to save you, so there’s no need to follow me around. You’d better leave now while I’m in a good mood, otherwise you’ll end up like those men back at the beach!”

Naturally, the person he was talking to was none other than Wagner.

“Please don’t be angry, mister! You just seem to resemble someone I know a lot! The person in question is quite important to my family, the Yarnes, you see... Which is why I would like to get to know you a bit better!” replied Wagner respectfully.

Before Gerald could even say anything else, he immediately explained, “You see, mister, the Yarne family has been waiting for someone for the longest time. Said person was said to make an appearance sooner or later, and quite frankly, you fit the description of the person to a tee! Call it pestering if you’d like, but I’m following you around for a reason!”

“...Hmm? Waiting for ‘someone’?” replied Gerald with a slight frown.

“Indeed, mister! Regardless, I’ve already ordered for my servant to drive a car here. I was wondering if you’d have the time to follow me to the Yarne family manor,” said Wagner.

Back when Gerald had stepped forward to save him, he had already felt that the young man looked slightly familiar. However, he just couldn’t put his finger on why he felt that way.

When he finally got a clearer look at Gerald’s face, however, he instantly understood where the feeling had stemmed from. Could it really be him?

Not wanting to lose track of Gerald, he then immediately called his servant to drive a car over before tailing Gerald. All that led to the current situation.

“Does that ‘someone’ really resemble me that much?” asked Gerald.

“Indeed! The resemblance is almost uncanny, but let’s not talk about this here. Again, please come to the Yarne family manor with me. You’ll see what I mean once we’re there!”

In response, Gerald simply nodded slightly. His first reason for agreeing was because based on Wagner’s expression, the middle-aged man didn’t seem to be lying.

The other reason was because too many mysterious and odd incidents had been taking place recently. Since some seemingly random person was now telling him that they had been waiting for someone who resembled him to show up, Gerald couldn't help but dwell on it.

Soon enough, Wagner's car came and drove both of them off to Yarne Manor.

On their way there, Gerald had a simple chat with Wagner. Through that, he got to know a bit more about the Yarnes as well as another incident.

The Yarne family had a history of over eight hundred years and it all began when they established their family properties here all those centuries ago. The family was considered to be one of the larger ones within Halimark City, and it was known for its power and knowledge. Wagner himself was the current master of that family.

Wagner also told Gerald that the Yarnes used to simply be fishermen before establishing their family properties. After an incident took place, however, drastic changes soon happened which eventually led to the current high status of the Yarne family.

"...For your sake, Mr. Yarne, I hope that what you plan to show me intrigues me!" warned Gerald as he walked behind Wagner once they finally got out of the car.

"I wouldn't dare make a mountain out of a molehill about something like this, mister! I assure you that you'll understand things better once you have a look at it! I truly believe that our meeting wasn't by mere chance!" replied Wagner who was currently drenched with cold sweat. After all, the aura Gerald was exerting was definitely pressuring.

As they walked and talked on, Wagner looked like he was trying to hide something every time the duo passed by anybody.

It was only after leading Gerald into a secret room when Wagner finally took out an extremely ancient-looking scroll.

Clearly enduring the pain as he handed the scroll to Gerald, he then said, "Have a look, mister!"

Taking the scroll in hand, he found it weird to be given a scroll out of the blue. As a result, he couldn't help but ask, "...Does this contain a painting?"

"Indeed it does, mister! Well, to be more accurate, it contains a portrait!"

Chapter 1106

Wagner followed that sentence with a nod.

Hearing that, Gerald slowly opened the scroll. True to Wagner's words, the opened scroll revealed an extremely vivid and realistic portrait of some sort of general.

The general himself was holding a longsword in hand, and he looked extremely formidable. Even Gerald couldn't help but feel slightly intimidated by the painting.

However, even that wasn't what captured Gerald's attention the most. No, what absolutely caught his interest was the fact that the general in the picture looked exactly like the deity in the eternal coffin which, in turn, meant that both of them looked exactly like him!

Even the sword in the general's hand seemed to be the Lightbane! The longsword that Gerald always carried around with him!

"It's him!" shouted Gerald, his eyelids twitching slightly.

"Do you know him, mister? Regardless, I told you that there was a reason behind all my actions! My family's been waiting all this time for a person who resembled the one in the portrait, and here you finally are!"

Gerald didn't even know how to reply to that.

To think that he would still be able to come across the general after leaving the desert... This was definitely no coincidence. Who exactly was this person...? And how did he have such remarkable capabilities? How could he even predict that Gerald would come here?

"...Who was it who asked you to wait for me? Where is that person?" asked Gerald after giving it some thought.

The other things could wait for now. After all, as long as he was able to find this mysterious person, all the other mysteries could be resolved much easier.

To his surprise, Wagner simply shook his head before replying, "I'm afraid that I'm not quite sure who the person who told us to wait for you was, mister... After all, my ancestors had been told to wait from eight hundred years ago... Thanks to Master Ghost's near-perfect calculations, however, he was able to estimate that I'd be able to meet that person soon. If you truly are the one we've been waiting for, then our eight hundred year mission is now finally complete!"

While Wagner seemed to be filled with excitement, Gerald himself was left bewildered as he muttered, “E-eight hundred years ago...?”

So what Wagner was telling him now was that someone from eight hundred years ago had wanted members of the Yarne family to wait for Gerald and meet up with him?!

Wanting to get to the bottom of this, Gerald told Wagner to detail all that he knew about the person.

Hearing that, Wagner then began elaborating on how the Yarne family had first met the mysterious person. As Wagner had earlier said, the Yarnes were only simple fishermen about eight hundred years ago.

However, all that changed when one of his ancestors bumped into an old beggar on his way home after fishing one evening. The old beggar had requested Wagner’s ancestor for some food. His ancestor was so kind that he brought the old man home and served him a grand seafood feast!

Once the old beggar had eaten to his heart’s content, however, he refused to leave! Instead, he told Wagner’s ancestor that he was going to stay here until he managed to get the Yarnes to become a rich and powerful family.

Upon hearing that, his ancestor’s family instantly grew amused, thinking that he was drunk. To their shock, he then stood up with a serious look on his face before saying, “As long as you’re willing to fulfill a single promise for me, I’ll allow all of you to lead a wealthy life without worries from now on.”

Following that, he took out a huge amount of gold from his pocket. Stupefied, Wagner’s ancestors immediately asked what the beggar wanted them to do.

Knowing that he had gotten their attention, the old beggar then began drawing a portrait on the spot. Once he was done, he told the Yarnes to wait for the person—who looked similar to the portrait he had drawn—to appear and once he did, they were to hand a wooden box—which the old man handed over to them—to him.

True to his word, he soon helped the Yarnes become a rich and powerful family. Once that was done, the old beggar simply left.

The Yarne family had never expected such an opportunity to come to them. In just less than a year, their family had managed to make a fortune in Halimark City, building several family properties there which still remained today.

“To be quite frank, my father had told me about all this not long before he passed away. I hadn’t really cared too much about it back then, thinking it was all just nonsense. After all, it is a tale from eight hundred years ago. Imagine my shock when I bumped into you today!” explained Wagner.

Gerald was equally as shocked after hearing Wagner’s entire tale.

“An old beggar? Why is it that old beggar again?! Can such coincidences even exist? He already appeared once in the North Desert! To think that he’s making an appearance here as well! There’s got to be at least a few thousand years in between his two appearances! Could it perhaps have been some descendant of his who had equally remarkable abilities? Or... Could they actually be the same person...?” muttered Gerald to himself, feeling quite nervous and frightened at the same time.

He was right to be terrified. After all, such a mysterious and extraordinarily strong person knew him this well and was probably keeping a constant eye on him! Anyone would be worried if they found out that such a person existed!

“Speaking of which, mister, the old beggar also told us to relay two sentences to you!” said Wagner as he looked at Gerald.

“What are they?”

“One is reborn in heaven beside the red spider lily. A defiant dragon will appear near the crossing of blood!”

Chapter 1107

Gerald thought carefully about the two sentences. ‘Reborn in heaven beside the red spider lily...’ And then there was some dragon who would appear near the crossing of blood...

...Wait. The crossing of blood? Crawford?!

Gerald was completely astonished at this point. He had honestly been actively refusing to believe that someone actually had the capability of breaking through all the limits and mastering the act of going back and forth between ancient and modern times. However, no matter how much he wanted to continue denying the possibility, everything he had found was simply hinting that all this was real.

“You know, my ancestors deduced that the person in the painting—once he was reborn—would most probably bear the surname of Crawford... While you certainly look like the person in the portrait, I wonder about your surname... If it truly is Crawford, then you’re definitely the one we’ve been waiting for, mister!” said Wagner as he looked at Gerald.

Frowning slightly, Gerald then nodded before replying, “...My full name is Gerald Crawford!”

“...T-then... By god, you truly are the one we’ve been waiting for! What the old beggar had claimed turned out to be true after all!” replied Wagner excitedly.

Gerald, however, only felt his stress building by the second.

If Gerald had to provide a visualization of what he was currently feeling, he felt like there was a pair of large, invisible hands controlling everything. Just like pawns on a chessboard, anyone unfortunate enough to be picked up by the hands would have to go according to where the person wanted them to be. The thought of that alone was enough to cause near suffocating amounts of stress and fear to him.

Who exactly was this person...?

Feeling a shiver run down his spine, Gerald quickly shook the thought away.

Wagner, on the other hand, revealed another secret room—though it was more of a secret compartment—before taking out a simple, but quite ancient-looking wooden box.

Coughing slightly, Wagner then said, “This here is the box that the old beggar told us to hand to you. I’ll step aside for the moment for you to have a private look at its contents.”

“That’s unnecessary. There’s nothing to be ashamed about... After all, nobody in the world would probably be able to keep any secrets from him! Haha!” replied Gerald with a bitter laugh.

Upon opening it, a strange fragrance was immediately released. As the scent continued spreading around the room, Gerald looked at the inch-tall and hard-looking golden amulet inside the box that somewhat resembled a goldfish’s tail. Beside it, lay some sort of black pill that was in the form of a pellet.

“What a pleasant scent!” exclaimed Wagner in surprise.

Evidently deep in thought, Gerald brought the pellet close to his nose and sniffed it, though he didn’t say anything else.

“...After being in there for such a long time, is the pellet still edible, mister...?” asked Wagner.

“It became inedible long ago. It’s an oxyblood pellet, and it’s typically consumed to help one quickly restore their strength and stamina. Should a person take one when they’re in great danger, their chances of finding a way out of their predicament is greatly increased.”

Gerald was able to recognize the pellet so quickly since he remembered the strange memory that the jade pendant had bestowed upon him.

“My word! How very knowledgeable of you, mister!” praised Wagner.

“...Regardless, the condition of the ingredients required to refine such a pellet is very harsh. Speaking of which, when I first entered your house, I was able to catch the fragrance of medicine. In fact, it’s everywhere. What kind of business does the Yarne family currently run?” asked Gerald.

“Well, my family is in the medicinal business. We have a lot of marine medicine products!” replied Wagner.

“I see. I wonder if you possess herbs that go by the name of wigerice... It’s the main ingredient needed to refine this kind of oxyblood pellet...”

“Wigerice...? Alas, I’ve never even heard about it!” replied Wagner with a slightly bitter smile.

“I see... Seems that I won’t be able to get it from you then,” said Gerald as he calmly shook his head.

Since the mysterious man had given him an oxyblood pellet, Gerald was pretty sure that the man was well aware that such pellets typically only had a shelf life of about a month... Did the person intend for Gerald to refine the pellet himself to be used to save himself when it was necessary...?

“Well, not necessarily... Remember, I’m only the boss so I’m not really proficient with medicinal herbs myself... Regardless, there may be a way for you to get that herb...”

After hesitating for a brief moment, Wagner looked at Gerald before adding, “I wonder if you’ve heard of the prestigious herb auction before...”

“Are you referring to the underground auction of the Enchanted Feast?” asked Gerald in a rather soft tone.

“That’s right. The auction is considered to be one of the major functions during the Enchanted Feast! One can expect to find many valuable herbs there that have been provided by both medicinal herb farmers and herb gatherers who have gathered their herbs from mountains. Many of the herbs there are well over a hundred years old, and they won’t be distributed to the market. The participants consist of wealthy people and businessmen—related to the field—who are invited to the auction to bid for the herbs. Understanding their value, many of them choose to pay for the herbs on the spot,” explained Wagner.

The way he described it, it was quite evident that such an auction belonged to a private organization, meaning it wasn’t a public event.

Chapter 1108

Still, with so many medicinal herb gatherers dying out at sea or high in the mountains every year, several of the herbs sold there were bound to have vague origins.

“As they say, rare things are always more valuable. Since so many wealthy merchants and prestigious people head to the Enchanted Feast just for a chance to get their hands on ancient herbs, maybe you’ll be able to find the herb you want there,” added Wagner.

Gerald simply nodded in response.

“...Speaking of which, I heard you mentioning someone called Master Ghost earlier... You said that he had predicted that I would show myself sooner or later, correct? Since he was actually able to calculate that possibility, I wonder what kind of person he is...?” asked Gerald, suddenly recalling what Wagner had earlier said.

It wasn’t the first time Gerald had heard that name either. After all, Master Ghost had also helped Alice escape from her predicament back then. As he thought about it, Gerald wondered if Master Ghost could actually be more accurate than the picture of the sun.

“Ah, well, Master Ghost is a mysterious master in Halimark City, known for his extremely accurate calculations. I had personally paid him a visit on the eleventh of last month to ask him when I would finally be able to meet the person in the portrait. After all, my family had already been waiting for well over eight hundred years. In response, he told me to just continue waiting since my family had been told to do so. However, he also said that I would be able to meet said person after a short while. In which case, he was right. Just as he had predicted, you appeared not long after!”

Hearing that, Gerald frowned slightly. If that person truly was that powerful, then Gerald definitely needed to pay him a personal visit as well.

“Where does Master Ghost live?” asked Gerald.

“Is there something you need to ask him about, mister? I’ll arrange for your meeting but he won’t be meeting anyone today!”

“Why is that?”

“Well, let’s just say that Master Ghost has an odd habit. He only tells people their fortunes on odd-numbered days. He simply refuses to meet anyone on days with even numbers! As a result, you’ll have to wait for tomorrow—which will be the twenty-first—if you wish to see him!” explained Wagner.

“I see... Then it can’t be helped. I’ll head to the Enchanted Feast’s medicine auction first to see if I can find the herb I want” replied Gerald with a nod.

With the pledge of the holy water just around the corner, he knew that the pellet could potentially be extremely useful. As a result, he was adamant about collecting wickerice herbs to refine it. Besides, Gerald knew that the mysterious person had definitely left it in the box for a reason.

As Gerald helplessly thought about how little he still knew about the mysterious person, Wagner began coughing rather badly as he said, “I-if that’s the case... allow me to... accompany you...”

“...I’ll tend to your injuries first before anything else... Give me a moment to write a prescription for you... Tell your people to grind the herbs once I’m done...”

Once everything was done, Gerald and Wagner hailed a taxi to head to the Enchanted Feast. Though it had already gotten quite dark, the venue hosting the Enchanted Feast was brightly lit. It was also extremely crowded.

“Apologies, but this is a private event. If you don’t have an invitation card, then kindly leave,” said a security guard rather rudely after walking up to the duo.

“An invitation card? Humph! I’m Wagner Yarne! Are you saying that even I require an invitation card?” replied Wagner rather placidly.

Hearing that, the security guard’s eyes widened as he coldly said, “And who the hell is Mr. Yarne? I’ve never heard of such a name! Look, if you don’t have an invitation card, then get lost! Also, you there! What are you looking at? Do you think that just about any random person can attend the Enchanted Feast?”

“...Hmm? Say, Yasmeen! Look there! Isn’t that your university junior? He’s here too!” said a feminine voice from behind Gerald.

Turning around, Gerald saw that it truly was Yasmeen and her friends. To think that they would bump into each other again for the second time tonight.

“Hah! It seems that he wants to attend the Enchanted Feast to have some fun! Sadly, it looks like he was rejected from entering!”

“What a foolish person! Did he go mad from being poor for so long? How could a random person like him even think about participating in the Enchanted Feast all willy-nilly?”

As Yasmeen’s female friends continued laughing and talking among themselves, Yasmeen herself had her mouth gaping so widely that an entire egg could probably fit in it.

When she finally recovered from her shock, Yasmeen asked in a surprised tone, “...Gerald? Why did you come here...?”

“What other reason could there be? You know what they say, the poorer one is, the more they want to show off! He must have come over to have a look around and take some pictures! I wouldn’t be surprised if he posted the photos as ‘proof’ that he had attended the event!” whispered the women among themselves.

Though it was quite evident that Yasmeen’s friends were disgusted with Gerald, Gerald himself said nothing.

It wasn’t long before Yasmeen and her friends decided not to linger around Gerald any longer. After all, several people were now looking at them.

Taking the initiative to get them away from Gerald, a man standing beside Yasmeen said, “That’s quite enough. Let’s just head in already. After all, the event is about to begin.”

Hearing that, Wagner was filled with deep shame.

Giving the guard an indignant look, he then said, “Are you sure you don’t want to let us in? While the medicine auction is organized under the name of the Enchanted Feast, last I checked, it doesn’t belong to the Minshall family! Don’t you think you’re crossing the line a little?”

“As I’ve said, you’re prohibited from entering unless you have an invitation card!” replied the guard coldly.

“What’s wrong?” said a loud and clear female voice out of the blue.

The voice was so striking that several people immediately turned to look at the voice’s owner. Wagner—who seemed to recognize the voice—on the other hand, instantly grew gloomy.

Turning around, both he and Gerald were greeted by the sight of a group of people walking toward them. With the person leading the people being a tall, slim, and seemingly multiracial woman whose face was sharply contoured—almost like a marble—it wasn’t hard to guess that she was the one who had shouted out earlier.

Her chin was raised high and hints of disdain could be seen in her eyes as she continued walking on while looking at Wagner.

All the present security guards, on the other hand, shouted in unison, “A pleasure to have you, young lady!”

Chapter 1109

“If it isn’t Zoey Minshall...” said Wagner rather casually as he looked at Gerald.

“It’s best that you don’t get fooled by her pretty looks, Mr. Crawford... Zoey is the young lady of the Minshall family and she’s known for being both cruel and vicious when dealing with things... You know, I heard that the Minshall family’s old master’s health has been deteriorating in recent years... It’s no secret among those in Halimark City that she’s hired people to refine some sort of eternal pellet. I guess that’s why the Minshalls organized the Enchanted Feast and invited the organizers of the valuable herb auction here in advance. She probably already has her eyes set on a few herbs!” added Wagner.

“Sounds to me like you’re not on friendly terms with the Minshalls. Are they the most powerful family in Halimark City?” asked Gerald as he looked back at Wagner before laughing wryly.

Nodding slightly awkwardly, Wagner then replied, “Well, the Yarnes were still the largest family here up till a few hundred years ago... Now, however, my family has unfortunately fallen to second place in terms of power... Today, the city’s economic flow is controlled entirely by the Minshall family... Since we’re not being granted access into the event despite the fact that my family runs a medicine-based business, it’s clear that the Minshalls are deliberately targeting me! I sincerely apologize for that, Mr. Crawford... I’ll get someone to acquire and send two invitation cards to us right this instant!”

Gerald simply remained silent after hearing that.

Zoey herself soon walked close enough to stare coldly at both Gerald and Wagner. Though her expression was frigid, she didn’t say a word to the duo. Instead, led by several security guards, she continued walking into the venue with several others following behind her. Also notable, was an imposing-looking middle-aged man who walked beside her the entire time.

Once inside, the security guard from earlier walked over to Zoey before respectfully saying, "Since I didn't allow Wagner to enter earlier, he seemed to be particularly angry, miss."

"You did a very good job, then. I just want him to know that though the Minshalls are a foreign family, we've already established our dominance here in Halimark City. Local rascals like him need to pay attention to their own status. He of all people should know not to step into the Minshall family's territory as he wishes. Then again, it's not like he can. Besides, my family had previously told him to collect herbs that my grandpa needs within a year's time. To think that he didn't even pay much attention to the request! I've already given him enough respect for not personally teaching him a lesson for that!" replied Zoey calmly.

Lowering her voice slightly, she then added, "Speaking of which... Have you done the thing I told you to?"

"Worry not, miss. Under no circumstances will it fail. We'll definitely obtain the elixir that we've set our eyes on!" replied the guard coldly.

After a few more people entered the venue, Wagner finally got hold of the invitation cards. It had taken a short while, but both Gerald and Wagner could now enter.

Inside, Gerald soon found out that all the herbs being auctioned there truly were both ancient and valuable. He also came to realize that he needed some of them for himself.

Though many others were already making bids for a herb when Gerald and Wagner arrived at the bidding area, Gerald didn't take it upon himself to be cordial.

"Seven million dollars!" shouted Gerald.

Naturally, his insane proposal instantly changed the atmosphere in the venue slightly.

As several people took turns staring at the sitting youth who had made that massive bid, one of the seated women in the room quickly exclaimed in surprise, "...Hmm? Yasmeen, look there! I-isn't the one who shouted, your junior?!"

"H-huh? You're right! Also, did he say seven million dollars earlier? He must've just yelled that amount for the heck of it, right? He can't truly be that rich, right...?"

“I’m guessing that’s the case! Regardless, how did he even sneak into this place...? From the looks of it, I wonder if he’s even participated in an auction before... Once you offer a price, you can’t retract it, you know? If nobody offers a higher price he’s bound to be ruined!”

The ones who had spoken were obviously Yasmeeen’s friends, and they were all feeling equally surprised and helpless by both Gerald’s presence there and also his bidding amount.

After all, the highest price offered up till this point was only around a million dollars. At the rate things were going, they had assumed that bidding for the current herb would stop once someone offered two million dollars. To think that Gerald had actually offered seven million dollars!

As the girls continued discussing among themselves, the plump man who had made the two million dollar bid sat down sensibly. Immediately after doing so, however, he shot a glance at Zoey.

Noticing his gaze, Zoey herself—who was sitting in the front row of the VIP seats—slightly narrowed her beautiful eyes before gesturing at a security guard who was standing at the side.

Seeing that, the guard—who was none other than the one who had blocked Gerald and Wagner’s path at the door earlier—immediately headed to where Gerald was seated before coldly saying, “Good evening, gentlemen! Our sincerest apologies, but we need to check your invitation cards!”

“You’re telling me that among all the people here, you’re only going to check ours? That kind of bullsh*t, don’t you think, mister?” replied Wagner as he took in a deep breath, now so angry that he was already trembling all over.

“Since you offered such a high bid, I’m just afraid that someone snuck in here to cause trouble! As a result, please give me your cooperation, gentlemen!”

Chapter 1110

After hearing the security guard’s dumb reasoning, Gerald simply frowned slightly before replying, “Let him have a look!”

Following Gerald’s order, Wagner presented their invitation cards to the security guard who—once he received them—immediately began checking the cards thoroughly.

Gerald, however, was no longer the naïve person he used to be. He already had an idea of what the security guard and Zoey were up to.

Noticing that the guard was wearing an earphone, Gerald used his heightened perceptive hearing to listen in on their plan. Instantly recognizing Zoey's voice, he heard her order, "Drive them away, and be sure to investigate that youth's background. If he truly is rich, then we may as well arrange for someone to blackmail them."

Hearing that, Gerald couldn't help but smile bitterly.

Wagner had already mentioned that the Minshalls were only rich due to them relying on both thefts and robberies. After all, the Minshall family's ancestors were all pirates.

After hearing Zoey's plans, Gerald really had to try his hardest not to burst out laughing.

"Apologies, gentlemen, but after looking through your admission tickets, they seem to be fake! Due to that, please leave!" grunted the guard.

"Fake? How the hell are they fake? You'd better give me a proper explanation, right this instant!" shouted Wagner as he immediately stood up, now fuming in anger.

"We can prove that they're fake!" shouted Yasmeen's friends out of the blue as they, too, stood up from their seats.

Following that, the middle-aged man from Yasmeen's group—who was the same person who had told the girls to enter the venue earlier—added, "We're acquainted with that young man! He goes by Gerald Crawford and he's from Mayberry! However, the most important thing to note is that he's a poor student!"

"Yeah! Both he and that man were stopped at the door earlier, you know? I saw them on the phone earlier when I was heading to the washroom too! They must have purchased the fake tickets then!" shouted another female friend of Yasmeen's.

It was honestly quite obvious why they were doing all this. After all, anyone sensible would be able to tell that the security guard was one who belonged to the Minshall family. By stepping forward now and cooperating with the Minshalls, there existed a chance that that family would have a deeper impression on them. With any luck, the Minshalls could, in turn, potentially aid them in future as well.

What more, this was also an opportunity for them to get to know more rich merchants!

"A poor student? How did he even manage to sneak into this place?"

As the others in the venue began discussing the situation, Yasmeen herself looked at Gerald before saying, “You know, you were quite an honest person in the past... To think that you’d end up like this... Look, if you really came here to gain more insight, then you should focus on earning money properly! If you have the energy to do such unnecessary things, then you may as well use that energy to do part-time jobs! You can’t just step into an event with this level of social class all willy-nilly!”

Watching as Yasmeen shook her head, Wagner immediately began looking around to find anyone who knew him. To his surprise, nobody within the spacious auction house seemed to be locals aside from those from the Minshall family!

“Well, regardless, of whether the tickets are real or not, the main focus is still whether we have the money to buy the herbs here, no?” said Gerald at that moment as he shook his head, a bitter smile on his face.

Following that, he turned to look at the organizers before adding, “I’m sure the organizers don’t intend on missing out on a chance to earn money, correct?”

“If you’re truly able to fork out enough money to buy the herbs here, then you’re definitely a distinguished guest to us, sir!” replied one of the organizers.

After all, what Gerald had said was true. They just wanted to earn more and they couldn’t care less about whether Gerald and Wagner had tickets or not.

Upon hearing that, the guard didn’t even know what else to say. As a result, he simply took in a deep breath before turning to leave.

“...How annoying!” grumbled Wagner angrily.

Of course, Gerald felt the same, and he wasn’t about to allow such an incident to pass without any consequences. Long before the guard had turned to leave, Gerald had already secretly plucked a strand of hair off the guard.

It was now time to make use of it.

After taking only a few steps away from them, the security guard suddenly began trembling all over... The next thing everyone knew, he suddenly let out a terrifying howl!

Chapter 1111

His howl was so disturbing that the function had to be momentarily paused as everyone stared at the loud man.

As that continued to happen, the middle-aged man sitting beside Yasmeen—who went by the name of David Stubbs—attempted to break the awkwardness by declaring, “You know, I’m extremely sure he won’t be able to retrieve the money he claims he has! After all, we’re in the presence of the Minshall family! The Minshall family’s honor and reputation definitely won’t be affected by someone like him!”

Upon hearing his flattery, many of the present Minshall family members instantly looked at David with admiration in their eyes.

However, nobody could have expected what was to come just seconds later.

A loud slapping sound could soon be heard and almost everyone went silent.

The security guard from before had just slapped David directly on his left cheek!

Cupping his swollen cheek, David spat out a few of his broken teeth as he miserably said, “Y-you... Why did you slap me?!”

Stupefied, the guard simply replied, “I-I don’t know either!”

Before David could even make a retort, he was instantly slapped again on the other cheek!

“M-Mr. Stubbs!” shouted Yasmeen, sounding extremely worried as she looked at how swollen most of his face already was.

“What on earth are you doing, Wolfie?!” demanded Zoey in a frigid tone as she stood up from her VIP seat.

“P-please listen to my explanation first, miss!” replied Wolfie in resignation as he felt his body turn around to face Zoey before walking toward her.

“That’s quite enough! I don’t want to hear- ...Hold on... What do you intend to do?” said Zoey as she watched Wolfie raise both his hands upon getting steps away from her.

Without warning, Wolfie then grabbed Zoey by her bosom!

Instantly screaming in response, Zoey then shouted, "G-get your hands off me, you b*stard!"

Following that, the other guards immediately ran over to drag Wolfie away.

Seeing that, the terrified Wolfie immediately knelt down as he cried out, "M-miss! I didn't do it voluntarily...!"

He wasn't lying about that either. For some mystifying reason, he truly had no control over his body earlier!

Zoey, however, wasn't having any of that. Blushing deeply, she was adamant about teaching him a lesson!

It was at that moment when Wolfie's body suddenly began moving on its own again... And everyone's eyes immediately widened as the kneeling man grabbed onto Zoey's dress before pulling it straight off!

With the dress shredded in the middle, the beauty's lower half was completely revealed, save for the part her undergarments covered!

As Zoey screamed in fear for the second time tonight, several of the men in the room found themselves hollering!

'D*mn! What a sight...!'

"B-b*stard! You utter, b*stard! Beat him to death if it's the last thing you do!" ordered Zoey as several bodyguards dragged him out of the venue to do just that while a few others instantly handed her a set of clothes they found lying around.

Everyone went silent for a while after Zoey left the scene rather awkwardly. Gerald, however, had a faint smile on his face the entire time.

Once things calmed down a bit more, the auction simply resumed, pretending as if nothing had happened.

After clearing his throat, the host then said, "...Alright, regarding the next herb, your insight will surely be tested! We present to you, the wigerice herb!"

“...Oh? So they truly have that herb here as well?” muttered Gerald to himself in surprise as he shook any other thoughts away.

“I told you, didn’t I, Mr. Crawford? All sorts of extraordinary herbs can be found at the medicine auction! Just say the name and they’ll have it!” replied Wagner with a smile. He was clearly in a good mood after witnessing all that had just happened.

“Since this herb is so special, the starting bidding price is three million dollars!” added the host.

Upon hearing that, the remaining Minshall family members looked at each other in dismay. Eventually, one of them shouted, “Three million dollars!”

After saying that, they immediately looked around to see if anyone would offer a higher price than that. From their reactions alone, it was evident that the Minshalls were interested in the wigerice herb as well.

‘Could they also be aware of the magical effect of the wigerice herb...?’ Gerald thought to himself, rather doubtfully.

With that, Gerald then shouted, “Five million dollars!”

After giving him a warning gaze, the Minshalls retorted by shouting, “Seven million dollars!”

“Holy! It’s at seven million dollars again!” shouted someone from among the crowd as an uproar began brewing again.

Chapter 1112

Yasmeen herself simply looked at Gerald before shaking her head.

‘I don’t think you realize how terribly you’re going to suffer later... If you aren’t able to cough out the massive amount of money you’ve stated, then not only will the organizers go after you, but also the Minshalls!’

“A million and five hundred thousand dollars!” shouted Gerald in return.

“Hah! Has that young man already gone mad? He’s probably too far gone to offer a lower price!”

Hearing that, several of the people present began roaring in laughter. Yasmeen herself had become speechless.

“...Mister, you can’t just offer prices this high...!” reminded Wagner with kindness in mind.

“Oh? But I’m not even close to being done! I’ll say it now that regardless of the amount the others bid for, I’ll add another million and five hundred dollars to my next bid!”

“H-hot d*mn!” shouted many of the people present, feeling completely stupefied.

Even Yasmeen gasped out loud.

The Minshalls themselves didn’t dare to shout an even higher amount. After all, while they could easily offer a bid worth a billion and five hundred million dollars, they were well aware that Gerald could just refuse to admit to what he had just said. Should that scenario play out, they would certainly suffer a massive loss!

As the Minshalls continued considering their options, a guard walked over to them and whispered something into their ears.

Following that, the Minshall family members took turns glaring coldly at Gerald before continuing to increase the bid.

At long last, the final bid for the herb landed at seven million dollars! Adding that to the price of the other herbs Gerald had purchased that day, the grand total amounted to a whopping twenty-three million dollars!

Though that amount sounded outrageous, it was honestly somewhat close to what his sister received for pocket money on a daily basis.

Gerald himself had long lost the concept of what expensive meant. Money was just a bunch of boring numbers for him now.

As Yasmeen continued staring at him, she thought, ‘I’d like to see how you’re going to end all this, Gerald!’

Seeing the staff take his now nicely-wrapped herbs out, Gerald walked over to them—with his card in hand—before keying in his password at the payment terminal.

A brief moment later, the staff nodded before replying, “Thank you, sir! Here are your herbs!”

“...What?” muttered Yasmeen to herself.

Eyes widened, the girl was so stunned that she was almost convinced that all this was just a bad dream.

As Gerald walked back to his seat, Wagner laughed loudly before saying, “It seems that you’ve acquired all the herbs you needed, mister! Congratulations! I’ve already ordered my men to prepare a dinner feast for you. Think of it as a welcome party of sorts!”

Following that, Wagner began leading Gerald out of the venue. When his and Yasmeen’s gazes met, Gerald simply nodded at her as a greeting before leaving the area for good with his herbs in hand.

“After you, mister!” said Wagner the moment they arrived before his car.

The moment he said that, however, a group of about twenty bodyguards came running over, all of them glaring at Gerald!

“What do all of you intend to do?” shouted Wagner coldly as he stared back at the bodyguards gathered in front of them.

“It’s quite obvious, isn’t it? I’m afraid I won’t be able to enjoy that dinner with you tonight!” replied Gerald with a placid smile.

Seconds later, the bodyguards made way for Zoey—who already had a new set of clothes on—as she walked over while saying, “I’m glad you understand that! Now leave the herbs you bid earlier behind and maybe I’ll let you live!”

“Oh? I bought it with my own valuable money, you know? Even if I were to give them to you, don’t you think I ought to receive some compensation?” replied Gerald who still needed the Minshall family’s map that led to the king of the ocean’s tomb.

“Compensation? Boy, it’s compensation enough that she’s allowing you to actually leave alive! Also, aside from handing the herbs over, you’ll need to tell your family that you’re currently being held captive! The price of your ‘ransom’ is three hundred million dollars!” declared one of Zoey’s bodyguards.

“How completely unreasonable... Then again, I do enjoy dealing with characters like yourself...” replied Gerald with a smile.

“Quite frankly, I came all the way out here to strike a deal with the Minshall family, you know? How about this? I’ll hand you three hundred million dollars as well as the herbs in exchange for something from the Minshalls... If there aren’t any further objections, then we can make the deal now...” added Gerald, still smiling.

“Agreed! Once we get the herbs and the money, you’ll be allowed to take whatever you want!” replied Zoey, laughing as she crossed her arms.

“Oh? You aren’t even going to ask what I intend to take?” asked Gerald.

“As I’ve said, as long as you hand the money and the herbs over, you can take anything you want!”

“Grab me a pen and paper, will you Wagner? After all, a mere verbal statement can’t be taken as proof!” said Gerald.

While Wagner wanted to stop Gerald, he didn’t really have a say in any of this. Knowing that, he unwillingly handed him a pen and a sheet of paper.

Once Gerald wrote the terms down, Zoey immediately signed it without even looking at what Gerald wrote.

Smiling, Gerald then said, “Very well, then! I’ll hand the herbs and money to you first for now. I’ll come and get what was agreed upon a bit later!”

“How tactful of you!”

Once Zoey and her men were gone, Wagner was already so angry that he instantly began stomping his foot! Looking at Gerald, he then said, “How could you be this careless, mister?! Now that the herbs and money are in their hands, you’ll never be able to get them back! I know how strong you are, but there are several exceptional people within the Minshall family as well! Just so you know, the Minshalls once told me to collect some herbs for them, stating that once I was done, I could just state a random price and they’d pay me the exact amount for my services! However, when the day of payment came, they refused to admit to ever making such a statement!”

Patting Wagner’s shoulder, Gerald replied, “You’re worrying too much. Everything’s fine!”

Chapter 1113

It was now extremely late at night and a cool ocean breeze blew across Halimark City.

Despite the time, the Minshall family manor was still brightly lit. Inside, all of them were having a family meeting.

“You did a truly swell job today, Zoey! Now that we have these herbs, we can continue refining the eternal pellet!” declared the old master of the Minshall family. Though he looked to be over ninety, he still looked quite strong for his age.

“You living to be over a hundred would already be a blessing to me, grandpa!” replied Zoey with a wide smile on her face.

“However, what does deserve congratulating is the fact that I barely made any effort to obtain the herbs this time around! What more, I even earned three hundred million dollars from that idiot without having to lose anything!” added Zoey as she laughed out loud.

“About that... It’d be best if you did less of this kind of thing in the future... It’s not good for our family’s good fortune... This applies to the rest of us here as well. Remember, Master Ghost calculated three years ago that the Minshalls could face some sort of disaster this year!” replied the old master with a slightly bitter smile.

“I know, grandpa... Speaking of that idiot, he’s just some foreigner yet he wanted to strike a deal with us in exchange for the herbs and the money! Haha! Now that I think about it, why don’t I send someone over to capture him? By doing so, we can blackmail and drain more cash from him!”

“You’re old enough to make your own decisions, Zoey...” replied the smiling old master as he shook his head in resignation.

The old master had already painstakingly managed his family for decades, and he had long lost any sort of fear for foreign forces. Due to that, his family members openly robbing others no longer surprised him.

At that moment, a servant walked in from outside. Carrying what looked to be some kind of document in his hands, he stopped before the old master before saying, “Old master!”

“What is it?”

“There’s a young man waiting outside and he told me to present this document—signed by the young lady—to you! He said that he’s here to claim what was agreed upon!” replied the servant.

“Humph! That fool! To think that he actually came over to us! Well that’s even better then! We don’t need to hunt him down now!” sneered Zoey.

Shaking his head with a smile, the old master then said, “Regardless, I’m interested in seeing what he actually intends to take from us...”

After picking the paper up and reading through it, however, the old master’s eyes immediately widened, immense anger reflected in them!

Slamming the document onto a nearby table, he then shouted, “That b*stard! He’s courting death for sure!”

“...What’s wrong, grandpa?” asked Zoey as she and several other members of the Minshall family looked curiously at the old man.

Rather than waiting for a reply, Zoey picked the document up for herself and looked at it. On it, Gerald had written ‘I wish to claim the entire Minshall family!’

“Humph! What an utter moron! I’m afraid he truly is unaware of how strong the Minshalls are! To think he would dare ask for our family!”

“Just let him in! We’ll let him have a taste of our family’s great power! We won’t allow this incident to just slide unless he coughs up a billion dollars!” roared one of the Minshall family’s apprentices as many others began doing the same.

With everyone agreeing to do so, Gerald was soon led into the manor by the same servant from before.

He was greeted by the sight of all the Minshall family members—alongside their guests—seated on either side of the room, with everyone scanning Gerald from head to toe with contemptuous eyes.

“Is everything ready? If it is, then you can just sign here! Once I’m done with my work tomorrow, I’ll call my family members over to take over your family!” said Gerald.

Hearing that, an exceptional-looking man—who was one of the Minshall family’s guests—ran up to Gerald’s back before shouting, “You b*stard! You’ll have to get through me first!”

Immediately after, he grabbed onto Gerald's shoulders with the intent of executing a shoulder throw. Seeing how thin and weak Gerald looked, the man had no doubts that Gerald would be unable to withstand his attack.

To his surprise, no matter how hard he tried to lift Gerald, he simply couldn't make him budge at all! Unwilling to give up, the guest's face soon turned purple due to all the force he was exerting. Despite that, Gerald remained pinned to the ground!

"You're going to vomit blood if you continued doing that, you know...?" said Gerald.

"W-what...? The hell did you say?" replied the guest, stunned.

"You know, I still don't know what you're trying to do... Here, I'll show you how it's done!" said Gerald rather placidly as he grabbed onto the guest's shoulders and instantly tossed him toward the door like he was nothing!

Crashing sounds ensued just seconds later...

Chapter 1114

The sounds had come from the door smashing into pieces when the guest's body collided with it! Even after that, the body continued flying until it hit a pillar, resulting in the pillar getting destroyed as well! The guest's path of destruction only halted once it struck a replica mountain that was located close to yet another destroyed door! By then, his twitching body was all bloody.

"...W-what?" muttered everyone in unison.

Though they were all smiling earlier, all their expressions were now stiffened. To think that the young man had such ungodly strength!

After witnessing that, all the other Minshall family apprentices—who had earlier roared to have Gerald beaten up—took turns retreating to the side.

"...M-masters! Combine your forces and get him!" ordered Zoey, her slight fear evident in her voice. She hadn't anticipated for any of this to happen!

Hearing that, the Minshall family's distinguished guests—who were all sitting at the end of the table—exchanged glances with each other before quickly running over to surround Gerald!

Before they were able to attack, however, Gerald simply lifted a hand before flicking a finger onto a stone pillar beside him. After a split second of silence, blinding rays of light suddenly emitted from where he had flicked, and—after an explosive sound—a hole soon appeared at the other end of the pillar as light shot out of it!

By that point, cracks that looked similar to spider webs had already formed on the pillar. Staring in horror, the masters watched as the entire pillar exploded before their very eyes! Most of the area was momentarily clouded in white debris, and when it finally cleared again, the masters could all be seen with both hands raised.

Utterly terrified, all of them kept their hands firmly in the air, not daring to even move an inch. If Gerald could do that to a pillar, all of them were too scared to even imagine what would happen if he used the same move on them.

The masters who recognized this level of power were even more terrified.

‘This power... This man is undoubtedly a great master!’

Seeing how terrified even the masters were, the other members of the Minshall family remained frozen in place as well, all of them terror-stricken.

With everyone seemingly petrified in fear, it made for a rather strange scene.

Gerald, however, didn’t look too bothered about it as he walked over to the old master. Once he was in front of the old man, he placed the agreement form—that he had prepared—in front of the old master before saying, “Do have a look at it first. If there aren’t any further problems, just sign it! Then again, even if there are problems, you still have to do it...”

Smiling ‘innocently’, Gerald then added, “...Otherwise, I’ll kill everyone in the room!”

The old master instantly gulped as his heart continued beating wildly. Now drenched in cold sweat, the old man then said, “...S-sir... It’s my granddaughter’s fault for failing to realize how strong and influential you were...! On her behalf, I apologize for her infuriating you! Please accept my apology!”

“No apologies needed. Regardless, you’ll only have a few more seconds to consider. Once I finish this sentence, you’d better sign it immediately. Otherwise—”

"I-I'll sign it! I'll sign it right now!" nodded the old master, who was now feeling—aside from terrified—both remorseful and angry.

They had such a beautiful and enjoyable life before this... Why did they have to offend such a reckless and unreasonable person?! Just why...

"...S-sir... Do understand that I'll need at least two days to gather all the Minshall family's properties... I'll prepare everything nicely by then so I hope you permit the slight delay..." pleaded the distressed old man.

"I'm fine with that. I'll come over and take everything at nine at night in two days! Once I return, you'll need to list out all the assets for me. Regardless, I still need to claim some interests first!"

"...What do you fancy...?" asked the old man as he gulped.

"I've heard that the ancestors of the Minshall family once dug up and stole a pair of jade charms from the king of the ocean's tomb!" replied Gerald.

"...While it's true that our ancestors had passed down the charms to our generation, believe me when I say that they were recently stolen by a woman! As a result, we currently don't have the charms—"

"I don't need them. What I want is the map you used to head to the king of the ocean's palace!" interrupted Gerald.

"...H-huh?" replied the old man, his expression now displaying how nervous he was.

The map to the king of the ocean's place was the Minshall family's most valuable heirloom. Several of their family's ancestors ended up losing their lives just to obtain it. The map alone could be considered to be the foundation of the Minshall family...

"If you don't hand it over, I'll just kill everyone!" said Gerald, his tone still as frigid as before.

Gerald was well aware that the Minshalls had always dealt with things unreasonably. As a result, he felt no need to beat around the bush with them.

Chapter 1115

"I-I'll hand it over...!" shouted the old master, his immense grief evident. However, he really didn't have much of a choice but to obey.

“...Men! Retrieve the map for him!” ordered the old man as he gestured for a few subordinates to do so.

Soon enough, they returned with the map, handing it over to Gerald.

“Speaking of which, I’ll also be taking the herbs I gave you tonight,” added Gerald.

“R-right away...!” replied the old master extremely bitterly.

They had only blackmailed three hundred million dollars and the herbs from him... To think that he would retaliate by snatching away everything that the Minshall family owned!

While all the other Minshalls were definitely brimming with anger and resentment as well, none of them dared to say a word, choosing instead to keep their dissatisfaction to themselves.

Once he obtained the herbs as well, Gerald turned around to leave.

However, he had only taken a few steps when a young Minshall apprentice jumped out while shouting, “You b*stard! Who the hell do you think you are?! Rot in hell!”

Following that, he raised his gun, aiming it at the back of Gerald’s!

Instantly pulling the trigger, the sound of a gunshot immediately followed...

However, Gerald remained standing. Everyone stared wide-eyed when they realized that he had caught the bullet between his fingers without even having to turn around!

“...What?”

As the apprentice stared in utter disbelief, he watched as Gerald flicked his wrist slightly... And that was the last thing he would ever see.

The apprentice's head exploded on the spot, creating a disgusting 'splotching' sound as fresh blood flew in all directions!

Now trembling in immense fear, the other petrified Minshalls watched as Gerald simply continued walking forward without saying a word.

As he walked past the masters who still had their hands raised, not daring to move a muscle, Gerald stopped in front of one of them.

Observing the middle-aged master's palm, Gerald wondered if the master had earlier planned to smash his palm into the side of Gerald's head.

"...Could this be the result of mastering the iron palm?" asked Gerald curiously.

"Y-yes, master!"

"I see... How long have you trained for this? And what can you do with the skill?"

"I've painstakingly trained for twenty years to master it! With it, I'm able to split even the hardest rocks in two!" replied the master before gulping slightly.

"...Not bad!" said Gerald, displaying slight admiration as he patted the master's shoulder that was now drenched in cold sweat.

Once he did that, Gerald then left the premise...

The second he was gone, everyone immediately released sighs of relief. As for the old master, his face was now filled with tears as he fell to the floor in a sitting position.

"G-grandpa!" shouted the still terrified Zoey as she ran over to his side.

However, the moment she was beside him, the old master immediately gave his most adored granddaughter a tight slap to her face!

“Look... Just look at what you’ve done...! To think that you offended such a person under the Minshall family’s name...! What’s worse is that he had every right to do what he had just done! This... This was what Master Ghost had predicted three years ago... This is the disaster that he had warned us about!” cried out the old master.

Meanwhile, Gerald continued walking back to the Yarne family manor.

Now that he had obtained the map to the king of the ocean’s palace, he could set off once his family sent a few teams over.

He still truly believed that heading there would be the key to him solving the mysteries of the woman in white, the ancient tomb, and the divine general.

Gerald had to meet up with the legendary Master Ghost as well, a person rumored to be extremely skillful. Knowing that Wagner had already set an appointment for him to meet Master Ghost tomorrow, Gerald was secretly excited to see whether that person truly was as skilled as many had claimed.

As he continued walking on, his train of thought was cut short when he heard a faint, feminine voice coming from one of the bushes by the roadside.

“...Hmm?” muttered Gerald, frowning slightly as he walked over to investigate.

Once he was there, he confirmed that the voice had come from a woman. The woman herself was dressed fully in black and her stomach was bleeding profusely. From what Gerald could tell, her injuries were extremely serious.

What surprised Gerald even more, however, was how extremely fair and charming her face was. Even though she was terribly injured, her shut eyes gave the illusion that the graceful-looking woman was at peace.

Chapter 1116

In a way, her face—at least to Gerald—was a textbook example of an oriental beauty.

Shaking the thoughts off, Gerald quickly ran over to her and checked her pulse while asking, “Are you alright?”

Getting no response, Gerald deduced that she had fainted from losing too much blood.

‘This wound would’ve been fatal if I hadn’t found you any sooner!’ Gerald thought to himself as he immediately rushed her over to the Yarne family manor.

It was early the next morning when Yume Gunter slowly opened her eyes to the lingering scent of medicine. Looking around, she saw that she was in some sort of luxurious room.

The moment she tried to sit up, however, she immediately let out a yelp.

Someone had dressed her up in pajamas!

Her immediate response was warranted since it was natural for women to be particularly sensitive toward being changed by strangers. This was especially so for Yume who was quite traditional-minded.

However, she did notice that the person had also bandaged the injuries around her stomach. Even so, she knew she needed to get out.

Forcefully dragging her still injured body off the bed, she eventually managed to get to her feet. Upon opening the door, she saw a small portion of what seemed to be a courtyard and her old clothes hanging on a rack that a young man was currently standing beside.

The man himself was facing the courtyard while looking at some kind of picture.

Hearing the door open, Gerald sipped his tea before putting the picture down and turning around to say, "So you're finally awake..."

"...Were you the one in charge of putting me in these pajamas?" asked Yume as she glared at Gerald while biting her bright-red lower lip.

Gerald simply nodded slightly in response.

"You! Who allowed you to touch me?!" shouted Yume as she glared daggers at him.

"You'd have died if I hadn't touched you! If you hadn't bumped into me last night you would've died not long after!" replied Gerald.

“Then... My current innerwear...”

“Would you have preferred to remain in blood-drenched clothes? And it’s not like I could tend to your wounds with your clothes on!”

“You... You b*stard!” roared the woman as she threw a vase directly at him!

Catching it with his free hand, Gerald then sighed before replying, “Look, I just made this tea... Could you calm down for a bit...?”

While the woman was undoubtedly charming—possibly even as pretty as Lyra—she had an extremely short fuse.

At that moment, the door leading outside—from Gerald’s side—was opened and a few maids stepped in.

One of them then said, “Mr. Yarne has invited you over to the living room to discuss some affairs, sir!”

“I see,” replied Gerald.

Gerald was currently within a top-notch manor that Wagner had arranged for him in order for the youth to avoid any disruptions from unnecessary people.

After hearing his reply, the maids turned to look at the woman next as another maid exclaimed, “Alas! Why did you get out of bed, miss? We’ve just bandaged your wounds so you have to refrain from moving around too much!”

“...Come again? Were you the ones who bandaged my clothes? ...Then... About my clothes...”

“Well of course we were the ones who changed you into them! We did so immediately after the master brought you back!” replied another maid.

Upon hearing that, Yume took a brief glance at Gerald while thinking, ‘...If that’s the case, then I’ve accused him of something he hasn’t done...!’

“...Why did you admit to doing all that if you hadn’t done any of it?” asked Yume.

“I didn’t. You were the only one assuming what had happened!” replied Gerald as he shook his head with a bitter smile.

“Regardless, you there. It’s about time to reapply medicine on her. Remember to apply it every three hours so that no scars will be left behind on her stomach once her injuries heal,” added Gerald as he smiled subtly at one of the maids.

“Yes sir!”

Following that, he smiled while nodding at Yume before heading off to meet Wagner.

Watching him walk off, Yume couldn’t help but think, ‘...Why does that person feel so familiar... I wonder if it’s just because he saved me...’

The moment Gerald was gone, the maids instantly gathered around her before sincerely saying, “Pardon us, miss, but you’re extremely beautiful! Truth be told, you’re probably the most beautiful woman any of us have ever seen on this planet!”

Hearing their words of admiration, Yume instantly lowered her charming face to hide her reddened cheeks.

“I appreciate the compliments... Also, thank you for saving me!”

“No problem, miss! Speaking of which, how did you get hurt, miss...? You were seriously injured last night and from what the master told us, your stomach wasn’t hurt by an ordinary blade!” asked another maid in surprise as the group of maids slowly supported her back into the room.

Chapter 1117

As for Gerald, Wagner had called for him so that both of them could head over to meet Master Ghost in Langvern Church—which was located in Langvern Mountain—as appointed by Wagner the day before.

In the past, Gerald hadn’t really believed in so-called ‘masters of fortune-telling’. He simply considered them to be people who were keen on deceiving others.

However, from the moment he first found out about the remarkable old beggar in the mural, his views on fortune-telling began changing.

Aside from all the mystifying new experiences he had gone through, Gerald also had another reason to believe that Master Ghost was the real deal. After all, Master Ghost had successfully predicted events that would befall Alice, Wagner, and even the Minshall family. Everything that he had said eventually came true.

Since Master Ghost had been able to predict that both Wagner and Gerald would eventually meet, Gerald knew that there existed a chance that he would be able to learn about Mila and his uncle's whereabouts upon meeting Master Ghost.

With that in mind, Gerald was quite anticipated to meet the master.

Located on a mountain ridge north of Halimark City, Langvern Mountain itself was an area surrounded by cliffs and old pine trees. If one were to stand atop the mountain, they would be able to see the entirety of Halimark City. Since the city itself was pretty large, anyone looking at it from the mountain would see it stretching into the horizon, so much so, in fact, that the end of Halimark City sometimes looked like it was converging with the sky.

Staring down from above, even a space that could fit tens of thousands of people gave the impression that it was only the size of a matchbox. Anyone who saw such a scene would undoubtedly be reminded of how insignificant humans were.

One could normally find lots of people at the foot of the hill. After all, several people went to Langvern Mountain to pray, and many others headed there to pay formal visits to Master Ghost in hopes of getting their fates foretold.

As for Langvern Church, it was a simple but ancient-looking building that, from afar, gave the impression that it wasn't overly spacious. While churches nowadays were usually refurbished quite exquisitely and luxuriously, from the day it was built—many, many years ago—the Langvern Church had retained its mottled, greyish-white walls as well as its reddish-brown bricks and tiles that could be found all around the building.

Despite many people constantly visiting Langvern Mountain, the mountain was still able to maintain its lightness and delicateness, making it quite a unique place.

Returning to Gerald and Wagner, by the time both of them arrived at the foot of the mountain, the path from the foot to the very top of the mountain was already crowded with people.

Looking around, Gerald ended up momentarily freezing. He wasn't even sure if he was just imagining things, but standing quite a distance away from him, was an extremely graceful-looking woman. Well, at least her back was graceful-looking, from what Gerald could see.

Watching as the woman's maids led her into her car, Gerald was unable to catch even the slightest glimpse of her face due to one of the maids holding a parasol—that completely blocked his view of her—as she entered the vehicle.

Eyes-widened as he gulped, Gerald could only stare as he watched the car drive off.

'...She... She looked so similar...!'

If it wasn't for the fact that he knew his girlfriend was missing, Gerald would've easily have thought that the woman he had just seen was Mila!

After all, the back of that woman's fair neck looked incredibly similar to his girlfriend's.

The sudden shock of the scene almost made his rational side crumble for second, thinking that it truly could be her. However, he quickly gathered his thoughts again, deeming the situation as slightly odd.

He immediately reminded himself that not only had Mila gone missing for a long time now, but since she had been captured by the Sun League, it was even less possible for her to be roaming around like this!

Gerald simply shook his head, summing up the incident as being only an illusion of his. It was probably because he was missing Mila too much.

Still, Gerald couldn't help but gulp as he watched the car continue to drive further away. He was now seriously considering catching up with that car to see if it truly was Mila or not. Even if she wasn't, he could at least rest easy knowing that he hadn't missed a chance to finally find her again.

At that moment, he suddenly felt a tug on his arm before hearing a feminine voice call out, "Hey, Gerald! I've already called out to you several times! Can't you hear me?"

Pulled from his train of thought and back to the present, Gerald turned to look at the owner of the voice. As it turned out, the woman who had tugged his arm was Yasmeen!

"Who are you even looking at...? The moment you saw that beauty, your eyes widened a lot you know? I really didn't think that you were such a person, Gerald!" said Yasmeen.

“What do you want?” asked Gerald in a clearly annoyed tone. After all, Yasmeen had interrupted him during an extremely crucial moment.

“Now what sort of tone even is that! I came over to greet you but this is how you treat me?” said Yasmeen who seemed rather adamant about continuing to talk to Gerald.

Taking in a deep breath, Gerald turned to look at the car again. However, it was now completely out of sight.

After thinking about it for a brief moment, he chalked it up as him simply thinking too much about it.

Regardless, since Yasmeen had been so enthusiastic to talk to him all of a sudden, he was now finding it quite awkward that he had treated her that way just seconds ago.

“...I was just deep in thought earlier. Sorry,” replied Gerald casually.

Covering her mouth to chuckle, Yasmeen then said, “Now that’s the Gerald I know! Haha!”

Chapter 1118

“So tell me, Gerald, why did you come all the way out here? Could it be that you’re hoping to meet Master Ghost to have your love fortune read? They say his predictions are extremely accurate, you know!” said Yasmeen.

At that, Gerald simply shook his head.

He didn’t really have much to talk to her about, and through his attitude, Gerald hoped that Yasmeen would eventually get the hint and understand that he really didn’t want to continue chatting with her.

“I see... Well I certainly did! I hope he predicts nice things about my love life!” replied Yasmeen with a smile.

“Come again? Don’t you already have a husband?” said Gerald.

Though he didn’t show it, Gerald already knew why Yasmeen was treating him so differently compared to before. After all, he was no longer a ‘poor student’ in her eyes after displaying how rich he was back at the auction.

“And who told you that I’m married? Whoever you’re thinking of, that man definitely isn’t my husband! Regardless, since we’ve known each other since university, I’m sure you think that I’m the kind of woman who only focuses on money and status rather than feelings. I’ll say it right here and now that I’m actually the complete opposite of that! You know, women are extremely particular when it comes to their feelings... Even I long for love, and pure love at that!”

“...I see.”

“...Anyway, just so you know, I’ve always felt that you were a particularly nice person, even from our university days... You really give people a sense of security and warmth, you know? It’s something many women, including me, yearn for! Women aren’t just only looking for wealth and luxury all the time! Sometimes the best things in life for us can be exceedingly simple!” added Yasmeen as she smiled sweetly at Gerald.

Shaking his head in resignation, Gerald simply smiled bitterly before replying, “You’re only yearning for the ‘simple things’ now since you know I’m rich... If I remained as poor as I used to be then you wouldn’t be saying all that!”

By this point, Gerald had already heard other women saying similar things to him countless times. As a result, Yasmeen’s motive was clear as day to him.

In the past, he would’ve surely been too shy and embarrassed to retort to her. Now, however, he had grown way too tired of listening to the same fake compliments over and over again.

“You!-”

Yasmeen was now blushing slightly, feeling extremely awkward at the same time. She truly hadn’t expected Gerald to be this straightforward.

She was left even more flabbergasted when she saw him starting to walk off—with Wagner—without even bothering to say anything else to her!

She had initially thought that she was perfectly capable of hooking up with Gerald due to her beauty. To her dismay, he was completely unaffected by her charm!

Feeling both vexed and ashamed of herself, Yasmeen then thought to herself, ‘...Gerald’s so much more mature now compared to how he used to be... He seems to give off an aura of security as well... I hate to admit it, but he truly has become a true man!’

Not wanting to give up so easily, she then ran after him while shouting, “S-stop!”

Naturally, they didn’t and eventually, Gerald and Wagner arrived at the top of the mountain. However, there actually seemed to be even more people crowded there compared to the foot of the mountain.

As Gerald looked around, he saw what seemed to be a few apprentices of Master Ghost standing before the closed doors of the Langvern Church.

They seemed to be actively prohibiting any visitors from entering.

“Let us in! We’ve already waited for a long time, you know? Why are you stopping us from entering?”

“Yeah! By the looks of it, the church may deteriorate soon and we won’t be able to meet the master then!”

For obvious reasons, several of the visitors there were complaining out loud at the apprentices.

“Today, the master will only be granting audience to a single acquaintance of his who comes from afar. For the rest of you, please descend the hill and come back next time,” replied one of the apprentices.

“Then what if I pay you to see him? I intend to meet him today to have my love life foretold!” asked Yasmeen—who had been walking by Gerald’s side for a while now—as she nudged Gerald’s arm slightly.

A look of disgust on his face, Gerald simply frowned before moving his arm away from hers.

‘Still... This Master Ghost is just a fortune teller, is he not...? To think that he’d put on such airs!’ Gerald thought to himself, slightly amused.

As Gerald was thinking to himself, another visitor said, “Mister, I truly have some urgent issues to talk to him about... Please state any conditions I could fulfill to meet him today!”

“There aren’t any. He simply refuses to meet anyone else today save for his acquaintance. Kindly leave, ladies and gentlemen....” replied the apprentice as he shook his head.

The moment his sentence ended, the church's doors suddenly creaked open...

Chapter 1119

Out stepped a young man draped in black robes. When the visitors saw him, all of them fell silent.

As for the apprentices, they immediately bowed respectfully before shouting in unison, "Senior!"

"The distinguished guest that master's been waiting for has arrived..." said the man as he scanned through the crowd with a smile.

"May I know who among you goes by the name of Mr. Gerald Crawford? From Northbay?" added the man.

"That would be me!" replied Gerald as he frowned slightly. To think that the mysterious Master Ghost had even predicted that he would come over today to pay him a visit!

"Greetings, Mr. Crawford. The master has been waiting for you for the longest time, and he's already prepared some tea for you. Please, follow me," said the young priest as he bowed.

Astonished, Gerald then replied, "...The longest time? From when exactly had he predicted my arrival...? As far as I know, Wagner only told him yesterday that I was coming over today to pay him a visit! Does Master Ghost know about my true identity as well?"

While he had long accepted that artifacts—like the picture of the sun—were capable of predicting the future, Gerald truly couldn't believe that a person could hold such abilities as well!

Quite frankly, the revelation was now causing Gerald to simultaneously feel envious, grateful, and resentful toward the mysterious man.

After all, Master Ghost sounded like a man who was well-versed in everything and always had everything under his control. Gerald hated such people, and he was now keen on getting to know the true extent of Master Ghost's strength.

"The master predicted it about a year ago," replied the apprentice calmly.

Gerald, however, felt his heart skip a beat the moment he heard that.

'...Since he's that powerful, I truly have to meet him today!'

"I see. Lead the way, then!" said Gerald as he began following the man into the church.

The first area they stepped into appeared to be a large hall with a statue of God placed right in front for people to worship. After walking past that, they entered what appeared to be an inner court of sorts.

This area was filled with fragrances that were emitted from an oil burner, and sitting cross-legged in front of it, was an extremely old-looking man. His eyes closed, the old man appeared to be meditating.

Seeing a tea table before the old man, Gerald realized that the fragrance of tea was also pleasantly mixed with the scent from the oil burner.

The moment he took a step forward, the old man—whose face was filled with wrinkles, slowly raised his head before opening both his eyes.

"It's truly been quite a while, Mr. Gerald Crawford..."

Upon hearing his master's voice, the apprentice then left the room.

Gerald himself sat cross-legged once he stood before the tea table before asking, "...Did you truly foresee everything? Truth be told, I'm not quite buying it!"

"Well, not everything... I can only see things in the form of life events," replied Master Ghost with a slightly bitter smile.

"Then I'm sure you already know why I came here today, right?"

"Indeed. You're here today to look for some missing people!" said Master Ghost.

"...You're correct. Look, could you make the appropriate calculations and try to locate the missing people I'm still searching for? If your predictions are correct, then I'll give you anything you want, be it money or anything else in the world that you wish for!" replied Gerald.

“Haha! There’s no need to be impatient, Mr. Crawford... Before I do a reading about them, why don’t I do a reading for you first? A reading for your future, per se. I’ll be honest and say that the slight redness around your forehead isn’t a good sign... In fact, it means that you’re about to face a great disaster soon...” said Master Ghost as he looked at Gerald with a smile.

Hearing that, Gerald felt his heart skip another beat. Master Ghost had yet again, predicted accurately. After all, the picture of the sun had predicted the same thing as well. Was the old man truly well-versed in the art of fortune-telling?

Due to the predicted disaster possibly spelling death for Gerald, he had come all the way out here just to look for the king of the ocean’s palace in hope of solving the secrets of the disaster. What exactly was the relationship between the woman in white and the deity that looked exactly like him?

“...I’m already aware of what you just told me... Even so, the more important thing for me now is to find out where the people I’m looking for currently are... And also to find out whether they’re still alive,” replied Gerald, finally choosing to believe Master Ghost.

“It seems they hold great importance to you, Mr. Crawford! Very well, then. Let the reading commence,” said Master Ghost with a slight nod.

With a wave of his hand, the drapes above all the doors and windows in the room were instantly lowered. Following that, a portion of the wooden floor in the middle of the room slid open as a giant instrument slowly rose from below.

The ancient-looking instrument itself seemed to have a frame that was made completely out of copper, and on it, were nine dragons with open mouths. While Gerald remembered seeing a picture of a similar instrument with pearls in the dragons’ mouths, these dragons had large copper coins in their mouths instead.

“Please place your hands on any two of the dragons’ heads,” said Master Ghost.

Gerald simply obeyed, and moments after touching the cold dragon heads, the eyes of all nine of the copper dragons began glowing in a green light! With how lustrous their eyes were, the nine dragons almost seemed to be alive.

As Gerald continued looking at them curiously, he soon heard ‘clinking’ sounds coming from the instrument.

Chapter 1120

As the copper coins in the nine dragons’ mouths dropped to the floor, they seemed to form a particular shape. Once all of them had fallen, Master Ghost walked over to have a look.

After studying their formation for quite a while, he nodded slightly to himself.

Seeing that, Gerald then asked, "How is it?"

If he was going to be entirely honest, Gerald still couldn't bring himself to fully believe in the old man's capabilities. However, if Master Ghost truly was able to locate both Mila and his uncle, then, and only then, would all his doubts be cleared.

"...Well, the reading shows that you have a predestined relationship... As long as you're able to find this relationship, then you'll definitely be able to finally locate the people you've been looking for! With that in mind, that means that the people you're hoping to find are still alive!" replied the old man with a smile.

Frowning slightly, Gerald then asked, "Then do you know where they currently are?"

Shaking his head, Master Ghost simply replied, "Their location is... blurry, to say the least. Be it near, far, east, or west, I truly am unable to locate them! However, I have a feeling that this is only the case since you still have a predestined relationship that has yet to end. In a way, it could be said that you're being 'insincere', and due to that, you aren't allowed to get any more information than you need yet."

'A predestined relationship...?' Gerald thought to himself, finding the statement to be extremely odd.

Gerald knew for a fact that he hadn't had feelings for other women from the moment he had fallen for Mila during his university days.

What on earth did the predestined relationship come from?

While he did feel guilty toward Giya and he admitted that the feelings he felt for her were complicated, he was undoubtedly sure that he didn't love her romantically. Though he would still take the initiative to care for her, he had also decided to explain everything to her once he could.

As for Lyra, he simply treated her like his sister. While she was technically his fiancée, would that actually make it a predestined relationship? Gerald certainly didn't think so.

As for Alice... Well, he didn't even need to consider her at all.

"I don't really have a predestined relationship... I'll say it right now that I'm only in love with Mila, the woman I'm currently looking for," said Gerald.

"Haha! Apologies, perhaps I worded it wrongly... The predestined relationship I was talking about relates to your fate and destiny! While you don't have love in your reading now, that doesn't mean that you won't have it in the future. After all, your love is simply going according to the natural law... You'll only get it after cultivating it for a few generations!" replied Master Ghost with a smile.

"I refuse to believe that. I'm the one who has the final say whether I love someone or not! What natural law? You know, I'll be frank and say I hate people like you the most! People who keep on talking about the natural law... Everyone's fates are in their own hands!" declared Gerald, a hint of anger in his voice.

He truly hated the feeling of being controlled by others.

"I'm afraid that you'll have to believe in it even if you don't like the idea! After all, the reading stated that you still have a predestined relationship that you've yet to encounter. Should you fail to meet with the relationship, then I'm sorry to say that you'll never be able to find the woman you love no matter how far and wide you seek out for her," replied Master Ghost while shaking his head.

Hearing that, Gerald then took in a deep breath before asking, "...Then tell me what I should do to encounter the predestined relationship..."

"Your heart already knows, Mr. Crawford. To be more precise, you should ask yourself why you came to Halimark City in the first place."

'...It's because I needed to head to the king of the ocean's palace to look for the woman in white's corpse... She was in love with the deity who looked identical to me... Yet in the end, they were placed so far apart from each other...' Gerald thought to himself.

There were a lot of clues, and all of them seemed to lead to the woman in white.

From what Gerald could tell, he needed to help the deity look for the woman and return her to his side to be buried together with him. By doing so, Gerald also hoped to reveal the secrets of his identity and background.

Regardless, did Master Ghost's reading mean that Gerald had a predestined relationship with the woman in white? How was that even possible?

As Gerald smiled bitterly, he heard Master Ghost mutter, "...Still, how absolutely queer... After studying the reading a bit more closely, it's clearly stated here that the predestined relationship is definitely yours... But at the same time, it isn't! From what I'm able to tell, she has a direct relationship with you, yet you don't seem to have a relationship with her! How baffling!"

After thinking about it for quite a bit—with a frown on his face the entire time—Master Ghost then added, "...Whatever the case is, you still have to find this woman before you're able to locate your lover, Mr. Crawford. I have to say, however, that your reading truly is chaotic! Haha! I'm only able to read so much!"

Watching as Master Ghost shook his head while looking slightly ashamed, Gerald thought to himself, '...I guess I'll go look for the woman in white's tomb first then!'

Gerald chose not to reveal to Master Ghost that he had seen another person that looked exactly like him in the ancient tomb. It seemed that the predestined relationship the woman in white had was actually with the other person. In any case, Gerald knew he had to find her.

Regardless, he was grateful to be able to confirm that Mila was still alive.

"...Speaking of which, what do you know about the Sun League?" asked Gerald out of the blue.

"The Sun League? I've only heard legends about them from my master. Their organization originated from an ancient era, you know? The league is extremely mysterious and nobody has truly been able to pry into their secrets. However, they seem to have left some traces here in Halimark City!"

Following that, Master Ghost lowered his voice before adding, "From what I've read, I can tell that you're quite an extraordinary person, Mr. Crawford. I can assure you that you'll naturally do even more extraordinary things in the future. Regardless, till this very day, I'm still unable to fully grasp the meaning of those traces the Sun League left behind... Perhaps you'll be able to crack the code."

"Traces you say?"

"Indeed! About fifty years ago, a stone tablet was excavated... Following that discovery, my master was told by someone to study it carefully, you see..."

Chapter 1121

“A stone tablet?”

“Indeed. An ancient event of some sort had been painted onto it. Even after studying the stone tablet for quite some time, however, Xyion was only able to tell that it had something to do with a burial scene. He wasn’t able to understand the wording on the table at all, and after many years passed, he eventually lost interest in it. As a result, the tablet is now kept as an ancient art piece within my private room!” explained Master Ghost.

Another mural...?

Whenever Gerald heard about murals now, it always prompted his mind to recall what he had seen inside the ancient tomb.

As one would expect, ancient murals were usually filled with historic tales that reflected the people of the time’s social, political, economic, literary, artistic, and technological capabilities. Such murals could end up being vastly different according to the artists’ beliefs, customs, and also their aesthetic concepts.

These murals—that were usually drawn as long as rivers—were viewed extremely highly due to all the vivid and informative ancient scenes that the people of old drew with their descendants in mind. The fact that their heartfelt stories were told in such a different way only served to make the murals even more valuable.

Gerald had already seen how detailed these murals could get back when he was in the ancient tomb of the general god. He could still clearly remember all the drawings on the tomb that described things from the day the people had found the general god up till the day he was buried.

“Speaking of which, I later asked one of my old friends to come over and have a look at the tablet. From what he could tell, the burial method depicted on it was some sort of ocean burial!” added Ghost.

“Ocean burial?”

Upon hearing that, Gerald had a feeling that it could be related to the king of the ocean’s tomb. Due to that, he added, “Could I have a look at it?”

“If it’s piqued your interest, then by all means!” replied Master Ghost as he gestured for Gerald to follow him.

Following that, Master Ghost led Gerald to a small hill that was located behind the church's backyard. On it, lay what seemed to be a private room where Master Ghost usually meditated in.

The private room itself was about five meters tall and three meters wide. Its walls were made of marble and the room was mostly dark and empty save for a table in the middle with a dimly-lit oil lamp on it, the sole source of light within the private room.

However, upon closer inspection, six mossy and ancient-looking stone tablets could be seen arranged neatly within the room as well. Those were definitely the murals Master Ghost had been talking about.

Lifting the lamp—that the master had offered to him—once Gerald stood right before the murals, he instantly began investigating them.

It wasn't long before he noticed that the wording used on these tablets were similar to the ones he had seen back in the ancient tomb. Putting two and two together, he deduced that these murals were as old as the tomb itself.

After looking at the first mural for a while, Gerald suddenly froze. Shockingly, one of the scenes on the tablet seemed to detail what seemed to be the lady in white's burial!

Not wanting to miss out on any key details, Gerald kept his eyes peeled as he continued trying to decipher the tablet.

From what he could understand, the story—that the mural was trying to tell—began by showing that Halimark City used to only be a tiny fishing village that was inhabited by rather isolated fishermen.

Reading on, it was shown that a group of people—led by an old man dressed in long robes—one day appeared at the village while carrying a huge coffin.

Gerald was all too familiar now with the robed old man. That old man was undoubtedly the same old beggar he had first seen on the ancient tomb's murals!

To think that Gerald would see him even here!

Shaking the thought off, Gerald then continued reading on. Based on what he could see, Gerald guessed that the old beggar had carried the lady in white's coffin all the way here after letting her and the general god bid each other farewell.

By this point, Gerald was completely certain that the one in the coffin was the lady in white. So his hunch was correct. She truly had been brought here...

Returning to the story of the fishermen, when they came back after fishing on that day, they were surprised to see the old man and his men carrying a coffin.

When the village's patriarch stepped forward to ask who was in the coffin, the old beggar had apparently told them that it contained the body of a goddess who had fallen from the sky!

Hearing that, the villagers immediately bowed to the coffin. Following that, the patriarch seemed to ask why she had been moved here.

Seeing the beggar hand the patriarch quite a bit of gold, Gerald felt that it was safe to assume that the beggar simply replied that she was to be buried here. The next image suggested that the patriarch was also told to get his men to build an underwater tomb in the nearby ocean.

Due to the fact that the coffin contained a goddess and they were given a lot of gold, the patriarch simply obeyed. Everyone in the village was involved in the construction of the tomb, and all of them seemed to be equally determined to get the job done.

Within a short amount of time, the patriarch managed to gather around eight thousand people—both young and old—to sail out to sea and begin building a tomb for the goddess.

Surprisingly, the structure wasn't called the king of the ocean's palace. Rather, it was named the palace of the goddess.

Under the old beggar's command, the palace was completed within half a year. On the mural, everyone involved appeared to be impressed by their grand underwater project. Soon enough, the lady in white's burial would take place.

Chapter 1122

Turning to look at the second mural, Gerald saw that it was about the lady in white's burial. On the day of her burial itself, a thunderstorm seemed to be present.

Inclusive of the old man, Gerald counted—relatively easily—thirty-seven people in the next image, with nine people standing in each of the four rows that were drawn. With the thunderstorm still raging on, the people in this team seemed to be the only ones who had been chosen to set off to the palace of the goddess.

Halfway through their journey there, they appeared to halt at an island to take a short rest.

However, something happened soon after as was seen on the third mural. The ones on the island were greeted by the sight of a giant ship!

This wasn't the first time Gerald had seen this ship either. It was exactly similar to the one he had seen in the tomb before this.

Seeing the oddly-shaped massive ship hovering atop the island, the thirty-six people the beggar had brought along immediately fell to their knees in terror and began worshipping it. From what Gerald could assume, they were all under the impression that some god was descending.

Following that, Gerald's eyes widened as he saw a man dressed in a black robe—who was also wearing an odd mask—descend the giant ship before pointing at the goddess's coffin.

The sight of the man alone was enough to make Gerald feel extremely anxious. After all, he was dressed exactly like the men Lyra had seen in the picture of the sun!

Was this hinting that he would be killed by those from the Sun League in the near future...? Frowning to himself, Gerald then continued reading.

Now nearing the end of the third mural, Gerald saw the old beggar jumping into the giant ship before walking into it. As for the others, they appeared to be trying to carry the coffin away...

Moving on to the fourth mural, it began by showing the old beggar continuing his journey with his group of men. Apparently, what happened in the giant ship was completely skipped.

Odder still was the fact that instead of thirty-six people like there were before, only twenty-seven remained... Where had the nine people disappeared to?

However, Gerald didn't have the time to dwell on that due to how unreal the next set of images was.

Once they got close enough to the palace of the goddess, all of them were immediately greeted to the sight of an injured dragon that was flailing around in the ocean! That itself wouldn't have been a problem if the dragon wasn't doing so on top of the structure!

The next image displayed the old man relieving the dragon of its agony by crushing its skull, thus ending its life. However, the moment he did so, it seemed that the thunderstorm only worsened.

As a result, the boat seemed ready to capsize and Gerald could see all the remaining men falling to their knees in terror.

In the fifth mural, the goddess's coffin could be seen being sent down together with the now dead dragon's body. Both of them were then buried together.

From the insane amount of detail put into drawing the submerged structure, Gerald felt that it truly looked like an undersea palace fit for dragons.

Regardless, all of them were apparently able to remain submerged for so long due to something the old beggar handed to them before they went under the waves. The old beggar's knowledge truly played a huge role in all this...

Finally moving on to the sixth mural, Gerald found himself raising an eyebrow. The very first image showed the people returning to the deck of the ship. However, they had brought up another coffin that was completely made out of glass!

Since the coffin wasn't that big, Gerald simply assumed that the person inside was a child.

Regardless, while everyone seemed to be particularly careful as they carried the coffin, one of the men apparently ended up slipping...

...Huh?

The last image simply showed the coffin being overturned... However, that was it. The final mural ended there.

Guessing that the murals were drawn by one of the thirty-six people who had been chosen to board the boat, Gerald couldn't help but feel slightly upset and irked by the fact that he wasn't able to finish reading the entire story...

Where did the small glass coffin end up...?

Chapter1123

Now that he was done reading the murals, he explained everything that he had just learned to Master Ghost.

“...I see. I do wonder, Mr. Crawford, if you find the supernatural giant ship in the murals to be suspicious as well... After all, scientifically speaking, there was no way such a massive, floating vehicle like that could exist back then. Even my master said that the ship was something out of this world back when he first saw it forty years ago,” said Master Ghost.

“I do. While this isn’t my first time seeing it, back when I first did, I had been extremely skeptical the moment I saw it. Now, however, I have reason to believe that the murals could actually be evidence that our planet had—at one point—been dominated by some advanced civilization alongside that dragon that had been heavily injured under the sea!” replied Gerald.

“It appears that you believe in these murals, Mr. Crawford. You know, both my master and I had been confused by the dragon and the giant descending ship from the sky for the longest time. After all, it’s simply impossible for them to exist! While both of us had simply summed it up as the imagination of the ancients, Xyion, on the other hand, truly believed that the events that had been drawn on the tablets had really taken place!” said Master Ghost as he turned to look at the murals.

Pointing at the mural where the old beggar had given something to his men before they descended into the water, Master Ghost then added, “After all, if you look here, the old man is clearly handing his men water repellent stones before they submerge below the waves! Since there’s a logical explanation to how they remained underwater for so long, I refuse to believe that the other incidents can’t be explained with logic as well!”

“Water repellent stones?” asked Gerald.

“Indeed. From what my master had told me, water repellent stones are celestial in nature and they’ve been around for thousands of years. As their name suggests, they repel water and once a person puts one into their mouth, they’ll be able to withstand the ocean’s immense pressure! Mind you, being that deep in the ocean is not something ordinary people can do!” explained Master Ghost.

Hearing that, Gerald thought about it for a moment.

After studying the map that he had previously obtained from the Minshall family, he realized how truly deep underwater the king of the ocean’s palace was.

While he was sure that his body was now solid enough to be able to withstand the ocean’s pressure without getting hurt or having his agility affected, the same couldn’t be said about regular people.

Since the king of the ocean’s palace was massive, he knew that it would be impossible for him to act alone.

Due to that, he had told his family to send a few men over after they prepared special equipment for them that would help repel the immense undersea pressure. Once they had geared up, they would definitely be able to assist him during his investigation. It was also due to the time needed to prepare said equipment that the men weren't here yet.

However, now that he had learned about the existence of water repellent stones, there was no reason for him not to use them instead! They did, after all, sound far more superior than any diving gear he could think of.

"Master Ghost, would you happen to know where I could get my hands on water repellent stones?" asked Gerald.

"Well, it's celestial in nature so it may be hard to come by... However, you could try asking the Minshalls for more information about it. After all, their family's ancestors had once used those stones to steal underwater treasures! If anyone knows where to find them, it should be them!"

Since Gerald now owned their entire family, that wouldn't be a problem for him at all.

"I see... Thank you, master. I'll visit you again once I've completed what I need to do at the king of the ocean's palace!" replied Gerald as he bowed toward Master Ghost before leaving.

Watching as Gerald's figure walked off, Master Ghost couldn't help but feel slightly moved.

"You left that legacy forty years ago, master... Despite me continuing to conduct research in the forty years to come, I still haven't been able to get anything out of it... Does that mean what you said will eventually come true, master...? That in the near future, big changes will happen and disaster will befall all of mankind...? However, I also remember you saying that a young man would show himself and try his very best to prevent said calamities from happening... I guess the one we've been waiting for all this time truly is Mr. Crawford!" muttered Master Ghost to himself, mixed feelings brewing within him.

Sometime later, Gerald grabbed onto the Minshall family's old master's neck in the Minshall family mansion. Though the Minshalls were sly, once the old man's feet were lifted off the ground, he soon gave in and told Gerald the truth that he knew where a single water repellent stone was.

It could apparently be found within the Minshall family's ancestral mine. In truth, it was even more precious compared to the map that led to the king of the ocean's palace.

Chapter 1124

Even if that was the case, however, everything they owned still belonged to Gerald now.

“You’d better sign the contract once I’ve retrieved the stone, you got that?” said Gerald as he tossed Zelda to the ground before all the other Minshalls.

Upon leaving, the old master immediately burst into tears as he shouted, “That... That b*stard...! How dare he take everything away from us...!”

He truly didn’t know how he was still alive after yesterday’s events. To think that they used to have such a happy and wonderful life... Now, however, it was all gone, and Gerald’s constant mockery only made it worse.

If only his naïve granddaughter hadn’t provoked that man, then everything would’ve been fine. Who would’ve thought that this man would be so unreasonable? He was a much bigger thief than all the Minshalls combined! He simply stole everything that he saw!

For many years now, the Minshalls had been a well-known and almost noble-like family within Halimark City. Never had they felt this lowly before throughout their time here!

“The water repellent stone is our family’s last treasure, grandpa! Even our ancestors have said though we can live without money and power, we’ll definitely crumble for good once we lose the stone!”

“Indeed! All will be lost if he gets his hands on the stone!”

All the younger generations of the Minshall family were currently shouting their thoughts as they gathered around Zelda.

Of course, what they had all said was undoubtedly true. As long as they still had the water repellent stone, then their family would definitely still have a chance of prospering again, even if Gerald had taken away everything else. Zelda probably wouldn’t have to die so soon either if that were the case. However, once again, Gerald was changing their fortune.

Thinking about it, Zelda’s expression suddenly turned fierce as he smiled before saying, “...What are all of you even worried about? Do you even think it’ll be that easy for him to obtain the water repellent stone? Quite honestly, I’d be overjoyed if he actually made it into the ancestral mines! Now that would truly be a blessing from our ancestors!”

“...What? Why would you say that, grandpa?” asked Zoey.

“You’ve been the smartest all this while, Zoey! How could you be such an idiot now? Have you already forgotten that we still have a trump card in our hands?”

“A trump card?” asked the other Minshalls as their faces lit up.

“I’m talking about the thousand years of poison, of course!” replied Zelda while gnashing his teeth fiercely.

Upon hearing that, all the Minshalls immediately began exchanging glances in their surprise.

The thousand years of poison was one of the Minshall family’s most ancient treasures. While many of the family’s grandchildren only thought that it was a myth, hearing that their grandfather mention it made them realize that the poison was real.

If the rumors were true, it was said that even a single sniff of the poison was enough to cause the person’s internal organs to fester, regardless of how strong the person was.

“While it’s true that none of us here are even close to being worthy opponents to him, I’d like to see how well he’ll be able to fare against the thousand years of poison! Hahaha!” declared Zelda in a ferocious manner.

Standing up, he then shouted, “Issac! Zoey!”

“Present!” shouted both of them simultaneously.

“Remember what Master Ghost had advised us back then? He had told us that a family with no morality such as ours would always end up badly. He had also told us back then that we’d face a massive problem this year that would cost us our entire family! Now that all of this has happened, I want both of you to head over to him and ask him to read our family’s fortune again! More specifically, ask Master Ghost whether our family will be able to successfully get over this problem, and if we will, ask when we’ll be able to regain our glory as well!” ordered Zelda.

Following that, the old master got all the other Minshall family leaders to gather in the meeting room that was located in their backyard. They were going to have an urgent meeting...

Chapter 1125

As all this was happening, Master Ghost himself was staring at the six stone tablets, continuing to ponder on Gerald’s interpretation of the murals.

Something just didn’t feel right...

Seconds later, a student of his came running in before saying, “M-master! There’s a girl outside who’s been trying to break into the church! She keeps saying that she wants you to give her a reading on her life! Though many of us tried to stop her, she simply keeps fighting her way in! We... We don’t stand a chance against her! Even worse is the fact that she said she would burn the building down if you still refuse to see her!”

Frowning, Master Ghost then waved a hand before replying, “I’ll deal with this. Tell her to wait for me in the front room!”

Watching his student run off, Ghost then shook his head before—rather unwillingly—heading over to the girl.

“M-master told you to wait here for him! He’ll be here in a moment!” wailed the voice of his earlier student as Master Ghost stepped into the front room.

Upon entering, he was immediately greeted to the sight of an extraordinarily beautiful girl stepping on his student—who was now lying on the floor, severely bruised—with a single foot.

“Release him this instant, young lady!” ordered Ghost instantly.

“Heh! So you’ve finally decided to show yourself, old master!” sneered the girl.

“There’s no need to harm my students, young lady! We can just talk things out!” replied Ghost as he shook his head in resignation.

“Quit your nonsense! I... I came here to... I... I need your help...!” shouted the girl as she covered her stomach with an arm, seemingly in immense pain.

“Please have a seat before you continue talking! You’re obviously hurt!” replied Master Ghost as he supported the charming yet impulsive girl.

“Master! She’s beaten up a few of the pilgrims outside as well!” shouted another student of his as he ran into the room.

Sighing, Ghost then replied in a frustrated tone, “Help them up and bring them to the hospital!”

Looking at the girl next, he then added, “As for you, young lady, why did you have to attack the pilgrims as well? You just came here for me, no?”

“It’s their fault for looking at places they weren’t supposed to! I haven’t even gouged their eyes out yet!” sneered the girl in response.

Since the pilgrims—she had attacked—had kept staring at and even harassing her on her way up, she felt that it was only right for her to teach them a lesson! They were lucky that she had only castrated them instead of taking their lives!

Sighing, Ghost then said, “...Then, what exactly do you wish to ask...?”

“I’m looking for a person... A dead person, to be exact! I need you to check whether I’ll be able to successfully find that person!”

Not wanting to deal with her any more than he needed to, Ghost simply nodded before starting the reading process.

“...Anyway, may I know what your name is?”

“It’s Yume Gunter!” replied the girl.

“Very well, Miss Gunter... Please place your hands on any two of the nine dragon heads!” ordered Master Ghost as the copper instrument with nine dragon heads rose from the floor.

Doing as she was told, the heads soon began spitting out coins.

As Ghost took his time carefully reading her prediction, Yume herself walked around the front hall.

All of a sudden, a unique-looking, crystal-clear stone that glowed a fluorescent green caught Yume’s attention.

Chapter 1126

The stone itself stood at about half a meter high, and Yume couldn’t help but feel that the stone was rather extraordinary. It simply gave off an aura of intimacy when one looked at it.

Unable to help herself, Yume found herself gently and carefully caressing the stone. However, not long after she touched it, the stone suddenly lit up, enveloping Yume in a bright light that shone in all the colors of the rainbow!

Taking a few steps back, Yume immediately shielded her eyes with a hand as the bright light momentarily blinded her.

A little while later, the colorful lights finally began dimming down again, and eventually, the stone returned to its initial faint glow. However, a few complicated-looking lines seemed to have formed on the stone as well.

“Are you alright, Miss Gunter?” asked Master Ghost as he walked over with a wry smile on his face, his divination reading complete.

“...I-I’m fine... Speaking of which, what kind of broken stone even is this...? Why would it suddenly light up on its own?” asked Yume as she blushed, feeling that she had just embarrassed herself earlier.

“Hahaha! That, Miss Gunter, is a marriage stone! It’s used to determine a person’s fate when it comes to marriage! You touching it earlier activated it! The lines on the stone represent your marriage, you know?” explained Ghost.

“M-marriage?!” replied Yume as her face turned as red as a tomato.

A girl with Yume’s personality and character was naturally repulsed with the idea of love and romance. In fact, she had been disgusted with the idea of affection between men and women ever since she was a child.

It was the reason why she had been so irritated and annoyed when Gerald had touched her skin back then, even though it was to heal her injuries. She simply hated the idea of skin contact between opposite genders and would very much prefer to avoid it as much as she could.

“You know, why don’t I tell you the fate of our marriage first? Based on what the marriage stone is saying, it appears that your heart will belong to someone in the future!” said Ghost.

“...W-who would even want a reading on such a ridiculous thing... Though... can you truly see my fate?” asked Yume as she felt her heart beating frantically.

Even if Yume was a woman with a fiery temper, she was still a woman at heart, and any woman would grow shy once they heard things regarding the fate of their marriage.

“I can, and I already have. From what I was able to gather, you’ll be able to find what you want on your trip. The eight diagrams also imply that you’ll not only be able to locate the person you’re looking for, but you’ll also obtain something you weren’t quite expecting! I’ve foreseen that you’ll be able to find the person who’s been hidden deep down in your heart!” replied Ghost.

Upon hearing that, Yume’s beautiful face somehow managed to turn even redder than before!

When they saw this, many of the apprentices—who had remained in the room—found themselves unable to stop themselves from gulping and staring wide-eyed at her. Despite her temper, the woman really was astoundingly beautiful.

“Now then, if you wish to obtain an even greater understanding, I can help further analyze the clues displayed on the marriage stone for you!”

“...L-look, the only reason I came here was to ask you if I would be able to achieve my goal during this trip! I don’t need to find out about anything else!” replied Yume as she stole a glance at the marriage stone before turning around to leave.

However, the moment she got to the door, she found herself stopping dead in her tracks.

...In truth, she was extremely tempted to find out as well!

Even though she had constantly been trying to escape such feelings for so many years, the emotions that she had within her kept budding, growing stronger by the year. It felt as though there were simply some things that she could no longer avoid no matter how much she tried to escape from them!

After struggling with herself for some time, Yume finally walked back before saying, “...Fine! I’ll listen to what you have to say and see whether what you predicted turns out to be accurate or not...!”

Meanwhile, Gerald had just arrived at the ancestral mine of the Minshall family. He was here since he had been told that the water repellent stone could be found here.

Though the location looked exactly like a mine on the surface, the Minshalls had carefully hidden the stone in the deepest part of the mine so that no random person would ever find it.

Upon walking inside, Gerald came across countless spider webs and the occasional discarded mining tool as he made his way deeper into the mine.

After passing through a few tunnels and uncovering quite a number of hidden paths, Gerald finally caught sight of the white, palm-sized water repellent stone lying motionless on a tray...

Chapter 1127

Emitting a bright light, Gerald could feel the power within the stone, even from afar.

“What a truly amazing object!” muttered Gerald to himself, overjoyed.

However, the moment he was about to take the water repellent stone, Gerald’s ears suddenly heard the sound of a rope being dropped from one of the upper tunnels.

...A person?

Seconds later, Gerald heard as the unknown person began sliding down the rope. With that, Gerald quickly hid in a corner to see who it was.

It wasn’t long after before a woman jumped down. The moment she saw the water repellent stone, she immediately smiled before clapping her hands.

“So it really is here! I can finally set off once I get my hands on the stone!” said the woman to herself in a soft tone.

“...It’s her?” whispered Gerald to no one in particular as he continued watching her from the corner he had been hiding in.

The girl in question was of course, Yume!

After descending Langvern Mountain, Gerald had returned to Yarne Manor to discuss a few more matters with Wagner. It was around then when a maid notified him that Yume had already left.

While Gerald already knew that the girl was quite extraordinary since she knew quite a bit of martial arts, he truly hadn’t expected for her to also be looking for the water repellent stone! Actually, it was amazing enough that she knew where to find it in the first place!

Thinking about it, Gerald couldn't help but smile slightly bitterly. Never could he have imagined that he would actually end up accidentally saving his rival's life!

Just as he was wondering how he should confront her, he suddenly heard a terrifying screech.

Yume herself had had her hand inches away from the water repellent stone when she heard the deafening screech. Looking up, she immediately saw a massive and terrifying black shadow swooping down at her from above!

As the shadow continued making unnerving sounds, Yume quickly fell back and rolled to the side to avoid the shadow. In doing so, however, she was unable to get her hands on the stone.

By then, she had already identified that the shadowy figure had belonged to a bat. However, this wasn't any regular bat. It was a giant bat that was even larger than an average human!

With its head about the same size as a human's, its most striking characteristics were its long, overflowing red hair and its exposed fangs. Together, these features made it look similar to a human with an incredibly hideous face.

Saliva dripping out its grinning mouth, the bat looked at Yume with its vicious eyes before letting out another ear-splitting shriek!

Following that, it leaped at her with immense speed and power!

While she was able to avoid the bat's front paw attack, Yume failed to dodge its tail wing attack in time! As a result, she was hit right in the chest which sent her flying!

Crashing hard onto the ground, Yume could feel her wounds start to hurt again as she felt some blood seeping out of her abdomen.

The bat itself wasn't going to give Yume any time to recover. Stomping menacingly toward the injured girl, it appeared to be enjoying the thought of soon having a delicious meal.

'...Am... am I truly going to die here...? That stupid Master Ghost! I shouldn't have believed in his words earlier! If I make it out alive, I'm burning his church down if it's the last thing I do! Otherwise, he'll only continue deceiving others! To think that he'd actually say that my marriage would be...'

As Yume thought to herself, she remembered how she had immediately descended the mountain before directly heading to the Minshall family's ancestral mine to obtain the water repellent stone.

Everything was going so well too... To think that she was actually going to die here being eaten alive by this beast... It made her feel sick even thinking about it.

Taking in a deep breath, Yume quickly unsheathed her dagger before pointing it at herself. Eyes closed and ready to end her own life, she first muttered, "I'm sorry, grandma... I was unable to complete the task you left for me! I'm truly sorry for being unable to head to the king of the ocean's palace!"

Before she could plunge the blade into herself, she heard the giant bat screeching again!

...Only to be followed by the sound of something heavy hitting the ground?

Opening her eyes, Yume found herself staring in disbelief at the dead beast that now lay before her. It... was dead? But how?

It was then when Gerald finally revealed his presence while saying, "It seems that I've saved your life again, beauty!"

Chapter 1128

Gerald was smiling as he said that while looking at Yume.

"It... It's you!" shouted Yume.

While her face had initially been pale from panic, the moment she saw Gerald, it instantly turned red as a tomato. Though she was clearly blushing, Gerald could simultaneously sense a deep hatred as well as a hint of killing intent in her eyes.

"It is indeed... Regardless, it seems that we both came here today with the same purpose in mind. Are you planning to head to the king of the ocean's palace as well?" asked Gerald who had been surprised to hear her muttering about it earlier.

"I... I don't know! Stop talking to me!" replied Yume before standing up and immediately turning to face the other way as she recalled Master Ghost's earlier words about the fate of her marriage...

“Judging from the results of the marriage stone, it appears that you’ve already met the person you’ll end up falling in love with, Miss Gunter! From what I can see, it seems that both of you only separated quite recently as well!” said Ghost when Yume had still been in the church earlier.

“The person I’ll end up falling for...? Who could that be? Actually... It... couldn’t be him, right? The person they refer to as Mr. Crawford...?”

Shaking his head, Ghost then replied, “Quite unfortunately so...”

“Unfortunately? Now why would you say that?”

“While it states here that you’ll definitely end up falling for him, he won’t love you in return! It’s just a sad ending since both of you will never be together!” explained Ghost before sighing.

“...You! You old man! Quite spouting nonsense! I’d never fall for someone who wouldn’t love me back! I refuse to believe you!” retorted Yume angrily.

“It’s simply the truth! It’s not up to you to decide!”

“The truth? Hahaha! Even if that’s the case, I won’t allow it to happen! I’ll just kill him when I see him again to avoid any future complications then! Once I’m done with that, I’ll return to burn down your church!”

Following that, she had descended the mountain in a huff, feeling greatly angered and frustrated as she made her way for the Minshall family’s ancestral mines.

Of course it had to be Gerald. While she had to admit that he was quite handsome and he was also the one who had saved her life, he didn’t have any other suitable qualifications to make her fall for him! What absolute nonsense!

While she had been sure that she’d never ever meet him again back then, she now realized how wrong she had been. In fact, not only was he standing behind her right now, but he had also just saved her life for the second time!

“...Regardless, you should really move around less since you’re still injured. You know, while the stone is useful to me, I don’t mind sharing part of it with you!” replied Gerald with a smile as he slowly approached the girl to help support her.

Once he was close enough, however, she simply pushed him away fiercely before shouting, "Don't touch me!"

"What a temper! I'll have you know that the water repellent stone now belongs to the Crawford family! Aren't you ashamed at all for attempting to steal something before its owner?!" replied Gerald in resignation.

With that, he went over to pick the stone up. Once he had it, he immediately turned around to leave.

"...W-wait!"

"What is it?"

"You... You said you would share part of the water repellent stone with me, right...?" asked Yume in a much softer tone now.

While she truly felt like killing Gerald now, she knew she was incapable of doing so. But if she didn't do that now, would she truly end up falling for him...?

"Since you asked so nicely, sure."

While the water repellent stone was only the size of a palm, even if it were to be split into a thousand pieces, each piece would still retain its initial functionality without any degradation in its performance. With that in mind, Gerald simply broke off three pieces of the stone and handed them to Yume.

"Since both of us will be heading to the king of the ocean's palace sooner or later anyway, why don't we head there together?" suggested Gerald.

Quite frankly, he found her to be quite the suspicious character. After all, while he had only managed to find out about the king of the ocean's palace after slow and careful investigation, based on what Yume had earlier said, the girl was apparently heading there to complete a task that her grandmother had entrusted her with.

For her grandmother to have business to attend to within the king of the ocean's palace... Who could she be? Could Yume's grandmother have secrets of her own as well? Gerald truly wanted to get to the bottom of this.

"There's no need to consider that! I'm not traveling with you!" replied Yume as she clutched onto her abdomen before slowly staggering out.

It was at that moment when Gerald noticed something was off. Sniffing the air, he couldn't help but raise a brow as he shouted, "This isn't good! Return here, quickly!"

Chapter 1129

Due to his keen sense of smell, Gerald was able to detect the scent of a highly toxic gas that was slowly filling the mine. From what he was able to tell, directly inhaling even just a little of the gas would be sufficient to easily corrode a human's internal organs!

True to his deduction, after taking just a few steps forward, Yume was already starting to get extremely dizzy. As the strength in her body rapidly left her, Gerald quickly ran over to support her.

Following that, he instantly began sealing several of her body's vital energy paths that led to her vital organs.

"M-my chest... Suffocating..." muttered the weakened Yume whose face was already pale.

"Thankfully you didn't breathe in too much of that gas... Know that the air around us now is slowly getting more and more poisonous... Someone seems to be deliberately releasing poison gas in here! Regardless, try not to talk for now and get ready to hold your breath," explained Gerald quickly.

After saying that, Gerald himself took in a deep breath, purposefully inhaling the poison gas. Just by doing so, however, he was able to roughly distinguish the composition of the gas!

Since Gerald had already been immune to several kinds of poisons as early as last year, this level of poison was nothing to him! While the poison gas was definitely fatal for normal people, to Gerald, the gas was simply akin to the mild distasteful scent of a spilled bottle of vinegar within an environment that previously had fresh air.

Regardless, someone was definitely up to no good outside!

Looking at the weakened girl who was now lying in his arms, Gerald knew that he couldn't allow anything bad to happen to her. After all, she appeared to know some secrets about the palace of the ocean king. What more, even from the first time he had met her, Gerald had felt that both Yume and Mila had somewhat similar eyes.

Due to this innate intimacy that he felt toward her, Gerald felt the urge to help her escape this place safely. In fact, he wouldn't have left her behind even if she was a complete stranger.

With the poison gas now slowly resembling a thickening, greenish poisonous fog, Gerald turned to look at the teary-eyed Yume—whose face was already flushed by this point—before saying, “...Since you haven’t used it yet, I’m assuming you’re not familiar with the breath-holding technique?”

After watching her nod slowly, Gerald then added, “I apologize in advance then. Please don’t hold it against me. Understand that my primary objective is to get you out of this place alive!”

Following that, Gerald took in a deep breath of the poisonous air. Once the air was inside him, the air was instantly purified. With that in mind, he then directed the fresh air into his mouth...

Before kissing Yume to transfer it over to her!

Seeing that, Yume’s eyes immediately widened in shock as she tried her hardest to resist. However, she simply didn’t have any strength left in her body due to her initial intake of the gas.

Glad that it was working, Gerald then continued to occasionally transfer fresh air into Yume’s lungs as they quickly made their way out of the mine.

Knowing that the person in charge of releasing the gas was probably after him and not Yume, Gerald truly wanted to know who the culprit was.

Meanwhile, a young Minshall—who was standing outside the mine alongside many other Minshall family members—laughed as he said, “Hah! We’ve truly released a huge amount of poison gas inside, uncle! Even if he has the physique of a deity, Gerald definitely won’t be able to make it out alive!”

Before them, stood a contraption that continued to pump poison gas into the sealed up entrance of the mine. They had made sure to carefully seal the entrance up too so that even if Gerald managed to climb up again to make his escape, he wouldn’t be able to tell where the passage leading out was!

“But of course! It’s called the thousand years of poison, after all! Not even an immortal would be able to escape death after inhaling this!” replied the middle-aged man—whose back was facing the entrance—with a dark expression on his face.

“Still, I really want to head inside to see how terribly Gerald’s body has already rotted!” said another young Minshall before laughing.

“Are you that tired of living? Even inhaling the slightest amount of that poison gas will cause all your internal organs to rot, you know! Don’t any of you know the origins of our family’s thousand years of poison?” declared the middle-aged man rather arrogantly after realizing that his current situation made him resemble a teacher who was standing before a group of students who were anxious to learn.

“We don’t, uncle! Please explain it to us!”

“Very well then! Listen closely, now!”

Now in a good mood, Uncle Minshall quickly cleared his throat to begin his tale. Before he could even begin, however, he noticed that all the young Minshalls were now pale-faced and staring wide-eyed at something. Their expressions suggested that they had just seen something terrifying...

“...What’s this then? Why the frightened expressions?” asked the middle-aged man as he laughed.

“U-uncle Minshall... B-behind you...!” squeaked one of the young Minshalls as he pointed behind the middle-aged man in horror.

Before he could even turn around, uncle Minshall heard a voice shouting, “Make way!”

Following that, Gerald—who had used one of his hands to dig open a small hole in the dirt-sealed entrance to check if he was on the right path—kicked the poison gas-spreading contraption right into the earthen wall, causing the sealed up entrance to be re-opened!

Now understanding what the young Minshalls had seen to be that terrified, the middle-aged man’s face instantly went as pale as a sheet when he felt a pat on his right shoulder. Knowing that he was the sole person blocking the entrance now, uncle Minshall slowly turned around to look behind him... To see Gerald there holding Yume in his arms!

Chapter 1130

“...M-Mr. Crawford...!” stuttered the middle-aged man who was so shocked and horrified by the turn of events that his eyes looked ready to pop out from their sockets!

Under normal circumstances, Gerald should have already melted into a pool of rotten meat by now... Even so, their initial plan had been to collect Gerald’s corpse after letting it rot in there for ten days!

Throughout that ten-day period, the Minshalls had already planned to actively look for ways to steal—the presumed dead—at least a portion of Gerald’s assets and possessions...

Nobody could’ve expected him to still be alive!

They had used the thousand years of poison! The most potent poison their family had!

Gerald himself ignored the shocked group of Minshalls, choosing instead to walk forward and look for a cool and safe spot where he then laid the now-unconscious Yume.

Following that, he casually walked over to the contraption he had earlier kicked before saying with a smile on his face, “What’s this then...? What were you guys so busy with over here? Hmm?”

“W-we were... um... W-worried that you didn’t have enough oxygen in the mines so we were pumping some in for you!” stuttered the middle-aged man who was now drenched in cold sweat. The damp discomfort on his crotch only served to signify how terrified he currently was.

“Oxygen, you say? But I’m pretty sure that this contraption pumps out poison gas, and not just any regular poison either! It’s a potent poison that causes the inhaler’s organs to fester, no? Regardless, with the amount of poison gas you were pumping in, I have to say that you guys are really willing to spend!” replied Gerald as he turned off the contraption that had still been sputtering poison gas out.

Knowing that there was no way out of this, the middle-aged man immediately knelt while saying, “P-please, Mr. Crawford! This is... This is all just one massive misunderstanding!”

Gerald, however, was having none of that.

Upon receiving a tight slap to the face from Gerald, the man’s teeth were immediately sent flying all over the place!

“You know, if it wasn’t for my unique physique, I would’ve definitely died in there already because of you people!” growled Gerald as his expression suddenly changed into one that exhibited pure fury.

Nobody had exaggerated when they described the potency of the thousand years of poison, and Gerald was well aware that even someone with Christopher’s strength would eventually be done for if he inhaled too much of the gas! The Minshalls truly were ruthless...

“P-please... Please spare our lives, Mr. Crawford...!” mumbled the middle-aged man who was already struggling to speak as his snot and tears flowed down his face.

“Oh? You want me to do that, do you? Fine then. I won’t personally end you. However, I’ll toss all of you inside the mine to see how you like it! Surviving from that point on are your own problems!”

With that, Gerald kicked the middle-aged man into the mine as easily as if he was kicking a ball! Following that, he did the same to all the other young Minshalls there.

While screams could momentarily be heard, they didn’t last long, and soon, the mine was quiet again.

After that, Gerald retrieved the jar containing the thousand years of poison from the contraption. With the jar in one arm and Yume in the other, he then immediately set off for the Minshall Manor.

The manor itself was quite lively at the time, with many people gathered in the main hall.

From the moment Lord Minshall had earlier heard that Gerald hadn’t stepped out of the mine yet—even after quite a while—he had a radiant smile on his face the entire time which caused his wrinkles to look even more defined.

“With the elimination of our enemy, the day for the Minshall family to shine again is upon us! While that Gerald had immense skill and capabilities, in the end, he was still a young, mindless brat! Regardless, today is a day for celebration!” declared Lord Minshall with a wry smile on his face.

“You truly are brilliant for finding this loophole to get rid of Gerald before he had a chance to bring more trouble to our family in the future, Lord Minshall!”

“Indeed! We shall hold a big feast tonight to celebrate this victory!”

Cheer after cheer came from the other Minshall who were all feeling both excited and happy.

“Still, I wonder how Zoey and Issac are doing... After heading over to meet Master Ghost for so long, they should already be back by now!” said Zelda.

It was exactly at that moment when both of them came running in from the courtyard, looking extremely panicked.

“G-grandpa!” shouted both of them simultaneously, their faces completely flustered.

“What’s wrong? How did the results go?”

“M-master Ghost only gave us the first half of the reading earlier! He said it was to ‘reduce the amount of trouble’! However, he’s just given us the second half of the reading not too long ago!” cried out Zoey.

“Well, go on! Show it to me!”

O obeying his orders, she immediately placed a note in Zelda’s hand.

On it, were written the words, ‘If you abandon your morality and virtues, lamentation, suffering, and endless tears will befall all of you!’

Chapter 1131

“There will be cries of weeping, lamentation, and suffering all over? This, this...”

Zelda’s lips trembled as he started breaking out in cold sweat that started dripping from his head. “How could this be possible?!”

“Gerald is dead so that the Minshall family will be even more established in the future. This is actually an opportunity for the Minshall family to turn things around. If so, why would there be weeping and suffering?”

Zelda was in disbelief, and he slammed the piece of paper down on the table heavily.

“Hurry up and ask Jackson what is the situation there! Why hasn’t he returned yet?!” Zelda said.

At this moment, a green poisonous fog suddenly appeared in his field of vision.

The young kid who was about to make a phone call suddenly started foaming at the mouth after he fell to the ground.

“What is happening?!”

Everyone was surprised.

Right after that, more and more people began falling to the ground.

Zelda started panicking as he stuttered, “This is... the thousand years poison!”

After that, the eyes of the members of the Minshall family widened in shock, and they saw a jar exploding directly in the Minshall family hall.

Gerald then appeared in the courtyard before their very eyes...

The Minshall family was filled with weeping and wailing!

That night, Gerald had been at Yarne Manor.

Yume had finally woken up at this time.

As she slowly opened her eyes, she had seen Gerald sitting at the side of the room as he sipped his cup of tea.

He had a very thin body, but he somehow gave people a great sense of security.

“You saved me again?”

“Who else could it have been if it was not me?!” Gerald replied as he smiled wryly.

“I do not want to owe you any favors. I do not want to owe you any favors at all!”

Yume sat up from her bed, and her pale face flushed red, almost as though she was blushing as soon as she saw Gerald.

“Tell me what you want me to do for you. I, Yume Gunter, will definitely do anything you ask for even if it will cost me my life! From then onward, we will not owe each other any favors!” Yume said.

Ghost’s words had affected Yume deeply. He had said that she would fall in love with this man, but he would not reciprocate that love.

Yume had such a strong and determined personality, so she certainly would not allow this kind of thing to happen.

However, she could not kill Gerald even if she wanted to.

In truth, Yume had actually developed a new form of feeling for Gerald at the moment when he had suddenly kissed her inside the mine.

“Are you serious? Would you be willing to agree to my request even if I asked you to become my wife, then?” Gerald asked playfully.

“You *sshole! Who wants to become your wife?!” Yume replied angrily with tears in her eyes.

“I am just joking with you. I already have a wife. So, even if you wanted to become my wife, I would not agree to it. However, you owe me two favors in total now. You have an opportunity to repay one of your favors now. There is something that I want to ask you, and you have to give me an answer!” Gerald said as he put down his teacup.

Yume took a deep breath before she asked, “What is it?”

“You were on a trip this time to look for the palace of the king of the ocean. This is a task that had been entrusted to you by your grandmother. You mentioned two people in your dream just now. The first person was your grandmother, and the second person was your great-grandmother. I want to know what is the task and mission that they had entrusted you to do at the palace of the king of the ocean. I know that it can’t be as simple as robbing the tomb!” Gerald said.

This matter was indeed very suspicious. Who else would send someone to investigate the palace of the king of the ocean unless it was someone like the Minshall family?

When Yume heard this, she felt very complicated and entangled, as if she was thinking about whether she would be able to tell him about this matter or not.

“Honestly, it does not matter even if you tell me about it. I will be frank with you. I am also looking for the palace of the king of the ocean. To be more precise, I am going to the palace of the king of the ocean to look for a dead person.” Gerald said.

Yume glanced slightly at Gerald.

She had always been the kind of person who kept her word and promises. Since Gerald was also going to look for the palace of the king of the ocean anyway, there was no need for her to continue hiding this matter from him.

“Me too! I am looking for a corpse so that I can bring it back to the Gunter family. This is my grandmother’s and great-grandmother’s greatest wish. It seems as though this corpse... has something to do with a very big secret. It seems as though this corpse is not from here!” Yume said.

“As for what secret it is, it is completely useless for you to ask me about it. That is because I do not know what it is either! I only know this much!”

“The Gunter family? Where is the Gunter family?” Gerald asked.

Chapter 1132

True enough, it was just as Gerald had expected.

Aside from Gerald, it appeared that some other forces seemed to know about the matter related to the deity as well as the woman who had descended from the sky back then.

The reason why he was looking for the woman in white was because he wanted to bring her back to the deity’s burial place so that he could determine the exact relationship between the woman in white and the deity.

But why would Yume want to bring the corpse back to the Gunter family?

Nevertheless, Gerald could tell that Yume was not lying to him.

If he had the opportunity to do so, he would visit the Gunter family too.

“Sorry, but I cannot tell you the location of the Gunter family!” Yume replied.

“Alright, then. I will not force you if you do not want to let me know. Anyway, no matter what it is, I hope that both of us will be able to achieve our own respective goals in the end. My fleet will arrive tonight. There has been a tsunami over the past few days. I am afraid that you will not be able to reach the palace of the king of the ocean alive on your own. If you are willing, I can bring you along with me.” Gerald said again.

Yume did not say anything else, and this was equivalent to her acquiescence.

Could it be that the both of them were truly fated as Ghost had said? Even if she wanted to escape her fate, she would not be able to do so.

Would she actually fall in love with this person?

Yume could not help but feel entangled.

The Crawford family’s large fleet arrived the next day, and they set off immediately after Gerald had boarded the ship.

“Mr. Crawford, the waves are massive today, and there is also a tsunami. Should we continue to set off?” One of the bodyguards of the Crawford family asked as he walked up to Gerald.

Gerald looked at the map and saw that there was still a long way to the palace of the king of the ocean.

Moreover, since hundreds of years had already passed, Gerald did not know whether the location of the palace of the king of the ocean had already changed. Hence, he did not dare to cause any delay.

“We will continue to set off. We have to arrive at Montholm Island before the sun sets tonight. We will need to adjust our future plans after we arrive at the island!” Gerald instructed.

The Crawford family had made careful considerations and paid a huge price for this batch of people in this fleet this time so that they would be able to adapt to the severe weather at sea.

“Yes!” The bodyguards hurriedly agreed.

As Gerald stood on the deck and stared at the boundless sea, he could not help but think of Mila again.

‘Mila, where could you be? What are you doing now if you are still alive?’

Gerald squeezed the guardrail tightly with both of his hands as he struggled in his heart.

This was because all of his problems were pointed toward one direction at this time.

That was the Sun League.

Mila’s disappearance, Gerald’s second uncle, Peter’s disappearance, the descent of the deity, and the corpses of the heavenly soldiers that had fallen from the sky. All of these things seemed to be directly related to the Sun League.

What kind of organization was this?!

It had already existed for tens of thousands of years, but no one could unravel its mystery.

Moreover, what was going on with the deity who looked exactly like him? Could it be that there was indeed another completely unknown world, far in the distant sky?

These things made Gerald feel very confused and frustrated.

However, Gerald felt that things were progressing relatively fast. As long as he could resolve the matter involving the woman in white, Gerald believed that he would certainly be able to find Mila soon!

Gerald was deep in his thoughts.

At this moment, Yume stared directly at Gerald’s side profile as he wore a worried look in his eyes.

She had been standing aside and watching Gerald for a long time. Unexpectedly, it seemed as though Gerald also had his weaknesses and things that made him sad and upset even though he was so powerful.

Yume felt as though she had discovered a whole different side of Gerald.

“It is time for me to change the dressing for my wound, but you gave me two different ones. So, I do not know which one I should use!” Yume said softly.

At this time, Gerald put his thoughts aside and came back to his senses as he walked back into the cabin.

However, at this moment, a bodyguard who was also standing on the deck was filled with doubts as he stared at the bottom of the sea.

This was because at a certain moment just now, he seemed to have seen an extremely large behemoth slowly passing through the seabed.

He could not see anything anymore after rubbing his eyes to get a clearer view.

Could it be... that he had seen wrongly?

Chapter 1133

Deep under the sea.

An extremely simple and unsophisticated huge copper ship passed by Gerald's fleet at this time.

Its existence was just like a burst of energy that could not even be detected by a detector.

What was this simple and unsophisticated ship that was covered in bronze?

Soon after that, the figure of this large copper ship continued sinking toward the bottom of the ocean.

Countless underwater creatures made way as though they were fleeing for their lives as soon as they saw this huge behemoth.

After that, the figure of the copper ship slowly disappeared, and the bottom of the sea returned to its former tranquility. However, the undercurrent was still strong and constantly surging because of the tsunami!

The fleet continued moving forward, and they finally arrived at Montholm Island in the evening.

According to the map, Gerald predicted that in terms of its geographical location, Montholm Island should be located halfway through their journey to the palace of the king of the ocean. At the same time, this was also the place where the old beggar had stopped by with thirty-six men, as shown in the mural.

At that time, there had only been a small fishing village on Montholm Island.

At the same time, this was also the place where the Sun League's huge battleship had made its first appearance.

It had risen into the sky and frightened all thirty-six of them.

There was also another strange and suspicious point, that was, there were only twenty-seven men left in the team that the old beggar had brought with him to the palace of the king of the ocean later.

Nine men seemed to have disappeared mysteriously.

They disappeared on Montholm Island. Could they have been killed?

How could that be possible? These thirty-six men were just ordinary men, and the old beggar had absolutely no reason to kill them!

As Gerald was thinking about this, the ship had already been docked, and they had arrived at the port.

Gerald came back to his senses as he looked at Montholm Island.

Now that tens of thousands of years had already passed, Montholm Island was naturally no longer a small fishing village, but it had already become a city on the island.

Many passenger ships which were heading north and south would pass by this island, and this island was extremely prosperous.

Night gradually fell, but the lights on Montholm Island were shining brightly and brilliantly as though it was still daylight.

They realized that the main street was even more crowded after they entered the city, and it seemed as though they were holding a grand event.

“This is the Holy Welcoming Festival on Montholm Island. It is held once every three years!” At this time, Yume who had been following Gerald suddenly said lightly.

“Holy Welcoming Festival? What holy beings are they welcoming?”

“How would I know?” Yume replied nonchalantly.

Gerald could not help but smile bitterly before he instructed his subordinates to make the arrangements for their accommodation.

“It seems as though there is a Holy Witch Gate here, and the young lord is calling on the people here to hold a festival for him!”

When Yume saw that Gerald was ignoring her, she suddenly spoke up to start a conversation with Gerald.

“It seems as though that young lord is remarkably honorable. He actually wants people to hold a festival for him!” Gerald could not help but nod.

“Could it be that the young lord can actually hold the tsunami back so that it would not affect this island?”

“In truth, this island has never been hit by a tsunami before! It has always been very peaceful here!” Yume said.

“That is truly strange!”

However, since they were already here, aside from settling his subordinates down and arranging for his subsequent plan and itinerary, the most important thing was for Gerald to look for the local official so that he could take a look at the history of the establishment of the city here. This was because the Sun League had visited this island before.

Therefore, Gerald did not know whether there were any traces of the Sun League left behind on this island.

Gerald had already ordered his subordinates to get this matter done even when they were back on the ship.

The place that they had chosen for their accommodation and rest was a luxurious manor on the island.

There was a hot spring on the island.

Gerald was resting in the hot spring as he waited for the local official to come over with the city's historical records.

At this time, there was a group of young men and women who were living an extravagant and luxurious life, and they were extremely loud and full of laughter near Gerald's resting place. This made Gerald feel a little frustrated.

However, Gerald was not the kind of person who would stir up trouble for absolutely no reason at all. Consequently, he simply treated it as though they did not exist.

"Ask her to come over here! My muscles and bones are a little exhausted. Ask her to come over here and help me exercise and massage my muscles!"

Chapter 1134

At this time, a young master snapped his fingers as he instructed his subordinate, who was standing aside.

"Mr. Yonwick, wouldn't that be a bad idea? Lord Yonwick has already said that she is our distinguished guest!"

One of his subordinates kindly reminded him.

Slap!

Without warning, someone suddenly gave him a tight slap across his face.

“Just bring her over here when I asked you to call her over! Why would it be a bad idea? Who said that she is our distinguished guest? She needs help and is asking for a favor from the Yonwick family now!” Mr. Yonwick yelled coldly.

“Mr. Yonwick, forget it. Although that woman is really very beautiful, she is indeed a little too feisty. She is also well-versed in martial arts!” Several of the other young masters reminded him.

“I am not afraid of her! I am just asking her to come over here to give me a massage. My dad does not allow me to touch her, so he is really suffocating me! Can’t I just ask her to come over here to help give me a massage and relieve my muscles?” Mr. Yonwick said as he sneered.

His subordinate was holding his hand over his face.

Not long after that, the woman came over to him.

Her appearance was indeed extremely beautiful, and she attracted the attention of many young men and even women as soon as she came over to him.

“Hahaha. Look! Isn’t she already here? If she dares to reject my invitation to ask her to come over here, I can guarantee that her grandfather will not be able to survive and pull through the night!” Mr. Yonwick said as he laughed

He was already lying next to the hot spring pool as he waited for the woman to massage him.

“Massage him! Moreover, if you were to massage him, you will have to sit on him to massage him!”

When the other young masters saw that the woman was not moving, they surrounded her as they continued roaring and urging her on.

The woman’s face turned red as she blushed, and she had a look of resentment and hatred on her face. If it weren’t because she had been forbidden from doing so, she would already have the intention to kill the man before her now.

She could not help but felt very entangled because she did not know whether she should massage that man or not!

If she refused to massage him, her grandfather and that genius doctor, he...

“Hurry up and sit on him!”

The people around her began shouting and yelling even louder at this time.

“D*mn it! Can you be a little quieter?!”

At this time, Gerald, who was soaking in the hot spring, could not help but take off the towel as he yelled at them.

Gerald’s voice naturally had a very loud and penetrating power.

As soon as he yelled, the few girls were so frightened that they could not help but shut their mouths in an instant.

Several of the other young men also trembled in fear.

Gerald did not want to act this way either. He had initially thought of minding his own business while they played on their own. However, it seemed as though the situation was getting messy and a little out of hand. They were even bullying that woman, and this made Gerald feel a little angry.

Slam!

At this time, Mr. Yonwick, who was obviously the core of the group, suddenly slammed his hands on the surface of the hot spring pool.

In fact, he had also been shocked earlier.

However, after reacting and coming back to his senses, he could not help but feel that he had lost face.

“Young lad! You are really courting death, aren’t you? You actually dared to yell at me, Layton Yonwick?! Are you truly tired of living?!” Layton cursed.

Layton stood up as he spoke, and many young men who were wearing sunglasses quickly gathered around him in an instant.

There were many hot spring pools around, and there were also many guests.

Everyone had witnessed the scene earlier when Gerald had yelled at Layton and the others.

Everyone quietened down as they watched the scene.

“Who is this young man? He actually dares to speak to Mr. Yonwick in this manner on Montholm Island?”

“That’s right! What is his background? He must really be tired of living! He is the first person who ever dared to ask Mr. Yonwick to shut up!”

“This is terrible! Everyone knows that his fate might change terribly just because he yelled at Mr. Yonwick today!”

The people around them stopped frolicking as they looked in the direction of Gerald and the others, one after the other.

Of course, Gerald could not be bothered to wait to see how Mr. Yonwick would deal with him.

He put the towel back on, and he closed his eyes to rest as soon as he had finished yelling at them.

However, the woman who had been bullied by Layton tentatively approached Gerald at this time as she said, “Ger... Gerald?”

Chapter 1135

Upon hearing the woman’s voice, Gerald, who had closed his eyes to rest his mind, could not help but feel a little startled.

He took the towel off before he looked up, only to realize that this woman was not just any other person.

It was actually Jasmine!

To be honest, Gerald had not had any contact with the Fenderson family ever since he had dressed up as the mute Sanderson and saved the entire Fenderson family back in Salford Province.

He helped Xavia settle down in Salford Province and had even given the family's industry in Salford Province to Xavia.

He had not seen Jasmine for over a year now.

Unexpectedly, who would have thought that he would run into Jasmine here today, and it seemed as though there had been some changes. Otherwise, why would the dignified young lady of the Fenderson family end up in this state?

Gerald stood up.

"Jasmine, why are you here?"

"It is truly you, Gerald! I never expected to meet you here!"

Jasmine's face flushed red, and tears welled up in her eyes.

As she spoke, Jasmine could not help but run toward Gerald as she threw herself into his arms.

It had already been such a long time, and there had been no news at all about Gerald throughout this whole time. There had also been so many changes. Now that this man was standing before her again, Jasmine could not help but feel as though the heavy boulder that she had had in her heart all this while had suddenly been lifted at this very moment.

"It's okay. Everything is going to be fine." Gerald comforted her.

"Hey! Hey! The both of you are still in the mood to flirt with one another?! Why, Jasmine? Is this young man one of your little lovers from Salford Province?" Layton asked coldly.

He had a very ugly expression on his face at this time. After all, he was already very upset and enraged after getting yelled at.

Now, the woman that he was interested in had actually run into another man's arms.

Layton felt as though he had been made a cuckold in public. As a man, he naturally could not tolerate this kind of humiliation and insult.

“D*mn it! I will let you witness how your little lover is going to die here today, then!”

Layton ground his teeth.

Many people around them hurriedly took a few steps back.

This was because everyone on Montholm Island knew that Mr. Yonwick really dared to kill people.

Everyone was afraid that they would get involved in this matter. Thus, they wanted to stay as far away as they possibly could from this situation.

“Layton, this is all my fault. My grandfather and the genius doctor are also under your control because of me! You can deal with me if you want to, but don’t do anything to harm my friend!”

Jasmine came to a realization, and she realized how ignorant and reckless she had been when she ran into Gerald’s embrace out of excitement.

Layton was very narrow-minded, and she would have probably implicated Gerald into this situation by acting that way.

So, she hurriedly let go of Gerald as she tried to explain herself to Layton.

“Gerald, you should leave this place as soon as possible!” Jasmine said as she lowered her head.

“It’s fine. Don’t worry. He will not be able to do anything to harm you as long as I am around!” Gerald said and he shook his head and smiled wryly as he looked at Jasmine.

“Gerald, I know that you are very powerful. I know that you are the young master of the Crawford family, but everyone on Montholm Island, especially the Yonwick family, does not fear any powerful or influential families at all. On the contrary, there

are many things that you would never be able to imagine that exist in this world! Layton will really kill you! You should hurry up and leave!” Jasmine said anxiously.

“You want to leave? I am afraid that it will not be that easy. I don’t care whether you are the young master of the Crawford family or the Xiques family. Since you are here on Montholm Island, you will have to lower your head in front of the Yonwick family. Men, grab hold of him now!” Layton said as he waved his hand.

He had already thought about it. He wanted to play around and teach Jasmine’s little lover a lesson first before he killed him.

About seven to eight bodyguards ran directly toward Gerald at this time.

“Stay behind me!”

Gerald grabbed hold of Jasmine as he pulled her behind him.

“Watch out!”

At this time, those men had already reached out their fists toward Gerald’s face.

Jasmine yelled out worriedly.

Unexpectedly, Gerald turned his head around and smiled at Jasmine as he said calmly, “Don’t be afraid. They will not be able to touch me!”

Boom!

As he was speaking, someone had already punched Gerald in the chest.

There was a muffled noise.

Chapter 1136

After that, there was a crisp sound.

Ouch!

After that, the man who had stepped forward and taken the lead to punch Gerald was clutching his fist, and his face had already turned pale as he yelled out in pain.

This was because it felt as though his punch just now had not hit a person's body, but he felt as though he had punched an extremely tough and majestic iceberg.

His arm bone was already shattered, and his hand bones had already shattered into pieces.

As the nerves of the fingertips were linked to a person's heart, how could an ordinary man endure this kind of extreme pain?

Gerald could only shake his head as he looked at the man. After that, he kicked that man, and the man's knee cap bent backward at a different and awkward angle before he flew out directly.

The other men were startled for a moment before they rushed directly at Gerald again.

Gerald did the same thing, and he simply brushed his feet a couple of times before the several men in front of him were all holding onto their kneecaps as they screamed in pain after falling to the ground.

Layton's pupils suddenly shrank as he witnessed the scene before him.

All of his subordinates were masters that he had carefully selected, but they were not this man's opponent at all.

Gerald had easily defeated all of them within ten seconds.

At this time, Gerald walked toward Layton.

"You were shouting all the time that you wanted someone to massage your muscles for you, right?" Gerald sneered.

"You... what are you going to do?! This is... Ahhh!"

Layton backed away as he tried to warn Gerald at the same time.

However, before he could even finish his sentence, Gerald had already grabbed him by the collar with one hand before throwing him into the air.

Click! Click!

Gerald grabbed hold of Layton's arms as he spun him around in the air.

Not long after that, Layton's arm broke, and he could not help but scream out in pain.

After that, Gerald threw him out again, and Layton's body fell and landed directly on the lamp bracket that was at the side.

He could not move his whole body, and he could only scream out in pain.

Everyone was shocked and frightened, and their mouths were hanging wide open even though they did not dare to say anything at all.

This was Mr. Yonwick, but his opponent seemed to be even more ruthless and stronger as compared to him.

He had actually broken Mr. Yonwick's arms!

Jasmine was also extremely surprised, and she could only cover her mouth in shock.

One and a half years ago, Gerald was still a thin and frail young man who had had some skills and abilities.

However, it seemed as though his skills and abilities had reached a terrifying point!

At this moment, rows of bodyguards dressed in black came running toward their direction.

When the other guests saw the imposing manner of the bodyguards who were clothed in black, they were even more frightened, and they hurriedly made way to avoid them.

However, this group of bodyguards did not even bother to look at the men who were howling as they lay on the ground.

Instead, they walked directly toward Gerald.

“Mr. Crawford, we have already gotten in touch with that person. He is already preparing the materials now, and he will come over to meet you later tonight!” One of the bodyguards said.

“Okay!” Gerald nodded.

After that, Gerald looked at Jasmine, who was still a little startled, before he asked, “Jasmine, I heard you talking about something related to Lord Fenderson as well as my disciple, Joshua. What happened exactly?”

Gerald had headed to Aurous Hill directly to settle the score with the Moldell family immediately after he had saved the Fenderson family. At that time, he had taught Joshua some medical skills and told him to help the Fenderson family as much as he possibly could.

Since they did not have any stronger enemy going against them anymore, even if the Fenderson family could not recover their full strength, they should be able to live a well and influential life.

But now, the Fenderson family had actually ended up in this state.

“I... I...”

Jasmine could not hold it back anymore, and she burst into tears. When Gerald saw that she could not speak, he brought her back to his room.

Outside, several of Layton’s friends were all standing under the lamp bracket as they stared at Layton, who was hanging more than a dozen meters above them. At this moment, his face was becoming paler and paler by the moment, and blood was constantly flowing out of his mouth.

Moreover, it seemed as though he was about to lose his consciousness and would die at any time.

Layton's friends were all frightened to death, and they hurriedly took out their cell phones to make phone calls...

Chapter 1137

After going into the room, Jasmine told Gerald about some things that had happened after they had come to Montholm Island about three months ago.

It turned out that Mindy had met with a car accident one year ago when she had been trying to find the mute Sanderson, and she had ended up in a vegetative state.

Lord Fenderson had initially thought that the Fenderson family had already pulled through the worse after he had finally reconciled with his daughter and made amends with the Crawford family. He thought that he would finally be able to enjoy his old age.

Unexpectedly, Mindy had actually met with this kind of mishap.

The old man had fallen ill after worrying too much about his granddaughter.

Jasmine had hurriedly looked for the genius doctor. In truth, the genius doctor had never given up on treating Mindy's condition all this while, but Lord Fenderson had also fallen ill at this time.

The genius doctor began looking for countermeasures according to the prescription that had been given to him.

He had finally found the prescription that he could use to treat both of them, but unfortunately, he lacked one of the ingredients for the prescription.

That ingredient was wisteria.

However, they could not find wisteria on the mainland, and it was very scarce everywhere.

Jasmine had eventually found out that there was wisteria growing on Montholm Island. As for this wisteria flower, it only had a shelf life of three days after getting plucked.

There was no other way to transport it.

So, three months ago, Jasmine had proposed to bring her grandfather and sister to Montholm Island with her, and she had asked Master Jenkinson to come along with them.

As for everything that had happened thereafter, the Yonwick family had gotten involved in this matter.

After arriving at Montholm Island, Jasmine had already paid a lot of money, but the head of the Yonwick family insisted on making Jasmine stay behind for some reason. He said that the young lord had taken an interest in her.

The Yonwick family wanted to act as a matchmaker.

Jasmine was naturally unwilling to agree to this matter, and she had gotten into a conflict and confrontation with the Yonwick family because of this matter. The Fenderson family's forces had also come forward, and as a result, every one of them had sunk to the bottom of the sea.

The Yonwick family had kidnapped her grandfather, sister, and the genius doctor in order to force Jasmine to agree to the match.

That was how things had ended up in this state.

After listening to Jasmine's explanation, Gerald felt a hint of self-blame and self-reproach deep within his heart. This was because after listening to Jasmine's careful explanation, it seemed as though he had something to do with the root of the problem.

He had a unshirkable responsibility in this matter.

"Gerald, Layton is Linus Yonwick's only son. Since you've injured his son so severely, he will not let you off so easily. This is all my fault! Gerald, since there is still time, you should hurry up and leave now!" Jasmine persuaded as she grabbed hold of Gerald's arm.

"There is a top master in the Yonwick family, and he is extraordinarily powerful. He was the one who intercepted the Fenderson family's fleet. He has an exceptionally powerful skill and ability, and it seems as though he is related to the Holy Witchcraft here. Gerald, you should really leave now!" Jasmine said again.

“Leave? Why should I leave? Since I have already found out about your matter, you don’t have to worry anymore. You can rest assured that I will certainly rescue Lord Fenderson and the others!” Gerald said as he smiled wryly.

Jasmine could not help but feel very moved at this time. However, the more things were this way, the more she felt as though she could not implicate Gerald in this matter.

“Come. Let’s go! I believe it won’t be long before the members of the Yonwick family come here. As you have just said. The precious young master of the Yonwick family is in my hands now. So, if he doesn't want anything to happen to his precious son, he should make a deal with me!” Gerald replied coldly.

After that, he walked outside.

Many people were surrounding the side of the hot spring pool at this time.

Everyone was pointing at Layton, who was about to fall unconscious and close to dying at this time.

“What?! Who is that brave and courageous? He actually dared to lay a finger on my son?!”

In the Yonwick Manor on Montholm Island, a middle-aged man was very furious and enraged at this time.

His face twitched slightly.

“I do not know. It seems as though his last name is Crawford. Everyone is referring to him as Mr. Crawford. He is indeed very skillful and powerful. Even a dozen bodyguards cannot hold him back for even ten seconds. The young master had been thrown up into the air by him, and he is being tortured at this time. He is almost out of breath now!”

A few of Layton’s friends cried out.

“He is truly courting his own death!” Linus growled as he clenched his fists.

“Hurry up and call the master here! Tell him to come with me to rescue Layton!” Linus roared.

All of the young men looked up as soon as they heard the word 'master'.

Indeed. If the master of the Yonwick family were to step up and take action, who would dare to continue causing trouble for the Yonwick family? That young brat would undoubtedly be dead!

Chapter 1138

The Yonwick family made a move, and many members of the family moved out as they headed directly to the Enchanted Manor.

When Linus arrived, he saw a young man sipping a cup of tea as he sat under the lamp bracket. Meanwhile, Layton, who was already pale because of the blood loss, had already lost his consciousness a long time ago.

"Even if Layton was wrong, don't you think that your actions are too vicious and ruthless?! You truly do not have any respect for the Yonwick family at all!"

Linus felt terribly distressed, and a hint of hatred and resentment flashed through his eyes.

"I am already giving you a lot of face by not killing him. Do you know what it means to be ruthless and vicious? You captured my disciple as well as one of my elders, and you are even threatening my friend. How do you intend to settle this score with me?" Gerald asked as he put down his teacup.

"Hahaha! It turns out that the Fenderson family has summoned another one of their helpers here. It is no wonder. Unfortunately, no matter how strong or powerful the Fenderson family is, they cannot be compared to the Yonwick family!" Linus said.

"Lord Yonwick, why are you wasting so much time talking nonsense to him? You should just ask the master to kill him now! Let him witness how powerful the Yonwick family is!"

"That's right! I want him to turn into ashes so that we can avenge Layton!"

A few of Layton's friends also shouted out loud at this time.

"Master, come! Everything is up to you now!"

As for Linus, he also had a deep look in his eyes as he automatically made way for the master.

Afterward, an old man slowly walked along the road where the crowd of people had voluntarily made way for him to pass.

He had a pair of triangular eyes, and when he narrowed his eyes, he looked like a poisonous snake that was hissing.

This gave everyone the chills.

The old man walked over slowly before he stood still amongst the crowd of people.

At the same time, he also turned around to look at Gerald.

However, the hyped-up Yonwick family did not notice that the master's eyelids were twitching profusely at this time, and it seemed as though his legs were also trembling involuntarily.

As for Jasmine, she was extremely nervous, and her palms were already sweaty at this time as she held tightly onto Gerald's sleeves.

In the next instant, everyone's eyes widened in disbelief.

Bam! A loud sound was heard.

Everyone saw the master, who was more than fifty years old, suddenly kneel in front of Gerald.

"Mr. Crawford... please spare my life!"

The master suddenly shouted, and his face had already turned pale in an instant.

As for Linus, he could not help but stare at the master in disbelief as he asked, "Master, you...?"

"Mr. Crawford... please spare my life! I have no intentions of offending you!" The master hurriedly said.

Jasmine took a deep breath as she covered her mouth in shock.

She had been worried to death just now, but at this time...

“Kort, I asked Christopher to execute you according to the family law. However, I never expected him to substitute one valuable item with another. You actually came all the way here!” Gerald sneered.

The old man in front of him was none other than KortMoldell.

Gerald had asked Christopher to execute Kort per the family law, but it seemed as though Christopher had violated the rules and done otherwise.

It seemed as though Christopher also knew very well that the future of the Moldell family would depend entirely on Kort. As for Christopher, he was participating in the pledge of the holy water with Gerald.

That sly old man!

Kort felt even more uncomfortable at this time. He was in hiding, and he had really thought that he had managed to hide at the ends of the earth now. So, he had thought that Gerald would never be able to find out about his whereabouts.

However, a person would never be able to hide for a lifetime, and he would always have to pay his debts one day.

Kort already knew very well that the current Gerald was no longer who he used to be. Even Christopher was not his opponent.

Therefore, Kort had already given up all thoughts about taking revenge on Gerald, and he simply wanted to keep his own life.

“Master, why are you acting like this?”

Linus was puzzled, and he could not understand the situation at all.

“Do you remember the Mr. Crawford I told you about? He annihilated the Schuyler family and slaughtered the Long family. The reason why I came all the way here was because I had nowhere else to go as I was hiding from him!”

Kort's face had already turned pale.

Linus asked in surprise, "Could it be that...?!"

"It is him! He is Mr. Crawford!"

Chapter 1139

As Kort finished speaking, he had already broken out in cold sweat.

Linus took a deep breath at this time.

As Kort was a guest that the Holy Witchcraft had sent to the Yonwick family, Kort would naturally have spoken about some of his painful past experiences while they were chatting amongst themselves.

This was especially so for this Mr. Crawford, who had slaughtered several big and prestigious families, one after the other. Linus felt even more fearful at this time.

This was because based on Kort's description of this particular Mr. Crawford, he might look very honest on the surface, but he was actually very narrow-minded and revengeful.

As long as anyone provoked him, he would certainly go to the ends of the earth to track the person down and settle the score with him.

To put it bluntly, as soon as he provoked this man, he would never be able to live in peace for the rest of his life if he did not give Gerald a satisfactory answer.

At that time, Linus had also secretly reminded himself that he should never mess with such people.

Unexpectedly, what he feared the most would truly happen.

Presently, he had a very shocked and terrified expression on his face.

As for Jasmine, she was also staring at Gerald with a shocked and startled expression on her face.

“Mr. Crawford, I was ignorant, and I unintentionally offended you because of that. I have already heard of your great reputation from a long time ago!”

Linus hurriedly bowed respectfully at a ninety-degree angle, and his face had already turned pale at this time.

Several of Layton’s friends also swallowed as they took a step back.

The people at the side were pointing at them with fearful expressions on their faces.

“Who is that man?! Why is Mr. Yonwick so afraid of him?”

“That’s right. Even that extraordinary master knelt in front of him immediately when he saw him! Who could he possibly be?!”

Everyone talked amongst themselves.

“So, can my friends leave with me now?” Gerald asked casually.

“Yes... yes, but Mr. Crawford, it was not our intention to threaten and blackmail Miss Jasmine. It was the young lord from the Holy Witchcraft who had taken a liking to Miss Jasmine, but she turned him down and refused to agree to the match. So, the young lord ordered us to capture her family members and use them to threaten her instead!”

“Although the Yonwick family has a great reputation and career on Montholm Island, to put it bluntly, we are nothing more than puppets of the Holy Witchcraft. We had no choice but to do so!” Linus hurriedly explained.

“If you put it that way, are you saying that you are not only a good person, but that you are also a victim, then?” Gerald asked as he glared coldly at him.

As soon as Gerald made his remark, Linus could not help but feel a little startled as he broke out in cold sweat.

He was so frightened that he was completely at a loss for words.

Linus honestly did not expect that Gerald would be so wise and sophisticated at such a young age. Indeed, how could he even be considered a good person?

“So many people are seeking after the Holy Witchcraft, but the people from the Holy Witchcraft are actually doing this kind of vicious and despicable thing! It seems as though it is not worthy of its name at all!”

After speaking, Gerald looked at Kort, who was being quiet, and he asked, “It seems as though you have taken refuge with the Holy Witchcraft. So, what kind of religion is this? Also, what is the background and origins of this young lord that you are talking about?”

Kort naturally did not dare to hide the truth from Gerald, and he hurriedly explained, “The Holy Witchcraft has nearly a hundred years of history, and it has a very strong foundation on Montholm Island. The internal members of the organization are very complicated, and I... I have no way of getting close to the internal core members of the Holy Witchcraft either. However, I used to be an elder of the Holy Witchcraft many years ago, and I begged them to take me in. As for the other internal core members of the organization, their whereabouts and identities are all concealed. Of course, the young lord is an exception. On the contrary, he is very high-profile!”

Kort paused for a moment before he said, “Although this young lord is highly sought after and worshipped by many, he is an overall villain who would rape, commit adultery, and also commit all sorts of wicked crimes as he pleases!”

Kort’s words were merciless.

However, during this process, Linus, who was bowing, could not help but glance at Kort with a strange expression on his face.

Gerald naturally saw the look on Linus’s face too.

Gerald glanced at Linus coldly. It seemed as though this old man was full of schemes.

On the contrary, Kort was telling him everything because he was honestly afraid of his strength and power.

“When would he usually come out?” Gerald asked again.

“Since it is the Holy Welcoming Festival tonight, he will surely participate in the event. The Holy Witchcraft has a strange tradition, and that is no sexual intercourse is allowed for the three months before the Holy Welcoming Festival. As soon as the Holy Welcoming Festival passes tonight, he will naturally come and look for... come and look for...”

As Kort spoke, he glanced at Jasmine, and he did not continue speaking anymore.

“He will be coming tonight?”

Chapter 1140

Gerald sneered.

“That’s right!” Linus nodded slightly.

“Alright, then. In that case, I will be waiting for him to come tonight. I really want to see what kind of background and origins this young lord has!” Gerald said as he smiled wryly.

Linus could not help break out in cold sweat.

“Okay, then. I will go and release Lord Fenderson, the genius doctor, and the others. But Mr. Crawford, what about my ignorant son, then?”

Linus asked as he looked at Layton in distress.

After that, Gerald snapped his fingers, and a burst of light flickered, and the lamp bracket broke directly with a bang.

Layton then fell heavily to the ground.

“Airbending skill?!”

Kort, who was kneeling on the ground, was shocked.

Jasmine was also staring at Gerald in disbelief. At this moment, Gerald seemed to have changed a lot compared to how he was a year ago.

“Mr. Crawford, if there is nothing else, we will retreat first!” Linus said fearfully at this time.

“Wait a minute!”

Gerald stopped them. “KortMoldell, it seems as though we have not settled the score between the both of us yet!”

Kort was still kneeling on the ground, and he did not dare to get up.

After that, he suddenly looked up.

Then, he gathered all of the strength in his body before he suddenly exhaled.

Boom!

White smoke exploded directly from his body as if a boiler had exploded.

He had abolished all of his inner strength!

At this moment, he was lying limp on the ground, and he was a disabled old man who looked as though he had suddenly aged a lot in an instant.

“I have already exhausted and abolished all of my inner strength. I do not have much longer to live now. Mr. Crawford, are you satisfied now?” Kort said in a hoarse voice as he lay on the ground.

Gerald glanced at him indifferently before he said, “Although you have already abolished your inner strength, a person’s heart cannot be abolished. Back then, you forced me into desperation, and I nearly died in your hands a couple of times. Many members of the Crawford family also died at your hands. Since you have willingly abolished your inner strength today, I will allow you to die a dignified death! I will give you three days to prepare for your own funeral.”

After he was done speaking, Gerald turned around and left, leaving behind Linus, who was dead silent, and Kort, who was left lying on the ground as he closed his eyes because they were filled with tears.

Kort had initially thought that he would be able to pull through these tough times and live long enough to see his eldest son who was far away in the military area.

It was a pity that the current Gerald was no longer the same indecisive and irresolute person of one and a half years ago who could easily be taken advantage of!

“Gerald, you... what did you experience over this one and a half years?”

Jasmine asked as she was moved and also very curious after returning to Gerald’s room.

“And Gerald, I heard KortMoldell saying that you were the one who slaughtered and annihilated the entire Schuyler family back then?”

Jasmine could not imagine that the weak and honest young man could actually undergo such a big and earth-shattering change.

“I will slowly explain this matter to you in the future!”

As he spoke, Gerald took off his shirt.

“Ahh? Gerald... you... what are you doing?!”

Jasmine’s heartbeat sped up in an instant when she saw Gerald’s strong and muscular body. She could not help but cover her eyes a little shyly.

“I am changing my shirt. What else would I be doing? That young lord is going to try and do something to you tonight. I will have to see what kind of origin and background he has! What did you think I was going to do?” Gerald said as he smiled wryly.

As he spoke, Gerald had already changed into a casual outfit.

“What else would I think you were going to do?!”

As for Jasmine, she could only pout slightly at this time.

‘That’s right. Gerald was in love with someone else. What could he possibly do to me, anyway? Hahaha. Jasmine, you are just overthinking things. You really are a joke.’

Jasmine could not help but feel a little lost and disappointed...

Chapter 1141

Both Lord Fenderson and Joshua were sent back to the apartment less than an hour later. By that time, however, Lord Fenderson was already seriously ill and Mindy was still in a coma.

Seeing this, Gerald skipped the pleasantries with Joshua and immediately provided him with new prescriptions for the two individuals.

Once he was done with that, Gerald headed out into the streets. Since it was already evening, it was only logical for the young lord to have returned home by now.

As he walked on, Gerald saw how lively the streets currently were, with many pedestrians getting immersed in the exciting atmosphere.

‘Hearing the name of the Holy Witchcraft alone usually prompts people to associate it with feelings of wickedness... What did that group of people do? And why are there so many who have come over to worship them?’ Gerald thought to himself.

It wasn’t long before he arrived at the door of Linus’s Yonwick Manor.

Since the manor was the reception point for the young lord’s arrival, there was already a near-impenetrable crowd by the time Gerald got there.

Standing at the manor’s entrance, were several young apprentices of the Yonwick family who had been tasked with receiving the important guests.

Due to that, it was no wonder why Gerald’s path was blocked by them when he tried to enter.

“Hey now, you can’t just enter the manor all willy-nilly! Who even allowed you entry?”

“Oh? Didn’t Linus tell you I was coming?” replied Gerald.

“Who the hell even are you? How dare you address my uncle by his name! I’ll have you know that all the guests present today are both influential and powerful people, many of whom are well over the age of fifty! Nice try, but I’ve had my share of opportunists like you!” shouted the youth coldly in return.

“There’s no need to talk to him that way... After all, a single glance is all it takes to be able to tell that he comes from foreign lands! Maybe he just wanted to enter to have a look after seeing so many people going in and out of the manor! The extravagance of this place could also have piqued his interest! So again, there’s no need to be so fierce!” said a charming woman as she smiled subtly while looking at Gerald.

From the way she spoke, it was evident that the woman had a good first impression of Gerald. After all, not only did his body seem to be in tiptop condition, he also looked extraordinarily friendly. The combination of the two gave Gerald the look of a learned gentleman. It was the reason why she had spoken up for him.

Just like how men were susceptible to helping beautiful women, women—like her—were also prone to aiding handsome men.

“Regardless, do you truly wish to enter...?” asked the woman, continuing to smile.

Looking more closely at her, Gerald could see that she seemed to be in her twenties. Her hair had also been tied in a ponytail and her smile was particularly sweet.

Seeing that he wasn’t answering her question, the woman then added, “...You know, we’re a little understaffed right now... Why don’t you come along inside with me?”

Before Gerald could even reply, the woman was already dragging Gerald into the manor like how a parent would drag their child.

“Humph! That younger sister of mine is way too kind... Since Queeny’s cried before just by seeing small animals die, it wouldn’t surprise me that she felt compassionate toward him just because I scolded him a little earlier! Sometimes I wonder if she truly is a Yonwick!” muttered the man to himself as he watched Queena Yonwick lead Gerald deeper into the manor.

After walking for a while, Queena eventually stopped before saying, “Well, this is the place! That, over there, is Mr. Yonwick, and I’ve already notified him about your presence. If any of the guests require any help, just head over to them and lend them a hand! I’ll be heading out there myself to serve them as well!”

Flashing him a smile, she then waved at him before leaving.

“...That young woman really is nothing like the other Yonwicks—at least the ones I’ve come across before—at all! What an enthusiastic person!” muttered Gerald to himself as he couldn’t help but smile in resignation. Regardless, that woman truly was rather interesting.

As he had said, however, she was a little too enthusiastic as well. It made him embarrassed to admit to her that he was actually here to assassinate people. Some people were certainly harder to reject than others.

“Hmm? Hey, you there! You were the one Mr. Yonwick called over, right? Come over here already and serve us some drinks!” shouted a young man rather unceremoniously.

The one who had called out to Gerald was seated—around one of the many tables that had been placed outside the manor—alongside a few other young men and women.

Since they had noticed that it was Queena who had brought him here,—and they knew for a fact that Mr. Yonwick had put her in charge of miscellaneous tasks—putting two and two together, they figured that Gerald was under her, which meant that he had the same tasks that she did.

Hearing that, a frown formed on Gerald’s face.

While he was slightly angry by the order, he knew that since he hadn’t rejected Queena’s enthusiastic offer earlier, it was akin to him agreeing with her suggestion.

With that in mind, Gerald knew that it would be imprudent of him to vent his anger out just like that.

Chapter 1142

Calming himself, he then walked over to the group while occasionally glancing at the entrance.

As he picked up a teapot to refill the empty cups at the table, one of the women who had heavy makeup on—as did the others—said, “You know, you look pretty handsome up-close! Still, you’re not quite my cup of tea! Only Queena would fall for someone like you!”

“Oh? Could you actually be Queena’s pretty boy?” asked another woman.

“Humph! As if someone like him would ever be qualified to be hers!” replied a third woman rather contemptuously.

After saying that, the women seemed to lose interest in him and they quickly found themselves resuming their previous topic of conversation.

“Anyway, I’m very happy now! Haha! At long last, someone finally took the blame for me!” said another woman from that group who looked to be slightly older than Gerald.

“Oh? What sort of blame, Freya?” asked one of her friends.

“Just some incident none of you were probably aware of... Actually, I think it’s fine for me to tell you about it now! You see, the Yonwicks have always had a secret deal with the young lord of the Holy Witchcraft!”

“...A deal?” asked the women who were now growing increasingly curious.

“Indeed! You see, according to the deal, over ten beautiful women have to be sent to the young lord yearly. As you may have already guessed, some of them come from the Yonwick family as well!” replied Freya.

“What? You’re not pulling our leg, are you?”

“Is there even a reason for me to do that? Regardless, my dad told me some time ago that I was initially one of the chosen beauties to be sent over to him! However, since a beauty from the Fenderson family came over about three months ago, my dad betrayed her just to protect me!” explained Freya as she laughed.

“How unexpected... To think that the young lord was actually such a person! It’s quite hard to even imagine!”

“I know right? Even I used to think that the young lord was both pure and flawless. Never could I have imagined that he was this disgusting in reality! Either way, this is a major secret that, if exposed, would ruin him for sure! As a result, it’s a great taboo for the people from Montholm Island to talk about this! Aside from the members of our family and a few other people on Montholm Island, I’m pretty sure that nobody else knows about this secret! I’m just sharing this with you because I’m so happy today!” replied Freya.

“Well, I’ve heard rumors about this a few years back myself, so I wouldn’t call it a tightly kept secret...” muttered one of her friends.

“Oh? Well I’m sure that you’ve definitely never heard of what I’m about to tell you! It’s something that my dad’s been hiding from my family! I’m pretty sure that I’m the only other Yonwick who knows about this!” whispered Freya in a slightly saddened tone.

“What are all of you talking about, cousin?” asked Queena as she led a few rich, young heirs over from the door. As the newcomers smiled at those from the initial group, Queena took the chance to wave at Gerald while greeting him.

“You interrupted Freya just as she was about to share some secrets with us! Come over and sit with us! Quickly!”

“Secrets?”

“Yeah! You see, an incident happened this afternoon... You all know Layton, right? My incapable younger brother? Well, something happened to him! Before I go on, though, do all of you know who Master Moldell is?” asked Freya.

“But of course we do!”

It didn’t come as a surprise for any of them that Freya called her younger brother ‘incapable’. After all, those from the Yonwick family were well aware that she didn’t have a good relationship with Layton.

This was mostly due to the fact that Layton was the only male descendant of the family. As a result, Linus adored Layton a lot and tended to spoil him. With Freya, Linus usually only gave her a cold shoulder, which explained her clear dissatisfaction with Layton.

“Excellent. Moving on, I earlier saw Master Moldell and my younger brother being carried into the manor from the backdoor... It was sheer coincidence that I saw them back then since I was planning to sneak out the backdoor to have some fun!”

“Oh, d*mn! How did Layton get hurt? Actually, the more important question is how did Master Moldell get hurt? We’ve all seen his immense skill before! To think that someone would actually manage to defeat him on Montholm Island!”

Everyone clearly found that news hard to believe. Some of the young men were even exchanging terrified glances with each other as Freya continued whispering, “While I’m not too sure about the details of what actually happened, after eavesdropping

on my dad while he was talking to a few of his subordinates, I heard the name, 'Mr. Crawford' being mentioned. Apparently that person has an extremely powerful background!"

Chapter 1143

"Mr. Crawford?" muttered the women in surprise.

"...Now where have I heard that name before... I can't recall much about that person..."

"Humph! I've done some investigating on him, and trust me when I say that you'll all be terrified to death upon hearing what I found out about him!" replied Freya.

"Go on..."

"As I've said before, after asking around, I heard from some people that this Mr. Crawford person has an extremely powerful background! The fortune he owns is near-unimaginable for ordinary people, you know? In fact, he's the kind of person who would be able to hand you any amount of money immediately should he allow you to request for any!" explained Freya as her eyes were filled with jealousy.

"What? Could there truly be a rich heir like that?" asked a few of the present men with resentment in their voices, clearly jealous as well.

"It's all true! Not only is he rich, but he's extremely capable as well! I'll say it right now that he's nowhere near comparable to any of you hedonistic rich heirs!" replied Freya while looking at the group of men—who were all younger than her—as she shook her head.

"So what if we're incomparable? It's not like we want to be compared to him either!" replied one of the men as they all took turns lowering their heads.

"Well, even if he's the richest person in the world, I believe that no human will truly be able to live life without having any worries, regardless of how much wealth one owns... I'm sure he has to deal with different kinds of issues that normal people like us can't even hope to comprehend... Regardless, problems definitely still exist for him so there's no need for all of you to feel ashamed just because we're all a little inferior to him," said Queena at that moment as she smiled.

Her words were like music to the men's ears, and they instantly found themselves feeling much better.

Gerald himself turned to look at Queena. Since he was so used to seeing materialistic women like Alice and Xavia by this point, he knew that women like Queena were rather rare in today's world. With that in mind, he found himself liking her a bit more after hearing what she had to say.

After all, what she had said was true. So what if he owned half of the world's fortune? He still couldn't change both his and his family's destiny... He couldn't even protect the woman he loved. No matter who it was, humans would always have worries.

As he was deep in thought, the tea he was pouring into Freya's cup ended up over spilling, causing quite a bit of it to spill onto Freya's clothes!

"What- You... You b*stard!" screamed Freya who immediately stood up as she felt the scalding tea on her body.

Looking greatly offended, she then glared daggers at Gerald before shouting, "Are you blind or something?!"

By then, her roars of fury had attracted the attention of several of the guests there.

Clearly still dissatisfied with Gerald, the aggressive woman then raised her palm, fully prepared to slap him! After all, Gerald was just a mere servant for all she knew. To think that he would dare offend her before everyone!

The others knew better than to step in. After all, they were all aware that once Freya got into a bad temper, she wasn't someone who could be easily trifled with.

However, when her hand was just inches away from Gerald's cheek, she immediately retracted it the moment she felt an immense pain on her palm that felt like a pinprick!

"Ow! M-my hand! I-it hurts!" wailed Freya as she burst into tears while holding onto her now bleeding hand.

"You b*stard! How dare you attack Freya?! You're courting death for sure!"

While the men didn't really know what Gerald had used to injure Freya, they at least assumed that he had secretly attacked her. With all of them coming to the same conclusion, it was natural for all of them to be infuriated!

Just as they were about to make a move on him, however, a—simultaneously—wrath-filled and terrified voice shouted, "Cease this immediately! What are all of you doing?!"

Hearing that, the men who were about to deal with Gerald immediately froze in place. Everyone else at the scene went silent as well.

After all, the person who had shouted was none other than the Yonwick family's master, Linus!

Following that, the pale-faced man quickly rushed over to where Gerald was standing. Gerald himself had been standing there with his hands behind his back, an indifferent expression on his face.

Seconds later, three loud and distinct slaps could be heard... And the three men who had initially planned to retaliate against Gerald ended up falling to the floor due to the immense impact of the slaps!

"D-dad?! What are you doing?! They were just trying to seek justice for me! Just look at that lowly servant! He's the one who hurt my hand!" shouted Freya as she stomped a foot on the ground in her frustration after seeing her cousins being slapped instead.

The immediate response she got from Linus, however, was a tight slap to her face!

Chapter 1144

"How daring can you be?! A lowly servant? It seems that all of you are truly oblivious as to how much you're just begging to die!" roared Linus as his lips twitched.

Now crying even harder after receiving the slap, Freya—who simply couldn't reconcile with the fact that she was getting punished instead of the servant—then retorted, "But it's the lowly servant's fault for hurting me, dad! Why are you hitting us instead?!"

She instantly received a second slap from Linus as he roared, "How dare you continue speaking so ruthlessly! If you know what's good for you then quickly apologize to Mr. Crawford!"

After fiercely warning her, Linus immediately bowed at Gerald before saying, "I apologize if this ignorant young woman offended you, Mr. Crawford! Please forgive her!"

"...H-huh...?" muttered Freya who truly hadn't expected her father to actually bow to that servant.

She wasn't the only one stupefied either. Everyone present was now utterly flabbergasted and in disbelief at what they were currently witnessing.

"I won't hold it against her just because I wish to show Queena some respect. However, I strongly suggest that you advise your daughter against slapping anyone as she pleases!" replied Gerald coldly as he glared at Freya.

Hearing that, Freya found herself blushing as she said, "...Y-you... Could you be... the mysterious Mr. Crawford from Northbay...?"

Gulping, she then thought to herself, 'He's the legendary rich heir...?'

"You silly girl! Thankfully, Mr. Crawford didn't take your actions to heart! The rest of you better hurry up and apologize to him as well!" ordered Linus.

While the others had earlier assumed that Gerald was just a very rich person—after hearing Freya's description of him—none of them had expected him to be this terrifying, face to face!

"...I-I'm sorry!" shouted Freya as she immediately lowered her head while blushing as she apologized. Though it simply felt incredulous, Freya knew that the man before her was the real deal after seeing how respectful her father was toward him.

As she did that, she snuck a few peeks at him—with her beautiful eyes—to observe his reaction to her apology.

In her mind, she was wondering if their simple dispute could end up with her having a romantic affair with that filthy rich man. To her utter dismay, he didn't even look at her!

The fact that Gerald was looking to the side while she was apologizing made Freya feel deeply disappointed.

As for the others present, none of them even dared to say a word.

Queena herself was currently looking at Gerald rather curiously, occasionally blinking her large eyes.

At that moment, some noise could be heard coming from a crowd outside. Hearing the commotion, both Gerald and Linus turned their attention toward the sound's direction.

Soon after, both men watched as thirty-two peculiar-dressed people made their way toward them. On their shoulders, was a massive palanquin that honestly looked like a living room of sorts.

Sitting atop a large chair on the palanquin, was a young man donning black robes, and following the group on both sides were two old men.

Any pedestrians whom they passed by instantly bowed at the magnificent procession.

It was Gerald's first time seeing such a dominant array as well. After all, even emperors during ancient times didn't travel about atop palanquins carried by thirty-two people.

"Is he the young lord?" asked Gerald with a frigid tone.

"Y-yes, Mr. Crawford!" replied Linus as he wiped the sweat off his forehead, knowing that he was truly between a rock and a hard place at the moment.

Currently standing between what could very well be two gods of death, he knew that offending any one of them could result in his entire family getting exterminated. There was no way he could afford to offend either one of them.

With that in mind, he immediately bowed and welcomed the young lord after respectfully answering Gerald's question.

Everyone else present did the same as well, bowing as respectfully as they could.

Seeing that, the two men standing by the palanquin nodded in satisfaction. However, the moment they looked at Gerald, they couldn't help but furrow their brows.

After all, Gerald was simply standing there while looking at them coldly, both his hands in his pockets.

Chapter 1145

"How dare you refuse to bow and greet the young lord when you see him!" shouted one of the old men.

Gerald, however, didn't respond to that. Instead, he simply continued staring at the young lord who was still sitting atop the palanquin. Throughout this entire time, the young lord had had his eyes closed, seemingly enjoying himself as he rested.

“Hey, now! I asked you a question, didn’t I? How imprudent of you not to answer!” shouted the same old man as he took a step forward, ready to make a move.

However, before he could even do anything, the old man’s eyes widened in astonishment as Gerald’s body disappeared into thin air!

“...Hmm?!” grunted the old man as he was suddenly filled with immense fear.

The next thing he knew, he felt a palm being placed on his shoulder extremely forcefully! The force was so overwhelming that he was unable to endure it for long.

Seconds later, the old man fell to his knees, causing the ground under him to be crushed under Gerald’s immense force!

“You said I should bow, no? I didn’t see you bowing toward me, though!” sneered Gerald.

“Brother!” shouted the other old man as he rushed over while revealing a clay teapot from under his sleeve.

Though he had planned to use witchcraft to deal with Gerald, Gerald was simply too fast for him. Before he could even do a thing, Gerald had already slapped him several times!

Following that, the second old man fell to the ground. He was no match for Gerald at all.

It was at that moment when the mighty young lord finally opened his eyes slowly.

Looking at Gerald with a bitter smile, he then said, “Your strength isn’t bad, I must admit! However, you really shouldn’t offend us today!”

“And what if I do?” retorted Gerald.

“Then don’t blame me for ending your life!” shouted the young lord extremely coldly.

Hearing that, everyone close by immediately began retreating from the area, knowing full well that the young lord was about to kill people.

“Due to the rules, I’m not allowed to lift my feet off the ground till I arrive at the large hall... However, it’s best that you don’t assume that I won’t be able to kill you just because of that!” added the young lord in an indifferent tone, making it clear that he was looking at Gerald as though he was a mere nobody.

Gerald himself had been quite serious toward the young lord this entire time. However, even after observing the young man’s aura for a while, he still couldn’t detect anything extraordinary about him. Even so, the young man sounded extremely confident with his abilities... Could the young lord secretly have powerful tactics under his sleeves? Or maybe he had a way to escape no matter the situation!

“So what you’re saying is that you can kill me without even standing up? Fine then! I’d like to witness your true capabilities for myself!” replied Gerald as he immediately made his move.

While Gerald usually only used thirty percent of his power, he made sure to use at least sixty percent this time.

With the Lightbane in hand—which glowed as densely as heavy rain and bore a free-running aura that made its wielder truly feel invincible—Gerald aimed its force at the gigantic palanquin!

While the young lord’s eyes had earlier only been half-open, they were now as wide as two full moons.

His expression immediately paling, he muttered, “What?”

Since he had defeated a lot of powerful people from the Holy Witchcraft before, the young lord was usually an arrogant person. The two old men were only his slaves so he hadn’t thought much about Gerald defeating them earlier.

As a result, he had already been thinking of how to kill Gerald for a while now. By doing so, not only would he get rid of a potential threat, but he would also be able to create fear among the ordinary people watching.

To his utter dismay, Gerald was actually much more powerful than he had initially anticipated!

‘No! I can’t get hit by that!’ The shocked young lord thought to himself in the nick of time as he immediately used all the energy in his body to dodge the attack! There was no way he was still going to follow the rules and remain seated there in this situation!

With an explosive sound, the palanquin was smashed into pieces, sending debris flying all over the place!

Due to the immense force of energy that Gerald had sent in his direction, the young lord found himself being thrown off the now broken palanquin, barely able to endure the Lightbane's impact!

His face now bloodied, the young lord instantly began vomiting blood, feeling as though all his internal organs had simultaneously been destroyed.

'H-how terrifyingly powerful!' Thought the young lord to himself, now extremely afraid.

Chapter 1146

Gerald found himself furrowing his brows as he walked over the young lord whose limbs were now trembling vigorously.

"...Do you not have any other tactics to show?" asked Gerald in slight disbelief.

"P-please spare my life... I'm the young lord and the entire Holy Witchcraft is on my side...!" replied the young lord as he began crawling backward rather pitifully due to his legs going limp from fear.

"...Is that really all you've got?" said Gerald, stupefied but also slightly amused by the turn of events.

He was, of course, laughing at himself. After all, to think that he had actually fallen for the young lord's taunts earlier! Gerald had to admit that he had initially thought that the young lord was truly a mysterious, powerful person. Why else could the young lord behave so recklessly?

As it turned out, the young lord was actually just a young warrior who had just gained his inner strength!

"You know, I've heard plenty about you, young lord... It seems that you've done a lot of wicked things in the past few years..." said Gerald as he glared at the youth.

"I-I..." stammered the terrified youth... However, the young lord's eyes suddenly went fierce as he swiftly waved his long robes!

Seeing that, Gerald's reflexes caused him to take a step back in anticipation of an attack. However, he realized a split second later that no attack was coming. As a result, Gerald immediately dashed toward the young lord, his arm stretched out to grab onto him!

However, the moment Gerald grabbed onto the black robe, he realized that the young lord was no longer there!

"...Oh? Golden escape? Now things are getting slightly more interesting!" muttered Gerald as he smiled faintly.

Feeling his ears twitch, Gerald was able to hear where the young lord was currently escaping to. Knowing that he had locked onto his target, Gerald immediately gave chase.

By the time night had fallen, Gerald found himself running in the middle of a dense forest as he continued chasing after the young lord.

Without any street lamps around, light was getting scarce and the bewildered Gerald found himself saying, "How odd... His aura is definitely present, but where could he be hiding...?"

With that, Gerald closed his eyes momentarily before opening them again. This time, however, there was a green sheen on his irises.

Scanning through the area, his eyes finally stopped when he noticed a small cask—one that was typically used to water seedlings—near one of the trees.

Smiling subtly, he then walked toward it. Seeing a lid on the cask, he kicked it open and took a look inside. While it only seemed to be filled with water, the water itself appeared to be shaking slightly.

Squatting down, Gerald then stared at the cask while muttering in slight astonishment, "Golden escape and bone crush, huh? Both tactics used to escape battle... I'm good at witchcraft too, you know? However, I've yet to see any true skills from you. I do wonder what the Holy Witchcraft has taught you... After all, you don't seem like you'll be mastering these two tactics without practicing them for at least a few more decades!"

By the end of Gerald's sentence, the water suddenly began quivering even more.

Shaking his head in resignation, Gerald then placed his hand in the water. Soon enough, his finger touched one of the hidden young lord's acupuncture points...

The moment that happened, the young lord's body was forced to spread out, resulting in the cask busting open!

After coughing vigorously for quite some time while lying on the ground, the young lord finally found his voice and said, "...You... Who the hell even are you...? We're both probably around the same age...! How are you even more powerful than my grandma?!"

Following that, the young lord then looked at Gerald with fearful eyes, looking like he was ready to burst into tears at any second.

"There's no need for you to know who I am. All you need to know is that if you don't answer my questions honestly, a terrible death awaits you!" warned Gerald as he gently patted the terrified youth's shoulder.

"...Y-your statement earlier... I didn't learn these skills from the Holy Witchcraft... Angelica was the one who had taught me how to escape while I was out having fun at sea when I was eight..." said the terrified young lord hurriedly.

"...Angelica?" asked Gerald, surprised.

True to what the young lord had earlier said, both he and Gerald were around the same age. Logically, one would need to train for decades in order to master the two tactics he had mentioned earlier. In fact, many people would probably spend their entire lives training to get better at those tactics, yet fail to even reach the young lord's proficiency in them.

With that in mind, it was certainly surprising for Gerald to find out that there was another person like Finnley—his master—out there who could help others gain twice the training results with only half the effort.

"Y-yes!"

"Then after teaching you those skills, was it also Angelica who had told you to do all those evil deeds? Evil deeds like rape and robbery? You know, if I hadn't come to Montholm Island, my friend would've probably been ruined by you now!" growled Gerald, a hint of murderous intent in his eyes.

Hearing that, the young lord knew that if he hadn't used his two skills earlier, there was a high chance that he would've already become a corpse by now.

“...I-I know I’ve done a lot of evil things in the past few years... But know that I didn’t mean to do them! I... I just really hate women! All of them without exception!” declared the young lord who was still lying on the ground as he grabbed tightly onto some grass on the ground...

Chapter 1147

From how pained his voice had sounded as the young lord continued lying on the ground, it was almost as though he was thinking about some unspeakable grief.

“...You... hate women?” inquired Gerald as he couldn’t help but stare coldly at the young lord.

“You probably wouldn’t believe me even if I explained it to you... After all, from the moment I was born, I’ve always only been known as the high and mighty young lord of the Holy Witchcraft... While everyone tends to get jealous of me, I can safely say that throughout the years, I’ve never truly been happy... You know, I’ve hated that woman ever since I was young... Because of her, I ended up hating all other women! The woman in question... She was my mother!” explained the young lord.

Upon hearing that, Gerald felt his eyelids twitch slightly.

He had never heard of anyone claiming to resent their mother as strongly as the young lord had... After all, who on this planet wouldn’t love the one who had birthed them? However, Gerald could sense that the young lord wasn’t lying due to the immense pain reflected in the youth’s eyes.

Could it truly be that this cruel and unscrupulous man was only the way he currently was due to difficulties he had previously encountered?

“...Why exactly do you hate her?”

“...I was three when my first memory came to be... I... I witnessed that scene right before my very eyes... My mother... She killed my father in front of me!” said the young lord, his voice sounding even more pained than before.

“...I still remember my father’s expression back then... Before he died, he had wanted to hold my hand one last time, you know...? As a mere child, I was beyond terrified back then... She didn’t have the slightest regret in her at all... Hell, she didn’t even care about me! Even after all these years, that scene keeps playing back in my mind... It’s like a curse that wishes to continue torturing me till the end of time!”

“And she wasn’t the only one either! Grandma disliked me as well! She kept scolding me... Calling me an illegitimate child... If I wasn’t the only child of the Tindall family, I truly believe that I would’ve already been beaten to death long ago by those two

monstrous women... In the end, I took up their surname so I now belong to the Tindalls of the Holy Witchcraft... It's an immense pity that even till this very day, I still don't know what my father's surname is...!"

Following that, the young lord looked up before adding, "You must be thinking how chaotic the relationships within my family are, correct? Humph! ...You see, my father was a live-in husband... I took up my mother's surname and my grandma is actually from the maternal side of the family..."

"Regardless, since I was treated that way by both of them, I've always had an innate feeling that all women are wicked! ...However, I'm also aware that the women I've hurt before this were innocent. You can choose not to believe me, but every time I hurt a woman, I end up repenting for a very long time... Hell, I even wish to compensate the families of the women I've hurt... However, as the young lord, I simply can't do that... I have to constantly obey my grandma's orders... After all, we from the Holy Witchcraft are far more superior compared to anyone else... Due to that, we are expected to be decisive when killing others when we do so!"

"But... I just can't! I can't be decisive when taking an innocent life! However, my grandma keeps wanting me to learn how to kill others! You know, I was already starting to turn wild and evil before my attempt to run away when I was eight..."

"It stemmed from an event that had happened when I was still in first grade... Back then, I got to know a particularly kind girl who went by the name of Lola Leeman... She was the reason why my views began wavering back then... She showed me that such good girls existed in the world as well... While I tried to resist thinking that way for the longest time, eventually, her enthusiasm and kindness ended up touching me. From that point on, we began learning and playing together... Such simple times..."

Laughing slightly bitterly as he reminisced, the young lord then continued, "...We made a promise, you know? That we would marry each other once we grew up... I distinctly remembered her telling me that while we were on our way home from school one day... Upon hearing that, I asked if she would kill me in the future, which resulted in her chuckling all the way home... Naturally, we were just fooling around back then... What would we know about love at that age... That, however, was the last evening I ever met her... She had been killed, and it was only sometime later when I came to learn that the murderer was my grandma!"

Upon saying that, the young lord began crying as he dug his fingers into the ground, holding on to whatever dirt he could, tightly.

"After that happened, I told myself that I would run away as far as I could to distance myself from those two women... With that in mind, I rowed a boat out into sea together with Lola's cremated remains... After all, Lola once told me that she loved the idea of watching the sunset while riding a boat... Granting her wish was the least I could do..."

"After rowing for quite a while, I realized that I could no longer tell where the shore was. With the sun quickly setting, I thought that I was definitely going to starve to death out at sea back then. However, it was then when I first bumped into Angelica... She

looked extremely beautiful and gentle, and to be frank, her character was very similar to Lola's... At the time, she had been standing atop a wooden boat all dressed in white as she played her flute... She honestly looked like a fairy, now that I think about it..."

Hearing that, Gerald couldn't help but focus more on the young lord's story.

Finnley had previously taught Gerald the mind-reading tactic. After learning it, Gerald found that as long as someone was weaker than him, he would definitely be able to see through them. It was because of that, that Gerald knew that the young lord hadn't been lying this entire time.

What caught his attention, however, was the young lord's mention of a woman dressed in white. How intriguing...

A woman playing a flute atop a wooden boat out at sea when it was nearing dusk... Gerald's mental image of the young lord's description made him feel that the woman in white was definitely an extraordinary person...

"...Regardless, she was the one who had saved me... She was also the one responsible for teaching me a few skills such as bone crush, golden escape, and turtle breathing tactics... She told me to continue training the skills in secret, making sure nobody knows about them... According to her, the skills would eventually help me manage my destiny!" added the young lord as he wiped his tears away.

"...I, Chester Tindall, have said everything that I've needed to... After letting out all of this, I can't deny that I'm feeling better than ever, knowing that once I'm dead, I won't have to bear this heavy burden anymore... Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story... Before you kill me, please allow me to ask for one final favor from you!" said Chester.

"What is it?" asked Gerald.

Chapter 1148

"Throughout the years, I've hurt a total of seven women... Before I die, I wish to beg for their forgiveness... Only then will I be able to rest in peace... Perhaps I may still be able to meet Lola after doing so..." said Chester extremely sincerely.

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded slightly without saying another word, a clear sign of his approval.

Gerald was fine with granting him his request since it truly seemed like Chester wished for repentance. The fact that Chester remembered where every single one of the seven women he had hurt lived made Gerald even more sure that Chester was serious about his request.

Soon enough, Chester and Gerald made their way over to a farmer's house. Once the door was opened, the pale-faced Chester knelt before the family of three which consisted of the daughter he had hurt alongside her parents.

"Y-young lord?! T-to what do we owe the pleasure...?" stuttered the father, as all three of them trembled in fear.

"I have come to beg for your forgiveness! While I'm well aware that I probably can't ever compensate for all the mistakes I've made, I promise to do anything you ask me to in an attempt to make up for what I've done! I don't mind taking my life either!" declared Chester.

"T-there's no need for any of that!" squealed the daughter—who had previously been his victim—in a terrified tone as she hid behind her parents while shaking her head rapidly.

"I beg of you! Please, allow me to do something to show my sincerity!" pleaded the young lord as he continued kneeling there.

"As he's said, you can tell him to do anything. Even telling him to kill himself isn't out of the option! Go on, take your pick..." added Gerald—who had been standing beside Chester this entire time—as he looked at the family of three.

"T-there's no need for any unnecessary deaths! ...Regardless... If you truly wish to do something, young lord... um... T-then help us fill up that water tank over there!" replied the daughter as she pointed at a water tank.

"...Huh?" said Chester, momentarily stunned. However, he quickly returned to his senses before nodding and heading over to the well to begin his task. Soon enough, the water tank was completely filled.

"That'll do!" said the family who were clearly still afraid of him, but not as terrified as they initially were. After all, the young lord didn't seem to have his usual awe-inspiring aura surrounding him at the moment... It made them feel that they could at least relax a bit more around him.

Hearing that, Chester then stood before them again before saying, "I... don't have much saved, but here's a hundred and fifty thousand dollars! Please, accept it!"

With that, Chester held out the money to the trio until they finally gave in and accepted the cash.

Following that, Chester and Gerald left the family's house to repeat the process with the other six families on Montholm Island.

Eventually, Chester kneeled before Jasmine once they arrived at the manor where Gerald was currently staying at.

Seeing the young lord, Jasmine quickly hid behind Gerald before shouting, "A-ah! He's here, Gerald!"

"...While I didn't physically hurt you, Miss Fenderson, I've still hurt Lord Fenderson and your family member... Both of them nearly died because of me, and I truly hope that you'll be willing to forgive me..."

Chapter 1149

Hearing that, Jasmine turned to look at Gerald rather doubtfully.

It was only a little while later when she realized that the one ruthless and arrogant young lord had now truly surrendered to Gerald.

"I apologize for all the mistakes I've made! I truly am sorry!" said Chester as he repeatedly lowered his head till his forehead touched the ground.

While she had initially wanted to kill him, after seeing how miserable he was, Jasmine simply replied, "...There's no need to apologize any further to me... Instead, you should be apologizing to those who you've hurt. After all, while my family has made it through this daunting experience without mishap, that isn't the case for the other families... Regardless, if it's punishment you seek, then I'll let Gerald make the final say! His words will be as good as mine!"

After saying that, Jasmine then turned to look at Gerald.

Women were sometimes like this. While Jasmine had first been uncertain whether she really had fallen for Gerald, when she first began getting rather dependent on him, she was almost certain that she truly was in love with him.

From that moment on, Jasmine had held those feelings for him in her heart.

It really was no mystery why damsels in distress who were saved by heroes usually ended up falling for them. Jasmine realized that she, too, had embodied the role of the damsel after being saved by Gerald so many times when she needed him most. With him constantly carrying her heavy burdens, she naturally grew to have great dependence, admiration, and trust toward Gerald due to how good his impression was to her.

Quickly catching on to the underlying message of Jasmine's words, Gerald felt his heart skip a beat. After all, he knew he couldn't return her feelings.

Regardless, upon hearing that, Chester—who realized that he had now cleared all his sins—crawled toward Gerald before kneeling and saying, “Thank you for allowing me to fulfill my wish, Mr. Crawford... I now have no more regrets... You can kill me now...!”

Despite how determined Chester’s voice was when he said that, Gerald simply looked back at the young lord before replying, “I never said I would kill you immediately. Rather, I’d like you to do something for me!”

“Please state your desire, Mr. Crawford!” said Chester as he looked at Gerald gratefully.

“You see, I’m attempting to search for the king of the ocean’s palace, and I’m currently in need of helpers... Since you’re proficient in both the turtle breathing and bone crush technique, I believe that you’ll be a helper who’ll be able to survive under the sea for quite some time... Are you willing to lend a hand?” asked Gerald.

“Of course I’m willing to stay by your side and work for you, Mr. Crawford! At long last, I’ll be able to live like a normal person!” replied the shocked but greatly delighted Chester almost instantaneously.

“Think about it properly before replying... Are you truly sure that you’re willing to give up your identity as the young lord?” asked Gerald again.

“Without a doubt!” replied Chester without the slightest hesitation.

After all, after Gerald had listened to him pour his heart out, he had even helped him resolve the feelings of guilt that had been plaguing his mind for the longest time! While Chester had already been extremely grateful to him because of that, to think that Gerald would even consider sparing his life now!

There was just something special about Gerald that greatly moved Chester, even though he couldn’t quite put his finger on what it was. Regardless, Chester felt that as long as he stayed by Gerald’s side, he would be able to feel that he hadn’t wasted his entire life on this planet up till this point.

“Very well. Then you’ll be coming along to the king of the ocean’s palace with me. Speaking of which, I’d also like you to investigate whether there’s a connection between the woman in white who saved you back then and the person I’m looking for...” said Gerald with a slight nod.

Chapter 1150

It was at that moment when Yume led a middle-aged man into the room where Gerald and the other two currently were.

The moment Yume saw that Jasmine—who seemed to be as charming and attractive as Yume was—was standing quite close to Gerald, for some unknown reason, she couldn't help but feel slightly uncomfortable.

Due to that discomfort, however, her tone was slightly harsher as she coldly said, "Here's the person you were looking for, Gerald! Mr. Yarrow here had brought along all the island's relevant information on that year!"

With that, she moved to stand on Gerald's other side. Seeing that, Jasmine herself began carefully sizing up the beauty who was now standing as close to Gerald as she was.

As sparks flew between the two women, the middle-aged man—who was holding onto the information in his hands—greeted, "Mr. Crawford!"

"A pleasure to have you here, Mr. Yarrow. Please, have a seat."

Tim Yarrow was someone from the cultural affairs bureau in Montholm City. According to what people had told Gerald, the man knew all about the development of Montholm City from ancient times till this very day. If one wanted to investigate the origins and history of this place, Tim was the perfect guy to look for.

After exchanging some pleasantries, Tim went straight to the point.

"So I've heard that you're interested in the history of Montholm Island's city construction, Mr. Crawford. With that in mind, I've investigated quite a bit into the subject this afternoon. You see, Montholm City actually began as a small fisherman village by the sea. Back then, there were only a mere hundred families inhabiting the area. As for the island's history, I'm afraid that it originates from about ten thousand years ago... The evidence to back that claim up is the fossils that were successfully excavated on the island a few decades ago..."

"All this sounds very well recorded and I have no doubts about the evidence you speak of. However, Mr. Yarrow, I'd like to know if you're aware of any legendary but well-founded unofficial historic events?" asked Gerald after hearing all that.

"Unofficial historic events you say? I'll have you know that there are far too many of those! Forgive my enthusiasm, but researching unofficial historic events and gathering evidence to disprove the official ones has been a personal—and the only—hobby of mine for as long as I've lived! If that's what you wish to ask me about then you can rest assured that you've found the right person!" replied Tim with a smile.

With that, he began detailing a few old legends to Gerald.

“Let’s see... It was about twenty years ago when I first started working. Through sheer coincidence, I came across a very ancient book in the cultural bureau’s library at the time! Its contents were simple, yet very ancient words that fascinated the younger me greatly!”

“I had reason to be so excited. After all, the words in that book were vastly different compared to the ancient words that could commonly be recognized and found. Since I had chosen to major in archaeology in university, I was lucky enough that one of my professors had taught me the meanings of a few ancient words. Once I was done deciphering the text, I found that the book was filled with legends and unofficial historic events. To put it in simpler and more modern terms, the person recording the legends seemed to be making memoirs.”

“Regardless, I also found out that the contents in the book had been extracted from a stone tablet. In other words, the story predated even the people who had transferred the memoirs into book format! As for the contents, it described an incident about an old man surviving through luck.”

“In the book, the old man had said that he was lucky enough to have been chosen to participate in a special funeral. The funeral itself was considered to be special since he was tasked with heading there to bury a fairy! As for the burial place, it was a magnificent palace under the sea!”

Hearing that, both Gerald and Yume couldn’t help but exchange glances in dismay.

“Moving on, the book then described how thirty-seven people—including the master—had carried the coffin all the way to Montholm Island. They had apparently made a stop here to rest due to a heavy storm.”

‘...Isn’t this... the same story from the six stone tablets...? I’m pretty sure it is! With any luck, the book hopefully contained what had happened after they came to the island. After all, I remember the following mural showing that the old beggar only had twenty-seven men with him after stopping by the island. Where had the nine other people disappeared to?’ Gerald thought to himself as his eyelids twitched slightly.

‘Come to think of it, the contents of the stone tablets seem more and more like an ancient epitaph of one of the nine people who had been left behind on the island... From the looks of it, the words seem to be describing said person’s entire life... Could that mean that the nine who were left behind didn’t die? What happened then? Why would they decide to stay behind halfway through their journey...?’

“It’s then stated in the memoir that after the writer arrived on Montholm island, his entire life was changed due to a scene that he witnessed which he claimed that he would never be able to forget for the rest of his life. To go into detail, the group of men was camping one night when all of a sudden, the heavens seemed to fall while the earth split open! Everyone was sure that

calamity was about to befall them and that the whole island was about to sink! However, as they were about to begin escaping, all of them saw an enormous, bronze house that hovered in the air!”

“Not only was the hovering house massive, but there also seemed to be people inside it! After one of the house’s inhabitants walked out, the large door of the flying house was slid open. The second that happened, the men—who were still on the island—immediately heard wretched wailing from inside the floating house!”

“Due to that, all of the men were scared half to death, and for good reason too. It’s described here that the wailing that those people made sounded like they were all suffering terribly...”

Chapter 1151

‘They seemed to have come with a purpose in mind... The master seems to know who they are as well.’

‘The master flew up and entered the flying house to discuss something with them... But none of us know what they’re talking about...’

‘They’ve negotiated for quite some time... Some time while they were negotiating, the flying house submerged below the waves, bringing master along with it...’

‘Night has come... We’re all tossing and turning, barely able to sleep... All we can do now is guard the fairy’s corpse...’

‘It’s late at night now, and it’s my turn to stand guard... Including me, my group had nine people...’

‘...I’m writing this after that terrifying event... The incident that changed my fate forever...’

‘While we were standing guard, the fairy suddenly came alive! Standing in front of us, her expression was livid as she coldly asked us where we were taking her to...’

‘Not daring to play any games, we truthfully told her all that we knew... Upon hearing our explanation, she was infuriated! I still distinctly remember her saying, “So you still wish to burden me even now...? Thank the stars that I regained my consciousness in time!”’

‘Following that, she flew into a deep rage and began attacking us! The moment she made a move, six peoples’ lives were ended... She was terrifying...!’

'As I attempted to run, she immediately waved one of her long sleeves and tied it around my neck! Before I knew it, I had been thrown up into the air!'

'If it wasn't for a tree breaking most of the fall, I would've definitely ended up dead from the fall damage alone! I was lucky that I only ended up breaking a leg...'

'It was in my state of semi-consciousness when I realized something frightening. This was all wrong. I was sure that the fairy was still in the coffin... Then who the hell was this mad beauty? At the time, I didn't even know what had happened to the rest of my companions. For all I knew, all of them could have already been dead.'

'Fortunately, the gigantic bronze house flew out of the ocean at that instant, causing an explosive sound! I remember fainting at that exact moment due to all the shock...'

'When I finally awoke, I was in a kind fisherman's house... It was only then when I learned that I was the sole survivor of that group of nine. The others who weren't standing guard, on the other hand, were all saved by the master.'

'Due to that incident, I was now disabled and I could no longer endure the ocean breeze. It was the reason why I remained on Montholm Island. However, the master was kind enough to compensate me with a lot of money...'

Following that, the epitaph described how the survivor had slowly used the money to become even richer in the coming years. In the end, he even ended up becoming a prestigious person on the island, and that was where the memoir on the stone tablet ended.

"People from ancient times had a tendency to exaggerate, especially those who were successful. They just loved adding extraordinary incidents into their epitaphs, you know? Aside from this example, another story I've heard is about a heroic person by the name of Brayden Laban who slaughtered a white snake and created an uprising... Haha! I truly admire the imagination of people back then... It wouldn't surprise me if the bronze flying house was the inspiration for today's science fiction movies!" said Tim as he laughed.

"It does sound slightly ridiculous... However, it also makes the epitaphs sound much more special!" chipped in Yume.

Gerald, however, didn't give any comments on that.

After chatting a little while longer with Tim and more or less getting to know all the facts that he had wanted to investigate, Gerald told someone to send Tim home.

Once he was gone, Gerald casually said, "I'll be returning to my room first... All of you should turn in early since we're going to set off tomorrow!"

Before Gerald could get far, however, Yume stopped him before saying, "Hold it. Why didn't you voice out any of your opinions earlier? In fact, you hardly said anything at all! Is something the matter?"

Being the perceptive woman she was, Yume then added, "I also noticed your eyelids twitching slightly whenever Mr. Yarrow described the flying house earlier... Why was that?"

"Very perceptive of you. Regardless, if I told you that the story that we just heard earlier was true... Would you believe me?" asked Gerald.

"...What? You're not pulling my leg, are you?" replied Yume, flabbergasted by his question.

"Is there any reason for me to lie? Still, this incident seems to be getting much more troublesome than I initially imagined it to be!" said Gerald before returning to his room.

Chapter 1152

Yume herself remained stunned on the spot for quite a while.

It was late at night when Gerald could be seen meditating on his bed, listening to the ocean breeze as he thought about the new discoveries he had made tonight.

According to what the survivor had said, a particularly powerful and wrathful woman had appeared that night, resulting in the death of the other eight people who had been standing guard over the coffin with him.

Who was she? And what did she mean when she said that she had awoken in time?

Whatever the case was, the woman seemed to be filled with immense resentment.

Aside from the woman, the terrible wailing from within the flying house was also something that couldn't easily be forgotten. Could all those who had been captured by the Sun League be in there? Were Mila and his uncle in there?

The mention of all those wretched wails from within the house had definitely shocked Gerald earlier.

As for the woman in white, she had probably surrendered to the mysterious old beggar in the end. After all, Gerald had already seen the continuation of the story back when Master Ghost had shown him the six stone tablets.

From what he remembered, the old beggar and the remaining men had continued on with their journey quite smoothly. After the old man killed an injured dragon, they all buried the dragon's corpse together with the fairy's coffin before making an equally smooth return trip.

After some time, Gerald's eyes flashed a hint of determination as he quietly muttered, "The ocean king's palace..."

It was two days later when Gerald and his family's fleet continued sailing atop the choppy waves. While the extremely high waves from earlier had lessened considerably, the ocean breeze was still very strong.

Looking out at sea, the seemingly endless number of strong waves as far as the eye could see would make anyone feel awe-inspired.

Before Gerald had set off two days ago, he had ordered his bodyguards to send Jasmine and the others to Halimark City first to look for Wagner. Once they were there, they were told to contact the Fendersons to send people over and pick them up.

Once he knew that Jasmine and the others were safe and sound, Gerald could finally rest a bit easier.

While Jasmine herself had initially wanted to head there together with Gerald, it was simply too dangerous. After all, this wasn't a trip, nor was it an ordinary adventure.

In fact, knowing that there could very well be many unknown dangers down there, even with his current strength, Gerald himself wasn't sure if he would be able to make it out in one piece.

It was noon when Chester headed to the deck and stood behind Gerald before respectfully saying, "It's estimated that we aren't too far off from the king of the ocean's palace now, sir!"

"I see. Then the place where you ended up drifting off to that year should be nearby," replied Gerald.

"I'd assume so. I was simply rowing the boat in the direction the ocean breeze was blowing at the time, so the boat was sailing quite fast... While I had prepared food to last me for at least three days back then, I ended up drifting at sea for about ten

days... Due to almost a week without food, I remember nearly dying from starvation back then... From the distance we've covered, I'd say we should be getting close," said Chester as he surveyed the area while making estimations in his head.

'In addition to the clues we found before we set off, I suspect that Angelica could very well be the person we're looking for...' Gerald thought to himself.

"Still, I truly think that you'll be able to find the answers you've been seeking once we make it into the king of the ocean's palace," added Chester.

"You and me both, Chester. You and me both..." replied Gerald as he looked out into the horizon.

Even with the map that Gerald had obtained from the Minshalls, they were still having slight trouble looking for the exact location of the palace.

All of a sudden, Chester pointed out at sea before saying, "...Huh? Sir, have a look in that direction! It... seems to be a ship of some sort..."

True to Chester's words, after turning to look at where he was pointing at, Gerald saw a large wooden ship out at sea.

Though its oars seemed to be static, the ship was sailing against the current, and it was headed straight for where Gerald's ship currently was rather quickly!

At that moment, Yume walked over before asking, "Is something wrong?"

However, the moment she saw the ship that was slowly getting closer to them, even she became slightly stunned.

Recognizing the aura surrounding the ship, the stunned Gerald—whose eyes hadn't left the sea-faring vehicle—muttered, "...Could that be... force...?"

Quickly snapping out of it, then coldly ordered, "For now, focus on dodging the incoming ship! I'll be heading aboard that ship to have a look around first!"

Chapter 1153

While both Chester and Yume had already been stunned, their jaws truly dropped the moment they saw Gerald leap toward the other ship!

The moment Gerald's foot touched the wooden ship's surface, it instantly caused a huge wave to form as the ship bobbed up and down due to the impact of Gerald's landing!

Eventually, the ripples slowed down and Gerald took the chance to begin looking around.

From what he could see, it seemed to be an average-sized wooden ship that could accommodate about forty to fifty people. It also seemed to have a bit of history to it.

Stepping into the cabin, there seemed to be an old and torn curtain hanging outside the cabin's windows. As a result, though it was quite sunny outside, the inside of the cabin remained quite dark.

After looking around for a while, Gerald began trying to feel his surroundings. The force he had sensed surrounding the ship earlier was now nowhere to be found... It was odd, to say the least.

With that, Gerald slowly drew the curtains before making his way deeper into the cabin.

With partitions separating the rooms within the cabin, the corridor in the middle led to small guest rooms on either side of it.

All of a sudden, the faint sound of footsteps could be heard coming from the control cabin that was located at the ship's bottom level. Someone was walking upstairs!

With that in mind, Gerald stood motionless, looking around attentively until he finally saw who was making their way up the stairs.

Gerald watched as a white-haired old woman with a stooped posture slowly swayed her body while ascending the steps. Aside from the fact that her clothes were old and torn and her hair was particularly messy, the woman's most defining feature was the many scars that covered her face.

In the dimly lit area, Gerald couldn't help but admit that she seemed rather spooky.

Regardless, he took the initiative by asking, "Good day, madam. May I know your name?"

“Dead Annie!” replied the woman with a subtle smile. Despite her friendly gesture, Gerald found himself growing slightly nervous. After all, anyone who smiled with such a scar-filled face would definitely create slight feelings of unnerve among those who saw it.

“...Come again? You said your name was Dead Annie, madam?” asked Gerald for confirmation.

“Dead Annie! Two petals bloom and each petal represents a world!” replied the old woman in a rather mysterious manner.

Gerald found himself raising a slight brow as he heard her talking about some mysterious plant. A flower that only bloomed two petals... Why did that sound so familiar? Thinking about it, he knew he had come across such a plant before. After all, natural flowers with only two petals were rare, so he would definitely remember if he had seen one before. But where?

The more Gerald stared at the woman, the odder he felt.

At that moment, he heard someone shouting, “Sir! Here you are!”

Turning around to look, Gerald saw that both Chester and Yume had boarded the ship as well.

“Why did both of you come here?” asked Gerald.

“Well, since you’ve been gone for quite some time and we heard nothing from you, we got slightly worried!” replied Chester as he and Yume immediately began scanning the old woman—who was now staring at the end of the corridor—from head to toe.

While Chester immediately let out a frown, Yume began smoothening her hair, though Gerald could tell that her breathing had grown slightly more rapid.

“There’s nothing to worry about. For now, head back first!” ordered Gerald.

Since Gerald still hadn’t been able to see through the extremely weird old woman, he was worried that both Yume and Chester would end up in danger if they remained here for any longer.

The moment she heard him say that, however, the old woman suddenly began laughing coldly. Her laugh sounded almost raven-like, making it all the more frightening.

Already feeling extremely anxious of her laugh, Gerald's unease peaked the moment he realized that several extremely weird-looking flowers had begun appearing—out of thin air—in the middle of the corridor.

The flowers themselves each only had two petals, with each petal resembling a human's face!

It was at that moment when Gerald finally remembered where he had seen such flowers before.

He had seen them in a garden back when he was at the Soul Palace!

That garden on his grandfather's island had been specifically made to plant that breed of flower. Gerald remembered finding the flowers strange, so he had asked Welson more about them.

According to what Welson had told him, the flower bore no name. Seeds of the flower were found in the Western Regions, and they seemed to date back to ancient times. After attempting to plant it, they were successful in making it bloom.

Due to the nameless flowers naturally only blooming to have two petals, Gerald's grandfather had decided to plant them in a garden, treating them as a living work of art.

As it turned out, the flowers were called Dead Annie's...

Just as Gerald's thought ended, he realized that fine pollen was starting to emerge from the flowers.

The pollen spread a unique fragrance around, and as soon as Yume and Chester smelled it, they instantly began feeling dizzy. Soon enough, both of them lost consciousness and fell to the floor!

"The pollen's poisonous!"

Chapter 1154

After shouting in astonishment, Gerald immediately turned back to look at the old woman, prepared to launch an attack.

However, before he was even able to take a step forward, Gerald suddenly felt all four of his limbs weaken as a dizzy spell simultaneously swept through him.

'What? But how is this possible?! I've long been immune to all poisons!' Gerald thought to himself as he slowly kneeled to the floor with one knee, his dizziness intensifying.

Seeing that, the old woman smiled wickedly as she slowly began walking toward him while saying, "I can see that your physique is quite different compared to ordinary people... However, do know that the Dead Annie's here were initially something different! Let's just say that they're a near-perfect counter against you!"

Feeling that he was going to pass out soon if he didn't do anything quickly, Gerald placed all his remaining focus on using his divine thought to call out, 'Dawnbreaker!'

Following that, the Dawnbreaker instantly shot out from his sleeve!

The old woman truly hadn't anticipated that Gerald would actually have a last resort planned quite literally under his sleeve. By the time she noticed the blade flying right for her, however, she was already too late to react in time.

Unable to dodge the attack, the Dawnbreaker ended up stabbing her right in her left arm, sending the old woman toppling to the floor!

Strangely enough, the moment she fell down, the intense dizziness that Gerald had been experiencing suddenly vanished!

'...So it wasn't poison that was causing my dizzy spell!' Gerald thought to himself as he quickly regained his power.

Thinking about it, Gerald soon deduced that the old woman had launched a mental attack at him instead of using actual poison, and that she had only used the pollen as some sort of medium. To think that his mental power had been controlled by that old woman earlier!

While the old woman certainly appeared surprised, she quickly snapped out of it, getting to her feet and running into a room!

Gerald himself made a dash to the door... Only to be greeted by the sound of shattering glass as the old woman crashed through the room's sole window and jumped into the open sea!

By the time he got to the window, the old woman was nowhere to be seen.

It was around then when both Chester and Yume slowly began regaining consciousness. Not long after, even the Crawford bodyguards began boarding the ship.

Since he had earlier suffered a mental attack, Gerald's face was still slightly pale as he ordered, "Take Chester and Yume back to the ship... Also, begin a search around the area to locate an old woman! She's injured so she'll definitely leave traces behind no matter what!"

Upon hearing that, Gerald's guards immediately obeyed and began their search.

'Still... Who even was she...? It's almost as though she had been waiting for us here deliberately... The fact that we bumped into her so close to where the king of the ocean's palace is, makes her all the more suspicious!' Gerald thought to himself a little while later as he looked out into sea.

'...I wonder if she could have actually been trying to prevent us from entering the king of the ocean's palace... Then there's her weapon of choice as well. While I could already tell that the flower was special back when I saw it at grandpa's place, I would've never guessed that it had such a function...'

As soon as Gerald's thought ended, the alarm in the cabin of one of the Crawford family's ships began blaring.

Over ten large Crawford ships had earlier been searching for the old woman around the area. With the blaring of the alarm, it was apparent that they had finally located her.

Seconds later, a bodyguard came running over to Gerald before excitedly saying, "The moment we saw her, that old woman instantly dived deep into the ocean, Mr. Crawford! While we haven't been able to capture her, our sonar detector found that she was quickly swimming toward what seemed to be a large metal building far beneath the waves!"

"I see. Then it's probably a solid hunch to assume that the place she's currently headed to is the king of the ocean's palace. I'm placing you in charge of providing support for us while a few of us head down there to have a look. Speaking of which, are the two of you alright?" asked Gerald as he turned to look at Yume and Chester.

"I'm fine!" replied Chester though Yume simply nodded.

"Very well. Place the water repellent stones in your mouths and follow me below the waves then!"

With that said, all three of them then dived into the sea, swimming into its murky depths.

Since they had specialized electronic equipment with them, they were able to quickly and precisely locate both the palace's and the old woman's location. With the help of the water repellent stones, the trio was able to make their way deeper into the ocean rather quickly.

A short while later, the three people arrived before a dark cave that had a rather small and narrow opening, about half the size of an average adult...

Chapter 1155

Though the gourd-shaped entrance was rather narrow, Gerald swam in just fine and the other two followed swiftly behind him.

After swimming through it, the trio found themselves in an area that felt almost alien. Soon enough, they came to yet another cave entrance, though there was one stark difference to this one.

There was Dead Annie pollen floating around everywhere inside!

"Cover your nostrils and remain focused!" ordered Gerald as he looked at the dashboard of the tracking device. While the old woman was nowhere to be seen on it, she had last been spotted right where they currently were. She was undoubtedly inside.

How absolutely cunning of her... If he had been any less cautious, then he would've definitely fallen straight into her trap!

It was at that moment when both Yume and Chester began feeling slightly uncomfortable. Gerald figured that it was due to the fact that the pollen at the cave's entrance was denser.

Even though he was aware of that and was actively trying to retain control over himself, Gerald still found himself being unable to resist the strong mental impact caused by the Dead Annies.

That old woman must be up to no good!

Soon enough, Chester and Yume ended up blacking out again while Gerald continued persevering through the strongest mental impact yet.

However, at long last, Gerald failed to endure through it. As his surroundings became distorted, Gerald saw a strange and ugly face appearing before him before he finally passed out.

After an unknown period of time, Gerald eventually woke up again.

As he slowly recovered his bearings, Gerald thought about how the pain from the mental assault was no different from the time he had received the memories of that deity or even when he was physically attacked with martial arts skills! In fact, if he had to argue, the mental impact hurt far more than either of those!

Regardless, Gerald was thankful that he had the water repellent stone with him, otherwise, they would've all drowned by now, seeing that they were still underwater.

Turning to his side, Gerald saw that the now extremely pale-faced Chester was still unconscious.

Enduring the pain of his headache, Gerald then turned to his other side to see how Yume was doing.

However, much to his surprise, Yume was nowhere to be found. What could've happened to her?

With Yume's disappearance sobering him up quite a bit, Gerald then supported Chester over his shoulder as he began looking around for her.

However, no matter how much he searched, there was simply no trace of her anywhere!

'Could something have happened to her...?' Gerald thought to himself, feeling slightly guilty. However, he knew that this wasn't the time to be hesitant.

After all, he was still alive and the king of the ocean's palace was now extremely close to them.

As Gerald woke Chester up, he truly hoped that Yume had just gone deeper into the cave where the Dead Annies had once been.

Soon enough, Chester awoke and both of them continued moving forward.

After swimming down the path for quite some time... Both of them were suddenly hit by a massive surge of water that seemed to be pulling both of them forward! As Chester and Gerald attempted to hold their ground, both of them looked at each other, silently agreeing that they were currently caught in a hidden undersea current.

Despite Gerald using all his force to resist being pulled in, he still ended up losing to the immensely strong current. Naturally, Chester failed to resist the current as well.

With their bodies now being flung deeper into the cave, Gerald noticed that it was quickly getting considerably smaller.

“Use Bone crush!” shouted Gerald as the space continued getting smaller and smaller.

Hearing that, both Chester and Gerald immediately began performing the skill to actively adapt their bodies to their environment.

With the cave’s size now getting to the size of a toddler—and rapidly continuing to get even smaller—Gerald knew that if they had performed the bone crush skill any later, even he would’ve ended up getting crushed to death despite having such a frightening physique.

At long last, they flung out of the other end of the cave!

The first thing that Gerald found surprising about where they had just landed was the fact that there was no seawater here. It was a completely dry space.

Regardless, the second he saw how injured Chester looked, Gerald immediately helped him up.

“I-I’m sorry for being so useless, sir!”

Chapter 1156

Looking at how weakly Chester was apologizing, Gerald then gently patted him on the shoulder before saying, “It’s fine... After all, we’ve... We seem to have finally arrived at the king of the ocean’s palace...”

After saying that, Gerald went silent for a while, utterly stunned by what he was now looking at.

Not hearing anything from Gerald for a while, Chester then looked up as well. His eyes widened the moment he did, and he found his mouth gaping as he stared at the extremely magnificent-looking palace that lay before them.

The palace looked befitting of a dragon, and in the middle of the structure, was an enormous high platform. What stupefied Gerald most, however, was the fact that hovering about twenty feet above the platform, was a crystal coffin!

'It's another eternal coffin!' Gerald thought to himself in his bewilderment.

So it really was true... The woman in white truly had been buried within an eternal coffin here after being separated from the deity!

Still, Gerald couldn't help but wonder why the old beggar had deliberately placed them so far away from each other... What could the old man's intention have been by disallowing the two to ever meet for all of eternity?

As Gerald was deep in thought, the corner of his eye saw Chester pointing at the surrounding murals as he said, "...There are murals all over the place, sir... They seem to describe everything that had happened that eventually led to all this..."

After glancing one more time at the woman in white's eternal coffin, Gerald turned to look at the murals together with Chester.

Similar to the underground palace in the desert, this place was also filled to the brim with murals.

Skimming through the images, Gerald confirmed that the murals were mostly detailing the tale of the woman in white's burial. More specifically, they talked about the burial process and the origins of the woman in white's corpse. In other words, mostly things that Gerald was already aware of.

Among the murals, however, occasional abstract words could be found. Gerald, for one, had no idea what they meant. After all, they were vastly different from the words he had seen in previous murals.

All of a sudden, he heard Chester mutter, "...Hmm? Cavern language?"

Turning to look at Chester, Gerald saw that he was also staring at a few abstract words that had been etched onto another wall.

"Cavern language?" asked Gerald as he went to Chester's side.

"Indeed, sir. You see, the language was used exclusively by an ancient tribe who were cave dwellers. My family had a collection of animal skin rolls belonging to said cave dwellers, and my grandma had forced me to learn the meaning of some of their words and characters when I was much younger..." explained Chester.

Raising an eyebrow, Gerald then replied, "Does that mean that you're able to read and understand the language?"

Briefly skimming through the words, Chester then scratched the back of his head as he said, "...At most, I feel that I'll only be able to understand a little over half of it... The rest will mostly be guesswork."

"That's already way better than me since I can't make heads or tails of it. Either way, do tell me what you think the words are trying to say," replied Gerald as he patted Chester's shoulder.

Hearing that, Chester immediately began trying to decipher the words very seriously.

It was around ten minutes later when he said, "...The text seems to be talking about some mysterious prophecy... It also keeps repeating a few words..."

Upon saying that, Chester then began pointing at a few words, guiding his finger along each word as he explained what they individually meant.

"The sentence that keeps getting repeated says, 'Two petals bloom and each petal represents a world. The answer you seek is in one of them!'"

"Two petals bloom and each petal represents a world... That's what it truly says?" asked Gerald for confirmation.

"That's right, sir!" replied Chester as he immediately nodded.

The mysterious old woman had said the exact same thing to him back then... Speaking of the old woman, Gerald had earlier used his mind to search his surroundings, yet he couldn't sense the old woman's presence at all.

'Could she have left the moment we fainted...? But that doesn't make any sense! With the currents so strong out there, even I can't go against them, let alone her!'

However, Gerald quickly shook the thoughts off. That wasn't the main thing he should be focusing on at the moment...

Moving back to what Chester had told him... Each petal represents a world... While Gerald was definitely sure that it was referring to the Dead Annes, he had no idea where to even begin comprehending the text.

Slowly frowning, Gerald then asked, "Is there anything else? Also, which part of that made you feel that it sounds like a prophecy?"

"Well, the rest of the words state that someone will appear after ten thousand years and bring the fairy away to be reunited with her lover after being separated throughout that period of time... Once they've been reunited, the person who brings them back together will also be able to find his answer... Even so, the answer may seem far but also very near at the same time..."

Just as Chester had said, while he was able to discern most of the words, he still needed a great deal of effort to properly translate them.

After a brief pause, he then continued, "...Because he owns the... key to carry away the eternal coffin... He's the only one who's able to truly open the eternal coffin!"

"A key?"

"Yeah. Or at least something very similar to a key!" replied Chester.

After thinking about it for a while, Gerald then said, "...Could it perhaps be referring to this...?"

Chapter 1157

"What is that...?" asked Chester rather curiously as he watched Gerald carefully take a square, wooden box out from his pocket.

Wagner had given the box to Gerald after an old beggar gave it to his ancestors about eight hundred years ago. From what Wagner had told Gerald, not only had the old beggar anticipated that Gerald would head to the king of the ocean's palace centuries later, but he had also accurately predicted Gerald's meeting with Wagner, hence why he had told Wagner's descendants to hold on to the box till Gerald finally showed up!

Could it be that the old beggar truly had foreseen what would happen in ten thousand years? Had the old man actually managed to predict that Gerald would find the eternal coffin and transport the woman in white away for her to finally be reunited with the deity?

Could... could that old beggar from ten thousand years ago actually be the same person from eight centuries ago...?

Gerald shuddered at the thought and didn't dare to dwell too much on it. Just thinking about it was enough to make him filled with fear and anxiety.

Regardless, Gerald was able to discern one thing from all of this. In the message the old beggar had left for Gerald, he had said that Gerald would gain the answer he sought for as long as reunited the woman in white with his other-self. Did that mean that once he did that, the incident regarding the Sun League would also be revealed soon as well?

"...What else did he say? Please do your best and try to understand as much as you can, Chester!" said Gerald after his brief silence of deep thought.

"...Well, it says here that something bad will happen to the world before long, and many will die because of that event... Nobody will be able to prevent the calamity from happening, and the prophecies will come true one by one! It's simply our destiny! Beyond that part though, I... I can't really understand anything else..." replied Chester with a sigh.

Prophecies? And a bad incident where many would die? What event could that even be referring to...?

And no matter how he looked at the words, why did he have a feeling that the words on the stone tablet were referring to him?

With so many questions in his mind, Gerald forced himself to record down all the words on the stone tablet. After all, even though he wasn't able to read the words now, that didn't mean that that would remain the same in the future.

Following that, he then brought Chester toward the other murals.

After looking through them for a while, they found that the last mural seemed to state that as long as someone was able to get the key to open the life gate, they would be able to find their way out.

Even the 'key' was shown on the mural. True to what was inside the box, the 'key' on the mural was drawn in the shape of a goldfish's tail.

Gerald made sure to record down all this as well before finally walking over to the eternal coffin—with Chester following right behind him—that still lay in the center of the structure.

While Gerald had heard Lyra describing the woman in white—from her dreams—as a person with the temperament of a fairy, Gerald had never seen her for himself.

Now that he was finally here, he wished to take a proper look at her. After all, he kept hearing that she was a beauty that had come from heaven. Was she really that beautiful?

With a little effort, both of them managed to push the coffin's lid open halfway. Immediately after that, a chill seemed to seep out of the coffin.

Seconds later, the iciness dissipated and the woman in the coffin could now be seen.

"...Angelica...?" muttered Chester with an excited expression on his face. His tone, however, hinted at simultaneous feelings of shock and delight.

So it seemed that Gerald's guess really was true. The person who had saved Chester from before really was the woman in white! However, a new question was now posed. How had she come alive back then?

Taking a better look into the coffin, Gerald saw that the person inside appeared to be a cold-looking beauty who was wearing spotless white clothes.

With near-unmatched beauty, Gerald had to admit that she was probably the prettiest beautiful woman on the planet.

What more, despite the fact that she was simply lying there so peacefully, she somehow still exuded a fairy-like aura. From what Gerald could tell, the aura seemed to help her heal any flaws on her the moment they appeared.

'How absolutely beautiful!' Gerald thought to himself, stunned.

"Unfortunately, no matter how beautiful you are, you still belong to my doppelganger. I'm only here because I wish to find Mila and uncle so that my family can finally be reunited again... Regardless, I'll be reuniting you with him first, and once I'm done with my task, I hope you'll help me as well. Even if it's just the tiniest of hints, I'll gladly accept it as long as it truly leads me to them..." said Gerald as he looked at the woman inside the coffin before averting his gaze.

With that said, he then re-sealed the lid of the coffin before jumping off the high platform together with Chester.

After looking around for a bit, Gerald finally saw an indentation in the middle of the high platform. The indentation itself matched the shape of the fish tail 'key' in his hand.

'We should be able to exit this place the moment I slide the key inside...' Gerald thought to himself.

Just as he was about to slide it in, however, he suddenly heard Chester shout, "S-sir! Look there! There's another coffin there!"

Turning to look at the dim area that Chester was pointing at, Gerald soon saw it as well.

Lying in the middle of that darkened area, was a giant black coffin that had been tied shut with a number of sturdy-looking chains. The way the chains were tied, it was almost as though they were actively preventing something from escaping.

With that in mind, it really was no wonder why Chester was feeling unnerved by it.

"How odd... Why didn't the murals show the origins of this coffin?" muttered Gerald to himself in astonishment.

That wasn't the only thing he had found odd upon arriving here. After all, where was the small coffin that had turned over from the ship? And though there was also supposed to be a gigantic dragon buried here, it was nowhere in sight either!

"...Let's not bother about that first. Regardless, stand back, Chester. I have a feeling that the second the exit is opened, a lot of seawater will come gushing in. I'll be focusing on taking care of the eternal coffin, so remember to stay close to me," said Gerald.

Gerald only had a single aim now, and that was the woman in white. While he still couldn't completely comprehend some things, he was far too drained to investigate any further into the matter, at least for the moment.

Upon seeing Chester's firm nod, Gerald slid the fishtail in place...

A second later, a golden light was emitted... And thunderous crashing followed immediately after!

Chapter 1158

The entire palace was now shaking vigorously, and it felt as though the heavens were about to come tumbling down while the earth seemed ready to rend open!

As all this happened, the crystal coffin slowly began descending, supported by Gerald in one of his hands.

While Gerald had anticipated for at least this much to happen... He hadn't expected the life gate to not open! Instead, it simply seemed to be shaking violently!

Amidst the chaos, even the iron chains that were wrapped around the giant black coffin began quivering in place...

It was at that moment when something truly peculiar happened.

Both of them saw the iron chains—tying the black coffin shut—starting to break apart. At the same time, the crystal coffin almost appeared like it wanted to fly out of this place! As if all that wasn't enough, Dead Annie's suddenly began growing rapidly on all the surrounding walls!

"It... It's the Dead Annie's again!" shouted Chester, now extremely frightened.

It didn't take long for the flowers to fill the entire place, and it was around then when a lot of pollen began emerging.

As a result, the dizziness instantly returned.

Before both of them could even think about how to react next, one of the palace's walls came crashing open, sending seawater rushing rapidly into the structure!

Despite his entire body already trembling in great pain, Gerald still grabbed onto the eternal coffin as tightly as he could.

Moments later, the stone pillars within the palace began collapsing, sending chunks of the broken pillars all over the place!

By then, Gerald's legs had already given in—due to the effects of the Dead Annie's—and he was now kneeling as he watched as Chester got hit by one of the pillar chunks.

"S-sir!" shouted the injured Chester as he began crawling over to support Gerald.

However, a massive gush of seawater prevented him from even getting close!

As seawater filled the entire palace, Gerald found himself slowly blacking out. The Dead Annies had already taken their toll on him, and he could no longer endure all the pain.

Seconds before he went completely unconscious, the large black coffin caught his eye again. By this point, all its chains had already been broken and the coffin's lid had now slid open. Following that, a black and dense light shot out of it...!

Meanwhile, it was late night above sea and the Crawford family fleet was still waiting for Gerald to return.

While the ocean had been relatively calm before, the ships instantly began bobbing up and down rather dangerously as the ocean's waves went wild and thunder and lightning began crashing and striking out of nowhere!

With the addition of sudden strong gales that hadn't been present just seconds ago, all the ships were truly in danger of getting overturned! It was almost as though a tsunami was imminent...

"How's the situation? Is Mr. Crawford still down there? All this seems to be happening due to the movement of secret currents under the sea! Can anyone tell what's going on down there?!" shouted several of the Crawford family's bodyguards anxiously.

"All the other ships have lost signal on him! The radars are all being disrupted as well!" shouted one of the men operating the ship.

The moment his sentence ended, a black light shot out of the ocean, towering into the sky!

"...What the hell is that...?"

All the bodyguards standing on deck found themselves staring wide-eyed as the black light flew high into the sky... before beginning to fall in a certain direction like some kind of meteor!

"...That... Couldn't have just happened, right...?" asked one of the guards, completely flabbergasted.

"We all saw it! It wasn't just your imagination!"

“Hold on. Everyone, quick! There’s a signal again! We’re connected with Mr. Crawford again!” shouted another one of the guards excitedly.

As the ocean gale grew more and more powerful, the unconscious Gerald simply floated in the sea with the eternal coffin wrapped tightly in his arms.

While his mind had long gone blank—due to the overwhelming pain—and he was no longer in control of his body, his wish to cling onto the eternal coffin persevered above all else...

The next time his eyes reopened, Gerald found that he was lying on a bed. Unsure of how long he had even passed out, he thought to himself, ‘...I... I actually survived...?’

“...G-Gerald...? You... You’re finally awake!” shouted a voice from right beside him.

Turning to look to his side, Gerald saw that Jasmine was the one who had cried out. It appeared that she had been waiting by his side this entire time, and the fact that he was now finally awake was such great news to her that she couldn’t hold her tears back.

Not long after, Lord Fenderson, Joshua, and several other top-notch bodyguards rushed in as well while shouting, “You’re finally awake, Mr. Crawford!”

Looking at them, Gerald then asked, “...How... long have I been unconscious...?”

“You’ve been unconscious for about a month and a half now!” replied one of the worried bodyguards.

“...What? A month and a half?! Actually, hold on, where’s the eternal coffin?” exclaimed Gerald, his eyes widened in shock.

Hearing his question, the bodyguard then quickly said, “...Well, we had been planning to tell you about this as soon as you woke up... You see, while it’s true that you managed to bring it back... Actually, it’s easier to explain if you go take a look at the situation yourself...”

Chapter 1159

As Gerald listened to what his bodyguards had to say, he was simultaneously also thinking about something else.

The fact that he had gone unconscious for a full month and a half meant that the Dead Annie's had been much more potent than what he had initially anticipated.

Completely different from the attacks from powerful people like Christopher, Dead Annie's were used as a medium to bring great mental harm to others.

It made him realize that despite training his physique to such a powerful state, his mental power was still far from catching up to his body's capabilities. To think that he had almost died due to all the injuries he had suffered from the Dead Annie's....

Regardless, Gerald distinctly remembered witnessing something seconds before he had fainted back when he was still in the king of the ocean's palace.

As he was clinging onto the eternal coffin back then, the lid of that large, black coffin had slid open and following that, a black light shot out of it....

Whatever the case was, he was sure that he had brought the eternal coffin back with him. But why were his guards still behaving like something was amiss?

Getting up from the bed, Gerald then headed to the room in the backyard that was currently being heavily guarded by bodyguards.

The moment he opened the door, Gerald was immediately greeted by the sight of the eternal coffin right in the middle of the room.

Moving toward it, Gerald slowly slid the lid open... Only to find out that it was empty! The woman in white was missing!

Seeing that Gerald had now realized what the 'problem' was, the same guard from earlier walked up to him before saying, "You see, Mr. Crawford, after successfully getting both you and the eternal coffin out of the water, we brought both of you back here. At the time, we were all pretty sure that the contents of the coffin remained inside. And we were right. However, it was about a week ago when... an incident took place. Even though she was still in the coffin the previous night, the next thing we knew, she had disappeared, leaving only the coffin behind!"

"Despite how unimaginable it sounds, it's the truth!" chimed in Lord Fenderson.

There was a reason why Lord Fenderson was still here. After returning to Halimark City, everything had gone fairly well. However, just as he was about to return to the Salford Province, Gerald's bodyguards suddenly asked for Joshua, stating that Mr. Crawford was injured and was currently in a comatose state!

Since they were still there anyway, they agreed to head to Montholm Island to visit the unconscious man.

Regardless, despite the fact that Lord Fenderson was almost a hundred years old by now, everything that was happening was still pretty hard for him to believe.

Gerald himself was equally as surprised. Could the description of the person who had taken part in the funeral procession back then really be true...? Was it truly possible for the woman in white to return to life?

As Gerald carefully scanned through the eternal coffin, a Dead Annie placed right in the middle of the coffin instantly caught his attention. The moment he saw that dreaded flower, he couldn't help but take a step back.

Due to how much pain it had caused him, his body had now instinctively learned to fear it.

Quickly regaining his composure, Gerald realized that the flower had been placed quite neatly within the coffin, almost as though someone had left it there the moment the woman in white left.

Seeing that Gerald had noticed the flower, the bodyguard added in a shameful tone, "Unfortunately, Mr. Crawford, that nameless flower was the only thing that remained in the coffin!"

Stunned, Gerald then turned to look at the guard before saying, "You... You know of this flower?"

The flower was extremely rare, and Gerald had only managed to encounter it the first time back when he was on his grandfather's island. Despite its beauty, Gerald had only regarded it as a simple flower back then, so he hadn't really paid it much attention.

Nevertheless, Gerald was this surprised now since a random bodyguard from his family—who didn't even belong to the Soul Palace—actually knew about the flower.

"Oh! Well, Lord Fenderson was the one who gave me the details!"

“Hmm? Then I’m assuming you’ve seen this flower before, Lord Fenderson?” asked Gerald as he turned to look at Bryson.

“But of course I do! When I was much younger at around the age of twenty, I had a pretty good relationship with your grandfather... That year, your grandfather and I were still comrades-in-arms... Either way, he showed me this breed of flower back then and claimed that it was owned solely by your family! When I asked him what its name was, however, he simply said that it was a nameless flower. He then added that it was a weird and mysterious flower that was once a totem flower that belonged to some mysterious country within the Western Regions,” explained Bryson.

“So what you’re saying is that not only did my grandpa have this breed of flower with him all the way back then, but he also knew that it was mysterious?” asked Gerald, feeling shocked by the sudden revelation.

Chapter 1160

After all, when he had last enquired Welson about the flower back when he was still on the island, Welson had told Gerald that after his grandpa founded the Soul Palace, he had gone to the Western Regions. While he was traveling northwest, he had apparently found the seeds to that flower by accident. Though he had an entire garden of it, he had only planted them for their beauty. In other words, Gerald had been told that his grandpa didn’t know about the flower’s mysterious properties at all.

What more, from what Lord Fenderson had just told Gerald, it seemed that his grandfather had found the flower much, much earlier than what Welson had told him! His grandpa had apparently even told Lord Fenderson that the flower was owned solely by the Crawfords!

What contrasting statements!

“Indeed. It’s a nameless flower, after all. ‘There are only two petals that bloom, and each petal represents a world...’ That was the stunning statement that that old man had told me back then, you know?” said Bryson as he shook his head with a bitter smile on his face.

‘It’s that sentence again!’ Gerald thought to himself, now finding the entire situation more suspicious than ever.

Why on earth would his grandfather say the exact same words as that strange old woman had...?

With so many questions in mind, Gerald began listening even more intently as Lord Fenderson continued speaking.

“Regardless, I then asked him what his odd statement meant. In response, he told me that by looking at the nameless flower’s unique shape, the flower could be split into two identical spaces. Regardless of whichever space one chose, the things they would see, hear, and feel would be exactly the same. Even so, the two spaces would still be completely different from one another. In other words, ‘two petals bloom, and each petal represents a world.’”

“But grandpa, why would there be two similar but completely different spaces?” asked Jasmine who had been standing at the side this entire time.

“I asked him the same thing as well back then. Following that, he gave me an example that I’ll now relay. According to Gerald’s grandfather, the nameless flower has a special ability in which it’s able to modify a person’s mentality as well as their sensory organs. To be more specific, the flower can use its strange mind control ability to make you feel that an object is similar to another object, even if it’s completely different from the actual object before you. Take this room for example. Have a good look around. When you’re exposed to the nameless flower’s ability, it makes you feel like you’re in this exact room, even if you’re in a completely different room! You should be able to understand it a bit better after hearing that example. I, for one, surely didn’t back then, and I had even joked around with him at the time by treating him like an extremely weird person...” explained Bryson as he shook his head again, the bitter smile still on his face.

Now that he was at the age where he was already a foot in the grave, Bryson seemed slightly melancholic as he reminisced the events of that year.

While that was Bryson’s reaction, when he and Jasmine turned to look at Gerald, they found that he had gone extremely pale. In fact, his current expression looked far more unpleasant than when he was still unconscious.

“Is something the matter, Gerald?” asked both Bryson and Jasmine in unison.

Gerald—who was already furrowing his brow—was already deep in thought by then, so he didn’t reply.

‘So that’s the true meaning of ‘each petal represents a world...’ Thinking back, while the old woman had clearly entered the cave, she didn’t have the goldfish tail ‘key’ with her... In other words, it wouldn’t make sense to assume that she would be able to leave the king of the ocean’s palace from the other side... I still remember stopping her at the entrance of the cave...’

After waking up from his brief moment of unconsciousness back then—due to the old woman using the Dead Annie’s on them again—he had entered the king of the ocean’s palace together with Chester. However, there weren’t any traces of the old woman there at all.

The only additional thing in there was that large, black coffin...

‘Speaking of which, I remember finding it strange that the giant dragon’s bones weren’t present back inside the palace... As for the black coffin, there wasn’t even any mention of it at all in the previous murals...’

Everything just kept getting stranger and stranger the more he thought about it.

Back before all this happened, Gerald had simply wanted to bring the woman in white and the eternal coffin back to the surface... According to the procedures on the murals, the door of the tomb should've been opened the moment he inserted the goldfish tail key.

Instead, the heavens fell and the ground split open! It was completely different from what the murals had shown.

'Also, why wasn't I calm at that moment...? Thinking back, it almost seems like there was a force that had captured me at my weakest moment in order to add more momentum to the incident...'

While all this was already quite worrying, there was one particular thought that truly made him extremely anxious.

'...Was... Was the place I had gone to truly the king of the ocean's palace...? Did I meet the real woman in white? If I'm to believe that each petal truly represents a different world...'

'...Then could I have entered another space? If that's the case, then...'

'Who did I save?'

Chapter 1161

Even though he hadn't even begun thinking about what the dark light—that had escaped from the black coffin—was, Gerald truly didn't dare to dwell any longer on any of all this, at least not for the moment.

The stress of all this just felt like a ticking time bomb weighing on his mind.

"...Speaking of which, where's Chester?" asked Gerald, suddenly remembering about him.

"Ah. Well, the young lord had been comatose for quite a long time as well, but he regained his consciousness about half a month ago. However, he suffered quite a lot of physical injuries, especially his legs. Even till today, he still hasn't been able to get out of bed," replied one of the bodyguards.

"I see. It's good enough for me that he survived!"

While the way Gerald and Chester had gotten acquainted was nothing short of dramatic, Gerald remembered how Chester had risked his life to protect him back when he was close to passing out. Due to his heroic actions, Gerald had felt extremely touched.

“...Also, aside from our signals, were any of you able to detect Miss Gunter’s...?” asked Gerald.

“About that... We searched for her for seven whole days and nights, but we weren’t successful in locating her at all, Mr. Crawford!” replied the same bodyguard from before.

Upon hearing that, Gerald was immediately filled with self-reproach.

Before descending into the ocean, Gerald had made up his mind that he would protect her since he had brought her beneath the waves with him. In the end, however, he had nearly failed to protect himself!

Due to that, he had burdened Yume. He didn’t even know if she was currently still alive or not. If only she hadn’t gone down there with him, she could have remained safe...

The thought of that made Gerald clench his fists tightly.

While he had initially thought that he could just do as he pleased with his current capabilities, in the end, it was all just a hopeless endeavor... He had just been lying to himself this entire time.

To think that a few small Dead Annies was all it took to render him incapable of fighting... If he hadn’t arranged for support above sea back then, Gerald knew that there was a high possibility that he would’ve already died in the depths of the ocean by now.

Even so, the most pitiful person throughout this entire event had to be Yume...

‘I’m so sorry...!’ Gerald thought to himself, his expression pale.

When Jasmine saw that expression on his face, her initial joy—of him finally waking up—instantly disappeared. In its place, an immense sense of loss began filling her heart.

'...Why does she get to be blessed with having Gerald worry about her...? Haha! I'm pretty sure that Gerald wouldn't be this sad if I were in her shoes...'

As Jasmine thought about that, Gerald himself was already scanning through the eternal coffin again.

No matter how much he looked at it, however, the coffin didn't seem to be fake.

'...Then... perhaps I really did save the woman in white...? The problems just keep adding to the pile... Regardless, it seems that grandpa knew about the origins of the Dead Annie flowers... Once I meet up with him, I'm sure I'll be able to understand more about its mysteries...'

'Speaking of grandpa, since a month and a half has already passed, he and the other legends should have long started their journey to the pledge of the holy water... I wonder how they're all doing...'

'Regardless, while I had initially promised to meet up with grandpa and the others once I located the woman in white's corpse, I don't even know where her body has gone now...'

His train of thought was cut short when miserable screams of bodyguards could suddenly be heard outside the manor!

Seconds later, the sound of a door being smashed open could be heard!

"What on earth are you doing? Anyone without an invitation is prohibited from entering this place!" shouted Gerald as he ran out to have a look at what all the commotion was about.

Upon arriving at the scene, Gerald saw a few of his bodyguards confronting a young woman who looked to be around twenty. The woman herself looked extremely cold and unapproachable.

Gerald also saw over ten seriously injured bodyguards—who were all clutching onto their chests—lying on the floor.

Before he could register anything else, several of the remaining guards began rushing toward her while shouting, "You're courting death!"

Lifting her arm and waving her hand slightly, the bodyguards quickly found themselves flying backward as though they were all just broken kites!

As Gerald watched his men topple all over the place, he felt his eyelids twitch rapidly as he shouted, "Step down, men!"

After getting his subordinates to stop attacking, Gerald turned to get a better look at the woman.

While the purple and black eyeshadow as well as her relatively dark lipstick made the woman look extremely charming, that wasn't what was on Gerald's mind at the moment.

After all, he now knew who the woman was. She was none other than Linus's kind-hearted niece, Queena!

Chapter 1162

He remembered how she had helped him enter the Yonwick family's manor in the previous month after he had been denied access into the manor by one of the Yonwick's apprentices.

At the time, Gerald had thought that she was extremely sweet and warm-hearted. After all, from what Gerald had personally experienced, nice women like her were far and few between in today's world.

While that had been his initial impression of her, the current Queena's temperament was vastly different from the one he had met back then.

Instead of the gentleness he had remembered her by, she was now displaying extreme arrogance and viciousness.

What more, while Gerald was sure that she was just an ordinary woman before this, he could now sense immense inner strength emanating from her. It was so overbearing that even Gerald had to admit that he was probably weaker than her at that moment. It was truly bewildering, to say the least.

"...What are you doing, Queena?" asked Gerald rather hesitantly.

"Why, I came over to see you, of course!" replied the woman as she placed both her arms behind her back while looking at Gerald rather fiendishly as though she was staring at someone whom she hadn't met for a long time.

"While I appreciate your kind gesture of visiting, don't you think you went a little overboard by hurting my men, Queena?" said Gerald as he turned to glance at the wailing bodyguards who were still lying on the floor.

“It’s their fault for stopping me from entering! Quite honestly, if it wasn’t for the fact that I was worried that you’d get angry, I would’ve just chopped their heads off by now! I refrained from doing so just for you, you know? I hope that gives you a clear image of how important you are to me!” replied the woman as she began seductively walking toward Gerald.

No human would ever treat another’s life as a trivial thing, especially not Queena, the person who would probably be sad for quite some time after a kitten or puppy died.

“...You... You aren’t Queena, are you? Who are you?! Queena isn’t like this at all!” declared Gerald in a frigid tone.

“You’re always like this, aren’t you...? No matter what I do, you’ll still end up having doubts about me... While it’s true that I cheat a lot, I’d never ever cheat you! Despite that, you still keep doubting everything I do!” said Queena in return as her eyes suddenly turned vicious.

“I’ve no idea what you’re talking about, but I know for a fact that you aren’t Queena!”

“Is it really that important whether I truly am Queena or not? After all, the most important thing is that we’ll still end up being together in the future! Nobody’s going to be able to snatch you away from me!” replied Queena as she smiled smugly.

Now directly in front of Gerald, Queena stared intently at his face. However, the moment she raised a hand to caress his cheek, Gerald quickly took a step backward, leaving her hand hanging in mid-air.

Looking at Gerald with a smile, she then said, “Fine, fine, I won’t tease you anymore... See, I came here today to give you some time to prepare yourself. Since tomorrow’s a good day, I’ve decided that we’re getting married then!”

“...What? Marriage?” replied Gerald, stunned.

“...I already have a fiancée so it’s impossible that I’d marry you! Also, I’m a good three to four years older than you!” added Gerald.

After undergoing such a huge change, Gerald knew that Queena wasn’t the same person she used to be. While he was sure about that, he wasn’t willing to argue with her just yet. After all, he was still unable to get an accurate reading of how strong she truly was. Due to that, he would only have a row with her as a last resort.

“I don’t care about that! We’re getting married tomorrow and that’s final! I wish to announce our love and marriage to everyone on the planet!”

Following that, Queena turned around and headed to the door leading outside. However, the moment she got there, Jasmine suddenly stepped forward while exclaiming, “Hold it! Who do you even think you are? Gerald already has someone he loves! You can’t just order him to get married to you out of the blue!”

Upon hearing that, Queena stopped walking forward. Tilting her head slightly to look at Jasmine, she then growled in a spine-tingling voice, “While I already hate any women that get too close to him, I hate women like you more! Women who dare to disobey my wishes!”

The moment her sentence ended, she stretched open her fingers before taking in a small breath. Through that action alone, Jasmine felt her entire body being pulled toward her!

“Jasmine!” shouted Gerald as he immediately stretched his own hand out to hold onto her.

However, before he was even able to touch Jasmine’s arm, Gerald suddenly felt a strong inner force against him! He found himself retreating a few steps due to the impact alone.

Looking at his hurting hand, Gerald saw that her attack had caused his thenar webspace to be completely torn off! His green veins were also extremely visible now, pulsating as his arms and palms began bleeding.

Jasmine herself was now being strangled by Queena...

Chapter 1163

‘S-she’s so strong...!’ Gerald thought to himself.

He only needed to experience her inner force once to know that her current force was already immensely different compared to the other forces he had previously come into contact with.

If he had to make a comparison between his force and hers, it was like comparing dirty water in a stagnant pool to pure and distilled water. With a difference that large, there was absolutely no doubt who held more power here.

Gerald watched as Jasmine’s face flushed as Queena slowly intensified the grip of her force.

Jasmine was going to die any second now if Queena truly wanted to end her!

“Stop!” shouted Gerald as he quickly began running toward her again.

“Worry not, I won’t kill her like this... After all, I can see that you care for her a lot! Anyway, I’ll be taking her with me until I get your answer!” replied Queena as she gently touched Jasmine’s body...

The moment she did so, Jasmine instantly blacked out! As Queena exited the manor, both Gerald and Bryson ran after her.

Upon exiting, however, the two men immediately saw several of the Yonwick family’s cars and bodyguards waiting outside. As the unconscious girl was brought into one of the cars, Queena herself stood before another car’s door before tilting her head to look at Gerald.

“You know, no matter where you go, you won’t be able to escape! I’m not letting you slip away from me again!” said Queena before closing the car’s door behind her and ordering her men to drive.

“J-Jasmine...!” shouted Bryson, looking extremely worried as he watched the cars drive off.

Seconds after Bryson shouted, Gerald began coughing loudly before vomiting a mouthful of blood!

“Mr. Crawford!”

“Senior!”

Seeing him in such a state, Joshua and the others immediately surrounded him.

While it was true that Gerald was now conscious, he was still only at around seventy percent of his usual strength at the moment due to the damage he sustained from the Dead Annies.

Adding that to the fact that Queena had almost crushed the force in Gerald’s entire body when he came into contact with her force while trying to save Jasmine earlier, there were now both old and new injuries on him.

She was simply too strong! Due to all the injuries, he simply couldn’t hold back the surge of his force and blood.

After all that, he now knew that even at his peak form, it was still going to be difficult for him to resist any of Queena's attacks.

"She... She's too strong, senior! I don't think you can take her on unless master is here...!" said Joshua.

"...I have to agree..." replied Gerald as he shook his head bitterly.

"Still, to think that she's so strong despite her young age! How truly unimaginable!" exclaimed Bryson.

"Queena isn't that strong... In fact, I know for certain that that isn't Queena! Regardless, I do have a pretty good hunch of who she actually is!" replied Gerald as he held onto his chest, still enduring the immense pain there.

"Who do you have in mind?" asked both Joshua and Bryson in unison.

However, Gerald didn't reply. Instead, he only turned to face the manor, looking in the direction where the eternal coffin had been stored...

"...Who she is doesn't matter. Whatever the case is, since all this is happening because of me, I won't allow anyone other than me to get hurt! Worry not, I'll surely bring Jasmine back!"

It was a little while later when the team of cars stopped before the Yonwick family manor. Turning to look at the back seat, the driver saw that Queena had her eyes closed. Following that, he then called out, "We're here, miss!"

Sensing how dominant her aura was without even the need to be angry was certainly astonishing for the driver and the other Yonwick family bodyguards. Starting as early as half a month ago, Miss Yonwick truly had changed a lot...

For one, everyone was immediately able to tell that something was wrong then since she had constantly kept herself locked in her room from that point onward...

While she finally came out again today, her immediate response was to order—in a commanding tone—the Yonwick family's team of cars to set off with her!

Chapter 1164

Up till that point, nobody had ever seen Queena behaving like that. However, due to how commanding her tone was, everyone couldn't help but obey her every word. Her imposingness was simply too powerful!

Regardless, after being told that they had arrived, Queena simply stepped out of the car and began walking into the manor.

Inside the manor itself, a minor familial commotion seemed to be taking place...

Aside from the fact that several Yonwicks were currently standing together, Freya herself was currently walking to and fro, looking quite anxious.

The issue stemmed from the fact that she had initially planned to rush to the airport to pick a friend up. However, she soon realized that Queena had taken all the family's cars out together with her!

'D*mn it all!' Freya cursed in her mind.

Queena was just her third uncle's daughter, which meant that she didn't have a high status! To think that she would actually be daring enough to take the team of cars out, even though Freya was—supposedly—the only one who could use them! How absolutely frustrating!

As Freya continued being outraged, she finally saw Queena slowly making her way toward the group of Yonwicks.

"We should really discipline Queena properly this time, dad! Even though she's just from Third uncle's family, she's slowly getting more and more imprudent by the day by not respecting her elders!" declared Freya.

While Linus said nothing, Queena's parents quickly ran over to the angered girl before saying, "We'll discipline our own daughter, young lady!"

"Since she's using the family's resources, it's up to you whether you wish to discipline her. Regardless, I'm still going to personally teach her a lesson!" growled Freya angrily.

Though Freya wanted to give Queena a piece of her mind as soon as she stood before her, Queena never stopped walking... In fact, she didn't even greet anyone!

Almost as though she hadn't seen anyone at all within the manor, Queena simply continued making her way to her room without a word!

That, of course, only served to amplify Freya's anger.

In an angered tone, Freya then shouted, "Hey, Queena! Didn't you see us standing here? Aren't you going to greet us at all? Regardless, why the hell did you use all the family's cars without permission? While we're at it..."

Though Freya still had a lot to say, the moment she saw the woman that her family's bodyguards were currently dragging in, her voice slowly trailed off in shock. She wasn't the only one feeling that way either.

The second Linus and the others saw her, everyone was utterly flabbergasted.

"M-miss Fenderson?! Why..." stuttered Linus whose face had already gone pale.

After all, it had taken so much effort just to send her away back then... To think that she had actually been recaptured by one of his family members! Wasn't this going to cause their family to truly be exterminated this time?!

"You... You actually brought Miss Fenderson back here again?!" shouted Freya in her bewilderment.

Hearing that, Queena turned to face the rest of the Yonwicks, staring specifically at Freya. The moment she felt Queena's cold gaze on her, Freya instantly began trembling. Both frightened and shocked, Freya felt as though she had just been tossed into some freezing dungeon.

After continuing to stare at her for a little while, Queena then sneered, "From now on, everything in this family is at my disposal, and that includes you! Now step down!"

Following that, Queena simply waved her hand slightly and Freya was instantly tossed out!

With her sneer alone already sounding so oppressive, none of the Yonwicks dared to go against her decision, not even Linus! In a way, it almost felt like whatever she ordered had to be obeyed no matter what!

Freya—who was now lying on the ground—was now too terrified to even crawl back up. Gulping in fear, she then watched as Queena continued bringing Jasmine back into her room...

A little while later, Jasmine was brought into Queena's room, and the moment she was released, Jasmine glared at her before saying, "...I've met Queena before... She's kind and gentle! After all, my grandpa, younger sister, and Master Joshua had only remained safe throughout that time with her secret help! You're too ruthless to be her!"

"...Oh? Aren't you afraid of me...? Don't you fear that I'll kill you at all?" replied Queena as she looked at the girl curiously.

"Not in the least! Hell, not only am I not afraid of you, but I'm willing to die if it's for Gerald, the person I love most! If you're planning on using me to threaten Gerald to marry such a vicious woman as you are, you'd best give up the idea! Know that the moment you threaten him with that, I'll end myself so that Gerald won't have to worry about me anymore!" declared Jasmine, displaying no weakness in her voice.

Upon hearing that, Queena's eyelids twitched. It was evident that what Jasmine had just said had seriously irked her.

"...You're a rich young lady, aren't you? With so many men in the world, why do you insist on loving him? Even to the point of sacrificing yourself! You'd abandon everything for him without the slightest hesitation! Why is that?" asked Queena, jealousy reflected in her eyes.

From what Jasmine could tell, her words had evoked some painful memories in her.

"...It's because I love him! With my strong feelings for Gerald, I'm able to do anything for him without ever having to be at a loss of what to do!" replied Jasmine.

"...I don't believe in love, and I certainly won't believe that a woman, especially one who's as prestigious and high-positioned as you are, would truly abandon everything for him! After all, even I wasn't able to do that... And because of that, I've suffered terribly for my entire life!" shouted Queena as she clenched her fists so tightly that her sharp fingernails dug deep into her palms, causing her excruciating pain....

Chapter 1165

"...You... don't know what love is...? ...So that's why you go to such extremes when dealing with things! ...Look, I'll have you know that fame and wealth are only able to give people the illusion of happiness... No matter how much of them you gain, you won't ever truly be happy without knowing what love is! After all, with an empty heart, you won't be able to hold on to anything dear... No amount of fame or wealth can fill that gap, and you'll just continue suffering till the day you die unless you come to understand that!" explained Jasmine.

While she didn't know who the woman in front of her was yet, that wasn't really the crucial thing now. The important thing was that though the woman was extremely powerful, she had a fatal weakness.

She appeared to have been deeply hurt by love.

Queena herself couldn't help but stare at Jasmine in amazement after hearing all that. While Queena had initially planned to kill Jasmine after inflicting immense fear into the girl—to the point of forming an utterly terrified expression—she now felt as though she had been defeated by Jasmine.

After all, the girl had been indifferent toward all her threats. It simply made Queena feel like a loser.

“...You're intelligent, I'll give you that... Regardless, you've touched me deeply... Alright, hear me out. I'll now tell you a story, and after listening to it, I need you to identify which of the two girls in the tale are wrong! If you're able to give me a clear answer, I'll consider freeing you,” replied the moved Queena as she sat at the side.

Jasmine gave no verbal reply, and only stared at the sitting girl.

Seeing that, Queena then began her tale.

“There were once a pair of sisters, twin sisters, to be exact... Both of them were like two peas in a pod, and the older sister was named Chloe while the younger one went by Indigo. The sisters had always had a very good relationship, even from their childhood days. They always enjoyed things together, but also made sure to endure all their misfortunes side by side.”

“All this continued until they met a guy at the age of sixteen. Not only was the person in question extremely diligent and considered to be a young genius, he was also extraordinarily handsome! It was like he was excellent in every sense! Regardless, both sisters ended up falling for him at about the same time...”

The love they felt for him, however, was somewhat similar to the love that Jasmine had earlier described, though both of them would only come to realize that later.

The young genius himself had first fallen for Chloe, the elder twin. While for a time, the three of them were able to enjoy beautiful sunsets and sunrises together, hand in hand, Chloe eventually ended up growing dissatisfied.

Not only did she want to have him all for herself, but she also had a gut feeling that her younger sister would end up ruining her relationship with him in the future.

This wasn't a baseless assumption either. After all, both of them had constantly been compared with each other ever since they were young. While the younger sister was known to be witty, obedient, and agreeable, nobody ever praised Chloe.

Though she had initially been fine with that, now that the young genius had fallen for her, she began taking it more personally. Knowing how much more exceptional her younger sister was compared to her, she was well aware that others would find it much easier to notice Indigo's potential and advantages, including the young genius.

As a result, Chloe began distancing herself from Indigo. Eventually, she even began targeting her younger sister!

Despite all that, Indigo would always tolerate Chloe's behavior. To Chloe's dismay, the more Indigo tolerated her, the clearer and stronger her advantages became.

Not wanting to be outdone, Chloe decided to build up her own aura, one that would overtake her younger sister's.

However, the harder she trained to achieve that, the more unscrupulous she ended up becoming. Eventually, she became completely blinded by fame and wealth, losing herself as well as her initial aspirations.

Sometime later, an incident happened where Chloe stepped over the line. Because of her actions, everyone ended up standing against her and this included her younger sister who ended up breaking relations with her. However, the most devastating blow came from the young genius who had chosen to stand against her as well...

Feeling that she had lost everything at that moment, Chloe became enveloped with fury and resentment.

As the incident developed even further, the young genius grew further and further apart from Chloe. This was because throughout the past few years, he had endured a number of misfortunes together with Indigo. Due to that, both of them developed quite a deep relationship.

Brimming with jealousy upon finding out about that, Chloe began deliberately starting fights with Indigo. Due to how much they fought, their resentment eventually got to a point where both of them wanted each other dead.

When a crisis happened one day, Chloe finally had a chance to prove herself.

If she had only been willing to abandon all her fame and wealth to save him back then, the situation could've been eased... However, she had been hesitant at the most critical time.

During the crisis, Indigo had disregarded her own safety and life, immediately rushing over to the young genius's side when he was in danger.

It was at that moment when Chloe realized that she had been completely defeated.

Chloe had still been thinking about herself while Indigo had rushed to save the person she loved... She... She just couldn't admit that she was weaker than Indigo... She wouldn't...

By this point, Queena's eyes had already grown teary.

Though Queena hadn't revealed much about the story to Jasmine, Jasmine could sense that Queena was truly concerned about that young man as well as her resentment back then...

Chapter 1166

"...Could... you be Chloe...?" asked Gerald in a careful tone.

After hearing how she had lost everything and completely changed after being betrayed by her friends and family, Jasmine now felt that Queena was more pitiful than anything.

"...That's not important. Regardless, know that I won't stop until I get my hands on him, and I will get what I want!" declared Queena as she clenched her fists tightly.

"...But... What does all this have to do with Gerald...?" asked Jasmine rather curiously.

"You wouldn't understand even if I explained everything to you... Do know that I'm only telling you a summarized version of this story. After all, I'm well aware that you're a smart girl! I'm not going to tell you everything in detail just so you can find my weaknesses!" sneered Queena.

"...Are you always this defensive with everyone around you...? Were you like this with him as well...?" asked Jasmine.

"Indeed, I was! It... It was the reason why he began distancing himself from me in the first place! However, I'm going to win this time... And I'm winning everything!" replied Queena as she took in a deep breath.

As a frigid expression formed on her face, one of the maids suddenly walked over before saying, "Pardon me, miss Queena..."

“What is it?”

“Young Master Gerald wishes to see you!” replied the maid.

Hearing that, Queena turned to look at Jasmine before saying, “...Please bring Miss Fenderson to the room downstairs... She’s not allowed to leave without my permission, understand?”

After instructing the maid on what to do, Queena walked out the room and began heading to the living room where Gerald currently was.

Once she got there, she saw Linus and the others in the room. Gerald himself was seated on one of the couches in the living room.

After Queena ordered Linus and the other Yonwicks to leave the room, Gerald watched as all of them left before standing up and saying, “While I’m not quite sure what is going on between the two of us, I assure you, Miss Queena, that none of this has anything to do with my friend. With that in mind, please free her!”

While Queena’s face had been quite happy just seconds ago, her expression bittered as she instantly said in a spine-tingling cold voice, “...So... You only came here to ask me to free your friend...?”

“Indeed!” replied Gerald as Queena immediately shot a frigid glare at him.

“Regardless, I have a hunch of who you actually are. I’m not quite sure what your relationship with the woman in white is, nor do I know what misunderstandings you have with Zeus. However, I do know that while I may look exactly like him, I’m not the person you think I am, which is why I’ll never fall for the woman in white! There’s only one person I truly love, and with that in mind, I hope you come to realize that there’s no room for you to negotiate!” added Gerald as he looked straight into her eyes.

Through his analysis on the writing that he had found back on Montholm Island, Gerald recalled there being someone that looked similar to the woman in white, yet wasn’t really her. The doppelganger was the one in charge of heartlessly killing the eight people on that island back then.

Gerald also suspected that the one who had saved him that night was this woman. With her standing before him right now, all his theories simply seemed to point to her.

Queena herself had a look of disbelief on her face, clearly angered by Gerald's claim as she growled, "Are... Are you trying to fool me...?"

Chapter 1167

"I have no reason to lie to you! All that I've said is true! I'm truly not the person you've been looking for!" said Gerald, looking at her straight in the eye.

Based on her reaction, he no longer had any doubts about what was going on. The person he had saved was definitely not the woman in white. As for the real woman in white, she could very possibly still be within the king of the ocean's palace.

With these new revelations, Gerald felt it would be wiser not to mention where Zeus's whereabouts was. He would keep that a secret until he found the real woman in white.

"I don't care! I'm never going to believe you! Regardless, I've told you that we're getting married tomorrow! Do you already have your answer?" asked Queena as her gaze momentarily softened as she looked at him.

"Marriage isn't a game, and it's not like there's any love between us in the first place... With that in mind, how could we get married?" replied Gerald with a bitter smile.

"It's definitely no game, I agree with that. Whatever the case is, does that mean that there really is no room for further discussion between us? Is the only one in your heart that lover of yours?" asked Queena as she raised a brow.

Hearing no reply from Gerald, Queena glared daggers at him as she added, "I see. So that's how it's going to be. I get where you're coming from, but just because you don't love me today, that doesn't mean you won't end up loving me in the future! I'll make you beg me sincerely to love me one day!"

Following that, she pointed at both Gerald's shoulder and forehead in quick succession. A split second later, Gerald felt his entire body stiffen. He couldn't move a muscle!

Turning to look at Queena—who had the elegance of a queen—Gerald asked, "What did you do to me?"

"It's simple, really. All I did was restrain the three largest chakras on your body. I've also sealed your inner strength! Due to that, you're just a regular human being now. Tell you what, I'll give you a bit more time to think about it. If you truly wish to recover your strength in order to get one step closer to finding the answer you seek, then beg me for marriage. You'll have to kneel before me while doing so, of course!" replied Queena, her pretty eyes glistening coldly.

Taking in a deep breath, she then gave Gerald an emotionless stare before shouting, "Now head back and sleep on it!"

With that, she turned around to leave.

Throughout this entire time, the other Yonwicks had been standing outside, listening intently to their conversation. Linus himself was already sweating.

He had previously thought that the Holy Witchcraft was already an incredible powerhouse. However, that changed when he found out about Gerald's existence. For a time, he had already convinced himself that Gerald was the greatest of the great...

However, it wasn't even that long after they had finally managed to get that death god away from their family when an even bigger threat showed up. To think that that person would be Queena!

In their hearts, everyone was already well aware that the current Queena was no longer the same good girl that they once used to know. Her change was simply too jarring.

Moving back to Gerald, he knew that Queena hadn't been pulling his leg. True to her word, he instantly found that he could no longer access his strength anymore. As a result, he was well aware that he wouldn't be able to withstand any attacks anymore, at least for the time being. The worst part was that the injuries his body had suffered now felt even more painful.

'There must be a way to take her on! There must be...!' Gerald thought to himself.

Just as he was about to leave, Freya noticed that Queena still hadn't walked too far off.

Knowing that Gerald had lost his power and was now just a weak person, Freya rushed toward him with glistening eyes as she yelled, "You heartless jerk! How dare you show your face here just to reject our dear Queena? I'll beat you to death for that!"

Of course, she was only doing all this to get on Queena's good side. However, before she could land a slap, she felt a tight grip on her wrist.

Gulping, Freya turned around and saw that it was Queena!

"Beat him to death? You have little right to do so! Now leave!" shouted Queena as she tossed Freya to the side.

Turning to look at Gerald again, Queena then said, “One day, you’ll understand that I’m only doing all this for you... I hope that you won’t disappoint me because I’ll destroy anything that I can’t get... Nobody should have what I can’t have!”

With that, Gerald slowly left the Yonwick manor as he held onto his weakened body. Never could he have anticipated that he would meet up with such a difficult opponent like this...

Regardless, while telling her where Zeus currently was would definitely help with his current situation, his gut told him not to reveal the information, and Gerald had decided to trust his intuition.

Chapter 1168

After all, Zeus seemed to be somewhat related to him, and Jasmine was still being held captive by her.

Regardless, once he got back to the Montholm Island manor, he was immediately greeted by the sight of a group of people surrounding the manor. Everyone was dressed in odd-looking costumes, and there were hundreds of them blocking the manor’s entrance.

However, what caught Gerald’s attention most was a few of his bodyguards lying on the ground.

“Young master! You’ve returned!” shouted several of his bodyguards—who were still conscious—excitedly the moment they saw him.

Realizing that he was now present, Joshua and Lord Fenderson immediately began walking toward him.

Once they were before him, Bryson immediately explained, “These are all members of the Holy Witchcraft, Gerald! The master of the Holy Witchcraft has personally come over today to meet you!”

Hearing that, Gerald immediately knew what they were here for!

“So you’re Gerald?” asked an old woman as she stepped forward.

She was clearly the master of the Holy Witchcraft, and despite already being in her eighties, both her skin and hair seemed to almost glow. There didn’t seem to be many wrinkles on her face either. In other words, she looked much younger than her actual age.

Going by the name of Tiara, she had heard that a powerful young man foreign to Montholm Island had beaten up one of the members of the Holy Witchcraft. From what she had been told, that person didn't even have a chance to fight back against that young man.

As if that wasn't enough, the young man even took her grandchild away! With nothing similar ever happening to the Holy Witchcraft in the past century, Tiara knew she had to see that young man for herself to believe it.

"Indeed, I am!" replied Gerald with a nod.

"You? You're nothing but a sick weakling, are you not? Are you really that powerful? Regardless, know that even if the entire world is afraid of you, I won't ever be, Gerald, so it's high time you quit all this nonsense! We'll talk more about this later, but for now, return my grandchild to me!" said Tiara coldly as she squinted her eyes.

"I didn't bind Chester to me. He was the one who had chosen to stay by my side, and I've always treated him as a friend. No matter what he decides to do today, I'll support him. Note that the decision is his. If he wishes to go back with you, I won't try to stop him. However, if he's unwilling, don't even think about taking him away! He's been trying his best to make up for all the wrong he's previously done!" replied Gerald.

"How arrogant of you! Who do you even think you are, little Gerald?! Fine then, I'll show you the true power of the Holy Witchcraft today! The floor is yours, Second lord!" declared Tiara as she waved a hand.

Following that, a man in his sixties stepped out from the crowd, an emotionless expression on his face.

He was Hendrik Tindall, the second lord of the Holy Witchcraft.

Locking his eyes on Gerald, he then charged toward him!

Seeing that, Joshua simply smiled before saying, "Who does he even think he is? Senior could easily take him down!"

However, contrary to what he had assumed, within three rounds, Gerald was already clearly out of shape.

Soon after, Hendrik landed a kick on Gerald's chest, sending Gerald flying as blood spurted out of his mouth!

“And here I thought that you would actually be a capable opponent... As it turns out, you’re just another useless and arrogant brat!” declared Hendrik before laughing.

“...He clearly doesn’t look like a worthy opponent for Chester... While I have no idea what method he used to lead Chester astray, it’s high time we ended all this nonsense. Kill them all, Second lord!” ordered Tiara.

“With pleasure!” shouted Hendrik as he looked at Gerald with a smirk on his face as he raised his right hand.

“Making us come all the way for nothing... You’ll pay with your life, you useless brat!”

“Stop!”

Chapter 1169

Seconds before Hendrik was able to land his skull-crushing punch on Gerald—who was already prepared to die at this point—a shout made him stop his attack half-way.

Of course, the person who had shouted was none other than Chester.

“Grandma, Second Lord! Please don’t kill master! This has nothing to do with him!” said Chester as he fell to his knees.

“You’re calling him master? How absolutely ridiculous! You’re the master of the Holy Witchcraft! Why on earth would you call this wealthy spoilt brat your master? If news gets out about this, then our clan’s prestigious name will surely be destroyed by you!” replied Tiara as the corner of her lips twitched.

She, for one, was a person who cared a lot about prestige. To her, a man dying was nothing special if it was to maintain the Holy Witchcraft’s status!

“It was my personal decision to be by master’s side! I’ve never wanted to be the young master of the Holy Witchcraft in the first place! All I’ve ever wanted was to live normally... Ever since I began following master, I came to realize that I was actually able to be useful to him, and knowing that, I was happy! After all, I was finally granted a chance to walk away from my past lifestyle and begin making up for all the wrong I’ve done!” cried out Chester.

None of what Chester had said was an exaggeration. He truly had been living in both guilt and pain before this, feeling extremely lost and coming to hate everything since he couldn’t find a way out no matter what.

However, from the moment Gerald had given him a taste of death before pulling him back, Chester became enlightened. In a way, that experience had allowed him to finally find a way to slowly relieve himself of his tormented past.

To make up for all that he had done, he swore from that moment that he would continue doing good deeds by continuing to stay by Gerald's side. He would finally be able to achieve much more in life.

That wasn't the only positive thing about all this either. Chester had actually managed to gain more friends throughout his stay with Gerald. The friends in question were Master Joshua and several of the Crawford bodyguards.

In fact, just yesterday, the bodyguards had invited him over to join them for a drink. However, Master Joshua had caught them in the act and for a second there, they all thought that they were going to be in trouble. However, Joshua had only been putting on a façade, and in the end, he ended up joining them as well...

It gave him a feeling of warmth... This was how being alive was supposed to feel.

Chester was also aware that they had invited him to drink with them because they all knew what had happened to him...

They had noticed that Chester was still quite self-conscious despite having turned into a new leaf after he began following Gerald around. He had reason to feel that way too. After all, he was a sinner. An unworthy young master of the Holy Witchcraft...

However, knowledge of that didn't stop Joshua and the guards from seeing him as a friend. A friend of Gerald's was a friend of theirs, and it was at that moment when Chester knew he could share anything on his mind with them.

It was nothing short of liberating, and for a moment, Chester truly believed that he had finally been able to walk away from his past.

"...Ridiculous... How absolutely ridiculous! How could the young master of the Holy Witchcraft say something like that?!" roared Tiara in fury, her eyes brimming with murderous intent.

"Since you're my grandson, I'll give you one final chance! Kill this Gerald and you'll be permitted to regain your title of young master of the Holy Witchcraft!" added Tiara.

Looking at the vicious woman, Gerald could only clench his fists tightly. If only Queena hadn't sealed off his power!

“Don’t make me repeat myself!” warned Tiara.

“Even if I have to die, I won’t hurt my master! Why do you want to kill him so badly, grandmother?! I’ve already left the Holy Witchcraft and I’m over with it! Please, just leave us be already!” replied Chester as he instantly began repeatedly lowering his forehead to the ground.

As blood began trickling down his forehead, the angered Tiara then shouted, “You b*stard of a grandson! Fine then! If you won’t do it, I’ll just kill this useless brat myself!”

With that said, she raised her right palm and—aiming it toward Gerald’s head—instantly began charging toward him!

Without his inner strength, Gerald knew that he wouldn’t be able to dodge the attack, so he could only brace for impact!

A loud ‘thud’ could be heard, as Gerald’s eyes reddened.

However, the redness wasn’t because of the attack. No, it was out of utter shock.

Chester had taken the hit for him, and due to that, part of his skull ended up getting crushed! The worst thing was, Tiara had clearly been able to stop her attack when Chester stood before Gerald. Even so, the old woman had proceeded with the deed anyway!

With blood now spurting out of Chester’s mouth, he fell to the ground right before Gerald.

“Chester!”

Chapter 1170

The roar had come from Gerald whose eyes were now bloodshot as he stared at all the blood currently gushing out of Chester’s mouth.

As Joshua and Lord Fenderson immediately rushed over, the trembling Chester stuttered, “M-master... it... it hurts...!”

Covering the injured parts of Chester’s head with his hand, Gerald attempted to force his powers out to save him while shouting, “You’ll be fine! Stay with me!”

"I-it's... too late... Y-you know, master... I... I think I can finally see Lola...! After so many years, she still looks like an eight-year-old child... And... her smile... her laughter... they're as pretty as ever...!" replied Chester, his voice slowly weakening as more blood spilled out from his mouth.

"I... can see it now... She's rowing a boat... She's telling me that we're going... to see the sunset together... We... We're finally going to be reunited again... How great...!" added the dying Chester, his trembling slowly getting weaker and weaker...

"I... miss you so much... Lola..."

That was the last thing Chester ever said as his hand slowly went limp.

"Chester!" shouted Joshua.

However, no amount of shouting would be able to help. Chester had already breathed his last breath...

Despite the emotional scene, Tiara herself simply looked away disdainfully.

Even Hendrik had scorn in his gaze as he thought to himself, 'Well isn't this great? To think that the young master would actually do all this to anger the master of the Holy Witchcraft! Regardless, now that he's dead, then that means that the position of future master of the Holy Witchcraft will fall to...'

As Hendrik smirked to himself, Gerald turned to look at Tiara as he growled, "He had already chosen to start a new life... Chester had been ready to start doing good after all the wrong he's done... How... How could you do something like this to your own blood-related grandson?!"

"He deserves to die for being such a disgrace to the Holy Witchcraft!" retorted Tiara to the furious Gerald.

"You know, I heard from Chester that you were the one who killed Lola as well... You're one vicious old woman... You'll certainly die an ugly death one day!" cursed Gerald.

"...What? You... You...! I'll kill you!" roared Tiara the moment she heard the words, 'old woman'. That was the last thing she wanted to be referred to as!

Just as the raging old woman was about to charge toward Gerald, a black car—which Gerald recognized to be one of the Yonwick's—came to a screeching halt close to them.

Following that, the car's driver immediately stepped out before shouting, "Please, wait a minute!"

"...A subordinate of the Yonwick's? How dare you attempt to stop me!" replied Tiara with a frown.

"Lady Queena wishes to see you!"

"What? Queena? Who does she even think he is? How dare she order me around!" growled Tiara, her rage seething by this point.

"Please don't be upset, Master Tiara. Before anything else, Lady Queena told me to show this to you... She said you'd understand once you open it!" said the driver as he tossed a box to Tiara.

Catching it, Tiara then opened it to see what the big deal was. Seconds later, however, her body instantly began trembling wildly as her eyes widened.

"...I-I'll follow you to meet Lady Queena!" replied Tiara as she immediately bowed! Whatever she had seen in that box, it must've been extremely incredible...

Getting the confirmation he needed, the driver then looked at Gerald before saying, "As for you, Mr. Crawford, Lady Queena asks if you've made up your mind. If you're still uncertain about it, I was told to leave you to be dealt with by the Holy Witchcraft's second lord!"

"Then tell her that even if I were to die, I'll make her suffer for the rest of her life! She'll never get what she wants!" replied Gerald, the only person who knew that he was referring to Zeus.

"Very well, then. You'll be in charge of young master Gerald then, Second lord. However, you're not allowed to kill him!" said the driver as he turned to look at Hendrik.

While Hendrik himself had never looked up upon the Yonwicks, seeing how terrified the master of the Holy Witchcraft currently was, he didn't dare to disobey. There was something he wanted to ask Gerald anyway...

Chapter 1171

With that said, Hendrik ordered for Gerald to be arrested.

Not long after, Gerald found himself within a secret room with Hendrik.

“Tell me, Gerald... Are you aware of any secret techniques to get rid of ancient witchcraft...?” asked Hendrik coldly.

“Secret techniques? Now why would I know anything of the sort! After all, such techniques are only taught to those within the Holy Witchcraft, no?” replied Gerald rather casually as he turned to look at Hendrik.

“You’d best stop putting on an act before me, you brat! I’ll admit that I used a secret ancient witchcraft technique on Chester’s body long ago... That particular witchcraft poisons a person’s heart, making them act in eccentric, unreasonable, and extreme ways! After a long period of time, said person would eventually die from insanity! I was lucky to have come across such an ancient technique, you know? Regardless, when I saw Chester again earlier, the witchcraft I had placed upon him seemed to have been lifted! While he was able to regain his consciousness, I’m glad that old woman still killed him with a single blow! Otherwise, all my plans would’ve been for nothing!” growled Hendrik as he glowered at Gerald.

Grabbing Gerald by his collar, he then added, “Now hurry up and spit out the truth! If it wasn’t you, then is there anyone else among you who’s proficient in ancient secret techniques?!”

In truth, Gerald had noticed something odd about Chester back when he had just cornered him in the woods. After using his mind-reading ability on Chester, he realized that Chester wasn’t actually a person with bad character. In contrast, he seemed to be constantly repenting and confessing his sins!

Simultaneously, Gerald also noticed an inner demon within him that wished to simply act uncontrollably.

Something just didn’t feel quite right about that. After all, while childhood traumas could certainly be linked with having extreme feelings or emotions, the things Gerald sensed within Chester were on a whole new level.

It was then when Gerald realized that someone had used heart devouring witchcraft on him. Such witchcraft was poisonous to the afflicted, and the technique could be used on any part of the body. If a person wasn’t proficient in the technique or if they didn’t know about its existence in the first place, even a master who was skilled with poisons wouldn’t be able to tell if someone was suffering from the witchcraft.

However, Finnley had previously taught and passed on all his skills to Gerald. As a result, Gerald was much more proficient in poisons since he had received legitimate training on them.

Regardless, sometime after that incident, Gerald found an opportunity to remove the poison from Chester's body. However, he had refrained from telling Chester about it since he only wanted to tell him about it once he fully recovered.

Anyhow, that was the reason why Gerald had treated Chester so well. If it wasn't because of the poison, Chester pretty much had a simple and kind personality. But there was no use thinking about all this now...

Chester was no longer among the living.

He had died because of Gerald, and Hendrick was the one who had set him up.

Thinking about that, Gerald turned to glare daggers at Hendrik, immense murderous intent reflected in his eyes.

"Not only are you refusing to answer my question, but now you're even glaring at me so murderously? Have it your way! I have many ways to make a useless person like you speak up! While I can't kill you, I can still make you suffer by humiliating you to the point where you'd definitely prefer to be dead rather than alive!" declared Hendrik as his eyes widened.

"Men! Tie him up before hanging him out at the port! He's going to be placed there as an exhibit for tens of thousands of people... Only let him down once he's willing to fess up!" ordered Hendrik as he laughed aloud.

Swiftly obeying, Gerald soon found himself on the ground as Hendrik's subordinates began tying his hands behind his back...

True to Hendrik's orders, Gerald was soon hung up—for all to see—at the port.

Also true to Hendrik's words, an almost endless number of pedestrians immediately recognized who he was when they walked past him, prompting many to take the time to stare and discuss Gerald's current plight.

"Oh god, isn't that Mr. Crawford...?"

"The hell is going on? How did he even end up in such a sorry state?"

"Well, I'm sure you've heard by now of how vile the internal committee of the Holy Witchcraft actually is, right? You see, Mr. Crawford was the one who had uncovered their lies and exposed them! Due to his actions, the young lord turned into a new

leaf and even announced his departure from the Holy Witchcraft! Since then, Mr. Crawford supposedly took the young lord under his wing!”

“You know, Mr. Crawford’s provided no shortage of economic-based projects for the Yonwick family... In fact, he’s even taken the initiative to invest and start several development projects on Montholm Island! You can already tell that Mr. Crawford is a good man from all that he’s done!” explained a passer-by.

While they clearly viewed him positively, none of those discussing Gerald dared to speak out loud. After all, there were two guardians from the Holy Witchcraft who were keeping a close watch on Gerald, and everyone knew that those from that clan were proficient in witchcraft that could easily be used to kill others.

Though they were aware that attempting to rescue him would definitely spell trouble, many of the pedestrians chose to remain there. To them, since they couldn’t actively help him, keeping him company was the next best thing.

Around that time, a car slowly drove past the area...

“...Hmm? M-miss Queena, look! It’s Mr. Crawford!” exclaimed the shocked driver when he saw who had been hoisted up at the port.

Hearing that, she immediately rolled the car’s windows down to have a look for herself. Naturally, the sight of Gerald in such a condition made her feel quite distressed.

While she was extremely tempted to lower Gerald right this instant, she kept reminding herself that his current situation was pretty much ideal for her plan to work out. In her mind, she summarized that after Gerald arrived at the point where he couldn’t bear the humiliation anymore, he would eventually come to realize that she was the only person who truly cared about him. By that point, he would surely choose to approach her, begging for mercy!

For her plan to come true, she knew she had to endure her own pain, even if it made her slightly distressed.

“So it is! Well, he has nothing to do with us! Drive on!” replied Queena as she closed her eyes.

Not daring to delay the car ride, the driver simply obeyed and drove off.

Meanwhile, Gerald was thinking to himself, 'I have to quickly think of a way to recover my strength! If this goes on, then I'll definitely miss out on the pledge of the holy water! However, even after I've escaped, I have no real way of contacting grandpa at all...!'

Hours passed and soon, it was late at night...

Chapter 1172

By that point, out of fear that those from within the crowd would attempt to rescue Gerald, the two guardians—who were tasked with keeping an eye on Gerald—quickly drove away anyone who had chosen to stay behind.

As a result, only silence remained when Gerald looked up at the moon in the midnight sky.

Throughout the afternoon earlier, Gerald had remained focused on thinking up a way to break free of his seal. After all, not only was the clock ticking, but Gerald had also come to realize something from Chester's death.

That being, he couldn't allow anyone else around him to suffer any more harm or die because of him!

With that in mind, he was eventually able to come up with a method to break his seals.

Back when he had first come across the deity, Gerald had found a ring-shaped jade pendant that embedded several memories into his mind.

Though he now had memories of learning several new skills, despite previously attempting to use those skills for himself, Gerald realized that he could only actually practice a small portion of the skills.

Regardless, while thinking of ways to remove his seal earlier, Gerald recalled a training technique that he felt could easily and quickly allow him to break free of all three of them.

However, said technique was also evil in nature, and if the user of the technique wasn't careful, they could easily get corrupted after receiving such a surge of power. What more, the execution of the technique was also rather cruel, even for Gerald's standards.

Due to that, he spent much of his remaining time wondering whether he should take the risk and use such a dangerous technique. Even after quite some time, however, Gerald knew that in the end, he didn't have much of a choice. There simply wasn't any other way, and he was well aware that he couldn't afford to allow anything bad to happen to Joshua and the others due to his hesitation.

Anyhow, in order to actually use the technique, Gerald first needed to practice it for some time, so he figured that midnight would be the best time to do so. With Gerald already having memories of the technique implanted in his mind, he knew it wasn't going to be too difficult for him to practice it.

Now that midnight was here, the determined youth felt that it was high time that he began practicing it. Since he was left hanging mid-air now, Gerald simply closed his eyes, resting while simultaneously manipulating the flow of the meridians in his body in accordance to the paths that his implanted memories showed him.

Fast forward to a week later, Gerald finally determined that his soul was ready. It was now finally time for Gerald to use the Dawnbreaker!

'Come forth, Dawnbreaker!' Gerald ordered through his mind.

Almost instantaneously, the black blade flew out of Gerald's sleeve and swiftly sliced open the rope that had been binding him this entire time!

Now freed from his restraints, Gerald fell to the ground, almost losing his footing since his body was still slightly weak.

As Gerald let out a long sigh of relief, he suddenly heard someone sneer, "The hell? How'd the ropes break? Hold up, looks like he had a dagger with him this entire time! Thankfully, the second lord sent seven of us to keep an eye on you, twenty-four hours a day! Otherwise, you would've surely made your escape!"

After sliding the Dawnbreaker back into his sleeve, Gerald turned to look at the seven smirking men from the Holy Witchcraft who were all staring at him as they slowly approached the youth.

Despite how cruel his following actions would be, Gerald had already convinced himself that he was only using the technique due to there being no other way to break the seals.

"Hey, brat! Are you going to tie yourself up or do you need us to do it for you? I'll have you know that you're just begging for trouble just by attempting to escape!" said the leader of the men as he continued walking over to Gerald in a carefree manner, intent on giving the youth a few gentle slaps to the face to teach him a lesson.

Once the leader was within range, however, Gerald immediately grabbed hold of his guardian's head before unleashing the technique he had been practicing throughout the week!

At that moment, a surreal and slightly chilling sound could be heard. Soon enough, the guardian's screams of pain were added to the mix.

To the six other guardians, it looked as though a huge suction force was sucking their leader dry, causing his body to rapidly begin shriveling up as his cheeks sunk so much that his pale face now resembled a skull more than anything.

Their leader's skin soon turned a purplish-black as it continued shriveling to a point where only ashes remained... Releasing his grasp on the ashes, Gerald turned to look at the six screaming men who were all paralyzed in fear after witnessing the horrors that Gerald had just committed right before their very eyes.

Chapter 1173

This evil method was known as the Soul Eater, and by using it, Gerald was able to quickly drain his victim's vitality, turning it into his own. Naturally, this meant that the more souls he absorbed, the more strength and energy he would gain.

None of the guardians had expected Gerald to possess such a diabolical skill, but it was already far too late for them to escape. With the same technique, Gerald swiftly absorbed the vitality of the six remaining men, resulting in each of them turning into mere piles of dust.

After completing the deed, fierce determination glinted in Gerald's eyes as he stared off into the distance.

While he had now managed to recover around thirty percent of his strength, Gerald was well aware that even at his peak strength, he still wasn't going to be a match for Queena by a longshot.

With that in mind, he knew that he needed to get as far away from Queena as possible. After all, his current priority was still to locate the actual woman in white.

Even so, Gerald was sure that it wasn't going to be as easy since Queena had supernatural powers.

After giving it some thought, he decided to look for Master Ghost to get another reading from him. After all, up till this point, everything that Master Ghost had predicted had eventually come true.

Regarding the old score that Master Ghost had told him to settle first before his next reading could take place, Gerald now knew that Queena was most probably the person that the previous divination session had predicted for him to meet.

Since he was actually capable of predicting all these events, Master Ghost would definitely be able to provide a good lead for Gerald's next step!

'Regardless, I should save lord Fenderson and the others first before leaving!' Gerald thought to himself as he instantly began heading toward the land of the Holy Witchcraft.

The second he arrived at the foot of the mountain, Gerald was immediately stopped by a guardian who shouted, "Halt! What do you think you're doing? Did you think you could break into the Holy Witchcraft that easily?!"

Gerald, however, wasn't planning to waste any time. Extremely swiftly, he decisively ran up to the guardian before instantly breaking his neck!

Seeing that, the other guardians widened their eyes in horror.

"Where is Hendrik Tindall?" asked Gerald coldly as he grabbed hold of one of the guardians.

"T-the second lord is drinking with his friends in the mansion!" stuttered the guardian.

"What about Lord Fenderson and the others? Where have they been locked up?"

With Gerald's pressuring aura and how resolute he had been when snapping the neck of the other guardian seconds earlier, the young guard knew that his life was hanging by a thread at that moment.

"I-I'll tell you the truth but in return, please don't kill me...!"

"Agreed!"

Meanwhile, Hendrik was playing cards with a few of his friends inside the mansion.

Throughout his life, the man had three things he loved most. Aside from his obsession with ancient witchcraft, Hendrik also loved beautiful women, and playing mah-jong as well as cards.

He simply adored the exciting atmosphere that came with playing mah-jong and cards. Due to that, Hendrik had converted his huge living room into a mah-jong and cards room. Of course, he also had an area—in the middle of the room—specifically designated for several beautiful and flirtatious women to dance while he played with his friends.

Hendrik himself was currently extremely comfortable and completely immersed in the atmosphere. Not long after, however, the loud ‘slam’ of a door could be heard, causing his attention to be drawn to the sound.

From where he sat, Hendrik saw a young man walking into the room as a servant—who was holding onto the young man’s shoulder—attempted to stop him from entering. However, the servant was clearly failing at his attempt as the young man simply dragged him into the room as well.

When the young man got close enough, Hendrik couldn’t help but feel surprised when he realized who the young man actually was. It was Gerald of all people!

“So it’s you, you worthless piece of trash! I really hadn’t expected that you’d be able to escape! Ignoring that, to think that you actually came all the way here to seek your own death again!” scorned Hendrik before continuing on with his game of cards.

He had already fought against Gerald before, thus he knew that Gerald wasn’t as powerful as the others had described him to be. That was also the reason why he was behaving so contemptuously toward the youth.

Seeing how calm Hendrik was, his friends didn’t even bother to budge and simply continued with their game. It was evident that they were all treating Gerald like he was nothing more than a joke.

“So that’s the infamous Mr. Crawford? And here I thought he was going to be some powerful man! As it turns out, he’s just some kid! Hah!” sneered one of the men playing with Hendrik.

Following that, a young man with a very pale complexion—who had been standing behind Hendrik this entire time—said, “So this is the person who killed the young lord! How absolutely perfect! I was planning to head to the port one of these days to look at how miserable he was hanging there, you know? To think that he managed to escape yet decided to show himself before us! Please allow me to take him down first before you deal with him next, father!”

Seeing how vicious his son’s expression was, Hendrik simply casually replied, “Very well, but be careful not to kill him! Keeping him alive will be of great use to me!”

Chapter 1174

Getting his father’s approval, the young man then began walking toward Gerald and with a contemptuous tone, he scorned, “I hope that you know that there is only submission when it comes to our sacred Holy Witchcraft, young man! There’s never been

room for any negotiation in the past, nor will there ever be any in the future! With that in mind, since you're clearly here to seek a compromise, you're already in the wrong! Due to that, I'll personally teach you a lesson you won't ever forget! We'll see if you'll finally tell my father what he wants to know once I'm done with you!"

After a booming laugh, he then launched himself toward Gerald!

Gerald, however, was now much faster than him. In one swift move, he grabbed hold of the young man's head before tearing it right off his body!

The others could only widen their eyes in disbelief as the decapitated body—that was now spurting a fountain of blood from the neck—flopped to the ground.

"...W-what?!" roared Hendrik as Gerald tossed his son's head—which still retained a frozen expression of shock—to the side.

At that moment, nobody at the table dared to even make a move in their immense shock. Hendrik himself was simultaneously flabbergasted, distressed, and extremely heartbroken by the sudden turn of events.

Not too long after, he managed to snap out of it and the second he did, he immediately stood up trembling. The immensely distressed man felt great pain from his aching heart as he cried out, "M-my son...!"

He truly hadn't expected that Gerald would possess such great strength! However, it was far too late for regrets now.

Gerald had already killed his only son!

It was at that moment when screams filled the room as the dancing girls finally snapped out of their horrified states and immediately began scattering to get out of there! Even the servant—who had earlier been trying to stop Gerald from entering—instantly turned around to run after witnessing Gerald's terrifying strength.

To his utter dismay, he was only a few steps away when he felt Gerald's hand on him! Fear was the last emotion he felt as Gerald took in a deep breath...

And just like that, the servant felt like millions of tiny explosions were simultaneously taking place all over his body! Though he was now still standing in place, the others watched in horror as a strange red mist began seeping out of every orifice on his body! By the time Gerald's attack was done, the young servant's body appeared to have been sucked dry and was now nothing but a shriveled up black corpse!

How absolutely horrifying and cruel! Frightened to death by all this, everyone's fight or flight instinct was instantly triggered.

Run. They needed to get the hell out of this place!

At that moment, that was the only thought in the minds of those who were earlier playing cards with Hendrik.

They were all well aware that Gerald was here to have his revenge on Hendrik, and though he was a good friend of theirs whom they could play cards with, there was no way in hell they were staying to die with him here today, especially after seeing how tragically the servant and Hendrik's son had died.

Though the men began running in all directions, hoping to escape, it was a futile effort, to say the least. After all, Gerald had already planned to kill everyone here tonight.

Regardless, they could wait. After all, Chester's murderer was now standing right in front of him.

Turning to look at Chester's murderer—who was now standing right before him—Gerald recalled how Chester's death had filled Gerald with immense sadness and guilt. After all, he had only died to save Gerald.

While it was true that the others in the room didn't have anything to do with that, Gerald simply wanted all of them to die here together with Hendrik today, simple as that. Not one of them was leaving alive tonight!

With that, Gerald released the Dawnbreaker.

Though everyone was undoubtedly fast, the Dawnbreaker was faster.

Even before any of them were able to make their way to the door, one by one, decapitated heads fell to the ground, followed shortly after by their bodies.

While he had earlier been filled with both anger and resentment after witnessing his son's murder, after watching Gerald kill off all his friends so effortlessly, all the previous feelings were instantly replaced with sheer panic as he began trembling uncontrollably.

The person standing before him now... He was no ordinary man! He... He was a death god! A death god who didn't even need to blink or think twice before killing! And his aura... What a terrifying aura he exuded... The pressure from Gerald's aura alone made people feel like an impending disaster was coming! Due to that, any sane person would only be able to think about surviving within his terrifying presence!

Now brimming with fear, Hendrik immediately knelt and hit his forehead against the floor quite loudly before begging with a quivering voice, "P-please, Mr. Crawford...! Please spare my life...!"

"Hmm... No can do. Regardless, you've always been obsessed with ancient witchcraft techniques, right? With that in mind, I'm sure you'd love to personally witness and experience one of the more vicious and terrible ancient techniques! Here's how it'll go. I'll plant the witchcraft within you, and from there on out, it'll begin to slowly corrode your internal organs bit by bit, until your insides all turn into rotten meat! Now you can take whatever remaining time you have left to learn it!" replied Gerald as he flicked his finger, sending a black, glowing orb floating right into the area between Hendrik's eyebrows.

Listening to Hendrik's terrifying screams of agony as he lay on the corpse-covered floor, Gerald retained an indifferent expression as he said, "You died because of me, Chester... I'll avenge you if it's the last thing I do!"

Chapter 1175

Following that, Gerald swiftly headed off to save Lord Fenderson and the others. They had been captured as well since Hendrik had planned to torture them if Gerald still refused to surrender the ancient witchcraft techniques after a while.

Thankfully, Hendrik hadn't personally done too much to them.

However, though Lord Fenderson's illness had been cured, all the fatigue, fear, and torture the ninety-year-old man had to go through had taken a clear toll on him. By the time they were all freed, Gerald found that Lord Fenderson had already been comatose for a while.

As all of them began leaving the manor, a tired and exhausted Joshua couldn't help but ask, "...Speaking of which, senior... Are you leaving again after this...? If you are, where are you headed to next...?"

"I'll be seeking out Master Ghost. I simply cannot continue staying on Montholm Island anymore! Worry not, I'll make sure to order a few of my family's guards to safely escort all of you back to the Salford Province," replied Gerald as a hint of helplessness and bitterness was reflected in his eyes.

Queena was still too strong for him to take on right now. If he didn't make a quick escape while he could, she could easily trap him for all of eternity. Should he allow that to happen, he knew he wouldn't ever get the chance to continue searching for Mila and his second uncle ever again.

To avoid that, Gerald needed to get out of this place immediately...

“...Senior, I...”

While Joshua was tempted to tell Gerald that he wanted to come along, after giving it some thought, he felt that he would only end up becoming a burden to Gerald, which was why he refrained from completing his sentence.

Patting Joshua on the shoulder, Gerald then said, “I know what you wanted to say, but you have an important job too, you know? Lord Fenderson and Mindy are in dire need of your treatment, after all. As for Jasmine... I’ll find a way to free her sooner or later. Regardless, all of you need to leave first. If I’m able to make it past this tragedy in one piece, I’ll definitely be sure to make some time to come over and cure Mindy and Lord Fenderson with you!”

Hearing that, Joshua simply nodded before saying, “...Alright then. You take care in everything that you do too, senior!”

“I will! This is goodbye for now then! Take care!” replied Gerald before turning around and swiftly heading into the jungle. In a blink of an eye, Gerald had already disappeared from Joshua’s sight.

Meanwhile, Jasmine was pouring a cup of ginseng tea back at the Yonwick Manor. Once she was done, she placed it on a table in the living room before turning to look at the bed. Sitting on it, was a calmly meditating Queena who had both her eyes closed.

While Queena truly had planned to kill Jasmine in the beginning, after spending some time with her and listening to what Jasmine had to say, Queena was now starting to grow fond of the girl.

Though she didn’t say much, Queena truly hoped that Jasmine would remain by her side in the long run. Simply being able to chat with Jasmine when Queena was down or when she was facing a difficult period was enough for her.

As for Jasmine, she simply couldn’t help but feel sympathetic toward Queena. While she was well aware that Queena wasn’t a good person, with both of them being women, Jasmine could completely understand the pain of loving someone yet not being able to be together with said person.

After all, she felt the same way with Gerald.

If anyone were to understand how terrible it felt not to be able to be with their loved one, it would be these two.

As Jasmine was thinking about this, Queena—who had been sitting cross-legged the entire time—suddenly opened her eyes before standing up abruptly while shouting, “...No! He’s escaped!”

“...Come again? Who’s escaped?” asked Jasmine.

“Who else? I’m talking about Gerald, of course!” replied Queena as a confused expression showed on her face.

She had already sealed off all his meridians... How was he able to get rid of the Holy Witchcraft without his inner strength? Thinking about it now, she realized that she had seriously underestimated him.

‘While you keep denying that you aren’t him, your cunningness is on par with his!’ Queena thought to herself.

Upon hearing that, Jasmine immediately felt like a heavy burden had just been lifted off her heart.

Seeing that, Queena turned to look at Jasmine with a triumphant smile before saying, “It’s best that you don’t get too happy yet! He’s not slipping out of my fingers that easily! Not this time! I’m holding onto him firmly by my side till the day he finally becomes my man!”

After saying that, she immediately stepped out of the room, and just like that, she was gone.

Gerald himself—who was proficient in making escapes underwater—was already leaving the island with the help of the water repellent stone.

Chapter 1176

Upon successfully escaping Montholm Island, Gerald immediately took the sea path toward Langvern Mountain in Halimark City.

However, it wasn’t long after before he realized that someone had locked onto his aura! No matter how much he attempted to get rid of the person who was tracking him down, he simply failed to do so!

‘Is it truly God’s will that I won’t ever be able to find Mila and Second uncle...?’ Gerald thought to himself rather anxiously.

What sort of immense supernatural power did Queena even possess...? Quite honestly, she was probably the only other true top master whom Gerald had ever met aside from Finnley. How absolutely terrifying!

Despite knowing how stacked the odds were against him, Gerald persevered on, willingly exhausting what little strength he had left as long as there still existed a glimmer of hope.

It was around three in the morning when Gerald finally arrived at the foot of Langvern Mountain.

By then, the person who had locked onto his aura was also feeling much closer than she was before. Knowing that she could very well catch up to him soon if he continued loitering around any longer, Gerald immediately began dashing up the mountain.

However, the second he arrived at Langvern Church, he was left completely astonished. The entire church was empty!

Due to how dusty the area was, Gerald felt that it was safe to assume that everyone who used to partake in the activities here had long evacuated the building. Not wanting to give up without trying, Gerald tried to locate any traces of auras within the church. To his dismay, he couldn't detect a single soul inside aside from his.

"...How could this be...!" said Gerald to himself, looking slightly lost and desolate as he stood in the room in the back that Ghost had once led him to.

His current situation was similar to a setting where he had just managed to start a fire after much difficulty. However, before he could even begin warming himself, someone had doused a basin of cold water all over it.

In other words, after going through so much, this was a visualization of how disheartened Gerald was now feeling.

What still surprised Gerald most, however, was finding out that Ghost and the others had left so suddenly. Why had they left in the first place...?

At that moment, a child-like voice could suddenly be heard calling out, "Gerald... Gerald..."

Getting on high alert almost immediately, Gerald realized that the voice calling his name was coming from the living room. However, even after searching the place with his mind, he couldn't detect any forms of life anywhere...

"Gerald... Gerald..." repeated the soft, child-like voice again as the squeaking of what sounded like wheels could be heard.

To Gerald's astonishment, he watched as a loose plank suddenly began shifting... Seconds later, a small robot of sorts—that seemed to have been made with a single bamboo stalk—slowly made its way toward him.

Though it was seemingly made completely out of bamboo, the robot itself had a unique appearance that resembled a very lifelike young girl—somewhere around the age of five—who had two 'braids'.

Its eyes glowing green, it looked at Gerald before calling out, "Gerald..."

"...Yes?"

"So you're finally here! I've been waiting for you for so long that I'm already close to running out of batteries!" replied the little robot.

"What? You were waiting for me? Could you actually have consciousness?" asked Gerald in surprise.

"Of course I do! Master Ghost was the one who had left me here to wait for you, you know? I'm his most special and mysterious piece of work! In fact, I'm even more intelligent compared to most computers! You can call me Zenny!"

"...A pleasure to meet you, Zenny. From what you've said, I'm assuming that Master Ghost had already predicted that I'd come here... Did he have a message for me?" asked Gerald.

"Indeed! You see, during your last visit, Master Ghost had requested to predict your fate. However, since you refused his offer, Master Ghost couldn't exactly force the reading on you. As a result, once you left, Master Ghost secretly read your fate by using the Nine Dragons Divination Technique through the use of palm prints that you had left behind. After getting to know everything that would happen, he realized that what was going to happen next would most likely affect the lives of at least a hundred people within the church. As a result, Master Ghost and the others had already left a long time ago. However, he left me behind so that I could pass on a few messages to you! He really hopes that his words will help you get through your current crisis!" explained Zenny.

"How truly thoughtful of him... I admit now that I may have been a bit too self-righteous and arrogant back then... Regardless, what did Master Ghost wish to tell me, Zenny?"

Chapter 1177

"Well, Master Ghost said that while you're currently trapped, you shouldn't feel upset or troubled since this is simply your fate playing out, Gerald! He also added that your fate won't be ending within a day, and nor will you be able to solve the answer

that you've been seeking in your heart within a short period either. All of this is simply inevitable, so with that in mind, all you can do is face all your hurdles bravely!" explained Zenny.

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded. When he had last met Master Ghost in the church, Ghost had given him a reading which Gerald hadn't really taken to heart back then. To his eventual surprise, everything that Ghost had said slowly became true in the end. With that in mind, Gerald couldn't help but feel slightly regretful and ashamed now.

"Anyway, he also said that your predestined relationship is much stronger than you could ever imagine! Once you encounter her and decide to face her head on, it'll only end up affecting the people around you! My master had been awaiting your visit for the longest time, but you came a bit too late! You see, he couldn't just secretly send a message to you to share what he knew. If he had done so, he would've had to pay the price by receiving retribution for his great sin of messing with fate! Regardless, it isn't completely impossible to crack this predestined relationship!"

"Do note that she isn't an ordinary person! Rather, she belongs to a certain energy group! As a result, while she is very strong, she has her own fatal weakness, that being her aura and destiny get greatly reduced between the tenth and fifteenth day of each month! Since her strength declines rather steeply during that period of time, that would be your best chance and time to deal with her!"

Nodding again, Gerald made sure to note down everything that Zenny was saying.

"While she may be weakened between that period of time, I've noticed that my inner strength can't seem to hurt her at all!" replied Gerald with a slight frown.

"But of course it wouldn't! Your inner strength hasn't gone through the baptism of heaven yet! Just so you know, ordinary inner strength doesn't possess the functional aspect and yin energy from heaven! As a result, no matter how strong your inner strength is, it'll still be completely useless against her since her inner strength consists of righteous yin energy from the heavens! Something that ordinary inner strength could never compare to!"

Zenny then added, "To undergo the baptism of heaven, you'll first need to find a stone called the Zircobsite. Once you locate it, you'll have to touch it with both your hands to absorb the essence of the sun and moon. The stone will definitely aid you greatly and soon, your inner strength will be able to undergo a complete transformation!"

"Zircobsite...?"

"Indeed! The Zircobsite is a spiritual stone produced by both heaven and earth. It's hidden deep in the mountains and it's able to absorb the essence from heaven and earth, making it extremely strong! In fact, it's the strongest functional yin energy in the world! As long as you're able to obtain the stone, you'll surely have a higher chance of avoiding danger and getting through this crisis in one piece!"

“But where exactly is it located at? And once I’m there, how am I supposed to find it? I really don’t have the time to slowly search for it since she’s already hot on my tail! I’ve really been cornered like a rat this time!” replied Gerald, his distress evident in his voice.

“Worry not, for Master Ghost had already predicted all this! As a result, he prepared several countermeasures for you, Gerald, so please focus and take what I’m about to say next to heart, Gerald!” said Zenny.

After seeing his nod, Zenny then explained, “You see, the reason you’re unable to escape her is because the scent on your body is different compared to that of an ordinary man! Because of that, you’ll never truly be able to shake her off and even if you manage to do so, she can easily find you again no matter where you go! With that in mind, you’ll first need to conceal the yang scent on your body before you head off to look for the Zircobsite!”

“Regarding how to hide the scent, you’ll need to locate two people with strong yin physiques and once you do, you’ll have to obtain invigorating blood droplets from them, though to be quite honest, just a single drop of blood from each of them should be sufficient. The blood is needed for two reasons.”

“Firstly, the two drops of blood will be enough to shield your masculine scent, subsequently preventing her from locking onto you. As for the other reason, the blood can also be used to sense the specific location of the stone. After all, yin and yang naturally oppose each other, so once you get close enough to the Zircobsite, the stone will reject you! When that happens, you’ll be able to safely and easily determine the location of the stone!” concluded Zenny.

“What a meticulous person Master Ghost is! Regardless, how do I find a person with strong yin physique...? And what on earth is invigorating blood droplets?” asked Gerald, puzzled. As far as he knew, once blood was removed from a person’s body, it would be more dead than invigorating...

“Ah, well, invigorating blood is blood that is willingly offered by the person you’re asking it from! To put simply, if the person is willing to help you, then their blood will surely remain active and spiritual! If the person is unwilling, then their blood will just be dead blood that won’t be of any use to you at all!”

Continuing to explain, Zenny then added, “As for where the two people with strong physiques can be found as well as the location of the Zircobsite, Master Ghost left behind four sentences from a poem that he had obtained through the use of the Nine Dragon Divination Technique. From the poem, it’s said that all three of these can be found hidden within two cities, though that’s just from my analysis. I’m afraid you’ll have to do most of the figuring out on your own... Regardless, here’s how the poem goes!”

“The green hills enter the deserted ancient cities,

A bending willow was revived and rejuvenated,

Strategists were met with repeated failure and success,

The people were all struggling to make a living.”

After hearing Zenny recite the poem, Gerald mumbled to himself as he thought about its deeper meaning.

As someone who was from the Department of Language and Literature back when he was in university, the poem wasn't that difficult for him to decipher.

A short while later, Gerald was able to formulate an answer in his mind.

Chapter 1178

The green hills enter the deserted ancient cities and a bending willow gets revived and rejuvenated... The two distinct sentences immediately reminded Gerald of a place known as Lugaw City which was located in the southernmost area.

‘As for strategists were met with repeated failure and success and the people were all struggling to make a living’, Gerald barely had to even think about what it was referring to. After all, he was far too familiar with that place. This half of the poem was clearly referring to Mayberry City, the place where he had grown up in.

If his deductions were correct, then it seemed that the three things he was looking for could be found in both Lugaw City and Mayberry City.

“Speaking of which, Gerald, Master Ghost said that since you haven't undergone the baptism of heaven, conflict should be inevitable the moment you meet with a person with a strong yin physique. Even so, you don't have to worry about that!”

“Master left two jade charms for you, and the first one helps you temporarily conceal the yang energy in your body! That way, she won't be able to lock on to you for a while! Even so, you should still hurry to the places you need to be, since the jade charm's ability can't last for too long!”

“As for the second jade charm, this one will help you determine whether the Zircobsite stone is within the city or not. If it senses it within the city, then the charm will start burning up! While it'll definitely help you determine where the stone is much quicker, there is one condition you have to abide by! You aren't allowed to use your inner strength until you find the stone, and master really emphasized it! Please remember that condition! Now then, you don't have much time left, so hurry up and leave!” said Zenny.

As soon as her sentence ended, two small boxes came out from Zenny's mouth, and in them, were the two jade charms she had told Gerald about.

Taking the two boxes out of her mouth, Gerald then replied, "Got it!"

"Alright, now hurry and leave! Otherwise, it'll truly be too late for you!" ushered Zenny.

Just as Gerald got to the door, he froze for a second before turning around to ask, "Speaking of which, did Master Ghost tell you where he had gone to? How can I find him?"

"Master said to me that if both of you aren't destined to meet again, then there's no real reason for you to cross paths. However, if you and master truly are fated to reunite, then you'll eventually see him again! Actually, hold on, Gerald! There was one last thing that Master Ghost wanted me to tell you!" shouted Zenny.

"What is it?"

"You have to be wary of the people around you!"

"Be wary of those around me? What do you mean by that?" asked Gerald immediately.

However, it was exactly that moment when Zenny's initially glowing eyes went dim. It was evident that her batteries had finally died.

Even though he still had questions, Gerald knew that he could no longer afford to stay there any longer. It was because the sense of being locked on suddenly felt way stronger than before...

She was here!

Crushing the first jade charm in his hand as he reminded himself not to use his inner strength, Gerald then quickly descended the opposite side of the mountain.

It wasn't long after when a strong gust of wind suddenly began brewing. At one point, the wind got so turbulent that all the church's windows and doors began shaking violently.

Seconds later, a young woman stood before the church, frowning as she muttered, "...How strange... I swear I could sense his aura extremely clearly just a while ago... How could he have just disappeared without a trace?"

Naturally, the woman in question was none other than Queena.

Chapter 1179

"...How on earth did he do it...? Even if he managed to regain his inner strength, it's quite impossible for him to hide his yang energy from me...! Someone must have helped him escape! Why... Just why would anyone help him leave me?! That person... The person who's helped him must know that I can't lose him! That person is definitely trying to oppose me by making me continue to suffer! However, I won't let you escape me, Gerald! Even if I have to chase you till the very ends of the Earth!" muttered Queena to herself as she trembled in near-uncontrollable anger, her bloodshot eyes reflected her extreme bitterness.

Her immense killing intent alone changed the atmosphere so drastically that the entire church felt like it had just been layered with frost.

By the time Gerald finally got to the foot of the mountain, he turned up to look at Langevern Church one final time... Only to find that it was now in flames! In fact, the blaze was getting so wild that fire was already spreading quickly across the rest of the Mountain.

Gerald had no doubt that this place would end up in ruins by dawn. At the same time, he also found himself feeling more respect for Master Ghost deep down in his heart. After all, all his predictions always came true!

Even so, what was Master Ghost attempting to say to him by telling Gerald to be wary of those around him...?

Whatever it was, Gerald knew that he wasn't going to get an immediate answer even if he were to stress over it. Not wanting to think about it at the moment anyway, Gerald simply used the dark of night to his advantage as he ran all the way to Halimark City's port. Even if Gerald wasn't allowed to use his inner strength, he was still quite strong physically.

Soon after, he arrived at the port. Taking a passenger ship back to land, he quickly hopped onto a train straight for Lugaw City the moment he could.

It was around three days later when Gerald finally set foot into Lugaw City.

The city itself was similar to those small towns within ancient capitals, and its streets were lined with ancient-looking buildings. From what Gerald could see, there was also an abundance of ancient traditional folk arts within that city.

Clear examples of these—that Gerald saw along the streets—were a few people performing puppet shows while many others sold traditional snacks by the roadside.

At that moment, a luxurious-looking convoy came to a halt by the side of the street.

Upon seeing that, all the pedestrians instantly avoided it. After all, from how expensive the convoy looked, it was evident that the young master or lady in there came from a prestigious and influential family. With that in mind, none of the pedestrians dared to get too close to them for fear that they could accidentally get involved with unnecessary trouble.

Everyone simply continued observing the situation from afar as two youthful-looking girls stepped out of one of the cars.

The younger of the two looked to be around eighteen, and though her relatively youthful appearance lacked any hint of maturity, her body, on the other hand, was quite developed.

As for the elder sister—who looked like she was twenty-three—she was quite tall and her figure was quite divine.

Due to their immense beauty, they quickly attracted the attention of most—if not all—of the people within the vicinity. With how absolutely stunning both of them looked, several found it difficult not to affix their eyes on the beauties!

‘What a truly beautiful duo!’ Thought everyone present.

“Humph! Cundrie, look! The gazes from those men are very annoying! There’s no way we’ll be able to shop happily this way!” complained the younger sister.

Cundrie herself—who was the elder sister—appeared much more mature and prudent than her younger sister. With a much more ladylike temperament, she then replied, “Even if you don’t speak, nobody would consider you to be mute. I’ve been in a bad mood recently which is why I’ve decided to bring you out shopping with me. Pay no attention to their gazes and let’s just enjoy our shopping trip!”

With that said, both girls then slid on masks before walking toward the shopping area, hand in hand.

Following closely behind the two girls were a few bodyguards who made sure to give stern, warning gaze to those who were still staring at the duo. This, of course, prompted the men to quickly withdraw their gazes and walk away.

Though their arrival had caused a minor sensation, it ended as quickly as it had begun, and everyone simply resumed with what they were doing earlier.

It was around then when Gerald walked out of a clothes store. Now wearing a simple set of casual clothes, he began making his way to the roadside to buy himself some snacks to fill his belly.

Though Gerald was filthy rich, at the end of the day, he was well aware that he would only be deceiving himself if he continued maintaining his pretentious and showy side here. After all, he had never been the kind of person who enjoyed living extravagantly.

Chapter 1180

All Gerald had always wanted to do was to live an ordinary life.

Regardless, now that he was in Lugaw City, he needed to start looking for people with strong yin physiques. For all he knew, he needed to wander around places where lots of people gathered. In other words, busy locations like train stations and bustling commercial streets.

With that in mind, he knew that now was a good time as any to begin the search.

From what he could see, Lugaw City was a lively place, and as he was walking around, he saw a few stalls selling small pendants that had once been owned by the sellers' ancestors. Some of them seemed to be selling what seemed to be radios from back in the 1970s as well.

While looking around, Gerald noticed several people—rather excitedly—gathering around one of the stalls. Following that, he heard a voice saying, “Sir, please! I need the money urgently to treat my sick child! Know that this jade has been passed down by several of my ancestors! Even though my mother passed it down to me, I really have no choice but to sell it! I’m only selling it for eight thousand! Eight thousand, I say!”

Despite the large crowd, Gerald had sharp and precise hearing, allowing him to accurately listen to the voice. Sensing that something wasn't right, he quickly slipped into the crowd to see what was happening for himself.

“The hell? You’re telling me that this broken piece of jade is worth eight thousand dollars? I’ll have you know that I’ve seen many jade pendants before in my life, so I can easily tell that this is only a fake! How dare you try to cheat me! From the quality of this thing, eight dollars would already be a massive profit for you! Now that you’ve angered me, however, not only am I not going to give you a single cent, but I’m also going to beat you up!” declared the rich young man as he instantly began kicking the seller.

The seller himself was a middle-aged man, and beside him, stood his young daughter.

Not wanting the rich young man to take his jade away, the man instantly knelt, clearly begging for mercy.

From what he had observed, Gerald managed to get the gist of the situation. In short, the man was in desperate need of money to treat his seriously ill daughter. As a result, he was selling the jade pendant that his ancestors had passed down to him for a relatively low price just to get enough to treat his child. While a rich young man took a liking to said pendant, he wasn't willing to cough up the money that the middle-aged man was pricing it at. As if that wasn't enough, the rich youth was even threatening him so that he could just take the pendant by force! With all that happening, the old man really didn't have any other choice but to kneel and beg for mercy while holding onto the rich youth's trousers.

"Hey now, didn't you hear what my husband just said? He's an expert when it comes to appraising jades, you know? Since he's already confirmed that you're trying to sell a fake for such a high price, you should be glad that we're letting you off easy by not calling the cops! Now let go of him already!" shouted a woman with heavy makeup on—who had been standing by her husband's side this entire time—as she began striking at the middle-aged man's face with the sharp corners of her LV handbag.

"I'm telling you that that jade pendant is worth at least fifteen thousand dollars! I'm only selling it at this low a price because I have no other options! If you're unwilling to buy it at that price, then please return it to me already! I'm not selling it anymore!" cried out the man as he continued begging.

"Oh? You're not selling it anymore, you say? Do remember that you've already taken my fifty dollars earlier and the jade pendant is now in my hands! That means that our transaction has already been completed! If you want to buy it off me again, then you'll first have to pay me thirty thousand dollars!" declared the youth's girlfriend in a cold tone as she held onto the jade pendant.

"Just pay my husband that amount and this broken jade pendant is yours again! While awaiting the payment, here, catch it!" added the woman as she instantly threw the pendant in the opposite direction.

Eyes widened, the middle-aged man instantly limped over to catch it. Of course, there was no way he was going to be able to catch the jade pendant in time from where he currently stood.

The second the pendant fell to the ground, it instantly shattered into pieces!

"My... My jade pendant...!" shouted the man—who was already bleeding from the corner of his right eye due to being hit by the woman's handbag earlier—as he knelt in shock, looking like his entire world had just crumbled along with the pendant!

“Hahaha! Looks like you weren’t able to catch the pendant in time! That’s on you so you’d better not blame me!” squealed the woman in glee as she clapped her hands.

“You... You broke my jade pendant...! Compensate me!” shouted the middle-aged man as he immediately began rushing toward the vile woman.

However, before he could get far, several of the rich youth’s bodyguards grabbed the man by his neck, holding him in place.

Following that, the rich man slid his hands into his pockets as he slowly walked toward the middle-aged man...

Slapping the middle-aged man gently on the face, he then said, “As long as it makes her happy today, my girlfriend can do anything that she pleases. If you dare ruin her mood, then believe it or not, with just a single phone call, I’ll make sure that your daughter won’t ever be able to get admitted into any hospital! I hope you can imagine how helpless both of you will be then with nowhere to go!”

After hearing the young man’s cold warning, the middle-aged man instantly stopped struggling. Knowing he was completely powerless against the young man, he could only tug his own hair in frustration as he replied, “...I... I was wrong... My jade pendant was a fake... I was the one who had attempted to cheat you of your money, so I deserve to die!”

“Daddy!” shouted his daughter at that moment as she hurried over to her father’s side to comfort him.

Seeing that, the woman locked her arms happily with the young man’s before coquettishly saying, “It’s not fun anymore, darling! Now let’s go!”

Just as she was about to walk off, however, she suddenly realized that someone was grabbing onto her hair... Before she even had a chance to react, she found herself being pulled backward!

Naturally, she instantly began screaming...

Chapter 1181

“D*mn it! You must be courting your death! Let go of me!”

The woman went crazy as soon as she was grabbed by her hair.

She started flinging her bag around, trying to hit the person who was pulling her hair with her bag.

As a result, before she could even hit the other party with her bag, the other party had already given her a tight slap across her face.

There was a loud sound from the slap.

The woman immediately felt as though her world was spinning, and she was in a state of confusion after getting slapped. She stumbled into a bread stall nearby, and she knocked all of the bread on display down in an instant.

The person who had slapped her was none other than Gerald.

After witnessing the previous scene, Gerald had become so angry and enraged that he could not hold his anger in any longer.

He had seen and encountered many arrogant people in his life, but he had never seen anyone as arrogant as this.

This woman was actually using a person's pain and difficulty as a way for her to gain excitement and pleasure. Why should he allow this kind of vicious woman to go around harming people?!

"D*mn it! Yumi?!"

As for the rich young man, he was also dumbfounded at this time. Everything had happened too quickly, and the rich young man did not even have time to react at all.

His own woman had actually gotten beaten up in Lugaw City?

She had been beaten up?!

How could this be possible? Who would even dare to do so?!

However, after coming to his senses, the rich young man glared at Gerald as he shouted, "You brat! You are indeed courting your own death, right? You actually dared to hit my woman? Do you know who I am?!"

All of the passersby on the street could not help but take a few steps back at this time.

The locals obviously knew of this rich and young man's identity and power. This was also the reason why no one dared to say anything even though they had clearly witnessed the scene just now.

This young man might be taking action out of a sense of justice and righteousness, but he was taking it all out on the wrong target! He shouldn't have gotten involved in Mr. Gross's business!

That's right! Mr. Gross could easily kill anyone he wanted to in Lugaw City!

When someone had accidentally offended Mr. Gross the last time, Mr. Gross had actually killed the other party's entire family in a single night!

The passersby could only secretly think about this matter in their hearts.

"This jade pendant is clearly a genuine piece of jade. This man over here is obviously facing difficulties and in urgent need of money. The both of you are not short of money, yet you threatened him and tried to take the jade pendant from him by force for just eight thousand dollars. Don't you think that you are being too overbearing? Furthermore, it would have been fine if you did not want to buy it, but why did you guys have to break his jade pendant? This is his life-saving money! Don't you think that this woman deserves to get hit since she is so heartless and utterly devoid of any consciousness at all?" Gerald replied coldly.

"Husband! Chop him up! I want you to cut off his hands and feet!"

The woman on the ground finally recovered her senses, and she immediately cried out to Mr. Gross as she held onto her face.

"Pfft? She deserves to get hit?! You are truly courting your own death! Men, come over here and chop him up now!"

Mr. Gross said as he waved his hand.

At this time, several of his bodyguards instantly pulled out their machetes as they charged directly at Gerald.

Gerald could not help but feel extremely enraged and furious when he saw them charging toward him.

At this time, strong killing intent filled him instantly.

However, at this critical juncture, Gerald suddenly recalled that he was not allowed to use his inner strength.

As soon as he utilized his inner strength, his yang energy that he had been hiding using the jade pendant would all be in vain, then.

On second thought, even if Gerald did not utilize his inner strength, these men would not be his opponents at all.

Very soon, all of the men were clutching tightly onto their broken arms and ribs, and they were all wailing and crying out in pain as they lay down on the ground.

“This...”

Mr. Gross and his few remaining bodyguards’ eyes widened in shock.

None of them dared to step forward at this time.

This young brat was actually very powerful!

Mr. Gross could not help but panic when he saw Gerald walking toward him. So, he hurriedly took out a pistol and aimed it directly at Gerald’s head.

“D*mn it! You are truly a very nosy person, aren’t you? I will kill you if you dare to take another step forward!” Mr. Gross yelled with flushed red eyes.

The crowd of people also dispersed as they screamed out in fear.

“Besides, if you dare to make another move, I will definitely not spare this pair of father and daughter’s lives today!” Mr. Gross warned.

Gerald took a deep breath. His inner strength began to move around restlessly.

It would simply be too easy for Gerald to deal with this rich young man.

Gerald would only need to move slightly, and his head would already be rolling on the ground.

Moreover, Gerald could easily slaughter his entire family.

But Gerald could not do so at this time!

Therefore, Gerald could only take a deep breath.

Mr. Gross saw that Gerald had stopped moving at this time.

Chapter 1182

Mr. Gross could not help but sneer coldly.

“Beat him up!”

Mr. Gross shouted out to the remaining bodyguards behind him.

The bodyguards rushed forward in an instant, and they were about to charge directly toward Gerald to chop him up.

“Stop!”

Suddenly, a pair of bodyguards dressed in black came over and stopped those men.

“Who are you people?!” Mr. Gross yelled as he looked at them.

“The Smith family.” The bodyguard casually replied.

“What?”

Mr. Gross could not help but tremble slightly as he hurriedly put his pistol down.

“So, it turns out that the Smith family is here!” Abner said as he smiled faintly.

The Smith family was indeed one of the very few families that were even more powerful and influential as compared to the Gross family in Lugaw City.

Although Abner was very vicious, he also knew the ways of this world very well, and he knew how to abide by the rules. He knew that there were people that he could provoke, but at the same time, there were also some people he should never try to provoke!

“You cannot touch this man, and you cannot touch this pair of father and daughter either! This is because they are under the protection of the eldest young lady of the Smith family!” The bodyguards said.

“Pfft. The eldest young lady of the Smith family?! I am the...”

Abner’s girlfriend was about to lose her temper as she slowly stood up at this time, but she was immediately stopped by Abner, who gave her a warning look.

“Alright, then. Since the eldest young lady of the Smith family has already spoken up, the Gross family will certainly give her face. Moreover, these are just a few stray dogs anyway. I will let them go if she wants me to!”

Abner said as he nodded and smiled coldly.

After that, he supported the woman as they prepared to leave.

However, as they walked up to Gerald, Abner whispered, “Brother, you’d better watch out. Wait for it. There will come a day when I make you pay for your actions!”

After that, Abner left with his girlfriend.

“Uncle, there are fifteen thousand dollars here. This is given by our eldest young lady. You can just treat it as though she bought the jade pendant from you!”

The bodyguard handed a box that was filled with fifteen thousand dollars over to the middle-aged man. “Use this money to treat your daughter’s illness first. You don’t have to worry about Mr. Gross. He will not cause you any trouble!”

“Thank you! Please thank Miss Smith for her kindness and mercy!”

The middle-aged man was so touched that he was about to kowtow to thank him, but the bodyguard hurriedly stopped him.

As for Gerald, he could not help but feel very touched, and he now had a very favorable impression of the eldest young lady of the Smith family.

At this time, there were two young women who were wearing masks over their faces, looking at this scene from a distance.

These two young women were none other than the two beautiful women from the street earlier.

Their convoy had already arrived at this time.

In fact, when Cundrie had arrived at the scene with her sister just now, they did not know what had happened. They could only see the crowd of people quickly scattering and dispersing.

It turned out that Abner had taken out his pistol and had been pointing it directly at an ordinary young man at this time.

After stopping a passerby to ask about the situation, they found out the general context of everything that had happened earlier.

Therefore, Cundrie had immediately sent her bodyguards to stop Abner.

This had eventually led to the current scene and turn of events.

She had a very kind heart. Therefore, whenever she saw anyone in trouble, she would always help as soon as she could.

Gerald could not help but feel very moved because of this girl's strong sense of justice.

When he heard the bodyguard saying something about the Smith family, Gerald immediately turned around, and he saw Cundrie through the crowd of people.

Cundrie was wearing a mask at this time, and she simply nodded slightly as she faced Gerald's gaze.

After that, she turned around and got into the car with her sister.

She did not seem to notice that Gerald looked dumbfounded, and his mind had already gone completely blank as soon as he saw her.

At this time, Gerald's whole body was trembling in excitement.

This was because Gerald could see this girl's eyes and figure clearly. He was all too familiar with it, and he would never forget it in this life!

"Mila!"

Gerald called her name out loud in disbelief.

This was because the girl was none other than Mila!

However, the girl did not hear him at all.

The car started moving as it left in a hurry.

"Mila!"

Gerald hurriedly chased after the car that was leaving from a distance...

Chapter 1183

The several bodyguards were all stunned when they saw Gerald chasing after the eldest young lady's car.

They could not hear what Gerald was shouting out at this time. However, they were worried that the eldest young lady would be in danger. Therefore, they hurriedly got into the car to chase after him.

Gerald continued running after the Cundrie as her car continued driving on.

Inside the car.

"Sister, did you notice that young man before you got into the car just now?" Riley asked with a smile on her face.

"Which young man are you talking about?" Cundrie asked as she frowned slightly, and her red lips were also slightly parted at this time.

"I'm talking about the young man that Abner was pointing a pistol at after he helped that pair of father and daughter!" Riley said, and she covered her mouth as she laughed.

"Him? No. Why?"

"You might not know this, but he looked dumbfounded and completely stunned when he saw you just now! He was just standing in place, and he looked so silly then! Hahaha! I saw the look on his face before I got into the car, and it was truly hilarious! Fortunately, you did not take off your mask. If you had taken off your mask, wouldn't he have been so mesmerized by your beauty that he would have already fainted on the spot?"

Riley could not help but laugh out loud.

"You are the only person who could say something like that..." Cundrie simply replied.

However, at this time, Cundrie also suddenly thought of the strange expression on the young man's face earlier when she had nodded slightly at him. He really had had a very stupid and silly expression on his face, and she felt like laughing when she thought about it now.

As Cundrie thought about it, she could not stop the corners of her lips from curving upward into a beautiful arc.

“He is actually quite handsome, and he also has a very kind heart. He is so much better compared to Ferris! This kind of young man would simply be a great husband. Don’t you think so, sister?”

“Shh! Shhh! Stop bringing up my weakness!”

“I am not doing that! But in all honesty, Sister, what is your fantasy about love? Be a little more serious. I am seriously asking you about this matter!”

“My fantasy about love? How can I explain this... In truth, throughout all these years, I have always been thinking about whether there would be a guy like Yang Guo in . He has only ever been in love with his aunt, and he had been searching for her throughout his entire life. Even though there were countless beauties by his side, his goal had always been very clear and certain. He simply wanted to be together with her!”

At this time, a longing look flashed through Cundrie’s eyes.

“Oh. Pfft. I don’t believe that there will be this kind of love in this world. Furthermore, that kind of love would only exist in fantasy novels. There will never be a man who is as infatuated as Yang Guo was in real life. Nowadays, there are only men who would appear and stay by a beautiful woman’s side to get closer to them regardless of anything she had encountered. I feel as though that kind of man would fall in love with any beautiful woman. Hahaha! In truth, this kind of man is just a scumbag in reality! If he cannot wait for his one true love, he might simply forget her really quickly!”

Cundrie nodded in agreement when she heard those words. “What you said seems to make sense too. Men nowadays are no longer that silly!”

“Pfft. Can you stop changing the topic just to avoid my question? Let’s talk about serious business. You have not commented about that young man just now. My guess is that he has already fallen in love with you. Perhaps he is already head over heels in love with you now, and he can no longer forget you. Even though we have already left, he is still chasing after us and following us closely because he wants to take a closer look at you. I am serious! My senses are usually very accurate in this kind of matter! I believe that is the way that he was looking at you just now!” Riley said mischievously.

“F*ck!”

At this time, the driver suddenly yelled out loud.

Cundrie and Riley frowned at the same time.

After all, girls absolutely disliked and hated men who swore.

“What do you think you are doing?” Riley asked coldly.

The driver pointed at the rear-view mirror before he said, “That kid is really chasing after our car! He is right behind us!”

“What?!”

The two beauties were shocked and surprised at this time, and they hastily turned around to look behind the car.

At first glance, they could see that Gerald was indeed chasing behind their car.

Even though the car was going at an extremely fast speed, Gerald was desperately chasing after the car.

Chapter 1184

It seemed as though he would not give up if he could not catch up to their car.

Riley covered her mouth and said, “Oh, my God! I really would not have expected that there would be such an infatuated person in this world! Sister, it seems as though he has truly fallen in love with you at first sight!”

Cundrie could not help but blush at this time.

This was because many people had pursued and gone after Cundrie ever since she was young because of her beautiful appearance and excellent temperament. However, she had never met a boy like this.

It would be a lie to say that Cundrie was not moved at all.

“Sister, why don’t we stop the car and see what he wants to say to you? Hahaha! Looking at him, I’ve suddenly thought of a story. It’s about a beggar who fell in love with a rich young lady at first sight. After that, he wrote a love letter to her as he chased after the rich young lady’s sedan to express his love and affection for her. As a result, he ended up getting beaten to death by the rich young lady’s family! Alas, it was all destined to be a tragedy from the very beginning...” Riley said expectantly.

“Why should we stop the car? Don’t be a troublemaker! You should stop watching so many television dramas in the future. They are not good for you!” Cundrie said as she pretended to be angry.

“That’s right! Miss Cundrie, Miss Riley, we cannot attempt to understand a person’s heart nowadays. Who knows if this young man has any other intentions by chasing after our car!”

At this time, the driver also spoke up as he continued driving.

“You should also shut up and focus on driving!” Cundrie said coldly.

Gerald continued chasing after their car at the back.

Gerald knew that he could not be wrong. This was because it would be simply impossible for two people to look the same, just like the lady who was dressed in white.

He could not be wrong.

This girl seemed to be the same girl that he had seen back on Langvern Mountain.

Her back view, her eyes, and even the look in her eyes were exactly the same.

It had to be her! He would not miss out on her again this time.

Very soon, the car finally arrived at the Smith Manor.

“Miss Cundrie, that young lad has really chased you all the way here. You can go in with Miss Riley first, and we will stop him!”

The driver said as he opened the car door for Cundrie.

Cundrie nodded, and she initially wanted to tell him not to hurt Gerald and to simply ask him to leave. However, she did not say anything in the end, and she could only nod slightly.

At this time, Gerald had already caught up to them.

“Mila, is it you?!” Gerald shouted.

His mind was indeed a complete blank at this time, and he had already thought about everything that he could possibly think of.

“What Mila are you talking about?! You brat! Don’t even think about pestering our eldest young lady! This is the Smith Manor! Why don’t you take a look at your own status and identity?! You actually dared to barge in here just like that?! Men, throw him out immediately!”

Several bodyguards surrounded Gerald at this time and captured him as they prepared to throw him out.

However, Gerald struggled desperately, and he finally freed himself from those bodyguards.

After that, Gerald rushed directly toward Cundrie, and he hugged Cundrie tightly from the back amidst the shocked and stunned look in the bodyguards’ eyes.

“Mila, it’s really great to be able to finally see you again! You might not know this, but I have been looking for you everywhere over the past two years!”

Gerald hugged her tightly and desperately, almost as though he was afraid that this would all be a dream.

As for Cundrie, she had initially wanted to resist. However, at this moment, she suddenly felt as though there was a magnetic force that was pulling her to him. She actually felt that she wanted to continue to remain in Gerald’s tight embrace.

She felt as though she could feel a sort of love and affection emitting directly from Gerald’s arms. It felt like a love that could melt everything.

This was an irresistible love...

Chapter 1185

Riley could only cover her mouth in surprise as she looked at the drama unfolding in front of her.

She even hurriedly took out her cell phone to take pictures, fearing that she would miss out on this moment.

No one would have expected this young man to be so crazy. Who would have known that he would actually rush up to hug Cundrie as soon as he saw her? This was simply unbelievable! Ahh! This was simply insane!

“I... I am not...”

After a brief period of calmness, Cundrie struggled slightly as she spoke in a soft voice.

It was also this voice that woke Gerald up in an instant.

This was not Mila’s voice.

Gerald hurriedly let go.

Cundrie had a strange expression on her face, as though she was feeling a little apologetic as she turned around slightly.

It was only at this time that Gerald could finally see her whole appearance clearly.

Her back view, her figure, and even her eyes really resembled Mila.

However, although she was also very beautiful... she was not Mila. He had made a mistake.

Gerald was startled, and there was a look of desperation and loss in Gerald’s eyes.

He felt as though he had finally seen the light just now. That was the reason why he had tried so hard to rush toward her, only to realize that it was just another abyss beneath the light.

How could this girl possibly be Mila? Mila had already been captured by the people from the Sun League.

“You b*stard! You actually dared to insult and molest our eldest young lady?! We are going to beat you to death today!”

The bodyguards were all enraged and furious as they came to their senses.

Their eldest young lady was devastatingly beautiful and had countless suitors going after her, but she had actually been hugged by an ordinary person with no status or background at all!

Regardless of whether it was because of their jealousy or sense of responsibility, these bodyguards simply wanted to tear Gerald’s heart out.

At this time, the bodyguards had batons in their hands as they began using them to hit Gerald.

As for Gerald, he was already in a great state of disappointment after harboring so much hope earlier. His mind was now a complete blank, and he could not even feel any pain even as he was getting beaten up.

“Oh, my God! It seems as though that tragic story is really reappearing! The beggar fell in love with the wealthy young lady, but there were no results in the end, and he will eventually get beaten to death by her family!” Riley lamented.

“Stop it! Why are you creating such a big commotion in the Smith Manor?!”

At this time, an angry shout coming from a beautiful woman interrupted everything.

The bodyguards stopped in their act, one after the other, before bowing slightly as they looked at the beautiful woman.

“Madam!”

“What is going on? Why are you beating someone up and fighting in front of the Smith Manor?!” The beautiful woman said with a cold expression on her face.

“This young brat came all the way to the Smith Manor... and he was pestering the eldest young lady. So, we...” The bodyguards replied after thinking about it.

“Someone like him is pestering Cundrie?!”

When the beautiful woman saw how Gerald was dressed, she instantly thought that he was just an ordinary commoner, no different as compared to a beggar in her eyes.

She snorted coldly. “You actually crave and seek for someone you are not worthy of. You actually dared to come all the way here to pester my daughter?! You’d better leave right now! Otherwise, I will make sure that you disappear from this world!”

Gerald truly did not expect that he would inevitably get himself involved in such a big mess.

This was especially so because he had taken the initiative to hug the eldest young lady of the Smith family just now.

Gerald could only blame himself for this mistake.

“I... I recognized the wrong person. I am sorry!” Gerald said.

After calming himself down, Gerald suddenly thought of the reason why he had suddenly acted that way earlier.

Aside from the fact that this woman’s figure really resembled Mila and had interrupted his usual train of thoughts, the most important point was the jade charm that he was carrying on him at this time.

The jade charm would not only help him to hide his yang energy, but it would also help him seek out someone with an extremely strong yin physique.

Zenny had already mentioned that yin and yang would naturally be attracted to one another. Therefore, they would certainly collide when they met.

That’s right! That should be the reason.

Chapter 1186

This was especially so when Gerald thought about the strange feeling he had felt in his heart when he embraced Cundrie earlier.

At this point, Gerald had already determined that the woman in front of him was someone with a strong yin physique.

He had finally met her.

As long as he could obtain her invigorating blood droplets, he would be able to return to Mayberry City safely.

At this time, Gerald had already calmed down completely.

“Cundrie, Riley, both of you should stay at home. You are not allowed to go anywhere anymore. Look at the kind of people you have gotten entangled with now! I am going to look for your father. He’s currently engaged in some business activity, so the both of you should stay at home and rest. Mr. Snyder will be holding a celebration banquet tomorrow. I heard that he has invited a particularly mysterious VIP. The entire Snyder family is placing great importance on this matter, and it would be great if you could come to the banquet tomorrow too. So, you should prepare for it!” Mrs. Smith patted Cundrie’s shoulder gently.

Just as she was about to leave, she suddenly realized that Gerald had not left yet.

“Byron! You can figure out how you are going to deal with this matter. I don’t want to see this person in front of my house again!”

After she was done speaking, Mrs. Smith glanced at Gerald disdainfully before she left.

As the head of the bodyguards, Byron cracked his neck slightly before he prepared to deal with Gerald and teach him a lesson.

Just as he was about to hit Gerald...

“Stop!”

Cundrie shouted, “Let him go. Just let him leave!”

“But Miss Cundrie, Madam said...” Byron and the others felt as though they were missing something, and they did not feel content if they could not beat Gerald up today.

However, they had no choice but to obey since Cundrie had already spoken up.

“You brat! We are already letting you go, so why aren’t you leaving yet?!” Byron scolded coldly.

As for Gerald, he raised his head and glanced at Cundrie before he said, “I am truly sorry about everything that has happened here today. I wonder if you could do me another favor? The only reason why I acted so rudely just now was because I thought that you were someone else!”

Cundrie could not help but feel a little unhappy when she heard those words.

It did not matter whether he loved her or not.

The main reason was that Cundrie had initially thought that the reason why Gerald had chased after her so desperately and even endured a beating was because he admired her and was in love with her.

However, who would have expected that it was all simply because he had thought that she was someone else.

Girls would always be a little narrow-minded, and this included Cundrie, who was just like a goddess.

“We can just pretend that nothing happened here today! You can go and look for the person that you are in love with, then!”

After she was done speaking, Cundrie turned around and walked into the villa.

As for Riley, she also made a monkey face at Gerald before going inside.

Gerald knew that the most he would get from Cundrie would be a dead drop of blood if he continued pestering her today.

Alas, he had no choice but to leave first before thinking of another way.

Therefore, Gerald could only shake his head before he left.

“Byron, look at that young brat! He actually gets to leave just like that after taking advantage of the eldest young lady! We have already been serving the eldest young lady for so many years, but in the end, that young brat got to take advantage of her while we do not get any benefit at all! I really cannot accept this!”

Several bodyguards murmured softly as they stared at Gerald’s back. It was obvious that they felt as though they had not beaten Gerald up enough earlier. They felt as though they still had some unfinished business with him.

“Hmph! I am also feeling very discontent! Why don’t we follow him and continue beating him up again, then? We have to let him know that our eldest young lady is not someone he can hug whenever he wants to!”

Byron and the others said this as they followed Gerald out with their batons in hand.

Gerald continued walking until he had arrived at a park by a dense forest.

He wanted to sit down so that he could enjoy a moment of tranquillity at this time to calm his heart down again.

Byron and the others were following him from a distance.

However, before they could even beat Gerald up, they noticed that another group of men had taken the lead and were walking directly toward Gerald, who was sitting on the stone bench.

This group of men was even more ruthless, and all of them were holding machetes in their hands. It was obvious that they intended to chop Gerald up.

“Byron, isn’t that Mr. Gross’s men? It seems as though they are going to attack him. What should we do?” Several of the bodyguards asked.

“What else can we do? Let’s observe the situation first. Even though this young kid really deserves a beating, no matter what it is, he stepped up to save that pair of father and daughter just now. Therefore, it proves that this young man does not have a bad heart. We will save his life if it is necessary before beating him up again. What do you guys think about it?”

“Agreed!” Everyone nodded in agreement...

Chapter 1187

“You brat! You offended Mr. Gross, but you are still so carefree and at ease now. Could it be that you really have nine lives to possess such great courage?!”

At this time, eighteen men surrounded Gerald as they held the machetes in their hands.

The bald-headed leader of the group spoke as he sneered.

“He is probably frightened to death now. He must have already found out about Mr. Gross’s identity and reputation. However, it is already too late for him to hide now! Since he dares to raise his hand to hit Mr. Gross’s woman, he is destined to fall here today!”

Several men said as they laughed amongst themselves.

“It’s great that you guys are here. Listen. If you had to ask for someone’s help, what would you do so that this person would help you willingly? However, because you already had a misunderstanding with her in advance, you did not know how to bring up your request when you wanted to do so.” Gerald questioned them when he saw the group of men.

This was because he was feeling extremely depressed at this time.

He had hugged Cundrie out of a moment of impulse, and it seemed as though it had really affected her.

If he had not been that impulsive, she might have been willing to give him a drop of her blood as long as Gerald sincerely asked her for it. However, things had already ended up in a rather embarrassing state at this point.

Furthermore, Gerald was not an expert in pleasing or making a girl happy.

What should he do?

Gerald could only ask them for their opinion.

At this time, the bald man and the others could only exchange glances with one another with a confused and puzzled expression on their faces.

The reason why they were here was to kill this man. Even if this man was not going to pee his pants in fright, he should at least give them some sort of reaction, right?

After all, this group of men was not the ordinary bodyguards Mr. Gross usually had with him. However, they were all top-level bodyguards that the Gross family had hired for an extremely high price. Each and every one of these eighteen men had experience equivalent to that of a mercenary, and each of them had taken at least thirty to forty lives each.

Under any ordinary circumstances, the murderous aura around them would surge out as soon as they opened their mouths, and there was no need for them to take any action at all.

However, it seemed as though there was something wrong with the young man in front of them.

“What kind of nonsense are you talking about? You offended Mr. Gross, but you are not afraid at all? Hahaha! Nevertheless, you are going to suffer a horrible death soon!” The bald man shouted sharply with a murderous aura lingering around him.

“Oh! It seems like you guys do not know the answer either. I was initially thinking of asking you for a solution! Hahaha!” Gerald replied with a wry smile on his face.

He had been busy thinking about the countermeasures that he could take earlier. Therefore, he did not take what the bald man had said to heart at all.

At this time, it seemed as though Gerald had come to a sudden realization as he said, “Oh, by the way, all of you are Mr. Gross’s men? Did he send you guys here to kill me?”

It seemed as though Gerald had just come to his senses.

“F*ck! Boss! It seems as though this young brat is making a fool out of us!”

The group of men was all enraged.

The bald man was also trembling in anger at this time as he waved his hand and said, “You think you are dealing with ordinary bodyguards, don’t you? You really think that you are invincible and at the top of the world? Brothers, cut him up now! Show him how powerful we are!”

At this time, the seventeen other men raised their machetes as they rushed directly at Gerald.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Successive noises sounded one after the other.

Gerald moved extremely quickly, and he completely disregarded the weapons they had in their hands.

Although Gerald could not use his inner strength, these ordinary men were not his opponents at all in terms of their skills or strength.

In the blink of an eye, these men's legs and arms were all bent in an exaggerated posture, and all of them collapsed to the ground, one after the other, as they cried out in pain.

The men were all howling helplessly like the rooster that was traditionally used and sacrificed as an offering during the New Year after getting their arms and legs twisted violently.

Moreover, the entire process was very quick and clean.

The bald man stood in place as he looked at his healthy and well brothers from earlier.

He could not help but feel a cold chill run down his back at this time.

Amazing! He was simply too cruel!

The bald man had initially thought that the eighteen of them would be able to deal with and get rid of this young man who was obviously not from this city. He even thought that they would be able to easily frighten and scare him to death.

Unexpectedly, this young man was actually a master. Moreover, he was a master who could make people feel the chills running down their backs!

On the other side.

Boom. Boom. Boom.

Chapter 1188

After a few loud noises, Byron and the others, who had chased after Gerald to beat him up, could not hold the batons in their hands firmly. All of their batons fell directly to the ground as though they had already rehearsed beforehand.

This was because their minds had gone completely blank at this time. Each of them also had a shocked and incredulous expression on their faces.

Byron could only open his eyes wide as he swallowed in shock. He could not help but feel that his throat was very dry at this time.

This young man was too ferocious! He was simply too ferocious!

The other men could not help but gasp as they thought this to themselves!

After Gerald was done dealing with those men, he finally fixed his eyes on the bald man who was already breaking out in cold sweat at this time.

The bald man could not help but feel extremely frightened as Gerald stared at him.

At this time, he instantly felt a damp and warm sensation on his lower body.

The bald man instantly dropped his weapon to the ground as he knelt directly and begged, "Big Brother, please spare my life!"

"My question is the same as before. How can I seek forgiveness from a girl and get her to willingly and sincerely offer me a helping hand? I have a feeling that you might have an answer!"

Gerald walked toward the bald man before he touched the latter's bald head gently. It felt as though Gerald was an elder who was looking at a young child in a doting and loving manner.

"I... I feel that if you have the opportunity to do so, you can... you can try to help her. Girls are generally very soft-hearted. As long as you are willing to help her, she will understand your intentions, and she will not hold anything against you anymore!" The bald man hurriedly replied as he swallowed vigorously.

"Oh, so that is the case!"

Gerald mused as he nodded thoughtfully.

After that, he hit the bald man on his head before saying, "If you knew the answer to my question, why didn't you say so earlier?!"

The bald man was so frightened that he was about to shit his pants.

"I... I forgot about it!"

"Help me to relay a message to Mr. Gross!"

"Big Brother, what should I tell him?"

"Tell him to live well..."

After he was done speaking, Gerald turned around and left.

As he was walking past Byron and the others, Gerald naturally knew that this group of men were the bodyguards working for the Smith family. So, he simply nodded at them.

As for Byron and the others, they also nodded slightly before making way for him.

Gerald had to get her blood no matter what it was.

Besides, when Gerald had been sitting at the park, he had taken a look at the other jade charm.

Even after visiting and looking around Lugaw City over the past few days, he had not felt any sensation or feeling that linked him to the Zircobsite.

This proved that the Zircobsite was not in Lugaw City.

It was in Mayberry City.

There were only a few days left until the middle of the month.

Therefore, Gerald had to act as quickly as possible.

As he thought about it, Gerald arrived at the entrance of the Smith Manor once more.

He wanted to meet Cundrie.

“Sister, what are you doing? Why does it seem like you are constantly so distracted?”

Riley had just prepared a cup of coffee for her sister.

At this time, she saw Cundrie holding onto her cheeks, and she was clearly taken aback at this time.

“Hahaha! Don’t tell me that you are thinking of that beggar... no, no... I mean, that young man just now?!” Riley said as she laughed.

Cundrie took a deep breath, but she did not deny anything.

Instead, she said, “Do you feel that that young man seems to give off a very strange vibe? It seems like he has already been looking for that girl for a very long time. Besides, I must truly resemble that girl closely. That is the reason why he was so excited when he saw me, and he totally lost control of himself. It felt as though he had forgotten everything just because of that girl, Mila. He thought that I was the Mila that he had been looking for!”

“So what even if that was the case? I originally thought that he had fallen for you because of your beauty! As a result, all of this happened just because he thought you were someone else! We are already letting that little beggar off easily by not asking the bodyguards to beat him to death after he had taken advantage of you!”

Riley had constantly treated Gerald as the protagonist in a story where the beggar had fallen in love with the wealthy young lady. So, that was the reason why she had given him this nickname.

“No. I have always been wondering whether there would be a man in this world who would love a single girl with all of his heart and life, even to the point where he would be willing to die for her. This is because I am also as doubtful as you are! I do not believe that any man would be that foolish! However, at the moment when he was hugging me tightly just now, I could feel the deepest part of his heart, and it felt as though I could feel his love and concern for that girl named Mila. It was a very deep and strong love...”

Chapter 1189

“To be honest, when he hugged me in his arms, I was a little moved. For a moment, I even thought about how blessed and happy that girl that he loved so dearly would actually feel. There is truly such a guy who cares about her this way!”

A look of envy flashed through Cundrie’s beautiful eyes at this time.

“Sigh. Okay, okay, that’s enough. You should immerse yourself in that kind of thought and waste your energy thinking about all these useless things. I would have been interested to find out more if he was in love with you. However, I think that it would be better to think about Mr. Snyder’s celebration banquet tomorrow instead. I heard that many big figures from Lugaw City and the southern region will be participating in this banquet. This is especially so because he has invited a particularly mysterious VIP to attend his celebration banquet!” Riley said.

“You can go if you want to, but I will not be going!” Cundrie flatly refused.

“Ahh? You are not going? But Mr. Snyder has specially invited you to attend the banquet. Furthermore, Mr. Snyder has already been pursuing you for such a long time now. I heard some of Mr. Snyder’s friends saying that he actually intends to proclaim and confess his love for you once again tomorrow.”

“I know of his intentions, and that is the reason why I will not attend the banquet. I already told him that I have a sweetheart. However, he still refuses to give up. I have no feelings for him at all, and I also know the reason why he is pursuing me. A girl’s instinct is often very accurate, and it seems as though he seriously belittles girls a little too much!” Cundrie said as she shook her head.

“But even if you say that you have a sweetheart, he will never believe it unless you can prove it to him. You will have to bring your sweetheart along with you so that you can parade him in front of Mr. Snyder before he believes you! That is the only way to make him give up! If you continue delaying it like this, it is not a good solution at all!”

"I understand what you mean, but where am I going to find someone to act as my sweetheart? I cannot casually look for just any random guy, can I?" Cundrie replied as she shook her head helplessly.

Riley also sighed as she felt a little depressed.

She walked toward the window as she looked out of the window, feeling a little down and depressed. She also wanted to share her sister's burden and worries for her.

At this time, her eyes suddenly opened wider and wider.

After that, she said joyfully in surprise, "Hahaha! Sister, I've found you a solution! To be even more precise, I think that I have already found you the perfect candidate!"

"What candidate are you talking about?"

"Hurry up and look! That little beggar is standing in front of the entrance of our house again! It seems as though he is sending himself here!"

Cundrie walked over to the window and saw that what her sister was saying was indeed true.

"Why is he here again? I understand what you mean, but he also has a person that he loves deeply. So, how could I make use of his feelings like this, then? I cannot ask him to pretend to be my boyfriend!" Cundrie replied as she shook her head.

"Pfft! He is not worthy or qualified enough to pretend to be my sister's boyfriend. Anyway, just leave this matter to me. We can attend the celebration banquet together as usual tomorrow. I can assure you that Mr. Snyder will not get his way. His strategy will not succeed, and you will also be able to give our parents a clear explanation in regards to this matter!"

Cundrie could only nod doubtfully as she stared at her sister, who was acting rather quirkily.

Riley hurriedly ran downstairs at this time.

"Little Beggar!"

Riley yelled at Gerald.

Gerald looked at her as he asked, "Are you calling me?"

"Who else could I be calling if it was not you? Hey! What are you still doing in front of our house? Are you thinking of taking advantage of my sister again?" Riley said.

"No, no, no. I only came here because I wanted to meet Miss Smith so that I could apologize to her again!" Gerald hurriedly said.

"Hmph! You don't need to apologize to her anymore. However, if you truly feel bad about what happened earlier, I need you to do my sister a favor tomorrow. By the way, based on your accent, it seems as though you come from the southern region, right?"

"Yes! I am from Mayberry City! What favor can I do for her?" Gerald replied.

"What? You're from Mayberry City?! That is simply perfect, then! You are the perfect candidate to pull this off!"

Riley was so happy that she could not help but jump in excitement.

After that, Riley calmed herself down and regained her composure before she said, "This is what I need you to do. The Snyder family will be holding a celebration banquet tomorrow. So, I want you to send my sister an invitation letter in public, and there is only one sentence that you need to say. Furthermore, you have to make sure that everyone at the banquet knows about this. This is especially so for the host of the banquet, Mr. Snyder!"

"Well? Will you be willing to do my sister this favor? If you are willing to help her, my sister will certainly be very grateful, and she will forgive you for everything!" Riley said.

Gerald had originally been planning to ask for Cundrie's forgiveness, and he had been thinking about what he could possibly do for her.

He had even thought about giving her hundreds of millions of dollars. After all, that would simply be a very small matter to him.

Chapter 1190

However, Gerald was afraid that Cundrie would hate him even more if he used money to ask for her forgiveness. The loss that he would suffer would certainly outweigh his gains, then.

Since he could simply obtain her forgiveness by doing her such a simple favor, how could Gerald possibly refuse to do so?

“No problem!”

“Alright, then. Come to our house early in the morning tomorrow before going to the banquet. I will prepare and give you the invitation letter then. After that, all you need to do is act according to our plan...”

The Snyder family was a very well-known and influential family in Lugaw City and even the entire Southern Region.

There were two main and most influential families in Lugaw City, and the largest and most influential family was the Snyder family. The rumors amongst the locals were that the Snyder family was connected to the dragon vein, and they had connections all over the country.

Although the Smith family was strong, they were still one grade lower compared to the Snyder family.

The Snyder family could be considered the leader in the entire Lugaw City, and everyone had to give them face.

Everyone in Lugaw City ushered in the most important day in Lugaw City today.

This was because the celebration banquet that the Snyder family had spent the whole year preparing for was officially beginning.

Many luxury cars had gathered on the streets of Lugaw City ever since early in the morning.

Many famous and wealthy businessmen from all over the country as well as from abroad had also arrived in Lugaw City.

Everyone wanted to participate in this eye-catching moment.

The celebration banquet would be held at the Lugaw International Hotel, which was the hotel with the highest standards in the entire Lugaw City.

Many luxury cars filled up the underground parking lot of the hotel.

There was also a long red carpet at the entrance of the hotel.

The passersby were all very envious. If any one of them could walk on this red carpet, they would be willing to live ten years less.

As one of the well-known and most influential families in Lugaw City, the entire Smith family would naturally be participating in the event.

Mrs. Smith was dressed even more glamorously today as she walked in front of her two beautiful daughters. She had a very arrogant and smug look on her face at this time.

This was because she had already received definite news that aside from the particularly mysterious guest, the other big event that was going to happen at the celebration banquet today was that Mr. Snyder was going to publicly propose to her daughter, Cundrie.

This news was absolutely unmistakable.

As soon as these two big and influential families joined hands in marriage, this would certainly be the most highly anticipated moment for their families.

Many of the other families had also heard about this rumor.

Therefore, many people came forth to congratulate Mrs. Smith.

However, Mrs. Smith would constantly look around as she snickered and spent time chatting with wealthy businessmen from all over the world. Time passed by quickly.

Not long after that, it was already noon.

Many wealthy businessmen took their seats in the hall.

There was a high platform at the foremost location of the hall, and many powerful and influential figures from all over the world were seated on the high platform at this time.

However, just as everyone was looking forward to the arrival of the mysterious guest, news came that the mysterious guest had met with some problem and might arrive at a slightly later time.

Everyone could not help but felt a little disappointed.

In a bid to ease everyone's disappointment, the eldest young master of the Snyder family decided to use another method to calm everyone down.

At this time, he could not help but fix his gaze at the spot where the Smith family was seated at.

Mrs. Smith was filled with excitement. Could it be that the moment that she had been waiting for, for her daughter, was going to arrive in advance?

Everyone present in the hall was also looking at Mr. Snyder out of curiosity. The entire scene was completely silent at this time...

"B*stard, it's you!"

Just as the entire scene was quiet, a loud commotion was heard from outside the hall...

Chapter 1191

The loud voice had come from a woman, and it sounded like she was having a fight with someone outside.

With such a commotion, everyone couldn't help but turn to look at the door. Standing right at the entrance, was a woman in heavy makeup who was blocking a youth and scolding him ferociously.

"I haven't forgotten about you beating me up back then! Do you honestly think that I'd just let that incident slide? You know, I had initially thought that you had escaped, so I racked my brains for the longest time, wondering how to find you! To think that

you'd actually come to me instead! Come to think of it, you're even daring enough to attend a grand ceremony like this invitation party! Regardless, you won't be dying in one piece once I'm done with you!" shouted the woman as she continued glaring daggers at the youth.

Meanwhile, Riley—who had been in the house—displayed an odd expression when she saw the youth. While everything had initially been going as planned, a sudden side issue had suddenly arisen!

Naturally, the youth in question was none other than Gerald. Gerald himself had come to hand the invitation card to Cundrie. After all, as Riley had instructed, the card should be given to Cundrie before Mr. Snyder confessed his love to her.

Not daring to delay the request, he had taken the invitation card and rushed over first thing in the morning. To his annoyance, he found himself bumping into the woman he had beaten up on the street—who was also Mr. Gross's girlfriend—the day before.

"I'm saying this now... Stay away from me or you'll come to regret it..." replied Gerald as he glared frigidly at the woman.

Though she had been scolding him just seconds ago, after seeing how piercing his glare was, the woman found herself taking a few steps back as chills ran down her spine. She couldn't really explain the feeling either, she was just... scared.

Even so, that wasn't enough to dampen her arrogance. Turning to look behind her, she saw that her boyfriend's parents were present. That alone was enough to fill her with confidence again.

"Mom! Dad! That's him! He's the one who beat me up yesterday! He nearly beat Abner up as well! You can ask him about it if you don't believe me!" said the woman.

"She speaks the truth! In fact, Brice's friends were seriously hurt by this guy as well! His skills are top-notch, dad!" added Abner in a stern but slightly fearful voice.

"Oh? They say that enemies are bound to meet each other, but to think that it'd happen so quickly!" sneered Abner's father.

Powerful? He had already seen many powerful people during his lifetime, but for as long as he's lived, he's relied on strategy rather than bravery.

"I heard from Abner that you're from some foreign land, sir! As a result, I wouldn't blame you for not understanding the rules here in Lugaw City. Essentially, you only have to remember to be careful not to cross the line when you're here. Otherwise,

you'll find that while it's easy to enter the city, leaving may prove difficult," added Abner's father as he smiled in a friendly manner.

It was evident that this was his own way of warning Gerald.

"Indeed! Don't come to a state where you don't even know how you'll die! How dare you offend my son! Also, why did you come here dressing like a beggar? If a person didn't know any better, they'd surely think that you came here begging for food! To make matters worse, you're actually attending such a grand ceremony in those clothes! Have a bit more self-awareness!" growled Abner's mother next as she shot a contemptuous gaze at Gerald.

At that moment, the Synder family's butler walked out while asking, "What's all the fuss about?"

'Don't any of you realize what sort of occasion this is? How dare you make such a commotion here!' The butler thought to himself, an extremely ugly expression on his face.

Though Abner's mother looked like she was about to say something, her husband stopped her in time.

"Oh, it's you, Albert! The situation's under control! We just bumped into a friend here and we're simply exchanging pleasantries with him! We're really sorry!" replied Abner's father.

Hearing that, Albert didn't buy the explanation one bit. What exchange of pleasantries would involve so much shouting?

Despite it obviously being a lie, Albert decided not to say too much about it. After all, Xyon Gross was still one of Lugaw City's big shots.

"...Regardless of what issues you have, I hope you remember that the Snyder family's prestige is the most important thing today! I'm certain that you're also aware of the old and young master's intentions behind hosting this ceremony. With that in mind, please resolve your issues only after today! I'll say it now that anyone who dares ruin the Snyder family's prestige will definitely face the appropriate consequences!" declared Albert coldly.

"That's for sure!"

"As for you there... Do you have an invitation card?"

Chapter 1192

Albert had a hint of contempt in his tone as he asked the question while looking at Gerald.

The butler's disdain was warranted since unlike him and the other upper-class people at the ceremony, Gerald stood out like a sore thumb in his commoner clothing.

"No, I do not. Regardless, I'm from Mayberry, and I've come here today to meet the young lady of the Smith family and hand her an invitation card."

"An invitation card? From whom?"

"I apologize, but I can't tell you the details!" replied Gerald.

Gerald was only saying this according to how Riley had instructed him to. Even so, Gerald truly didn't know who the owner of the invitation card was. After all, not only was it unnecessary for him to pry, but he wasn't interested in finding out in the first place.

At that moment, Riley ran out before saying, "Let him in, Albert! As he's said, he's come all the way from Mayberry so he must be here on a mission!"

Riley leading Gerald into the place was also naturally part of the plan.

"...Oh? Well, since you're a friend of the Smith family, I suppose it's fine. Let him in!" ordered Albert who naturally needed to show respect due to the relationship between Cundrie and the young master.

With that said, Riley walked over to Gerald—making sure to make a face at him while sticking her tongue out—before dragging him in.

Not long after, the scene slowly returned to its initial atmosphere.

Even so, Abner found himself looking at Gerald before grumbling, "Are we just supposed to let him off that lightly? I find that difficult to bear!"

“Don’t be impatient! Worry not, for I’ve just made a call with some simple preparations in mind. Now that he’s entered this place, I guarantee that he won’t be able to leave this hall alive!” replied Xyon, his ruthlessness reflected in his eyes.

Hearing that, both Abner and the woman exchanged glances before looking at Xyon once more in admiration. After all, both of them were well aware of how strategic he was.

True to Abner’s words, just as Mr. Snyder took in a deep breath—ready to begin the event—he was interrupted by a group of over twenty people rushing into the hall from outside as they shouted, “Let us in! We must capture that thief!”

While the group appeared to only consist of mere vendors, all of them had indignant expressions on their faces.

“What is the meaning of this!” shouted the bodyguards who were still trying to push the group back after failing to deny them entry.

“What are you b*stards up to!” roared Mr. Snyder as his expression stiffened. His anger was warranted since something like this was happening while several international big shots were present!

“We wish to meet Mr. Snyder! We want him to seek justice for us!” shouted the vendors as they continued trying to barge further inside.

Upon hearing that, Mr. Snyder signaled for his subordinates to allow them in before sliding one hand in his pocket and asking, “Justice? What sort of justice are you seeking? What’s the full story behind this ruckus?”

“You see, Mr. Snyder, we were just doing our businesses as usual when this person suddenly stopped by to steal our things! As if that wasn’t enough, he even seriously hurt a few students from the kindergarten! After finding out that he came all the way here to hide, we’d like to ask why you took such a thief in, Mr. Snyder!” replied one of the vendors as all of the others—who had come with him—instantly began pointing angrily at Gerald.

Several of the big shots were now exchanging glances with each other after hearing all that.

“To think that a thief actually managed to get into this place... Why are the Snyders even doing?”

“Yeah! Also, hurting kindergarten kids? How brutal and inhumane!”

Whispers discussing the situation soon filled the place as the crowd slowly grew more and more dissatisfied.

There was no need to doubt how genuine their claims were either. After all, over twenty people had rushed into this place just to capture a single person! Everyone was now keen on finding out what Mr. Snyder—who was infamous for having a bad temper—would do.

Knowing that his next action would make others judge his morality, Mr. Snyder was well aware that he needed to perform well. With that in mind, he then glared daggers at Gerald before saying, “To think that you came over to my family’s ceremony to hide after committing so many sins... Coming here after causing such a scene, I’ll have you know that you’re definitely courting death!”

“He wasn’t the one who did it!” persuaded Riley who truly hadn’t expected the situation to get so fired up.

After so many people had stepped forward—claiming that Gerald was the perpetrator—Mr. Snyder’s slowly growing murderous intent was only making her initial plans go more and more off course!

Gerald himself was now casually looking at the people who had called him out. Though they were all dressed up in common clothes, all of them were a little too energetic to be simple vendors.

It was evident that all of them were proficient in martial arts. Taking a look at the father and son of the Gross family—who were standing at the side—Gerald easily put two and two together.

Chapter 1193

However, Gerald chose not to defend himself, at least not yet.

After all, since both the father and son of the Gross family had openly made a false charge against him during such an important occasion, Gerald had reason to believe that the injured children were currently under their control as well.

With how quickly and efficiently they had managed to slander and frame him, Gerald could already tell that the father and son were no strangers to using such vile tactics. The fact that they were able to manipulate the Snyders to get rid of him for them only served to prove his point.

“Someone, drag him away and make sure to break all his limbs while you’re at it!” ordered Mr. Snyder in a frigid tone.

Seconds later, over ten Snyder bodyguards stepped forward, prepared to deal with Gerald.

However, Riley quickly said, “Now, hold on a minute! There must be some sort of misunderstanding here! He’s not one to do such things!”

Riley was so sure about this since both she and Cundrie had seen how heroic Gerald had been yesterday when he tried to attain justice. With that in mind, it just didn’t seem possible that he would actually steal or even hurt children!

What more, in order to make things more convenient for them, Riley and Gerald had been sharing their locations with each other from the previous day. As far as she knew, Gerald had been sitting in a Dominoes not too far away from the large hotel for most of the time.

So how could their claims be true? The puzzled Riley was pretty sure that the vendors had gotten things wrong.

“...Hmm? You sound pretty certain about that, Miss Smith. Why is that?” asked Xyonn as he turned to look at her.

“Indeed, Riley. If you aren’t certain about your statement, you’d best not spout nonsense here!” added Snyder as he, too, turned to look at the girl.

“What on earth are you doing, Riley?” asked Mrs. Smith anxiously.

She had already been asking Riley why she had allowed that loser to enter the hall earlier. While that was already embarrassing enough, the humiliation she was now suffering was way worse.

Regardless, though Riley wanted to claim that she knew where Gerald had been the entire morning, she knew she couldn’t just tell the others about the incident. Racking her brains, she then thought, and thought, until suddenly, an idea dawned upon her.

“...Now who said I wasn’t certain? He definitely wouldn’t ever steal! Then again, I guess you have your doubts because you still don’t know who he is or where he comes from. In fact, I’m pretty sure none of you even know why he’s here today!” declared Riley.

Upon hearing that, everyone fell silent as they turned to face Riley.

“You see, he came all the way here today to deliver a unique invitation card to my elder sister. The card itself is from a rich heir from Mayberry!” added Riley.

There was now dead silence among the crowd. After all, everyone there was well aware that they couldn't offend any rich heirs from Mayberry.

At that moment, Noel Snyder, the master of the Snyder family, took a step forward before saying in his deep voice, "Haha! You said he came over to send a letter on behalf of a rich heir from Mayberry? He certainly doesn't look like a subordinate of any rich heir! I mean just look at his clothes! Even if we choose to believe that he's truly here to send a unique invitation card, who's the rich heir who ordered him to send it?"

"Humph! His attire is ordinary since the rich heir who sent the invitation card over is an extremely mysterious person from Mayberry who prefers keeping a low profile!"

After saying that, Riley placed both her hands on her waist before adding, "And the rich heir in question is Mr. Crawford from Mayberry!"

The moment Riley was done dropping her bombshell, the crowd instantly burst into an uproar! Even the international big shots—who were standing atop the high platform—couldn't help but stare wide-eyed at Riley in their sheer disbelief.

According to legends, Mr. Crawford owned about half of the world's properties and fortune, making him a truly mysterious and prestigious rich heir.

Since everyone from the business field had heard that name before, nobody even dared to slouch now.

A rich heir with the surname of Crawford who enjoyed keeping a low profile... There was no doubt about it. She truly was referring to Mr. Crawford that everyone was thinking about.

With that in mind, nobody was able to maintain a cool head anymore...

Chapter 1194

Cundrie herself felt her heartbeat quicken, utterly shocked by what Riley had just said.

She was well aware that Riley was just doing all this in her attempt to dissuade Mr. Snyder from continuing to go after her. With the inclusion of a powerful and influential 'rival', they had hoped that Mr. Snyder would retreat after realizing that his competitor was much stronger than he was.

However, Cundrie hadn't expected her sister to actually exaggerate the facts this much! To think that she had even gotten Mr. Crawford from Mayberry involved!

Meanwhile, Xyon and those from his family were all silent, not daring to say a word as their legs quivered in their stupefied state.

After all, the family knew that Mr. Crawford's subordinates were all very proficient in martial arts. Since—as Abner had said—Gerald was so strong, that meant that there was a high chance that he truly was Mr. Crawford's subordinate!

'Does... does that mean that we've offended Mr. Crawford...? Are we going to perpetually be doomed then? Never to succeed again?!

These were the thoughts of those from Xyon's family, who had all gone pale by this point.

As for Mrs. Smith, while she had initially been against her daughter's decision of allowing Gerald in, the moment she heard Riley's explanation, she felt like she had arrived at the pinnacle of her life.

'What?!'

No wonder her two daughters had been acting so mysteriously all morning! As it turned out, Mr. Crawford apparently had interest in Cundrie! He had even specifically sent someone over to invite her eldest daughter to some occasion!

'This... Compared to Mr. Crawford, Mr. Snyder is nothing but dirt! D*mn it all! How dare you even wish to gain my daughter's affection when you're inferior to Mr. Crawford in all aspects!' Mrs. Smith thought to herself in excitement.

The Snyder father and son themselves—who were still on stage—were now exchanging glances with each other rather agitatedly.

Mr. Snyder in particular looked like he was just struck by lightning, immense feelings of jealousy and helplessness swirling within him. After all, not only had his hopes and plans been ruined, but everything he owned could potentially be taken away from him now!

However, he simultaneously appreciated that electrifying feeling. With it, he was frightened enough not to show any signs of resistance, and he knew that it was for the best—at least for now—so that he wouldn't end up digging a deeper grave for himself.

Regardless, they weren't the only ones flabbergasted by the revelation. Gerald himself was wide-eyed in shock as he thought to himself, '...The hell? So the master of the invitation card is supposed to be me?!'

Attempting to calm himself down, Noel then asked, "...M-miss Smith, did that person over there truly come over to send the invitation card on behalf of Mr. Crawford...?"

"Is there even a reason for me to lie?" replied Riley as she lifted the exquisite-looking invitation card for everyone to see.

"Look, it's written right there that he's inviting my sister over to meet him at Mountain Top Villa in Mayberry! I'm sure none of you need any further explanation with the mention of that location!" added Riley.

"Mr. Crawford bid a whopping hundred and twenty million dollars for Mountain Top Villa two years ago! It's the most expensive villa in the entire country! Built atop a mountain and constantly shrouded in cloud-like mist, being able to stay there allows people to experience what it's like to be a deity!" said one of the local big shots rather longingly at that moment.

"Indeed! That villa's also particularly well-guarded, and normal people aren't even allowed to head up there to take photographs! I know since I went to Mayberry for some amusement last month. As you may already have guessed, despite my status, I apparently still didn't have the right to head up to Mountain Top Villa!" said another big shot as he cleared his throat before shaking his head with a bitter smile.

On the other hand, several of the present ladies were now looking at Gerald in admiration.

"Now that I look at him a bit more carefully, Mr. Crawford's subordinate honestly looks quite handsome!"

"I know right? Well, he's Mr. Crawford's subordinate, after all! Any woman would fall for him after giving him a good, long look!"

As the ladies squealed excitedly among themselves, Noel felt the need to get some confirmation on the legitimacy of Riley's claims.

With that, he then asked, "I apologize, for my doubts, but just to be sure, may I ask how many rooms there are in Mountain Top Villa, sir?"

“...H-huh? Are you actually doubting Mr. Crawford’s subordinate, Mr. Snyder? Aren’t you afraid that you’ll offend Mr. Crawford?” asked Riley as she instantly began blushing. After all, even she wasn’t aware of how many rooms there were in the villa.

Cundrie herself began clenching her fists tightly, feeling extremely nervous. If they managed to see through Riley’s lie, then Cundrie would definitely be the most embarrassed person that day!

Brimming with anxiety, sweat began falling down Cundrie’s forehead as she thought, ‘I’ve already told you how smart and slick Noel was! He’s not someone who gets cheated easily!’

“...There are a total of thirty-six rooms that are divided into upper, middle, and lower floors. Since Mr. Crawford was born in a family that appreciates literature and art, the middle floor is used to display masterpieces that include ancient paintings, famous western oil paintings, and many other works of art from all over the world. Behind the mountain top is a large hot spring pool built high above the clouds that can accommodate over two hundred people!”

“The villa is even equipped with workspaces for staff from the medical, catering, entertainment, and several other relevant fields. There’s even a helipad for helicopters to land and take off from!”

Despite Cundrie’s worries just seconds ago, Gerald didn’t even hesitate to explain everything there was to know about the villa. In fact, he did so in a way that suggested that he was quite familiar with it.

After Gerald was done explaining, both Riley and Cundrie could only look at Gerald in utter disbelief.

Chapter 1195

After all, Gerald had described Mountain Top Villa in such great detail that it truly seemed like he had lived there before, and not for a short time either. How else could he be so familiar with that place?

While Cundrie and Riley were most definitely shocked, the Snyders—and everyone else present—barely had any color left on their faces.

Noel’s countenance had changed as well by this point, and he was now looking at Gerald much more respectfully. After all, Gerald had just successfully described everything—in an extraordinarily detailed way—there was to know about Mountain Top Villa.

It was evident that nobody else dared to doubt the legitimacy of Gerald’s identity anymore.

Now certain that Gerald was the real deal, Noel quickly descended the stage before bowing slightly to Gerald and saying, “So it turns out that we have a distinguished guest with us today! Please excuse the Snyders for not greeting you immediately earlier. We hope that you’ll forgive our mistakes.”

Naturally, he wasn’t paying his respect to Gerald. After all, Gerald was nothing but a subordinate. No, it was evident that he was doing so to show his respect to Mr. Crawford.

Riley herself was feeling slightly touched by Gerald now. After all, though their lie had almost been exposed earlier and he could’ve just let them deal with the rest, Gerald turned out to be quite insightful and had actually stayed back to help them!

Xyon and his son, on the other hand, weren’t even able to stand still anymore. With their composure in shreds, both of them were currently seriously considering rushing over to kneel before Gerald and begging for his forgiveness.

“T-to think that was Mr. Crawford’s subordinate this entire time...!” stuttered Abner’s girlfriend, fear reflected in her eyes.

At that moment, Xyon turned to face her before slapping her directly in the cheek without warning!

As Abner’s girlfriend fell to the floor, feeling faint as she cupped onto her now swollen cheek, Xyon gritted his teeth before roaring, “You... You b*stard! Our family is now ruined because of you!”

“Hold it! Something doesn’t add up!” shouted a youth from the crowd out of the blue.

“...Hmm? What do you mean by that?” asked Noel.

“Well, you see, I headed to Northbay to negotiate some business matters a few months ago. Back when I was there, I heard some rumors that a major incident had befallen Mr. Crawford’s family who was living there! Putting it simply, Mr. Crawford had separated from the main Crawford family and shortly after, he mysteriously went missing! Mind you though, that this is news from over a year ago.”

“Regardless, from what I heard back then, Mountain Top Villa had apparently been transferred to the Moldell family, and the same went for Wayfair Mountain. Isn’t it a bit odd that Mr. Crawford would reappear all of a sudden? Odder yet is the fact that he invited the young lady of the Smith family to head to Mountain Top Villa—which he probably doesn’t own anymore—to meet him! I’ll be frank and say that I called up a few of my friends from Northbay just minutes ago. Apparently, Mr. Crawford’s whereabouts is still unknown till this very day!” explained the youth without any doubts in his voice.

“...You have a point!” replied Noel as he clicked his tongue, seemingly remembering something at that moment.

Naturally, Riley was stunned by this sudden turn of events, and she instantly glared at the youth who had raised everyone’s doubts again.

‘You mother*cker! We had already succeeded in getting them to believe us earlier! Why the hell did you have to talk so much?!’ Riley thought to herself, now so anxious that she had to hold herself back from flying into a rage.

Noel himself turned to look at Gerald before asking, “If I may, may I know whether Mr. Crawford has returned to Mayberry, sir?”

“He hasn’t. However, I do know that he’s planning to head back there sometime soon,” replied Gerald.

While the doubtful youth from earlier was clearly unconvinced by Gerald’s explanation, Noel simply raised his hand before the youth could ask anything else.

“Now, now, let’s not get too impatient, ladies and gentlemen! Quite honestly, it’s useless to discuss whether Mr. Crawford’s already returned or not. Let’s just wait for the arrival of that mysterious guest instead! Once he’s here, we’ll all know the truth! After all, the guest in question belongs to the Crawford family as well!” declared Noel with a laugh.

Upon hearing that, everyone instantly grew extremely intrigued. Could Noel truly have gotten into contact with the Crawfords?

“Since you’re Mr. Crawford’s subordinate, I wonder if you know who the distinguished guest attending today is? Could it be that Mr. Crawford didn’t inform you that he’s sending a guest over?” asked Noel again, still quite respectfully.

Noel was a person who was well acquainted with how the world worked. Knowing that there was a chance that Gerald truly was working under an extremely powerful and influential person, he didn’t dare offend him any more than he needed to until he got the truth.

Gerald simply shook his head before replying, “I have no idea who’s coming over. As I’ve said, Mr. Crawford only told me to send this invitation card!”

Chapter 1196

After saying that, Gerald himself began wondering, ‘People from my family are coming over...? Who could they be?’

As for the others, many were clicking their tongues as they discussed how weird the turn of events was getting.

“Humph! You’d better give it some thought if you aren’t truly Mr. Crawford’s subordinate! I’ll say it right now that I dared to state the possibility that you aren’t working under Mr. Crawford since there was once a case where someone pretended that they were him! After deceiving several people in Northbay, the real Crawfords eventually caught wind of what the impersonator was doing. From that day onward, that person—along with his family—simply vanished off the face of the planet! With that in mind, if you truly are an impersonator, now would be the time to confess! If you do, you’ll at least have a much higher chance of leaving alive!” said the youth from before.

Hearing that, Riley immediately gulped in fear. It seemed that the incident had just gotten a lot messier... How was she going to settle this?

Cundrie herself was brimming with fear after hearing that people who were involved with ‘fake Mr. Crawfords’ would be completely exterminated along with their families. The worst part was that she now knew that those from the actual Crawford family were coming over soon!

“I’m the real deal!” retorted Gerald.

“That’s quite enough!” shouted Cundrie at that moment, sending everyone silent as they took turns exchanging glances with each other again.

Now knowing full well that she had potentially just created an overwhelming disaster, Riley didn’t even dare to say another word.

Mrs. Smith herself seemed to have caught on that something was amiss, and her earlier excitement had now switched to fear. After all, if he truly was an imposter, they were all going to be exterminated! Nobody had the means to deal with the Crawford family.

“T-the truth is... The invitation card is fake...!” declared Cundrie as she bit her lower lip slightly before tossing the card to the floor.

As the invitation card lay flat on the ground, Cundrie looked at the words written on it. ‘Inviting Miss Cundrie Smith to meet Mr. Crawford at Mountain Top Villa!’ The more she looked at the words, the more she felt like they were contemptuously mocking her. She simply wasn’t able to bear keeping the façade up.

“...So it really is a fake!” shouted several people from the crowd as another uproar began brewing.

While Noel was stunned by the revelation, Xyon himself nearly tumbled to the floor in his delight. He had earlier been under so much pressure that he even ended up wetting himself! Then again, nobody could blame him since the amount of pressure he was facing surpassed that of what any regular person could deal with.

Feeling like he was just reborn, Xyon then excitedly said, "I... I'm going to get a change first!"

As the man quickly ran off to change his pants, hoping to make a speedy return to watch the rest of the drama, the anxious and teary-eyed Mrs. Smith turned to look at her daughter before asking, "What... What exactly happened, daughter...?"

Heaving a long sigh, Cundrie then replied, "...It was a tactic I thought of so that Yves Snyder would give up on proposing to me today... I had hoped that after presenting him with difficulties, I wouldn't have to decline his proposal in the first place! Still, I'm amazed none of you caught on sooner! Humph! Do any of you have any idea of how many beautiful women surround themselves around Mr. Crawford? Why would he ever invite me to Mountain Top Villa!"

Cundrie said all that with only a single breath, and it was evident that she was placing all the blame and responsibility on herself.

"S-sister, I-I!" cried out Riley, not even sure what to say anymore at this point.

"If those from the Crawford family come later and wish to investigate the incident, just place the blame on me! I'm the only one who arranged for the impersonating incident to happen and it has nothing to do with my family!" added Cundrie.

Mrs. Smith herself looked like she had gone insane at that moment. After all, throughout the past few minutes, she had gone through a rollercoaster of emotions. Finding no better way to vent her immense anger, she turned to look at Gerald before shouting, "You... You son of a b*tch! You've ruined the Smith family for good this time!"

Following that, she ran over to a table and grabbed some sweets before throwing them at Gerald!

As Cundrie burst into tears and ran over to stop her desperate mother from continuing to take her anger out on Gerald, the crowd began throwing scornful boos at both Gerald and Cundrie.

Even so, Gerald retained an oddly composed expression.

Walking over to where Cundrie had earlier tossed the card, Gerald picked it up, took a look at it, and then said, “Well, I guess I’ll officiate this invitation card then. If you’re free, Miss Smith, then I invite you over to Mountain Top Villa to have a chat with me!”

Upon hearing that, the crowd momentarily went silent again.

Chapter 1197

“...What... What on earth are you even talking about...?” asked Cundrie—who was still in tears—as she turned to look at him in disbelief, unsure of what he was even going on about.

“Does he really think that he’s the real Mr. Crawford now? Do you think he’s gone cuckoo from the fear? Hahaha!”

“I know, right? He’s even made an official invitation for Miss Smith to have a chat with him at Mountain Top Villa! What a clown!”

“Hah! Does he even have the slightest of self-awareness?!”

As several of the ladies within that hall continued spitting contemptuous remarks at Gerald, Xyon returned with a new pair of pants on.

The moment he saw everyone mocking Gerald, he became just as excited as his son was. By that point, even Abner’s girlfriend had forgotten the pain she had suffered from the slap earlier.

“That guy’s ruined for certain this time, dad! Not only had he impersonated Mr. Crawford’s servant earlier, but now he’s pretending to be Mr. Crawford himself! I’d like to see how he worms himself out of this one!” growled the woman viciously.

As the situation grew more and more chaotic, the door to the large hall was slowly opened...

Following that, one of the waiters shouted, “The distinguished guest has arrived!”

Knowing that the guest in question was a person from the Crawford family, silence ensued almost instantaneously as everyone—including Gerald and those atop the stage—turned to look at the door.

Once the two large doors were fully opened, around fifty Maybach cars could be seen parked by the red carpet leading out of the room. Seconds later, the doors to all the cars were opened—almost simultaneously—and black-suited bodyguards stepped out with extremely respectful stances.

As everyone remained shocked and in awe of the scene, a middle-aged man was led to the red carpet by one of the guards, and he began calmly walking toward the crowd.

Everyone who was still seated immediately stood up as Noel and the other Snyders quickly ran toward the door to greet the biggest of big shots within the business field.

“We’ve been awaiting your arrival for the longest time, Mr. Lyle! You’re finally here!” greeted Noel as he made a sharp bow, prompting the other juniors of the Snyder family to do the same.

“You’re being way too cordial, Chairman Snyder... I’m only a bit late since I had to deal with a few issues first!” replied the middle-aged man as he and the other guards began walking into the large hall.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Lyle!”

“Thank you for taking the time to come over, Mr. Lyle!”

As the others took turns nodding at and greeting the middle-aged man, Cundrie couldn’t help but feel—as she looked at Mr. Lyle and his bodyguards—that the Crawford family’s presence alone was able to immediately change the atmosphere of the area.

Even the Crawford bodyguards themselves felt simultaneously imposing and awe-inspiring. However, she, of all people, knew that this wasn’t the time for her to admire the Crawfords.

In all honesty, Cundrie was beyond terrified now. She was afraid that someone would expose the incident that had happened earlier. Should that happen, then the fate of the Smith family would definitely be changed.

Mrs. Smith was arguably even more afraid than her daughter was, and she kept her head low the entire time, looking very much like a primary school student who had just made a mistake and was now waiting to be scolded by the teacher.

As they say, however, the more afraid one is of something happening, the more likely it will happen.

At that moment, Xyon took a step forward before saying, “Speaking of which, Chairman Lyle, there’s an incident I wish to inform you about. You see, before you arrived, someone impersonated Mr. Crawford in hopes of deceiving all of us!”

There were two reasons why he was doing this. Firstly, he wanted to show where he stood before Chairman Lyle. By making a contribution, the Gross family could potentially earn a chance for massive development.

As for the second reason, he simply wanted to use the opportunity to get rid of that b*stard in order to avenge his son.

“...Hmm? Is that so...?” replied Chairman Lyle as his expression instantly turned grim.

The forty over bodyguards standing behind him—who hadn’t taken their seats yet despite there being special chairs arranged for them—found themselves frowning deeply as well. To them, Mr. Crawford was a man with extraordinary status, and whoever dared to disrespect him had to die!

“...Have you investigated who that person is?” asked Chairman Lyle in a frigid tone.

Filled with delight—and glad that he had changed his pants earlier—Xyon then ran toward Chairman Lyle while shouting in a clear voice...

Chapter 1198

“You don’t have to look far, Mr. Lyle! For that person is among us! He’s the impersonator!” declared Xyon as he pointed at Gerald.

Before Chairman Lyle could even turn to look, Abner and his girlfriend quickly ran over—clearly intending to show off—as they added, “Indeed, Chairman Lyle! You know he tried to trick everyone into believing that the real Mr. Crawford had invited Cundrie to Mountain Top Villa earlier! I assure you that everyone here can testify to my statement!”

“What a b*stard!” roared Chairman Lyle as he immediately turned to look at where Xyon was pointing.

Holding their breaths, everyone was ready to see Chairman Lyle flip out... However, they were instead greeted by the shocking sight of him trembling in place!

He wasn’t the only one either. All the other Crawford bodyguards were equally as stupefied as Mr. Lyle was.

"I-It's not his fault! I was the one who had told him to impersonate Mr. Crawford! If there's anyone that needs to be punished, it's me! He was only following my orders!" shouted Cundrie as she gritted her teeth.

Hearing that, Mrs. Smith's anxiety peaked. They were already placing the blame on someone else! Why was her stupid daughter stepping up to take the blame instead?!

"Have you gone mad, Cundrie? Why are you even speaking up for this ugly toad?!" asked Mrs. Smith, her immense unease evident in her tone.

"I haven't! I only speak the truth! Since I was the one who told him to do all that, then I should bear the responsibility!" replied Cundrie.

Before Mrs. Smith could retort, she suddenly heard Mr. Lyle shouting with great difficulty, "M... Mister Crawford...!"

Turning to look at him, everyone was shocked to see him filled with tears as the middle-aged man trembled vigorously.

Following that, the other bodyguards bowed deeply before shouting in unison, "Mr. Crawford! We stand before you with the utmost respect!"

The shout itself was so loud that it almost felt like the entire structure swayed for a moment there, leaving everyone completely flabbergasted.

While the Snyder father and son found themselves widening their eyes, the father and son from the Gross family—who had been laughing cunningly just seconds ago—on the other hand, found themselves unable to even close their jaws in their utter disbelief. In fact, they were gaping so widely that one could stuff an egg in there without any issue.

'...Mister... Crawford...? We... We must've heard that wrongly... right?'

As the atmosphere grew rigid, Gerald simply replied, "It's been quite a while since we've last met, Zack!"

He truly hadn't expected Zack to be the special guest they had invited over.

Regardless, Zack was extremely loyal to him, and had it not been for him trying his best to save Gerald back then, Gerald probably wouldn't have been able to escape the Salford Province in the first place.

With that in mind, not long after Gerald reunited with his family, he had given Zack a lot of power and authority without the slightest hesitation. However, since he was still busy dealing with the Moldells back then and he barely had to deal with business affairs, both Gerald and Zack found little to no reason for them to meet till today.

“Indeed it has, Mr. Crawford! You have no idea how excited I am to finally meet you again!” replied Zack with a broad smile.

Cundrie, Riley, and Mr. Smith were now in a daze, unable to simply accept that the person they had previously labeled as a beggar was actually the infamous Mr. Crawford!

“A-are... Are you truly the real Mr. Crawford...?” asked Cundrie as she gulped.

Turning to look at her, Gerald then smiled before nodding slightly and replying, “I am, which is why my early officiation of that invitation card is a hundred percent real. Again, if you’re free, I hope that you’ll come to Mountain Top Villa in Mayberry to have some fun! The scenery up there isn’t bad, you know?”

Before Cundrie could even reply, Noel immediately fell to his knees and said, “I... I apologize for not being an insightful person, Mr. Crawford! To think I failed to recognize who you were, even after repeatedly asking you about it earlier... I hope you’ll forgive me!”

Being a smart man, Noel naturally knew that apologizing was his best course of action now. While the Gross father and son were naturally thinking the same thing, they didn’t even know how to start apologizing after all they did to him!

‘It... It’s over... The Gross family is truly ruined this time...!’ Xyon thought to himself as he felt a familiar dampness in his pants again.

“Speaking of which, Zack, this family over here is extremely evil! Do get rid of them for me by making them go bankrupt as soon as possible! Let them have a debt of over a hundred and fifty million dollars! With your current influence, I’m sure it shouldn’t be too difficult for you!” said Gerald as he turned to look at Abner and the others with a cold smile.

“Oh? Gladly!” replied Zack as he returned a cold smile.

Following that, Zack then turned to look at his subordinates before ordering, “Head out and investigate any business partners that the Gross family has. Your task will be to cut off their relationships with the Gross’s! Should any of the business partners be unwilling to do so, then just make them bankrupt as well!”

“Right away, Mr. Lyle!” shouted the bodyguards as they hurriedly ran off to carry out their new task.

So this was how powerful the Crawford family was!

After looking at how respectfully Zack treated Gerald, nobody dared to doubt the authenticity of Gerald’s true identity anymore.

Everyone found themselves holding their breaths, as Gerald turned to look at the Gross family before saying, “You enjoy building your happiness over others’ misfortunes, do you not? Well, I’m glad to tell you that the same goes for me as well! I’m honestly overjoyed to see how much suffering you’re currently going through!”

Chapter 1199

Gerald truly hadn’t expected such a major interlude to take place just from him heading over to Lugaw City.

Regardless, Gerald wasn’t really that interested in Zack’s relationship with the Snyders. After all, as long as it was related to business affairs, Gerald had no doubts about leaving Zack in charge.

Once the party was over, Gerald headed out together with Cundrie and a few others.

As they were walking on, Gerald looked at Cundrie before saying, “I truly apologize for my imprudence back then, Miss Smith, and I hope you aren’t still angry about that incident... You see, at the time, I had mistaken you as Mila, my girlfriend, which was what caused me to behave the way I did... I had wanted to explain this for a while now, but I never got a proper chance to do so!”

After Cundrie had stepped forward to bear the responsibility of her actions earlier—even though she knew how dangerous that would be for her—Gerald could already tell that she was a very nice person.

“How could she remain angry? I’ll have you know, Mr. Crawford, that as long as you wish for it, I’ll not only allow you to hug her, but I’m even willing to give her to you-”

Though Mrs. Smith had said so excitedly, she was cut short when Cundrie—who could tell what her mother’s intentions were—shot a bitter glare at her. Realizing that she had gone a bit too, Mrs. Smith immediately stopped talking.

Seeing that, Riley immediately began dragging her mother away as she said, "Mr. Crawford wishes to talk to sister, mom! Don't disturb them!"

Once they were out of sight, Cundrie then smiled faintly before replying, "...It's fine. To be quite honest, while I was angry at the time, I simultaneously felt the urge to thank you after you made me realize something!"

Cundrie could've never imagined that the imprudent man she had imagined Gerald to be this entire time was actually such a refined man who was quite stubborn when it came to love.

"...Hmm? Was it something I said?" asked Gerald as he returned the smile.

"Well, you see, I had previously thought that true love no longer existed on this planet... After all, the world today is fuelled mostly by sexual desires... Regardless, for the longest time, I simply considered all love to be fake and hypocritical... It got to the point where I assumed that whenever a man fell in love with a woman, he was only doing so to gain access to her body! Due to that mentality, I had been disappointed with the concept of love for as long as I've lived!"

"...However, the moment you embraced me, I could feel how tightly you were hugging onto me... I didn't even know who you were yet at the time, but I could sense how much you loved the woman you mistook me for... It was almost as though you were terrified of the thought that she'd leave you again if you didn't hug her tight enough... It was also at that moment when I realized that true love still existed in the world... I have to admit that I'm quite envious of that woman... She's called Mila, right?" asked Cundrie as she turned to look at Gerald.

After watching Gerald nod slightly, Cundrie then added, "Could I request something from you, Mr. Crawford...?"

"Go on. I'll try to fulfill your request as long as I'm able to!"

"...If you don't mind, I'd like to hear the story about you and Mila..."

After a brief pause, Gerald then agreed and began telling Cundrie about his tale with her. It wasn't long before Gerald summarized most of his relationship with Mila to her.

Once he was done, Cundrie found herself nodding in satisfaction before saying with a smile, "...I see. As it turns out, true love doesn't really ask for much! Speaking of which, you said you needed a drop of my blood, correct? While I'm not quite sure how my blood will be useful to you, I don't mind donating some since you sound like you really need it!"

With that, Cundrie then bit into her index finger, causing a small amount of blood to start puddling there.

Once Gerald got what he needed, he looked at Cundrie gratefully as he said, "If there's anything you need help with in the future, know that you can always come to me. Thank you very much, Miss Smith!"

Getting slightly teary-eyed, Cundrie then replied, "We shouldn't be thanking each other anymore, you know...? After all, we're friends now, so you better not thank me again in the future...! Jokes aside, I sincerely hope that you'll be able to reunite with Mila again soon, Mr. Crawford... Do invite me over to your wedding when that time comes...!"

Chapter 1200

"With your blessings, I'll make sure that that day comes! Thank you!" replied Gerald as he immediately turned to leave.

Taking in a deep breath, Cundrie couldn't help but feel slightly desolate as she watched him walk off into the distance.

After Gerald was quite a distance away, Riley and her mother quickly returned to Cundrie's side.

"How did the conversation go, sister?"

"Yes, why did Mr. Crawford leave just like that...? It wasn't easy for both of you to even meet, you know? Aren't there any feelings between both of you at all?" asked Cundrie's mother, her voice filled with concern.

"...Despite the fact that we've touched, it's impossible for us to be together, mom. After all, I can tell that he truly loves his girlfriend... An extremely strong love..."

While Gerald did have slight physical contact with her and Cundrie herself couldn't deny that she had been touched by how gentle he was, in the end, she knew that she didn't stand a chance against that Mila girl.

With that in mind, all she could do was give him her sincerest of blessings...

It was a little while later when Gerald, Zack, and a few others were sitting in a helicopter bound for Mayberry.

"Has everything been going alright after I left Mayberry?" asked Gerald as he looked at Zack with a smile.

“Everything’s been running smoothly! After you killed off those from the Moldell family, I had some people renovate Mountain Top Villa to how it used to look like. I’ll have you know that everything looks exactly like how you remember it now! Speaking of which, we’ve also reclaimed Mayberry Commercial Street and Wayfair Mountain Entertainment! After a year of fixing Mayberry up, everything’s as good as it was before!”

After pausing to catch his breath, Zack then continued, “Also, after taking the medicine that you prescribed, Felicity successfully made a full recovery! However, she’s no longer an internet celebrity! She’s become an actress instead! Due to her initial popularity and our support, she’s now a top celebrity!”

“I’m glad to hear that! What about Naomi? How’s she doing?” asked Gerald, a hint of concern in his voice.

Back when he had last parted with her, he had told her that they wouldn’t ever meet again in the future. It was a fair claim since he was being pursued by others back then and his fate truly was unpredictable.

However, now that he was returning to Mayberry, he knew that he would eventually bump into her.

Regardless, now that he had acquired the blood he needed, Gerald knew Queena wasn’t going to have an easy time finding him. As long as he didn’t do anything too high profile, there was little chance of her finding him, or at least he hoped.

“Ah, about Miss Milton... Truth be told, I had initially planned to help her establish a company. I even gave her a large sum of money! Even so, not only did she refuse to go with that idea, but she also didn’t take the money I offered, stating that you already gave her more than enough, Mr. Crawford! Miss Milton is simply too straightforward a person!”

“It was a little while later when I found out that she had passed the necessary exams to gain a teacher qualification certificate. Realizing that her ambition was to be a teacher, I asked her whether she would like a luxurious school to be built for her. Alas, she rejected that suggestion as well! She’s currently working as a regular teacher in a high school!” replied Zack as he shook his head with a bitter smile.

“Naomi’s just like that... She isn’t one to care too much about money, and she doesn’t think it’s that big of a deal to be rich either. It’s how she treats me as well. Whether I’m rich or poor, she always treats me as a very close friend,” said Gerald as he smiled rather gratuitously.

At that moment, Zack looked like he wanted to say something. When Gerald saw him simply lowering his head instead of saying what was on his mind, however, Gerald turned to look at Zack before saying, “If there’s something on your mind, say it!”

“Well... I just wanted to say that Miss Milton truly is a nice person... You know, back when she and Miss Nelson found out that you had disappeared, both of them had rushed all the way to Northbay just to inquire more about you. Since the Crawford family was still being suppressed by the Moldells back then, the two girls had to go through quite a bit of their own suffering...”

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded.

“What I’m trying to say is that even till this very day, Miss Milton still contacts me weekly, asking whether there’s any news on you! She’s been doing this for a year and a half now!” added Zack.

Hearing that, Gerald felt moved. How couldn’t he understand Naomi’s feelings for him...

Chapter 1201

It was akin to Gerald wearing a bulletproof vest. While having it on allowed Gerald to remain unharmed, other parties wouldn’t be able to get close to him, resulting in them feeling hurt. Though the other party’s problem could be solved should that vest be penetrated, once that happened, Gerald would surely be the one getting hurt next.

It was the reason why he had always hidden his emotions deep inside his heart. He believed that time was the best medicine to cure rancor, and after a long period, everything would simply fade away.

Shaking the thoughts off, Gerald then changed the topic by asking, “I see... What about my buddy, Xeno? How’s he doing?”

“Back when I returned to have my revenge against Jett, I remember that the Moldells had snatched up most of Mayberry’s economic lifeline. While I do know that Yoel ended up getting tortured to the point where he became a beggar, I only heard news about Xeno’s automobile trade not doing too well back then. Sadly, I didn’t have the time or energy to be concerned with too many things at the time!” added Gerald.

“Ah, yes. I wanted to talk about that too. Back then, Jett had been extremely hostile toward any capital or connections involved with you. Of course, Xeno was no exception. Not only was his company ruined by Jett, but that b*stard had even hired people to assassinate him! Thankfully, Xeno is quite smart, so he managed to bring his fiancée along and escape before Jett could murder him. Regardless, once Jett was dealt with, I returned to Mayberry and began getting things right again. Alas, when it came to Xeno, even after asking around everywhere, I found no traces of where he could have possibly gone to, even till this day!” replied Zack with a sigh.

“...I see. It seems that many problems still remain from that incident back then...” replied Gerald as he found himself speechless.

Soon after, the helicopter arrived at Mayberry. As soon as Gerald was within the city's borders, the jade charm—that he had been holding onto—began vibrating, making a tiny 'buzzing' sound.

As it turned out, Master Ghost's prediction had once more been extremely accurate. The Zirkobsite stone truly was in Mayberry!

In order to find the specific location of the stone, however, he still needed to look for another girl with a strong yin physique. According to what Mr. Ghost had said, the other person could be found in Mayberry.

Gerald was well aware that time was ticking as well. It wasn't going to be long before the middle of the month arrived, and should he fail to accomplish his task before then, he knew he wouldn't be able to hide his scent from her for much longer, even with the blood.

Should that scenario happen, Queena would surely hunt him down immediately, causing all the work he had done in the previous days to be rendered useless. With that in mind, Gerald didn't dare delay it anymore.

"Speaking of which, I'll be laying low once I return to Mayberry due to certain reasons. Regardless, you and the others should just behave like you normally would!" said Gerald as he looked at Zack.

Just like how he had located Cundrie, Gerald would need to look everywhere in order to find the other person with a strong yin physique. He was also well aware that he wouldn't be able to find said person just by relying on others.

"Also, which area within Mayberry is usually most crowded by women?" inquired Gerald.

"Well, if it's a place filled with girls, the university is definitely your best bet. Actually, now that you've asked me that, there may be an even better option. You see, there's currently a function at Wayfair Mountain Entertainment. Felicity and many other celebrities are shooting a film there. As a result, many women—from all over the world—constantly flock around that area to watch them shoot their scenes! If it's a place with lots of women you want, then Wayfair Mountain Entertainment is the perfect place to go!"

"Excellent!"

With that, the helicopter then sped up and flew directly toward Wayfair Mountain Entertainment. To attract even more women there, Gerald was well aware that getting more celebrities would definitely do the trick. With that in mind, he then told Zack to begin contacting handsome and effeminate men to come over to Wayfair Mountain Entertainment.

To make sure that the celebrities would drop whatever they were doing and come over immediately, Gerald also promised that they would be paid ten times more than they usually would.

Naturally, that did the trick and soon after, the entire city began getting crowded with fans from all over the world.

Once there were enough women around, Gerald began slowly strolling up and down Wayfair Mountain Entertainment, making sure to scan through the women carefully to see if any of them had particularly strong yin physiques. However, to his disappointment, even when noon came, he still couldn't sense anyone suitable at all!

At long last, Gerald found himself walking over to the area behind the mountain, where a few of the cast and crew currently were. By the looks of it, they had just completed their shooting and were ready to get off work.

It wasn't long before an extremely beautiful woman caught Gerald's attention, and when he saw her, he couldn't help but break into a smile.

The woman in question was none other than Felicity.

From what Gerald had heard, after Felicity had become famous enough, she ended up starring in two relatively successful dramas. Not only that, but she was also active on screen.

Regardless, now that she had gotten off work, Gerald noticed that she was wearing headphones as others instantly began serving her...

Chapter 1202

The ones serving Felicity continued following her as they began heading over to a private room within Wayfair Mountain Entertainment.

"Felicity!" shouted Gerald, though only a few extras seemed to have heard his shout.

Turning to look at him, one of the extras then shouted back, "Hey, now! Lots of people come to see Felicity every day you know! Who do you even think you are? Go line up properly like the rest of them!"

Hearing that, Gerald couldn't help but shake his head with a bitter smile. He had only tried to catch up to her since he was feeling slightly touched to be able to meet up again with such an old acquaintance of his.

Meanwhile, Felicity's manager was carrying a stack of what seemed to be scripts as she said, "This here is a script written by an internet writer who goes by the name of 'Two Ears is Bodhi', Miss Nelson! It's about a loser who rises up to fame the moment he becomes a rich heir! I've already contacted him through Line, and I wonder if you'd be interested to have a look at it."

Taking a peek at the scripts, Felicity simply pouted before replying, "Just forget it for now and toss it aside! I really don't have the time or energy to pay attention to it at the moment! I just want to get a good rest for a while!"

Following that, Felicity entered her room, and the manager—who couldn't really say much after hearing that—simply left.

Upon closing the door behind her, Felicity found herself heaving a long sigh. While development that year had gone by rapidly and she had finally managed to achieve her life-long wish, Felicity still felt like there was something lacking in her life...

No matter how much she gained, she simply couldn't feel happy for some reason...

Regardless, she was just about to remove her makeup and take a bath when suddenly, she caught a whiff of cigarette smoke in her room. Felicity, for one, never smoked, which was why the scent was so evident to her.

At that moment, the doors of the closet in her room burst open, and out stepped a big-bellied, bald, middle-aged man who was wearing a suit and a pair of leather shoes.

Laughing lasciviously, the nicotine stains on his teeth were clear as day.

"You... Chairman Zabka!" shouted Felicity as she instantly began taking a few steps back.

The one who was currently standing before her went by the name of Chairman Zabka. While he was her sponsor, he had constantly given her strange looks before this. Now that he was daring enough to hide in her room, Felicity could easily tell what exactly it was that he wanted from her.

Now already close to the door, Felicity immediately ran over to it to make her escape. Alas, Chairman Zabka was faster than her!

Grabbing onto her arm, Chairman Zabka barely gave any time for Felicity to scream as he quickly stuffed Felicity's mouth with a white cloth!

Though she did attempt to struggle free, Felicity soon felt her body growing weaker and weaker.

“I’m sure you’ve long known about my feelings for you, Felicity... Yet why did you keep avoiding me? I’ve yearned for you for nights on end, you know? I really can’t take it anymore!” said Chairman Zabka as he tossed Felicity onto the bed.

“N-no...!” replied the enfeebled Felicity as she continued trying to struggle to no avail.

“Worry not, I’ll video what we’re about to do next in extreme detail... As long as you listen obediently to me and serve me well, I won’t post the video on the net! If you don’t... Well, let’s just say you’re going to be getting even more famous! Hahaha!” warned Chairman Zabka before laughing lasciviously.

Everything had been perfectly planned. Not only had he waited in Felicity’s closet for a long time just to do this, but he had also ordered someone to set up shooting equipment in her room!

Knowing that nothing could stop him now, Chairman Zabka then began undressing rather menacingly.

He had just taken his pants off when he heard someone shout, “Make a pose, Chairman Zabka!”

“Of course!” replied Zabka out of habit as he instantly turned around to pose.

Soon enough, however, his eyes began widening as his body quivered in place.

“...Who... Who the hell are you? How did you even get in here?”

Chapter 1203

At the sight of the person who was currently standing at the door alongside two black-suited bodyguards behind him—who were both holding video cameras—Desmond Zabka immediately slid on his clothes again.

From what Desmond could tell, the two bodyguards seemed even more professional than the d*mned photographers in his crew. After all, he hadn’t heard any footsteps. Hell, he didn’t even hear the door being opened!

‘I’m done for! They’ve definitely captured everything I’ve done earlier on tape! If that footage gets spread around then Felicity’s behind-the-scenes boss will definitely break all my limbs off!’

Zabka hadn't been afraid of doing his own recording since he knew he could always manipulate it enough to make the assailant seem like it wasn't him. If things had gone according to plan, he could've even used it to threaten Felicity!

"How long do you plan on filming, you b*stard?! You got a death wish or something?! Who do you work for?!" scowled Desmond as he immediately tried pouncing on them to snatch the cameras away.

However, all it took was a single kick from one of the bodyguards to send the man—who weighed over a hundred kilograms—flying back into the room and smashing against the dressing table!

After watching the mirror get shattered to pieces upon Zabka's impact, Gerald then asked, "Are you two done shooting the video?"

"Yes, Mr. Crawford!" replied both the guards in unison.

"Then go make the preparations!"

After nodding and bowing slightly toward Gerald, both of them then hurriedly left the room.

As for Felicity, the second she realized that it was Gerald who had saved her, she was so excited that she almost burst into tears. Even though she couldn't move, her mind was finally at ease now.

"You... You b*stard! Are you planning to threaten me?! Just tell me how much you want already! Actually, before you say anything, I'll tell you now that I have several powerful connections in Mayberry! Since I'm feeling generous, I'll pay you fifteen thousand dollars to delete that video! If you accept, I'll consider today's incident to never have happened! If you chose not to accept, however... Well, don't blame me for what's going to happen to you next!" warned Desmond as he somewhat calmly began lighting a cigarette.

Being involved with society for so long, Desmond had already seen much and gained quite a bit of insight into how the world operated. From his previous experiences, he knew that he could just bribe paparazzi like these to pacify them. Once they deleted the photos or footage, Zabka would simply send someone over to secretly assassinate them! Nobody would know what happened, and he would just continue living his life as he usually did.

At that moment, Desmond heard the familiar muffled sounds of a walkie-talkie saying, "We're downstairs, Mr. Crawford! Everything's been well-prepared!"

Bringing the walkie-talkie to his mouth, Gerald then replied, "Alright, make it quick then! Be sure not to create an uproar!"

Watching as Gerald tossed the walkie-talkie aside, the puzzled Desmond then said, "...What do you mean, 'make it quick'? Were you even listening to what I said earlier? Is fifteen thousand dollars still too little for you? Who the hell do you even work for? Give me your name!"

After looking at Gerald's demeanor for a while, Desmond could feel his confidence slowly sinking, his gut telling him that Gerald was bad news.

"...You know, there's a steep cliff right outside the window, you know?" said Gerald frigidly.

"...W-what do you intend to do..." replied Desmond as he glared at Gerald while trembling all over.

"You see, you messed with the wrong girl... She's my classmate and friend, you know? And I once swore that I'd make anyone who dared to harm those close to me pay a heavy price... With that said, I'll make sure you'll regret ever being born!" growled Gerald as he stared at Dylan, his murderous intent reflected clearly in his eyes.

Gerald's murderous intent was so immense that Desmond felt like he had just been thrown into a freezing dungeon. Trembling even more now as chill after chill ran down his spine, Desmond then shouted, "H-how dare you! It'd do you good to research more about how influential I am in this city! I have the most powerful connections in Mayberry and I own endless power here, you know?!"

Now knowing that Gerald wasn't doing all this merely because of money or to collect evidence for juicy gossip, Desmond was so terrified that he almost lost control of his bladder!

Chapter 1204

Even so, knowing about all this now was a little too late for Desmond.

Grabbing him by the neck, Gerald then lifted Desmond—till his feet couldn't touch the ground—before tossing him out the room! Naturally, the bodyguards from before quickly took care of him from that point onward.

With that done, Gerald slid an incense stick out of his sleeve, lit it, and began letting Felicity breathe in its scent.

As Gerald did so, he recalled how all this had begun in the first place. Just as he was about to knock on Felicity's door earlier, he had heard odd noises coming from inside.

It didn't take long for him to realize what was happening inside, and though his murderous intent immediately fired up at that moment, Gerald quickly calmed himself down. After all, he was well aware that he couldn't act too recklessly now that he had returned to Mayberry.

It was the reason why he had quickly formulated the events that had just taken place.

Regardless, Felicity soon found herself feeling much better after smelling Gerald's incense. The moment the febleness was gone, she immediately sat up excitedly and embraced Gerald before saying, "T-thank god you were here, Gerald! I... I was so scared just now..."

Quite honestly, Felicity was terrified with the thought that this was all just a dream. That when she eventually woke up, the person she had yearned for, for so long would disappear...

"Everything's fine now... Also, you're already a great celebrity, aren't you? How could you be so careless and not have a few bodyguards with you at all times?" replied Gerald with a slightly bitter smile.

"Well, since Chairman Lyle and many others have always taken care of me, I had the assumption that nobody would actually try to frame me... I admit, I was way too naïve! But enough about me! When... When did you come back, Gerald? Naomi and I went looking for you the second we heard that you had disappeared, you know? And that eventually led to..."

Felicity's sentence slowly trailed off, seemingly remembering something frightening...

"...There's no need to go into detail about that. It's all in the past now. What matters is that we're safe and sound now. Isn't that nice!" replied Gerald as he looked at her with a subtle smile.

"...Yeah... Speaking of which, Gerald... Did you return to Mayberry just to see me...?" asked Felicity in a softened tone.

Even though she knew that the answer was still probably going to be no, the touched girl still felt the urge to ask that question. After all, who knows, there could be a chance that it truly was the case.

"...Somewhat," replied Gerald, which was the truth.

While he had wanted to meet up with her sooner or later, he hadn't returned to Mayberry just to see her. His main objective was still to find another girl with a strong yin physique, after all. Besides, he was also planning to visit his other old acquaintances.

Regardless, he of all people knew better than to use ambiguous words to coax her.

Hearing that, a hint of disappointment could be seen on Felicity's face as she said, "...I see! Regardless, I'm glad to see that you're safe and sound!"

"...Speaking of which, how's Naomi been, recently? I know you've been busy shooting a film here in Mayberry, but have you contacted her at all while you were here?" asked Gerald.

"Naomi? Oh, we've been in touch quite recently, actually. We had to use the school she was teaching in to shoot a few scenes, you see. The director even allowed a few students in her class to act with us! Still, though I did consider asking Naomi to stay by my side, I refrained after hearing how much she was enjoying her job now. Speaking of which, I'm sure you've already guessed it by now, but she's already a teacher, you know? She's even bought a house for her and her mother near the school!" explained Felicity.

"I'm aware of that much," replied Gerald with a nod.

"That's good to know! Still, I wonder if you're aware of the troubles she's currently facing... Though it's only been two days, she's refused to go out to have lunch with me, saying that she was busy. While that may not sound like much, she had previously always agreed to my lunch invitations! When I asked her what the problem was, she simply remained silent and sulky!" said Felicity as she smoothed her hair before pouring a glass of water for Gerald.

"...Oh? Is that so? I'll go meet up with her first then. Meanwhile, you should get the rest you deserve. You know, I plan to return to Mayberry University tomorrow. If you're interested, we could head there together!"

"O-of course!" replied Felicity, overjoyed.

After hearing how sulky Naomi had recently been, Gerald immediately thought of paying her a visit as well. The fact that she was staying close to a school also made it possible for him to kill two birds with one stone. He still needed to look for another woman with a strong yin physique, after all, and where better to find a crowd of women than a school. What a perfect coincidence!

With that in mind, Gerald then left Wayfair Mountain Entertainment in his Lamborghini to meet up with Naomi...

Chapter 1205

Mayberry First High School was the name of the school Naomi was currently teaching in. It was also where she was living close to.

After getting the directions from Felicity, Gerald found himself arriving at the front gates of a small neighborhood that looked like it was still pretty new.

By sheer coincidence, he also saw Naomi—who had a few groceries in her arms—there! However, a woman and a man seemed to be talking to her as the trio walked further into the neighborhood. The man himself had a notebook and pen in hand, seemingly recording details whenever Naomi spoke.

From that alone, Gerald could deduce that the two of them were police officers dressed in regular clothing.

‘What on earth could have happened...?’ Gerald thought to himself as he continued watching them inquire Naomi about something.

As he kept a safe distance from the trio in his car, Gerald made sure to constantly be on the lookout for any women with particularly strong yin physiques.

Before long, Gerald watched as the two police officers shook hands with Naomi—seemingly done questioning her—before driving off in the direction of Mayberry First High School which wasn’t located too far away.

Naomi herself seemed to look quite disappointed as she continued carrying the ingredients back to her home.

Looking at her now, Gerald thought about how it had been almost over a year since he had last bumped into her. Though she still retained her long hair and fair skin, Naomi was now a teacher and Gerald could sense an intellectual charm—as well as greater maturity—from her that hadn’t been present the last time they met.

Now that she was alone again, Gerald drove close to her before pressing his horn slightly.

Hearing that, Naomi turned to look at the luxurious-looking car that was currently slowly tailing her.

As a hint of impatience flashed across her eyes, Naomi simply began quickening her pace. She utterly hated these kinds of playboy rich heirs who assumed that they were greater than others simply because they had more wealth.

'How disgusting!'

Seeing her reaction, Gerald couldn't help but laugh as he continued following her. At some point, Gerald overtook the girl before stopping his car in front of her.

Hearing him honk his car again, Naomi faced her back against the car before scowling, "Are you mad? Get lost already!"

Since such a luxurious-looking car was present, it was natural for those around the neighborhood to get drawn to the scene. In fact, several women were already walking closer to snap pictures of the car.

Though the rest were in awe, Naomi wasn't the least impressed with the individual driving the car. Quite frankly, the only thing the driver was doing right, was raising her temper!

Rolling down the car window, Gerald looked at Naomi with a smile before asking, "Now, now, is there a need for such a bad temper?"

Upon hearing that familiar voice, Naomi suddenly began trembling all over. That voice... It made her doubt for a second whether she was truly awake or just dreaming all this. Feeling her heart clench, Naomi thought to herself, 'Could... Could I have just heard wrongly...?'

Slowly turning around to see for herself, Naomi found herself loosening her grip and dropping all the groceries she had in hand! Though the girl hadn't cried in the longest time, she was now ready to bawl her heart out.

She had missed Gerald dearly every single day from the moment he had left her a year and a half ago... Constantly yearning to hear his familiar voice again, she oftentimes found herself recalling the times when she had first met Gerald back in university. Due to him being a nice person with a kind heart, she had already developed a crush on him, all the way back then. What more, there was just a special charm to him.

Though the others in the university had never been able to stand Gerald back then, Naomi had always found him to be quite brilliant. She was able to see all his good points within him without being biased about how poor he was back then.

Quite honestly, she still regretted not making a move on him back then. If the two of them had become a couple from the very beginning, maybe she wouldn't have to be filled with the pain of missing him now.

Shaking the thoughts off, the now red-eyed Naomi said, "...G-Gerald...? Is that... really you...?"

Stepping out of the car, he then smiled while looking at her before replying, "Who else could I be?"

Hearing that, Naomi wasn't able to hold herself back any longer. Rushing over to him, she immediately wrapped her arms around him...

Chapter 1206

Since Gerald had mentioned before that his fate was still largely undecided, she had often found herself thinking about the worst-case scenarios. It was the reason why she was so glad to see him in one piece now.

By then, those living in the neighborhood were already crowding around the duo as they watched in jealousy.

"It must be nice being so rich! I'm sure he can do whatever he pleases!" said one of the men in the crowd rather enviously.

His voice was so loud that a woman—who was returning from a stroll in a nearby park—heard it. Finding his comment strange, she then realized that a huge crowd had formed right in front of her house!

Feeling that something was amiss, she quickly made her way through the crowd and was shocked to see that her daughter—alongside some man whose back was facing her—was the center of all the attention!

"Still, that rich heir truly is capable... All he did was say a few things to that beauty to gain her affection!" said another person from within the crowd.

Hearing that, the woman growled, "...What?"

Under the impression that her daughter was getting bullied, she then rushed over and pulled Naomi away from the stranger's embrace while before, "You b*stard! Unhand my daughter!"

She couldn't care less whether the person was a rich heir or not. As long as he was trying to take advantage of her daughter, she was going to make sure that that playboy would get a piece of her mind.

"Now listen here, you-"

Momentarily stunned when she saw who the person her daughter had been hugging was, her angered face slowly turned into surprise before eventually ending in delight.

“...Gerald...? Are... Are you really Gerald...?” asked the woman, her shock evident in her voice.

“Indeed I am, madam. It’s truly been a long time since we’ve last met each other!” replied Gerald with a smile.

“And here I thought that someone was bullying Naomi! Well, now that I know who you are, do come in!” replied Naomi’s mother happily.

Since Gerald had cured her illness back then, her sudden change in mood was really no surprise. Regardless, all three of them then entered Naomi’s house.

Upon entering, Naomi’s mother took good care of Gerald and immediately headed off to cook the ingredients that Naomi had brought home with her. According to her mother, Gerald had to stay for a home-cooked meal with them no matter what.

Gerald himself wasn’t about to say no to that, and he simply sat on a sofa, chatting with Naomi as her mother cooked in the kitchen.

While chatting, Gerald eventually asked about the two people that Naomi had talked with back at the entrance of the neighborhood.

Scratching the back of her head, Naomi then explained, “If you hadn’t reminded me about it, I would’ve surely forgotten about it by now... I even promised the two that I’d head over to the school to help them get to the bottom of the incident once I brought the groceries back home!”

“An incident? What happened?” asked Gerald, realizing now that the ‘incident’ had something to do with Naomi.

At that moment, Naomi’s mother walked out and said, “It’s all because of that thirty thousand dollar scholarship... You see, not only does Naomi have the position of a class teacher, but she also manages the scholarships of the senior students! The thing is, all that money suddenly went missing the night before the scholarship money was to be distributed! As if that wasn’t already troubling enough, a woman by the name of Yazmin Yallop keeps asserting that Naomi was the one who had taken the money! Her argument was that Naomi was suddenly able to buy a house not long after the money was stolen!”

“While even the school had initially wanted to deal with the situation in a low-key manner, that madwoman reported the case to the police and insisted that Naomi was the perpetrator! That’s the reason why the officers were looking for her in the first place!” grumbled Naomi’s mother angrily.

Following, she then added, “I’m sure you’re well aware that Naomi isn’t such a person, right Gerald? After all, even though your subordinates keep trying to hand her money, Naomi never accepts any of it! With that in mind, why would she even covet the thirty thousand dollar scholarship?”

“But of course I believe her!” replied Gerald with a nod.

“I’m glad you agree! But my daughter here... You know, she said she was willing to just admit to stealing the money and let bygones be bygones! Just giving away thirty thousand dollars for something she didn’t do? Not on my watch! There’s no way I’m allowing that Yazmin to take advantage of her like this!” growled the angered mother.

“First things first... Who exactly is this Yazmin person?” asked Gerald.

“Ah... She’s the class teacher of the class right next to mine... She’s been jealous of me ever since I took over her position in the grade she’s teaching in. I didn’t even have a say in it when I got recommended to get the role during the conferring of academic titles... However, she fully doubts that and believes that I made schemes to snatch everything away from her! With that in mind, she’s been hostile toward me ever since!” replied Naomi with a sigh.

“She’s bullying you because her husband is both powerful and capable! Aside from that, you’re also slightly at fault for being so gentle all the time! Some people are just like this, you know? The more you respect her, the more she’ll think how easily bullied you are. I’ve already told you to tell Chairman Lyle about this, but you simply refused... We have Gerald’s support on our side, you know? What are you even afraid of?”

“...It’d be better if you said less about this mom. Regardless, I need to head over to the school since the officers are still waiting for me... Do you mind waiting here for the moment, Gerald?” asked Naomi.

“Actually, I was planning to head to your school to have a look around anyway. Let’s just head over together!” replied Gerald as he stood up.

Chapter 1207

Gerald knew Naomi’s personality well. As long as she thought that she was able to solve an issue, she simply wouldn’t rely on others to help her. In fact, she would still refuse to beg others for help, even if she couldn’t solve the issue in the end!

He also knew that she was probably feeling guilty about asking for his—and in turn, Zack’s—help after receiving so much of his money during their last meeting.

‘For a teacher, she still behaves like a silly girl...’ Gerald thought to himself as he drove Naomi to Mayberry First High School.

Upon parking his car at the entrance, both of them had just taken a few steps into the school when a female student—carrying a backpack—saw Naomi and called out, “Miss Milton! Hello!”

From her greeting, it was evident that she was one of Naomi’s students. Though her clothes were well kept and her face was considerably beautiful, Gerald could tell that the girl barely had any confidence in her. After all, she hardly even dared to raise her head while talking to others. While observing her, Gerald also noticed that her backpack was slightly torn.

“You haven’t gone home yet, Sherry?” asked Naomi in a slightly concerned tone.

After lowering her head even more, Sherry then replied, “I-I was told to stay back at school, miss... I’ve already written about how you remained at school throughout the entire day the day before yesterday... They told me that it could be used as evidence! I’m really sorry I can’t help with much, Miss Milton! But I truly believe that you weren’t the one who had taken the money!”

Sherry’s voice slowly got softer and softer, and by the end of her sentence, the now teary-eyed girl’s voice was barely audible.

Smiling subtly, Naomi then said, “It’s fine, Sherry. You said the truth and that’s all that matters to me... Regardless, your results have been wavering slightly of late... It’s almost time for the final high school exam you know? Focus more on that and give it your all, alright? Now, it’s getting pretty late. Hurry along home, now!”

After getting patted on the head, Sherry then nodded before leaving the school.

As Naomi watched her run off, Gerald averted his gaze from Sherry, disallowing Naomi from noticing the sudden seriousness in his eyes.

“...She’s the most obedient student in the class, you know? She’s extremely diligent when it comes to her studies as well. Seeing her that hardworking, I was always willing to stay back at school to teach her... However, it was about a month ago when her mood suddenly turned slightly bad... I’m not sure what happened, but it influenced her results slightly negatively as well!” said Naomi, concern in her voice.

“Studies aren’t the only thing you should be concerned about, you know? If you think the student deserves it, then as a teacher, you should be concerned about her life as well. You should take note of whether there are any sore spots that she refuses to talk about, or whether something’s happened to her family... Things like that, you know?” replied Gerald as he smiled at Naomi.

“You almost sound like you’ve previously worked as a teacher yourself,” said Naomi as she returned the smile.

“I have, but nowhere near your level of dedication, of course! I was a Biology teacher for a short period, but then again, I only taught by reading out of the textbook!”

Amused, Naomi simply chuckled at his reply, and soon enough, both of them arrived at the principal’s office.

Before they even entered, however, both of them could already hear the frantic yells of a woman from inside the principal’s office.

“I’m telling you, officers, she’s the culprit! You really don’t have to investigate any further! I swear to god that there’s nobody else capable of doing the deed! Besides, not only do we have a testimony now, but we also have material evidence! I mean, just look at the house she’s just bought for herself! I’ve been wondering for a while how she was so willing to suddenly fork out so much to buy that house! At long last, I finally realized that she had her eyes on the cash this entire time! It’s been her plan this entire time, I tell you! So again, there’s no need to investigate anymore! Just capture and take her away already! Imprison or shoot her in the head, I don’t care! Just do whatever you need to do!”

“Miss Yallop, please be quiet... Solid evidence is needed before we do anything...” replied the male officer as both of the police looked helplessly at Yasmine.

It was at that moment when Gerald and Naomi decided to step into the principal’s office.

Staring at the teacher who looked to be around the age of twenty-four, Gerald remembered how Naomi had said that Yazmin’s husband was quite capable.

While Naomi had only been able to join the school after passing the official teacher examination, Yazmin was simply given an important position in the school the moment she was recruited.

As time passed, the difference between Yazmin and Naomi’s capabilities became more and more discernible. With Naomi clearly being more adept at her job, it was no wonder why the principal had handed the more important tasks for Naomi to deal with.

Knowing that only caused Yazmin's jealousy to skyrocket...

Chapter 1208

Yazmin wasn't just jealous of Naomi's capabilities either. In fact, she was even more irked by the fact that Naomi had been chosen to be the top beauty in the school!

The moment she found out about that, Yazmin nearly went mad with rage. As long as Naomi existed, Yazmin felt that she would always remain in her shadow.

"...Humph! Don't you know how late you are? You almost had me wondering whether you were too frightened to come for fear you'd get tossed into jail immediately! You even brought some guy with you! Are you planning to scare me with him or something? Just look at how shabby he looks!" said Yazmin right off the bat.

Simply choosing to ignore her, Naomi then began explaining her point of view to the officers and the principal.

In the end, they weren't able to arrive at an immediate conclusion. With that said, the officers then told them that they would probably return again the day after. They also told Naomi to be prepared at all times, stating that as long as they could contact her at all times, she should be fine.

The moment the officers left after saying that, Yazmin immediately turned to look at Naomi before shouting coldly, "Humph! Even if there isn't an immediate conclusion, I assure you that the incident won't end until the culprit is caught! And here I was thinking that you were a woman with good temperament before this... To think that you'd actually steal the scholarship money! Don't you have a guilty conscience at all? It's truly a wonder how you were chosen to be the most exceptional teacher in the first place!"

"Honestly, you of all people should know what exactly took place... Best be careful now... Don't get into too much trouble or you'll end up hurting yourself instead!" sneered Gerald as he glared icily at Yazmin.

Suddenly being stared at like that, Yazmin felt herself go pale as she gulped slightly.

Naomi herself turned to look at Gerald in bewilderment.

'...Why would he say such a thing...? Is he assuming that Yazmin stole the money and placed the blame on me instead...? But that's impossible! Yazmin was out on a business trip when the incident happened... Besides, she wasn't even aware that I had taken the scholarship out at that point in time... Heck, not even my mom knew back then! With that in mind, I'm the only

possible person to know about this... It's the reason why Yazmin immediately placed the blame on me...' Naomi thought to herself.

"...What... What do you mean by that? Don't get into too much trouble or I'll end up hurting myself? Listen, you'd better tell me what you mean by that, or I'm not letting you leave the school alive!" replied Yazmin, her anxiety evident in her voice.

"Oh, I'm sure you know exactly what I mean... Either way, let's just wait till tomorrow. I'll share the truth behind all this and I hope someone won't end up crying then!" said Gerald as he led Naomi out of the office.

Once they had left, Yazmin's eyes grew fierce as she left the office and instantly began making a phone call.

"...Hubby? I'm facing some issues... Naomi called over some guy and he seems to be targeting me! What should I do...?" asked Yazmin.

"Worry not. I'll investigate his background right this instant!"

"That's great to hear! Hah! I'll definitely ruin Naomi this time... As for the student, think of a way to keep her quiet and obedient! I'm glad that everything is still under control" replied Yazmin in a vicious voice before hanging up.

Meanwhile, Gerald and Naomi were already in his car. However, it wasn't long before Naomi realized that they weren't heading back to her home.

"...Gerald...? Where are we headed to?" asked Naomi.

"Well, about that student of yours... Sherry, was it? Could you tell me where she lives?" asked Gerald in return.

"...Huh? You want to meet Sherry? For what reason...? She's an obedient child and she's already given her part of the testimony... I assure you that she's only told them the truth, and I truly hope that she did so rather than choose to lie just to defend me... That way, she won't have too much to weigh on her mind!" replied Naomi.

"Oh, I could tell that she's obedient. However, I could also tell that she was facing another issue, a very troubling one at that. If we don't act fast she could end up falling into an endless abyss... So again, where does she live?"

Chapter 1209

Gerald was no stranger to mind reading. As long as a person's training was less than his, he was able to see what that person was thinking from just a simple glance.

That said, when he had earlier bumped into Sherry, he came to learn about the truth about the incident.

Yazmin truly was a vicious woman with the wickedest of hearts. After all, from what Gerald found out, death wasn't off the table when that woman became jealous. Fearing that something would happen to Sherry, Gerald wanted Naomi to bring him to her.

From what Gerald had read from Sherry's mind, it was about a week ago when Yazmin made her appearance before Sherry's house, even though Yazmin should've rightfully been on some kind of business trip at that time.

After calling Sherry out, she ordered her to secretly stalk Naomi and attempt to steal the scholarship money. Yazmin even explicitly said that by doing so, she would be able to frame Naomi! Adding that her husband's subordinates would lend her a hand in secret while Sherry did the deed, Yazmin also promised that once Sherry acquired the money, she could use it to pay for the medical expenses needed to treat her mother's illness.

Upon digging a bit deeper into her memories, Gerald found that her mother had fallen seriously ill about half a month ago, and her fatherless family was simply too poor to do anything about it.

Even so, Sherry simply couldn't bring herself to steal!

It was then when Yazmin began threatening her. According to Sherry's memories, Yazmin had told her that if she refused to help her, then Yazmin would actively try to cut off her grant to the point where Sherry wouldn't be able to sit for her college entrance exams!

In fact, she wouldn't even be able to acquire her high school graduation certificate! Hearing that, Sherry was instantly terrified. After all, her biggest dream was to get admitted into university.

After a few restless nights of battling between her dreams and her morals, Sherry's determination finally shattered the moment Yazmin told her that she was going to use her connections to make Sherry drop out if she continued being hesitant.

With a threat like that, Sherry had no choice but to obey.

Following that, Sherry began stalking Naomi until she eventually took the money out. The night after Naomi did that, Sherry snuck into the financial room with the key that she had previously duplicated.

As for the surveillance system, Yazmin's husband had made sure to send some of his men to deal with it first. Due to all that happened behind the scenes, Naomi was eventually labeled as a thief.

Of course, Gerald wasn't blaming Sherry for doing all this. After all, it was evident that the girl had a simple heart. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to gather so much off her mind so easily. Being a filial and obedient girl, Gerald didn't doubt the fact that Sherry was pretty much a victim in all this as well.

Regardless, Gerald currently had two things on his mind as he continued driving to Sherry's house. Firstly, he told Naomi all that he had found out to get her clarification on all this.

As for the other thing, he wanted to save Sherry too.

After all, if she did indeed use all thirty thousand dollars to pay for her mother's medical fees, then Sherry would still end up losing her chance to sit for her college entrance exams. What more, there was also a very real chance that she would end up getting imprisoned! Not only would her life be ruined, but her mother would also be filled with grief! It could truly result in a broken family!

Thinking about it made Gerald remember how vicious and cruel a woman Yazmin was. Quite honestly, he had to actively hold himself back from beating that woman to death when they had earlier met in the principal's office.

Regardless, after hearing what Gerald had to say about the situation, Naomi ended up covering her mouth in fear. While she absolutely bought what Gerald had just told her, she simply couldn't believe that Yazmin would dare to do such a thing, even though Naomi knew for a fact that she was being targeted by her.

She trembled as she thought how terrifying a jealous person's heart could get.

"...Then... If what you're saying is true, then Sherry's life will surely be ruined! That poor diligent girl!" said Naomi, her worry apparent in her voice.

"It's not too late yet. However, judging from that woman's actions, I'm sure that she'll be sending some people over to keep an eye on Sherry soon. Hang on tight, we're going to be rushing over to her place!" replied Gerald as he instantly began accelerating.

Soon after, they arrived at a shantytown in the suburbs of Mayberry. It wasn't long before both of them could see Sherry from afar, holding onto a thermos in her backyard. From the looks of it, she had just cooked a meal for her mother and was now heading back into her house.

Just as she was opening her front door, however, two black cars suddenly came to a screeching halt before her house, and out stepped six sturdy-looking men. All of them had crew cuts and they were also wearing gold chains around their necks. With bags under their armpits and cigarettes in their mouths, the men were quick to block Sherry from closing the door behind her.

"What's the hurry, little girl? I'm sure that serving the meal can wait!" said what seemed to be the leader with a cold smile.

"...It's you people again! I already did the thing you told me to! Why are you still pestering me?" replied Sherry as she hugged onto her thermos tightly while taking a step back in fear.

"Haha! There's no need to be afraid... Honestly, we're just here to warn you not to reveal the incident to others no matter what... Well, that was the initial plan, that is. We decided to take an extra measure by having you record yourself admit to doing the deeds. Fret not, for as long as you don't reveal the incident to the public, then the video will be safe in our hands forever. However, should news about the deed spill out, then you'll soon find yourself getting famous all over the country once we post the video on every major social media site!" added the leader as he laughed aloud, prompting a few of his men to show Sherry the video cameras they were holding onto.

Chapter 1210

"Again, worry not, little girl! We'll be quick as long as you're obedient. In fact, I'd even be willing to pay you some cash... if you make me feel good, that is! You'll be using the money to save a life anyway, so what I'm about to do to you next is going to be a fair trade!" shouted the leader as he dragged Sherry by the arm, causing the thermos she was holding onto to fall to the ground!

As the carefully-prepared food that Sherry had earlier cooked for her mother got spilled all over the ground, the leader quickly covered her mouth and began carrying her into one of their cars!

Seeing that, the other five men stood at the side as they laughed in excitement.

However, one of the men's laughter was short-lived as he suddenly felt someone grabbing his right ear! Before he could even react, the sickening sound of flesh being torn off could be heard. By the time he screamed in agony, half of his face was already bloodied!

Gerald himself casually tossed the torn-off ear to the ground before revealing that he was holding onto a large iron stick that he had picked up from the streets.

With a single smash to the man's head, he immediately fell to the ground, convulsing as foam exited his mouth!

The second they saw how terribly their comrade was suffering, the remaining men immediately grew terrified. As for their leader, he quickly jumped out from the car, a hideous expression on his face.

"You f*cking bastard! How dare you ruin our affairs! You're just begging for death, aren't you?!" roared the fierce-looking man as he unsheathed a dagger that had been attached to his waist.

Before the leader could strike, another one of his men had already unsheathed his own dagger, and was currently rushing toward Gerald to stab him!

However, Gerald was much, much faster.

Grabbing onto the assailant's ear, Gerald twisted it with great force, causing yet another tearing sound to be heard as a new scream filled the air.

Repeating the process, Gerald tossed the ear aside before smashing the stick into the side of his head. Naturally, this man reacted exactly the same as the first.

"You... You b*stard! Gang up on him!" ordered the leader as his eyelids twitched rapidly.

Though the leader weighed over a hundred kilograms, his movements weren't clumsy at all. In fact, he was the fastest and also the smartest among his men.

Charging at Gerald, he leaped into the air, aiming a flying kick right at Gerald's head!

Even so, Gerald remained calm as he struck the iron stick right into the man's leg before he was even able to get close to Gerald.

Following the sickening sounds of bones cracking, the leader screamed in pain as he toppled to the ground. With how hard Gerald had hit his leg, his leg was now angled in a way that his calf was folded against his thigh. After being twisted in such a frightening way, the man could even feel his thigh with his toes!

As he continued screaming on the ground while convulsing erratically before Gerald, Gerald himself coldly declared, "I won't even bother using my fists to beat all of you up! You're all nothing but b*stards!"

After saying that, he then ripped the leader's ear off as well before throwing it aside! Now bleeding profusely, the leader of the men almost found himself fainting from the sheer pain alone.

Seeing that, the remaining men instantly threw their daggers aside as they began running away! After seeing their boss being beaten up so easily, they knew they could never dream of defeating Gerald. Not only was Gerald powerful, but he was also a savage for pulling off the ears of whoever he beat up!

Of course, it was impossible for them to escape in the first place.

Running after the escaping men, Gerald whacked his iron stick onto all of them, making sure to rip an ear off each of the men.

Once he was done, he fed the ears he had collected to a few stray dogs...

Chapter 1211

With all the assailants now lying on the ground, Gerald threw the stick away. Naomi herself immediately ran toward the car to help Sherry up.

Being both soft and weak, the scene from earlier had almost shocked Sherry to death.

Had those men had the chance to touch her inappropriately, Sherry wouldn't have had the will to live on with that memory in mind!

The fact that she had been constantly forced to do things against her will for a while now didn't help her mental state. If they had truly had their way with her, then Sherry feared that taking her own life wasn't going to be out of the question anymore.

Regardless, her teacher was now here and the teary-eyed Sherry immediately embraced Naomi while whimpering, "M-Miss Milton...! Y-you've been so good to me and yet I... I... I'm such a jerk! A total inhumane, jerk...!"

Comforting the crying girl, Naomi simply replied, "It's alright, I understand... I don't blame you... After all, you only did all this because your mother had fallen sick, right? Why didn't you tell me that you had been going through such a rough time...?"

Naomi truly felt bad for what Sherry had to go through this entire time. She couldn't imagine how hellish it would be for the girl had Gerald decided not to come back to look for her...

It'd be a complete waste for such a talented girl's future to be destroyed, just like that... Not wanting to think about it anymore, Naomi simply reminded herself that in the end, the most important thing was that her student was still safe.

"I-I was the one who stole the money, miss...!" wailed Sherry, unable—and unwilling—to hide the truth anymore.

"B-but I didn't dare use any of the money! No matter how broke I am, I'd never use such unclean cash! I've been earning all that I needed by working part-time as a tutor!" added Sherry in between tears.

"I'm proud of you for not using any of it... And again, I understand!" replied Naomi as she continued comforting the sobbing girl.

A little while later, Gerald walked toward the side of her house's door and lifted a loose tile. Just as Sherry had said, the money was there, all thirty thousand dollars of it. Seeing that, Gerald couldn't help but feel slightly touched by Sherry's sincere personality.

"Hey now, your mother still hasn't eaten, you know...? Now stop crying and let's go cook her a new meal! I'd like to meet her at the hospital as well!" said Naomi as she wiped the tears off Sherry's face.

Nodding slowly in agreement, the two of them then quickly cooked up a new meal. After getting it into the thermos, Gerald sent both Naomi and Sherry to the hospital.

As for the bloodied bodyguards left there, Gerald easily settled the messy scene with a single phone call.

Once they arrived at the hospital, Gerald joined the duo as they visited Sherry's mother. From just a single look at her, Gerald was able to tell that the illness was nothing too serious, at least for his standards. While it wasn't incurable, the problem was that treating her mother's sickness required a lot of money.

Sherry truly had it rough. With that in mind, Gerald paid for all the medical fees needed and even promised Sherry that all her university living expenses and fees would be sponsored by the Mayberry Commercial Group.

Gerald also told her that he would get a person named Zack to arrange a job for her once she made a full recovery. Comforting her, Gerald added that everything was going to get better soon.

It was about nine at night when everything was settled. Knowing that Sherry had been through a lot today, Naomi decided to accompany and have a little talk with her.

Since Gerald didn't really know how to comfort such a young lady, he headed off with the same flask from before to get some water.

It was at that moment when...

Chapter 1212

All of a sudden, the jade charm that Gerald had been carrying around seemed to sense something!

Feeling his body tremble in excitement, Gerald knew that a woman with a strong yin physique was around!

With that, he immediately began searching around the area.

However, the jade's reaction quickly vanished and Gerald found himself disappointed. He couldn't just have imagined that, right?

"What on earth happened...? Why did it stop reacting so quickly?" muttered the confused Gerald to himself, his disappointment evident.

Since the charm had reacted so strongly just moments ago, Gerald assured himself that the reaction must have diminished since the woman with the strong yin physique had left the area. With that in mind, Gerald dashed down the hospital, actively looking around while hoping for another reaction from the jade. However, no further reactions were triggered.

By the time he gave up and returned to the hospital room, Naomi had just closed the door behind her.

"I think we should leave for now, Gerald... Sherry's clearly exhausted herself from all the pressure she's been facing lately, and I say this because she's now fast asleep on an extra bed in the room! Still, I can't help but worry about their safety if we leave just like that..." said Naomi.

"Not to worry. I've already ordered for a few bodyguards to stand guard over them without them knowing. My guards are quite capable so you needn't worry any further!"

“That’s a relief... Also, Sherry told me that she would be heading to the police station to make her statement tomorrow. She’s far too pitiful after having to face all that so I really hope that you’ll take good care of her... She doesn’t deserve to get hurt a second time!”

“I’ll be there for everything!”

Hearing that, Naomi nodded slowly, a cocktail of emotions reflected in her eyes.

As long as Gerald was here, Naomi wouldn’t be afraid even if the sky began falling.

To be entirely honest, she sometimes still wondered what life would’ve been like if she had gotten together with Gerald at the very beginning. Perhaps they would’ve gotten married by now, living life happily with each other... She didn’t even care for Gerald’s money... All she truly wanted was to be with him...

Even so, Naomi knew that Gerald was still yearning for Mila who had apparently gone missing. With that in mind, there was no way that she was going to act that selfishly...

However, the more Gerald cared for her, the harder her heart throbbed.

Following that, Gerald sent Naomi home and Naomi’s mother cooked a nice supper for both of them. Gerald only left after having his second home-cooked meal from Naomi’s mother.

Sometime later, Yazmin asked her husband, “...Hubby? Is something the matter...?”

“It’s just strange, you know? I can’t seem to contact Thiago and the others at all! Also, earlier when I called the hospital, Sherry’s mother was apparently in the midst of transferring? By the time I got there to have a look for myself, she wasn’t even in the same ward anymore! What the hell is even going on...?” grumbled Yazmin’s husband with a frown.

“Well, maybe Thiago and the others are out having some fun! They probably muted their phones or something... As for Sherry, it wouldn’t surprise me if the hospital has finally kicked her out since she doesn’t have the cash to pay for all those medical expenses! I’ll call Thiago later as well to ask him about it... Though again, if you’ve already been trying to call him for some time, I truly believe that he’s just having too much fun to notice!” replied Yazmin.

“...That’s true. Fine then... Regardless, I’ve already gotten all my connections to check for that man’s background. It’s weird that they haven’t replied to me though... Whatever the case is, I’m still going to find the chance to show him how great I am tomorrow!” sneered her husband.

It was exactly at that moment when his phone began ringing many, many times. Several messages were—almost simultaneously—being sent to him, and Yazmin’s husband quickly picked up his still-vibrating phone.

Upon reading the text messages, a frown slowly formed on his face as he muttered, “...The hell is all this supposed to mean...?”

“What is it hubby...?” asked Yazmin in a gentle tone. As long as her husband could help get rid of Naomi for her, she didn’t have much else she wished for.

“...All these messages... They’re all saying the same thing...” replied Yazmin’s husband as he shook his head.

“...What is it?”

“Well, they all say, ‘good luck!’”

Chapter 1213

The very next day, Yazmin headed to school along with her husband.

Since Naomi had gotten a man to back her up the day before, Yazmin was definitely getting hers to help her as well. Yazmin was sure that the sight of her husband’s car alone would be enough to scare the life out of Naomi’s man! Humph!

Still, Yazmin would be lying if she said that those weird messages and Thiago’s disappearance the day before didn’t have her worried. Even after calling him and his men, none of them picked up, and none of them were at Sherry’s place either. Where could they be...?

Though Thiago and his men could get a bit wild while enjoying themselves, she also knew them to be very responsible men. It was near-impossible for them not to return her messages after completing their job.

Feeling odd about the entire situation, that was the second reason she was bringing her husband along. Whatever the case was, she knew Sherry’s background well so she probably wouldn’t be a problem for her.

It wasn't long before they arrived in front of the school building. Since Yazmin's husband was driving the newest BMW 7-series, a group of male students was instantly drawn to it.

"Holy cow! Is that Mrs. Yallop's husband? Not only is he driving a BMW 7-series, but he's also charming?!"

"D*mn! So her husband's a rich heir! By the looks of it, his family must be super powerful too! Though with how luxuriously Mrs. Yallop always dresses, it isn't too surprising that her husband isn't an ordinary man!"

Still, in their high school days, it was common enough for male students to favor talking about games and cars.

Locking her arms around her husband's, Yazmin then stood in front of the car for a brief moment, enjoying every second of how envious and adoring the students were of her and her husband.

After pretending to retrieve some things from the car, Yazmin saw a few of her colleagues coming to work and called out, "Well hello there, Mrs. Shaq! You're early today! And the same goes for you as well, Mrs. Xanders!"

Seeing the smiling woman calling out to them, Mrs. Shaq then replied, "Good day to you too, Mrs. Shaq! Is that your husband! The car he's driving looks pretty new! It must've been expensive!"

Though everyone looked enthusiastic to reply to Yazmin's greeting, deep inside, they were all equally upset.

'Why's she even being all proud about that? So what if she has a rich husband and a nice car! Big deal! Still... Why is it that other people always have better lives... There's no way we could ever compete with her!' Thought several of her colleagues who were cursing her in their minds with utter jealousy.

As the female teachers continued putting on a cheery façade while talking with Yazmin, a few male colleagues of Yazmin's showed up.

The moment they all saw the car, they were instantly impressed. One of them was so excited that he immediately said, "Holy! That's a BMW 7-series! It's the newest model in 2020 and it's barely been a few days since it was released into the market! How cool!"

After they continued talking with Yazmin and her husband for a while, one of the female teachers finally found herself unable to hold back anymore as she asked, "When would you be free to take us out on a ride in the car, Mrs. Yallop?"

“Why, anytime, of course! Where would you like to go? My husband can be our driver!” replied Yazmin with a smile.

“Oh, how kind you are, Mrs. Yallop! I’ll be thanking you in advance then!”

“I’m just glad you finally realize how nice a person I am! While I know I can be hard to deal with sometimes, but I’m generally a very kind person to those close to me! It’s just the way my straightforward personality is! Unlike a very fake teacher of course! You know, the house she bought near our school spans a good hundred and fifty square feet! It’s quite obvious where she got the money to buy that house from, given her current financial status!” replied Yazmin.

“I don’t know... Maybe she just found a rich husband...?” said one of the male teachers.

“Hah! Her? Tell you what, I’ve checked the bursary record before and I’ve already seen what her husband looks like!” replied Yazmin.

“What? How does he look?”

Chapter 1214

“Saying that he looks below-average is an overstatement for him! With that in mind, how could he possibly be rich? He’s probably just some regular worker somewhere!”

Knowing that, Yazmin was beyond sure that such a person wouldn’t ever be able to compare with her husband.

Before any of her colleagues could even react, a group of students began screaming out of the blue! Some were even screaming so hard that they seemed close to fainting!

“...The hell?” muttered Yazmin as she and her other colleagues turned to look at the front gate to see what all the commotion was about.

The second they saw what the students were screaming about, however, the group of teachers immediately widened their eyes before cursing out loud in shock. Yazmin, in particular, seemed more flabbergasted than the rest, covering her mouth in astonishment.

“W-what a cool car!” shouted everyone in both shock and awe.

The 'cool car' they were referring to, was one that cost millions of dollars. In fact, it was arguably a hundred times cooler than a Lamborghini sports car! The car itself was now slowly driving from the school compound toward the main school building.

Not even caring about the school rules—which stated that students weren't allowed to bring their phones to school—any more, all of them immediately began snapping pictures of the expensive-looking car.

"I-It's a Lambo! A million-dollar Lambo!" stuttered Yazmin's husband as his jaw dropped.

"Whose car is that? Is it the husband of one of the teachers? Or perhaps one of the students' fathers?" added one of the male teachers who was still shocked by the sight.

"If I'm correct, then that car right there is limited edition! There are less than a hundred cars for this model in our country, you know?" shouted a car expert from within the crowd.

With all this happening, Yazmin's expression quickly turned sour. Naturally, this was because the spotlight on her husband's BMW 7-series had now been stolen by that other car!

"...Since you know so many people, can't you guess who the driver of that car is, hubby?" asked Yazmin.

Hearing that, the other female teachers instantly grew jealous again. After all, they knew better than to doubt how powerful Yazmin's husband was.

"...Well, while I do know several wealthy businessmen in Mayberry, some regions are still beyond my reach... Regardless, once I see the driver's face, I may know who he is! Bring me my name card, Yazmin!" replied her husband as he straightened his suit.

"Right away, hubby!" said Yazmin as she happily returned to his car to retrieve his name card.

Before she opened his car's door, however, she made sure to look at her female colleagues before saying, "Businessmen are always like this, you know? It's natural for them to want to exchange name cards with others, especially when the other party is an experienced director! After all, it could very well bring business to them, though I don't expect any of you to understand!"

Naturally, this made the other female teachers upset.

Regardless, the car finally stopped moving when it parked right next to the BMW 7-series.

Everyone's attention was now on the car, and both teachers and students alike held their breaths, eager to find out who the owner of the car was.

Shortly after, the car's door was opened, and out stepped a young man with his right hand in his pocket. Simultaneously, the door opposite of the driver's seat was also opened, and an extremely beautiful yet familiar-looking woman stepped out.

The moment Yazmin saw the duo who had just exited the car, the name card in her hand instantly fluttered to the ground. Her entire body now trembling, Yazmin felt as though her soul had just been crushed by an immense strike of lightning.

Her mind now completely blank, the current situation felt almost dream-like.

While Yazmin felt like she was about to faint, many of the other students and teachers were now screaming!

"Miss Naomi! It's you!"

Chapter 1215

True to their words, the duo that had just descended the car truly were Gerald and Naomi.

Knowing that, Yazmin felt as though her entire world had just been flipped.

After all, she had assumed that since Naomi probably didn't have anyone capable backing her up, her husband could easily get rid of her. While it was true that she had met Gerald yesterday, Yazmin simply thought he was some ordinary man who would suffer terribly by her hand today!

Never could she have imagined that he would be this filthy rich!

Now sweating profusely and genuinely unsure of what to even do next, her heart skipped a beat the moment she saw a police car driving into the school.

Though there had only been two police officers the day before, four of them stepped out of the car today.

Scanning the crowd, one of the officers glared at Yazmin before saying, "Good day, Miss Milton, and I see that Miss Yallop is here too! There's been some progress on the case... Why don't we discuss this in the principal's office...?"

"F-fine by me...!" replied Yazmin, her gut telling her that something was insanely wrong.

Once they were in the office, the pressuring atmosphere there caused great discomfort to Yazmin. After all, everyone was now looking at her differently.

"...We've received new evidence about the theft, and after some digging, we found a new lead! Apparently, someone had been forcing a student to act on their behalf, and in extremely cruel ways too!" explained one of the officers to the principal.

"Thanks for your hard work, officers!"

Hearing that, Yazmin's face turned even paler as her heart skipped a beat. Gulping, she turned to look at her husband, a clear sign that she was asking for his help.

However, the moment he took a step back, Yazmin finally realized where her feelings of insecurity were stemming from.

Yazmin's husband knew for a fact that he couldn't get involved any further into the matter. The young man who was currently standing before him... His background was definitely not a simple one, and with that in mind, her husband knew better than to challenge such a person.

He also knew that if he continued helping Yazmin, he wouldn't be able to get away easily. Though he honestly wanted to just run out of the office at that moment, he was well aware that a few security guards were currently patrolling right outside the office's door.

As he continued thinking about what he should do next, one of the officers took a warrant out and showed it to Yazmin.

"Miss Yallop, we suspect that you and your husband are involved in a crime! With that in mind, please follow us back to the station for further questioning!"

Utterly stunned to hear that, Yazmin's husband immediately retorted, "T-this is none of my business! That woman was in charge of the entire thing! This doesn't involve me at all!"

Following that, he immediately swung the office door open and attempted to escape! Naturally, he was instantly caught by one of the security guards who were still patrolling outside the office.

Upon hearing that, Yazmin instantly began shrieking in a frenzy before attempting to escape as well! She knew for a fact that if they were found guilty of the deed, then they wouldn't be released for at least twenty years!

With that in mind, she managed to dash past the guards who were still busy pinning her husband down. None of them had expected her to run out as well!

By the time she arrived at the stairs, all the students who had seen her running for her life were utterly confused as to what was happening.

Before she could even take the first step down, however, she felt a jolt of electricity running down her spine!

Screaming from the impact of the thrown object, Yazmin crumbled to the floor and saw that she had been hit by an electric rod that was glowing blue!

"H-huh? Isn't that Mrs. Yallop...?"

"My god! Why are they trying to capture her?!"

As the present students instantly covered their mouths while taking steps backward, Gerald himself jogged over to where Yazmin currently lay.

Seeing that the other officers were still a distance away, Gerald bent down and shocked her with the electric rod one more time before they arrived, sending the woman unconscious.

"If it wasn't for our current location, I hope you know that I'd have torn you into a thousand pieces by now...!" growled Gerald as he tossed the rod to the side.

With his current temper, he wouldn't truly be Gerald if he didn't treat a cruel woman like Yazmin the same way he did to that woman in Lugaw City...

Chapter 1216

With the current matter resolved, Gerald and Naomi soon found themselves returning to the hospital to visit Sherry and her mother.

Though Gerald stayed for quite a long time in the hospital, he eventually found himself disappointed. It didn't seem like the person who had triggered the jade charm before was going to make an appearance again any time soon.

While he had initially thought that the person in question could be one of the doctors, nurses, or even patients in the hospital, after walking through the entire hospital for most of the morning, Gerald was now doubtful that that was the case.

With the middle of the month now dangerously close, he would be lying if he said that he wasn't anxious.

Eventually concluding that the woman with the strong yin physique would've shown herself by now if she truly was related to the hospital, Gerald simply sent Naomi back to the school before considering heading to other nearby schools or universities to begin searching again.

Honestly, he felt that none of this made any sense. After all, according to what Master Ghost had said, due to fate's role, even if Gerald were to miss meeting the other person the first time, they would certainly meet again!

Knowing that thinking about it wouldn't really do him any good, Gerald simply spent the rest of the morning driving around several high schools and universities. In the end, he still couldn't find the person he was looking for.

With only one final university left unchecked, Gerald simply sighed before muttering to himself, "...Mayberry University it is!"

If she wasn't there either, then he really didn't know where else to look for her.

Upon arriving at the university, Gerald immediately felt slightly embarrassed when he saw so many students pointing at his car. He really shouldn't have been this high-profile...

With that in mind, he quickly turned his car around and headed for the small forest where he used to park his car in the past. Upon arriving there, he saw that a few cars had already been parked in his usual spot.

Momentarily stopping his own car, Gerald saw that there were many beautiful girls there dressed to impress as well, as several rich young men who each seemed to own different kinds of sports cars, Ferraris, and many other expensive-looking cars.

Gerald also noticed that there seemed to be a conflict between two of the men, and all the others present at the scene were currently gathered around them.

Listening in, Gerald heard one of the men say, “How dare you even park your cheap car here? Aren’t you ashamed of yourself at all? My car is worth at least three hundred thousand dollars you know?”

“Mr. Yackee is so handsome and cool! His car looks absolutely marvelous as well!”

“Yeah! What a wonderful car!”

Squealed a few of the girls while looking rather enviously at the one who had spoken.

From what Gerald could tell, the other man’s car probably cost around a hundred and twenty thousand dollars. As a result, all the girls there were naturally supporting Mr. Yackee.

Nobody was standing up for the other guy at all, and after being made to feel so inferior, the other man simply drove away angrily.

While Gerald had once used this secluded spot to hide how rich he was, things had apparently changed now. From what he could tell, those who now knew about this small forest were mostly owners of luxury cars. To show off their wealth, only the most expensive and dazzling luxury cars were permitted to park here.

As for the others who knew of this place, they mostly consisted of both male and female students who wanted to enjoy the show.

Regardless, the moment Mr. Yackee saw that he had successfully driven the other guy away, an extremely proud-looking expression was formed on his face. Just as he was about to park his car properly, however, the loud revving of engines could suddenly be heard.

Turning to look at the source of the sound, everyone’s eyes widened as an even cooler-looking Lamborghini made its appearance! The atmosphere climaxed as soon as it stopped close enough and a young man—wearing a pair of sunglasses as well as cropped pants—stepped out of the car.

Turning to look at Mr. Yackee, the man—who was chewing some gum—then declared, “About time you get lost, don’t you think? Do you really think that you deserve to park here? My car is worth at least seven hundred and sixty million dollars, you know?”

“I-it’s Mr. Lockworth!”

“Oh my god, he’s so handsome!”

Gerald could simply watch as the girls began squealing in excitement again.

While he wasn’t aware of this, everyone from within that crowd knew of the legend surrounding that small forest. Essentially, the legend stated that a mysterious and rich young man once made his appearance in this very forest in a top-notch luxury car. Following that, the owner of the car managed to pursue and get the university’s top goddess to fall for him! Though it was simple, the tale was popular enough to make the small forest west of the university a famous parking spot for those with luxury cars.

“What are you still looking at, Mr. Yackee? Move your car already so that Yalter can park his car!”

“Indeed! It’s more suitable for Mt. Lockworth to park there and you know it!”

After hearing the girls’ shouts of contempt, Mr. Yackee could only purse his lips as his inferiority complex kicked in. By the time he drove off angrily, the scene had already attracted the attention of at least a hundred onlookers.

Shaking his head with a wry smile on his face, Gerald simply thought, ‘These kids think they’re so young and rich... You should be making use of your youth and wealth to do more meaningful things!’

Following that, he stepped on his accelerator, driving his Lamborghini directly toward the crowd of people...

Chapter 1217

As the students heard the revving of yet another car’s engine, they turned to look at the Lamborghini as it swerved right before them before halting, sending the fallen leaves on the ground scattering all over the place with the force of an autumn gale.

The abrupt appearance of the car left everyone at the scene momentarily frozen in shock.

“...Is... is that a Lamborghini Reventon...?”

The situation was so dream-like that everyone could barely hide the shock on their faces. None of them even dared to blink for a while, for fear that the sight of the luxurious car would simply disappear the second they did.

Not only was the limited-edition Lamborghini Reventon a car that was worth at least two million and six hundred thousand dollars, but according to the local legend, the mysterious rich and young man had initially owned a similar car!

Now that that specific car had arrived at this specific location, those present felt like they were living out the legend that everyone kept talking about. None of them had truly expected to be able to witness the car for themselves, which was why they were all so stupefied by the sight of it.

Mr. Lockworth himself was left utterly dumbfounded. However, he quickly regained his senses and knew that he had to admit defeat this time.

‘That car... It... It’s simply too luxurious!’ Yalter thought to himself before immediately driving his car away from the parking space so that Gerald could park his car there.

After parking his car in his old spot, the girls instantly began screaming hysterically—with many of them placing their hands over their mouths and the rest cupping their cheeks—as Gerald stepped out of his car.

All this was simply too amazing for them to remain calm!

“Hey there, brother! What’s your phone number?”

“Do you have a girlfriend, brother?”

As the girls there instantly began huddling around Gerald, the other rich men quickly began heading over to their own cars—with the intention of driving them away from the area—while shouting, “We’ll be taking our leave now, brother!”

“Hold it!” shouted Gerald in a cold voice as he turned to look at them.

Hearing how frigid and commanding his voice was, everyone was instantly paralyzed in place.

Following that, Gerald then retained his cold voice as he asked, “Tell me, was there a point of comparing how wealthy each of you were?”

Hearing that, the boys quickly lowered their heads, each of them at a loss for words.

“While you may be rich, I hope that each of you realize that there’ll always be wealthier people out there! With that in mind, since there’s always going to be someone richer than you, why even bother comparing in the first place? If you have that much time and energy, you should be spending all that on your family and those you care for instead! Why even come all the way out here just to show off?” added Gerald in a casual tone as the boys turned red in embarrassment while nodding slowly.

“He’s right, you know? How could people like Mr. Lockworth or Mr. Yackee ever dream to be able to compare to him?”

“Now that I’ve met you, I finally understand what it means to be mature and stable, sir! You truly are charming and everything you say is completely true!”

By that point, several of the girls—with love-struck expressions on their faces—were backing Gerald up with affectionate voices.

As one of the girls began rubbing her arm against Gerald’s he simply pushed her aside before saying, “You girls aren’t any better!”

Turning to face them next, he then said, “Have a good look at what you’re all wearing now! T-shirts without any pants or even shorts underneath? Is this how girls should be acting? Don’t you think you’re all being a little too shameless?! As for you in particular! Your top is nothing more than a thin rope at this point! What’s the point of exposing so much of your body to others? Be a bit more ladylike for heaven’s sake!”

After seeing this money-worshipping group of youngsters, it was no real wonder why Gerald was so furious at them.

Knowing that they would definitely come to regret it—in the future—if they didn’t use this time to cherish and appreciate their family members and loved ones, Gerald could only reprimand them in hopes that it would return them to their senses.

However, several of the girls simply began crying as soon as they heard Gerald scolding them!

“...Just... Leave already! Leave! All of you!”

Chapter 1218

After waving his hand to drive everyone away, Gerald made sure he parked his car properly while wondering to himself what was wrong with today’s society.

So what if one was rich? If everything could be resolved with money, then Gerald wouldn't have to continue searching like this.

Shaking the thought off, Gerald then looked at the campus building before heading in its direction to continue his search for a woman with a strong yin physique.

What happened earlier was simply a small episode, and Gerald's thoughts were soon replaced with a slight nostalgia as he stepped into the campus again after graduating for over two years.

As the saying went, life was a circle that went round and round. Regardless of whether a person was rich or poor, they would always end up returning to where they came from.

True to that saying's words, all of this had started in this very university. After all, Gerald had first been told that he was the heir of the Crawford family while he was studying here. What more, Gerald had also met the love of his life on this very campus.

Even the milk tea shop at the entrance of the campus was still there, and the owner of that shop was still the same person.

Looking at the shop, he recalled how Mila had forgotten to bring her wallet out with her when she was buying some milk tea back then... Him helping her pay for it was their very first encounter...

Back then, his relationship with Mila had been both pure and innocent... There weren't any earth-shattering or bitter moments in their relationship at all. Just a simple, 'I love you and you love me' relationship... Of course, good things never tended to last.

From the moment he had met her, Gerald had never wanted to be the heir of the Crawford family. If he could choose, he would've very much preferred to remain poor. After all, Mila didn't despise him regardless of his wealth.

After graduating university, both of them could have continued living together happily. After getting jobs and collecting enough money, they could've even opened a milk tea shop together. By that point, they would've surely earned enough to get married and start a beautiful family together... All could've gone so perfectly...

Thinking about it, Gerald couldn't help but smile slightly bitterly. Then again, there was no way that the past him would've been able to predict that all this would happen...

As he continued being deep in thought, he suddenly heard a voice call out, "Hey there, handsome! You've been standing all dazed there for a good five minutes, you know? Are you alright?"

Turning to look at who had called him, Gerald was greeted by the sight of a smiling girl with a ponytail hairstyle who was currently waving at him.

Caught off guard by her sudden question, Gerald only managed to say, "...Uh... Yeah. You... need something from me?"

Hearing that, the girl simply laughed aloud. How silly of him to be standing there in a daze in broad daylight... She wondered what he could possibly be thinking of...

"...Well, my roommates and I were planning to take pictures together by the lake, you see... I was looking for someone who could help photograph us! Since you're the first person I've bumped into while searching around, I wonder if you'd be willing to take our pictures for us, handsome?" asked the girl—who had already been interested in Gerald when she first saw him from a distance—as she held out her camera to him. It was undeniable, after all, that Gerald had a charming appearance.

"...Oh. I... Sure I guess..." replied Gerald as he took the camera from her. Seeing that it wasn't a particularly difficult request to begin with, Gerald found it hard to turn her down.

"Alright! Also, please be careful with that. It's a very expensive camera! Think you know how to operate it?" asked the girl who now realized that Gerald was dressed in rather ordinary clothing. With that in mind, she couldn't help but worry that he would accidentally get it to malfunction if he truly had no idea how to use it.

"Don't worry, I do!" replied Gerald with a simple nod.

Meanwhile, six girls could be heard chattering away at the side of the lake. Since they were all about to head into their second year of university and the weather looked good today, all of them had agreed to come out to take pictures together. They wanted to make sure that they captured sufficient memories of their first year in university.

While there were many people strolling around the lake, all of them seemed to be couples, and many were even acting rather intimately by hugging each other in public. Due to that, the girls felt that it would be a little too awkward for them to ask them for their help.

"...Speaking of which, where the hell is Yulisa? From her message earlier, she told me that she's already found someone to photograph us! What's taking her so long...?"

"Speak of the devil! There they are now! Hey, look at the guy she brought along. He looks rather handsome, no?" said another girl as she giggled.

“Handsome? Him? Hah! I think he looks rather ordinary!” replied a third girl as she shook her head.

“That’s quite enough. What are you girls even thinking? Remember, he’s being kind enough to help us take our pictures so we should be courteous and polite to him!” said a long-haired girl—who was standing right in the middle of the group—with a smile.

Chapter 1219

Hearing that, the girls made sure to thank Gerald first as soon as he got close enough to them.

Even when they did so, however, Gerald was still feeling slightly absentminded. After all, he was constantly being bombarded with nostalgic memories of his own, back when he was still studying here.

Eventually, Gerald snapped out of it and got into position before saying, “Well, I’ll be taking the picture now if you girls are ready!”

“We’re all good to go!” said the girls after getting into various poses as they laughed among themselves.

Getting the confirmation he needed, Gerald slowly raised the camera. Once he was sure that everyone was within the picture, he then said, “Alright, on the count of, one! Two! Three- f*ck!”

Out of the blue, Gerald suddenly jolted in both surprise and excitement, resulting in the camera being thrown into the air! By the time everyone relevant realized what was happening, the camera had already collided onto the ground! With its lens slightly cracked and a few extra ‘clunks’ coming from inside the camera, everyone was fairly certain that a few components inside the device had been broken.

Regardless, Gerald’s actions stemmed from the fact that at that moment, he had suddenly felt an immensely strange feeling in his heart. Not only that, but he was also sure that he had felt the jade charm react while he was still concentrating his hardest on taking the picture just seconds ago.

The only other time he had felt such a way was when he had first met Cundrie. Turning to look at the girls again, Gerald was sure that his initial shock had been triggered when he first paid closer attention to the long-haired girl’s—who was standing in the middle of the group—aura while he was still counting down earlier. There was no doubt about it now.

She was definitely the second girl with the strong yin physique that he needed to locate!

As Master Ghost had previously said, yins and yangs were prone to attracting each other, especially when they were close by. Should these opposites come too close to each other, they would most definitely have an encounter with each other.

Whatever the case was, Gerald knew that he had made the right choice by looking for the girl in his old university as well. To think that the one he was looking for was studying at Mayberry University this entire time!

Though Gerald was sighing in relief, the other girls were now all equally dumbfounded. With their jaws gaping widely, they all stared in horror at the camera that was still lying on the ground.

The camera alone cost around seven thousand and six hundred dollars! To think that this guy would just toss it into the air like that!

Naturally, Yulisa was the first person to react as she shouted, "W-what?!"

Her entire world was now spinning as her vision darkened slightly in her shock. After all, the camera wasn't even hers to begin with! It was a rented camera, and with it now being broken, surely she'd have to be the one to pay for its repair cost!

"You... You a*s hole! What were you thinking by just throwing our camera into the air like that?!" roared Yulisa as she rushed over to Gerald before pushing him in her rage.

Of course, the other girls were equally as angry as she was. After all, this was supposed to be a happy occasion and they were all ready to have their photographs taken to commemorate the event as well! Anyone would get displeased with something as unexpected as this happening.

"While he certainly looks like he won't ever be able to achieve anything in his life, he's certainly a pro at ruining things! Seriously though, Yulisa! How'd you even manage to find someone like this to take our picture?!" growled one of the girls as all of them took turns glaring at Gerald.

Whatever the case was, Yulisa looked like she was ready to burst into tears at any second.

Seeing that, the long-haired girl pushed her hair behind her ears before picking the camera up and checking for any broken parts. After a while, she said, "...I don't really think that the camera is damaged... After a brief look at it, I remember that this kind of camera has a protective layer around each of its components... Even so, we'll probably still need to fork out at least one to two thousand dollars since the camera lens looks slightly cracked due to the fall earlier!"

“Humph! You have no idea how angry I am right now! Of all the people I could’ve bumped into and asked for help, it had to be him! If it was anyone else, we could’ve had our pictures taken ages ago! Oh, why on earth am I so unlucky...?” grumbled Yulisa who was now beyond annoyed and angry.

“How much do I owe you? I’ll compensate!” replied Gerald immediately.

“Hah! You? Pay me seven thousand and six hundred dollars, then we’ll be even!” snorted Yulisa.

“You’re asking him for that much...? We’d be lucky if he’s even able to fess up three hundred dollars! How truly unlucky we are...!” sighed the other girls.

“I’ll pay you that exact amount!” said Gerald as he slid his hand into his pocket to retrieve his cell phone so that he could immediately transfer the money over. The second he did so, however, he instantly felt both awkward and embarrassed. After feeling around in all his pockets, he realized that his cell phone wasn’t on him!

Thinking where he could’ve misplaced it, he quickly remembered that he had left his cell phone in his car earlier since he had been a bit too eager to lecture that group of money-worshiping teenagers!

The only money he had on him now was apparently a hundred and twenty dollars! After all, he hadn’t had the need to use physical money for the longest time.

“...Hah! For a second there, you almost made me feel like you were capable enough to pay for the damage!”

Chapter 1213

The very next day, Yazmin headed to school along with her husband.

Since Naomi had gotten a man to back her up the day before, Yazmin was definitely getting hers to help her as well. Yazmin was sure that the sight of her husband’s car alone would be enough to scare the life out of Naomi’s man! Humph!

Still, Yazmin would be lying if she said that those weird messages and Thiago’s disappearance the day before didn’t have her worried. Even after calling him and his men, none of them picked up, and none of them were at Sherry’s place either. Where could they be...?

Though Thiago and his men could get a bit wild while enjoying themselves, she also knew them to be very responsible men. It was near-impossible for them not to return her messages after completing their job.

Feeling odd about the entire situation, that was the second reason she was bringing her husband along. Whatever the case was, she knew Sherry's background well so she probably wouldn't be a problem for her.

It wasn't long before they arrived in front of the school building. Since Yazmin's husband was driving the newest BMW 7-series, a group of male students was instantly drawn to it.

"Holy cow! Is that Mrs. Yallop's husband? Not only is he driving a BMW 7-series, but he's also charming?!"

"D*mn! So her husband's a rich heir! By the looks of it, his family must be super powerful too! Though with how luxuriously Mrs. Yallop always dresses, it isn't too surprising that her husband isn't an ordinary man!"

Still, in their high school days, it was common enough for male students to favor talking about games and cars.

Locking her arms around her husband's, Yazmin then stood in front of the car for a brief moment, enjoying every second of how envious and adoring the students were of her and her husband.

After pretending to retrieve some things from the car, Yazmin saw a few of her colleagues coming to work and called out, "Well hello there, Mrs. Shaq! You're early today! And the same goes for you as well, Mrs. Xanders!"

Seeing the smiling woman calling out to them, Mrs. Shaq then replied, "Good day to you too, Mrs. Shaq! Is that your husband! The car he's driving looks pretty new! It must've been expensive!"

Though everyone looked enthusiastic to reply to Yazmin's greeting, deep inside, they were all equally upset.

'Why's she even being all proud about that? So what if she has a rich husband and a nice car! Big deal! Still... Why is it that other people always have better lives... There's no way we could ever compete with her!' Thought several of her colleagues who were cursing her in their minds with utter jealousy.

As the female teachers continued putting on a cheery façade while talking with Yazmin, a few male colleagues of Yazmin's showed up.

The moment they all saw the car, they were instantly impressed. One of them was so excited that he immediately said, “Holy! That’s a BMW 7-series! It’s the newest model in 2020 and it’s barely been a few days since it was released into the market! How cool!”

After they continued talking with Yazmin and her husband for a while, one of the female teachers finally found herself unable to hold back anymore as she asked, “When would you be free to take us out on a ride in the car, Mrs. Yallop?”

“Why, anytime, of course! Where would you like to go? My husband can be our driver!” replied Yazmin with a smile.

“Oh, how kind you are, Mrs. Yallop! I’ll be thanking you in advance then!”

“I’m just glad you finally realize how nice a person I am! While I know I can be hard to deal with sometimes, but I’m generally a very kind person to those close to me! It’s just the way my straightforward personality is! Unlike a very fake teacher of course! You know, the house she bought near our school spans a good hundred and fifty square feet! It’s quite obvious where she got the money to buy that house from, given her current financial status!” replied Yazmin.

“I don’t know... Maybe she just found a rich husband...?” said one of the male teachers.

“Hah! Her? Tell you what, I’ve checked the bursary record before and I’ve already seen what her husband looks like!” replied Yazmin.

“What? How does he look?”

Chapter 1214

“Saying that he looks below-average is an overstatement for him! With that in mind, how could he possibly be rich? He’s probably just some regular worker somewhere!”

Knowing that, Yazmin was beyond sure that such a person wouldn’t ever be able to compare with her husband.

Before any of her colleagues could even react, a group of students began screaming out of the blue! Some were even screaming so hard that they seemed close to fainting!

“...The hell?” muttered Yazmin as she and her other colleagues turned to look at the front gate to see what all the commotion was about.

The second they saw what the students were screaming about, however, the group of teachers immediately widened their eyes before cursing out loud in shock. Yazmin, in particular, seemed more flabbergasted than the rest, covering her mouth in astonishment.

“W-what a cool car!” shouted everyone in both shock and awe.

The ‘cool car’ they were referring to, was one that cost millions of dollars. In fact, it was arguably a hundred times cooler than a Lamborghini sports car! The car itself was now slowly driving from the school compound toward the main school building.

Not even caring about the school rules—which stated that students weren’t allowed to bring their phones to school—any more, all of them immediately began snapping pictures of the expensive-looking car.

“I-It’s a Lambo! A million-dollar Lambo!” stuttered Yazmin’s husband as his jaw dropped.

“Whose car is that? Is it the husband of one of the teachers? Or perhaps one of the students’ fathers?” added one of the male teachers who was still shocked by the sight.

“If I’m correct, then that car right there is limited edition! There are less than a hundred cars for this model in our country, you know?” shouted a car expert from within the crowd.

With all this happening, Yazmin’s expression quickly turned sour. Naturally, this was because the spotlight on her husband’s BMW 7-series had now been stolen by that other car!

“...Since you know so many people, can’t you guess who the driver of that car is, hubby?” asked Yazmin.

Hearing that, the other female teachers instantly grew jealous again. After all, they knew better than to doubt how powerful Yazmin’s husband was.

“...Well, while I do know several wealthy businessmen in Mayberry, some regions are still beyond my reach... Regardless, once I see the driver’s face, I may know who he is! Bring me my name card, Yazmin!” replied her husband as he straightened his suit.

“Right away, hubby!” said Yazmin as she happily returned to his car to retrieve his name card.

Before she opened his car's door, however, she made sure to look at her female colleagues before saying, "Businessmen are always like this, you know? It's natural for them to want to exchange name cards with others, especially when the other party is an experienced director! After all, it could very well bring business to them, though I don't expect any of you to understand!"

Naturally, this made the other female teachers upset.

Regardless, the car finally stopped moving when it parked right next to the BMW 7-series.

Everyone's attention was now on the car, and both teachers and students alike held their breaths, eager to find out who the owner of the car was.

Shortly after, the car's door was opened, and out stepped a young man with his right hand in his pocket. Simultaneously, the door opposite of the driver's seat was also opened, and an extremely beautiful yet familiar-looking woman stepped out.

The moment Yazmin saw the duo who had just exited the car, the name card in her hand instantly fluttered to the ground. Her entire body now trembling, Yazmin felt as though her soul had just been crushed by an immense strike of lightning.

Her mind now completely blank, the current situation felt almost dream-like.

While Yazmin felt like she was about to faint, many of the other students and teachers were now screaming!

"Miss Naomi! It's you!"

Chapter 1215

True to their words, the duo that had just descended the car truly were Gerald and Naomi.

Knowing that, Yazmin felt as though her entire world had just been flipped.

After all, she had assumed that since Naomi probably didn't have anyone capable backing her up, her husband could easily get rid of her. While it was true that she had met Gerald yesterday, Yazmin simply thought he was some ordinary man who would suffer terribly by her hand today!

Never could she have imagined that he would be this filthy rich!

Now sweating profusely and genuinely unsure of what to even do next, her heart skipped a beat the moment she saw a police car driving into the school.

Though there had only been two police officers the day before, four of them stepped out of the car today.

Scanning the crowd, one of the officers glared at Yazmin before saying, "Good day, Miss Milton, and I see that Miss Yallop is here too! There's been some progress on the case... Why don't we discuss this in the principal's office...?"

"F-fine by me...!" replied Yazmin, her gut telling her that something was insanely wrong.

Once they were in the office, the pressuring atmosphere there caused great discomfort to Yazmin. After all, everyone was now looking at her differently.

"...We've received new evidence about the theft, and after some digging, we found a new lead! Apparently, someone had been forcing a student to act on their behalf, and in extremely cruel ways too!" explained one of the officers to the principal.

"Thanks for your hard work, officers!"

Hearing that, Yazmin's face turned even paler as her heart skipped a beat. Gulping, she turned to look at her husband, a clear sign that she was asking for his help.

However, the moment he took a step back, Yazmin finally realized where her feelings of insecurity were stemming from.

Yazmin's husband knew for a fact that he couldn't get involved any further into the matter. The young man who was currently standing before him... His background was definitely not a simple one, and with that in mind, her husband knew better than to challenge such a person.

He also knew that if he continued helping Yazmin, he wouldn't be able to get away easily. Though he honestly wanted to just run out of the office at that moment, he was well aware that a few security guards were currently patrolling right outside the office's door.

As he continued thinking about what he should do next, one of the officers took a warrant out and showed it to Yazmin.

“Miss Yallop, we suspect that you and your husband are involved in a crime! With that in mind, please follow us back to the station for further questioning!”

Utterly stunned to hear that, Yazmin’s husband immediately retorted, “T-this is none of my business! That woman was in charge of the entire thing! This doesn’t involve me at all!”

Following that, he immediately swung the office door open and attempted to escape! Naturally, he was instantly caught by one of the security guards who were still patrolling outside the office.

Upon hearing that, Yazmin instantly began shrieking in a frenzy before attempting to escape as well! She knew for a fact that if they were found guilty of the deed, then they wouldn’t be released for at least twenty years!

With that in mind, she managed to dash past the guards who were still busy pinning her husband down. None of them had expected her to run out as well!

By the time she arrived at the stairs, all the students who had seen her running for her life were utterly confused as to what was happening.

Before she could even take the first step down, however, she felt a jolt of electricity running down her spine!

Screaming from the impact of the thrown object, Yazmin crumbled to the floor and saw that she had been hit by an electric rod that was glowing blue!

“H-huh? Isn’t that Mrs. Yallop...?”

“My god! Why are they trying to capture her?!”

As the present students instantly covered their mouths while taking steps backward, Gerald himself jogged over to where Yazmin currently lay.

Seeing that the other officers were still a distance away, Gerald bent down and shocked her with the electric rod one more time before they arrived, sending the woman unconscious.

“If it wasn’t for our current location, I hope you know that I’d have torn you into a thousand pieces by now...!” growled Gerald as he tossed the rod to the side.

With his current temper, he wouldn’t truly be Gerald if he didn’t treat a cruel woman like Yazmin the same way he did to that woman in Lugaw City...

Chapter 1216

With the current matter resolved, Gerald and Naomi soon found themselves returning to the hospital to visit Sherry and her mother.

Though Gerald stayed for quite a long time in the hospital, he eventually found himself disappointed. It didn’t seem like the person who had triggered the jade charm before was going to make an appearance again any time soon.

While he had initially thought that the person in question could be one of the doctors, nurses, or even patients in the hospital, after walking through the entire hospital for most of the morning, Gerald was now doubtful that that was the case.

With the middle of the month now dangerously close, he would be lying if he said that he wasn’t anxious.

Eventually concluding that the woman with the strong yin physique would’ve shown herself by now if she truly was related to the hospital, Gerald simply sent Naomi back to the school before considering heading to other nearby schools or universities to begin searching again.

Honestly, he felt that none of this made any sense. After all, according to what Master Ghost had said, due to fate’s role, even if Gerald were to miss meeting the other person the first time, they would certainly meet again!

Knowing that thinking about it wouldn’t really do him any good, Gerald simply spent the rest of the morning driving around several high schools and universities. In the end, he still couldn’t find the person he was looking for.

With only one final university left unchecked, Gerald simply sighed before muttering to himself, “...Mayberry University it is!”

If she wasn’t there either, then he really didn’t know where else to look for her.

Upon arriving at the university, Gerald immediately felt slightly embarrassed when he saw so many students pointing at his car. He really shouldn’t have been this high-profile...

With that in mind, he quickly turned his car around and headed for the small forest where he used to park his car in the past. Upon arriving there, he saw that a few cars had already been parked in his usual spot.

Momentarily stopping his own car, Gerald saw that there were many beautiful girls there dressed to impress as well, as several rich young men who each seemed to own different kinds of sports cars, Ferraris, and many other expensive-looking cars.

Gerald also noticed that there seemed to be a conflict between two of the men, and all the others present at the scene were currently gathered around them.

Listening in, Gerald heard one of the men say, "How dare you even park your cheap car here? Aren't you ashamed of yourself at all? My car is worth at least three hundred thousand dollars you know?"

"Mr. Yackee is so handsome and cool! His car looks absolutely marvelous as well!"

"Yeah! What a wonderful car!"

Squealed a few of the girls while looking rather enviously at the one who had spoken.

From what Gerald could tell, the other man's car probably cost around a hundred and twenty thousand dollars. As a result, all the girls there were naturally supporting Mr. Yackee.

Nobody was standing up for the other guy at all, and after being made to feel so inferior, the other man simply drove away angrily.

While Gerald had once used this secluded spot to hide how rich he was, things had apparently changed now. From what he could tell, those who now knew about this small forest were mostly owners of luxury cars. To show off their wealth, only the most expensive and dazzling luxury cars were permitted to park here.

As for the others who knew of this place, they mostly consisted of both male and female students who wanted to enjoy the show.

Regardless, the moment Mr. Yackee saw that he had successfully driven the other guy away, an extremely proud-looking expression was formed on his face. Just as he was about to park his car properly, however, the loud revving of engines could suddenly be heard.

Turning to look at the source of the sound, everyone's eyes widened as an even cooler-looking Lamborghini made its appearance! The atmosphere climaxed as soon as it stopped close enough and a young man—wearing a pair of sunglasses as well as cropped pants—stepped out of the car.

Turning to look at Mr. Yackee, the man—who was chewing some gum—then declared, “About time you get lost, don't you think? Do you really think that you deserve to park here? My car is worth at least seven hundred and sixty million dollars, you know?”

“I-it's Mr. Lockworth!”

“Oh my god, he's so handsome!”

Gerald could simply watch as the girls began squealing in excitement again.

While he wasn't aware of this, everyone from within that crowd knew of the legend surrounding that small forest. Essentially, the legend stated that a mysterious and rich young man once made his appearance in this very forest in a top-notch luxury car. Following that, the owner of the car managed to pursue and get the university's top goddess to fall for him! Though it was simple, the tale was popular enough to make the small forest west of the university a famous parking spot for those with luxury cars.

“What are you still looking at, Mr. Yackee? Move your car already so that Yalter can park his car!”

“Indeed! It's more suitable for Mt. Lockworth to park there and you know it!”

After hearing the girls' shouts of contempt, Mr. Yackee could only purse his lips as his inferiority complex kicked in. By the time he drove off angrily, the scene had already attracted the attention of at least a hundred onlookers.

Shaking his head with a wry smile on his face, Gerald simply thought, ‘These kids think they're so young and rich... You should be making use of your youth and wealth to do more meaningful things!’

Following that, he stepped on his accelerator, driving his Lamborghini directly toward the crowd of people...

Chapter 1217

As the students heard the revving of yet another car's engine, they turned to look at the Lamborghini as it swerved right before them before halting, sending the fallen leaves on the ground scattering all over the place with the force of an autumn gale.

The abrupt appearance of the car left everyone at the scene momentarily frozen in shock.

"...Is... is that a Lamborghini Reventon...?"

The situation was so dream-like that everyone could barely hide the shock on their faces. None of them even dared to blink for a while, for fear that the sight of the luxurious car would simply disappear the second they did.

Not only was the limited-edition Lamborghini Reventon a car that was worth at least two million and six hundred thousand dollars, but according to the local legend, the mysterious rich and young man had initially owned a similar car!

Now that that specific car had arrived at this specific location, those present felt like they were living out the legend that everyone kept talking about. None of them had truly expected to be able to witness the car for themselves, which was why they were all so stupefied by the sight of it.

Mr. Lockworth himself was left utterly dumbfounded. However, he quickly regained his senses and knew that he had to admit defeat this time.

'That car... It... It's simply too luxurious!' Yalter thought to himself before immediately driving his car away from the parking space so that Gerald could park his car there.

After parking his car in his old spot, the girls instantly began screaming hysterically—with many of them placing their hands over their mouths and the rest cupping their cheeks—as Gerald stepped out of his car.

All this was simply too amazing for them to remain calm!

"Hey there, brother! What's your phone number?"

"Do you have a girlfriend, brother?"

As the girls there instantly began huddling around Gerald, the other rich men quickly began heading over to their own cars—with the intention of driving them away from the area—while shouting, “We’ll be taking our leave now, brother!”

“Hold it!” shouted Gerald in a cold voice as he turned to look at them.

Hearing how frigid and commanding his voice was, everyone was instantly paralyzed in place.

Following that, Gerald then retained his cold voice as he asked, “Tell me, was there a point of comparing how wealthy each of you were?”

Hearing that, the boys quickly lowered their heads, each of them at a loss for words.

“While you may be rich, I hope that each of you realize that there’ll always be wealthier people out there! With that in mind, since there’s always going to be someone richer than you, why even bother comparing in the first place? If you have that much time and energy, you should be spending all that on your family and those you care for instead! Why even come all the way out here just to show off?” added Gerald in a casual tone as the boys turned red in embarrassment while nodding slowly.

“He’s right, you know? How could people like Mr. Lockworth or Mr. Yackee ever dream to be able to compare to him?”

“Now that I’ve met you, I finally understand what it means to be mature and stable, sir! You truly are charming and everything you say is completely true!”

By that point, several of the girls—with love-struck expressions on their faces—were backing Gerald up with affectionate voices.

As one of the girls began rubbing her arm against Gerald’s he simply pushed her aside before saying, “You girls aren’t any better!”

Turning to face them next, he then said, “Have a good look at what you’re all wearing now! T-shirts without any pants or even shorts underneath? Is this how girls should be acting? Don’t you think you’re all being a little too shameless?! As for you in particular! Your top is nothing more than a thin rope at this point! What’s the point of exposing so much of your body to others? Be a bit more ladylike for heaven’s sake!”

After seeing this money-worshiping group of youngsters, it was no real wonder why Gerald was so furious at them.

Knowing that they would definitely come to regret it—in the future—if they didn't use this time to cherish and appreciate their family members and loved ones, Gerald could only reprimand them in hopes that it would return them to their senses.

However, several of the girls simply began crying as soon as they heard Gerald scolding them!

“...Just... Leave already! Leave! All of you!”

Chapter 1218

After waving his hand to drive everyone away, Gerald made sure he parked his car properly while wondering to himself what was wrong with today's society.

So what if one was rich? If everything could be resolved with money, then Gerald wouldn't have to continue searching like this.

Shaking the thought off, Gerald then looked at the campus building before heading in its direction to continue his search for a woman with a strong yin physique.

What happened earlier was simply a small episode, and Gerald's thoughts were soon replaced with a slight nostalgia as he stepped into the campus again after graduating for over two years.

As the saying went, life was a circle that went round and round. Regardless of whether a person was rich or poor, they would always end up returning to where they came from.

True to that saying's words, all of this had started in this very university. After all, Gerald had first been told that he was the heir of the Crawford family while he was studying here. What more, Gerald had also met the love of his life on this very campus.

Even the milk tea shop at the entrance of the campus was still there, and the owner of that shop was still the same person.

Looking at the shop, he recalled how Mila had forgotten to bring her wallet out with her when she was buying some milk tea back then... Him helping her pay for it was their very first encounter...

Back then, his relationship with Mila had been both pure and innocent... There weren't any earth-shattering or bitter moments in their relationship at all. Just a simple, 'I love you and you love me' relationship... Of course, good things never tended to last.

From the moment he had met her, Gerald had never wanted to be the heir of the Crawford family. If he could choose, he would've very much preferred to remain poor. After all, Mila didn't despise him regardless of his wealth.

After graduating university, both of them could have continued living together happily. After getting jobs and collecting enough money, they could've even opened a milk tea shop together. By that point, they would've surely earned enough to get married and start a beautiful family together... All could've gone so perfectly...

Thinking about it, Gerald couldn't help but smile slightly bitterly. Then again, there was no way that the past him would've been able to predict that all this would happen...

As he continued being deep in thought, he suddenly heard a voice call out, "Hey there, handsome! You've been standing all dazed there for a good five minutes, you know? Are you alright?"

Turning to look at who had called him, Gerald was greeted by the sight of a smiling girl with a ponytail hairstyle who was currently waving at him.

Caught off guard by her sudden question, Gerald only managed to say, "...Uh... Yeah. You... need something from me?"

Hearing that, the girl simply laughed aloud. How silly of him to be standing there in a daze in broad daylight... She wondered what he could possibly be thinking of...

"...Well, my roommates and I were planning to take pictures together by the lake, you see... I was looking for someone who could help photograph us! Since you're the first person I've bumped into while searching around, I wonder if you'd be willing to take our pictures for us, handsome?" asked the girl—who had already been interested in Gerald when she first saw him from a distance—as she held out her camera to him. It was undeniable, after all, that Gerald had a charming appearance.

"...Oh. I... Sure I guess..." replied Gerald as he took the camera from her. Seeing that it wasn't a particularly difficult request to begin with, Gerald found it hard to turn her down.

"Alright! Also, please be careful with that. It's a very expensive camera! Think you know how to operate it?" asked the girl who now realized that Gerald was dressed in rather ordinary clothing. With that in mind, she couldn't help but worry that he would accidentally get it to malfunction if he truly had no idea how to use it.

"Don't worry, I do!" replied Gerald with a simple nod.

Meanwhile, six girls could be heard chattering away at the side of the lake. Since they were all about to head into their second year of university and the weather looked good today, all of them had agreed to come out to take pictures together. They wanted to make sure that they captured sufficient memories of their first year in university.

While there were many people strolling around the lake, all of them seemed to be couples, and many were even acting rather intimately by hugging each other in public. Due to that, the girls felt that it would be a little too awkward for them to ask them for their help.

“...Speaking of which, where the hell is Yulisa? From her message earlier, she told me that she’s already found someone to photograph us! What’s taking her so long...?”

“Speak of the devil! There they are now! Hey, look at the guy she brought along. He looks rather handsome, no?” said another girl as she giggled.

“Handsome? Him? Hah! I think he looks rather ordinary!” replied a third girl as she shook her head.

“That’s quite enough. What are you girls even thinking? Remember, he’s being kind enough to help us take our pictures so we should be courteous and polite to him!” said a long-haired girl—who was standing right in the middle of the group—with a smile.

Chapter 1219

Hearing that, the girls made sure to thank Gerald first as soon as he got close enough to them.

Even when they did so, however, Gerald was still feeling slightly absentminded. After all, he was constantly being bombarded with nostalgic memories of his own, back when he was still studying here.

Eventually, Gerald snapped out of it and got into position before saying, “Well, I’ll be taking the picture now if you girls are ready!”

“We’re all good to go!” said the girls after getting into various poses as they laughed among themselves.

Getting the confirmation he needed, Gerald slowly raised the camera. Once he was sure that everyone was within the picture, he then said, “Alright, on the count of, one! Two! Three- f*ck!”

Out of the blue, Gerald suddenly jolted in both surprise and excitement, resulting in the camera being thrown into the air! By the time everyone relevant realized what was happening, the camera had already collided onto the ground! With its lens

slightly cracked and a few extra 'clunks' coming from inside the camera, everyone was fairly certain that a few components inside the device had been broken.

Regardless, Gerald's actions stemmed from the fact that at that moment, he had suddenly felt an immensely strange feeling in his heart. Not only that, but he was also sure that he had felt the jade charm react while he was still concentrating his hardest on taking the picture just seconds ago.

The only other time he had felt such a way was when he had first met Cundrie. Turning to look at the girls again, Gerald was sure that his initial shock had been triggered when he first paid closer attention to the long-haired girl's—who was standing in the middle of the group—aura while he was still counting down earlier. There was no doubt about it now.

She was definitely the second girl with the strong yin physique that he needed to locate!

As Master Ghost had previously said, yins and yangs were prone to attracting each other, especially when they were close by. Should these opposites come too close to each other, they would most definitely have an encounter with each other.

Whatever the case was, Gerald knew that he had made the right choice by looking for the girl in his old university as well. To think that the one he was looking for was studying at Mayberry University this entire time!

Though Gerald was sighing in relief, the other girls were now all equally dumbfounded. With their jaws gaping widely, they all stared in horror at the camera that was still lying on the ground.

The camera alone cost around seven thousand and six hundred dollars! To think that this guy would just toss it into the air like that!

Naturally, Yulisa was the first person to react as she shouted, "W-what?!"

Her entire world was now spinning as her vision darkened slightly in her shock. After all, the camera wasn't even hers to begin with! It was a rented camera, and with it now being broken, surely she'd have to be the one to pay for its repair cost!

"You... You a*s hole! What were you thinking by just throwing our camera into the air like that?!" roared Yulisa as she rushed over to Gerald before pushing him in her rage.

Of course, the other girls were equally as angry as she was. After all, this was supposed to be a happy occasion and they were all ready to have their photographs taken to commemorate the event as well! Anyone would get displeased with something as unexpected as this happening.

“While he certainly looks like he won’t ever be able to achieve anything in his life, he’s certainly a pro at ruining things! Seriously though, Yulisa! How’d you even manage to find someone like this to take our picture?!” growled one of the girls as all of them took turns glaring at Gerald.

Whatever the case was, Yulisa looked like she was ready to burst into tears at any second.

Seeing that, the long-haired girl pushed her hair behind her ears before picking the camera up and checking for any broken parts. After a while, she said, “...I don’t really think that the camera is damaged... After a brief look at it, I remember that this kind of camera has a protective layer around each of its components... Even so, we’ll probably still need to fork out at least one to two thousand dollars since the camera lens looks slightly cracked due to the fall earlier!”

“Humph! You have no idea how angry I am right now! Of all the people I could’ve bumped into and asked for help, it had to be him! If it was anyone else, we could’ve had our pictures taken ages ago! Oh, why on earth am I so unlucky...?” grumbled Yulisa who was now beyond annoyed and angry.

“How much do I owe you? I’ll compensate!” replied Gerald immediately.

“Hah! You? Pay me seven thousand and six hundred dollars, then we’ll be even!” snorted Yulisa.

“You’re asking him for that much...? We’d be lucky if he’s even able to fess up three hundred dollars! How truly unlucky we are...!” sighed the other girls.

“I’ll pay you that exact amount!” said Gerald as he slid his hand into his pocket to retrieve his cell phone so that he could immediately transfer the money over. The second he did so, however, he instantly felt both awkward and embarrassed. After feeling around in all his pockets, he realized that his cell phone wasn’t on him!

Thinking where he could’ve misplaced it, he quickly remembered that he had left his cell phone in his car earlier since he had been a bit too eager to lecture that group of money-worshipping teenagers!

The only money he had on him now was apparently a hundred and twenty dollars! After all, he hadn’t had the need to use physical money for the longest time.

“...Hah! For a second there, you almost made me feel like you were capable enough to pay for the damage!”