

Chapter 1220

Yulisa's tone was beyond contemptuous as she said that.

"...Regardless, let's just forget about taking the pictures for now and focus more on the camera issue first... Once we're done, we can go eat out at Dominoes or something..." said the long-haired girl as she shook her head.

"What? We can't just let him off just like that! We have to make sure he pays us for all that damage!" replied Yulisa, clearly unwilling to let Gerald off that easily.

"Just forget it already!" said the long-haired girl in a rather awkward tone as she watched as more and more people began excitedly gathering around them to see what the commotion was about.

As she continued trying to pull her friends away from him, Gerald quickly turned to look at the long-haired girl before saying, "Hold on! Could... Could you give me your contact information? I still need to transfer the money over to you later, you know?"

Hearing that, Yulisa and her friends instantly became dumbfounded. F*cking hell! To think that after dropping their camera, he still had

the audacity to ask for Noelle's phone number! To think that such a person even existed!

From what everyone could now tell, Gerald had only dropped the camera for a chance to get Noelle's contact information! Was it because she was more beautiful than they were? The thought of it only served to further fuel the anger and contempt the girls had toward Gerald!

Noelle herself truly wanted to just leave already. Not only did she not want to continue getting entangled in the situation any further, the fact that so many people were currently looking at them simply made her uncomfortable.

"Hah! Brother, I hope you know that Noelle's the most beautiful girl in our department! Don't you know how many rich and young heirs have already attempted to pursue and confess their love to her? To think that you'd actually dare to ask for her phone number!"

"Indeed! While you may have had the slimmest chance to do so if you had managed to properly take our photograph earlier, you managed to mess that up greatly as well! Hope you regret your own actions now!"

As several of the onlookers continued putting Gerald down, Gerald simply shook his head with a wry smile on his face, ignoring their mockery for the most part.

In his mind, he was wondering if the attraction between yin and yang had interfered and affected the balance in his heart again. After all, the same thing had happened back when he had first met Cundrie in Lugaw City.

Gerald had ended up making a huge blunder upon his and Cundrie's first meeting due to him being unable to properly control his own emotions. Somewhat similar to the previous event, he had made another mistake upon coming across Noelle—who had a strong yin physique—though this time he ended up breaking the pony-tailed girl's camera instead.

What more, he had even attempted to rush things by immediately asking for Noelle's phone number even though the one who had rented the camera was the girl with the ponytail! He was clearly too impatient and anyone would find that sort of behavior annoying!

Despite the misunderstanding, however, Gerald was still quite happy with the turn of events. After all, he had finally managed to find the person with the strong yin physique. That meant that he would be able to find the Zircobsite stone soon!

Even though the middle of the month was coming soon, there was still a chance that he was going to be able to make it! All his efforts hadn't been in vain!

Snapping out of it, Gerald turned to look at Noelle and the others—who were currently still walking away from the scene—and instantly began tailing them.

Though Noelle and her roommates were only in their freshman year, they had already encountered all sorts of boys. Noelle, in particular, had had to deal with endless guys trying to pursue her. Due to having to decline the advances of those from her very own class to seniors from her department, Noelle found herself growing easily frustrated by guys attempting to woo her.

With that in mind, not once had she agreed to anyone's attempts to be her boyfriend, and Gerald's fate was surely going to be no different from all the others she had rejected. After all, he couldn't even get something that simple done right! It was truly annoying.

Shaking the thought off, Noelle and her friends quickly dealt with the issue on their own, with Noelle using her own money to compensate for the damages.

Following that, the group of girls headed over to Dominoes to grab a quick bite. While they were at it, they were also hoping to look for someone a little more capable to help take pictures of them near the mountainous area right outside their campus.

At that moment, Gerald revealed that he had been following them for a while now. After all, he truly wished to sincerely express his apologies. While doing so, he also hoped that he would be able to clear the serious misunderstanding he had with them. He really wasn't the kind of person they were probably imagining him to be, after all.

Upon seeing him, the girls were utterly flabbergasted as they said, "It's him again! How annoying can he get?!"

After all that had happened, it was completely reasonable for the girls not to have a good impression of Gerald in the least. Just as he was about to bite the bullet and attempt to explain himself, an explosive sound could suddenly be heard!

All of a sudden, pink flower petals began falling from the restaurant's ceiling, the sudden romantic atmosphere shocking everyone who was eating there! Seconds later, a handsome-looking boy dressed in a suit began walking into the restaurant, a bouquet of roses in hand.

Walking past Gerald, he then stood before Noelle before kneeling on one knee and holding out the bouquet of flowers for her to take.

“Do you like it, Noelle? It’s a surprise I prepared for you!” said the boy.

It was a romantic confession!

Chapter 1221

“Holy! It’s Preston!” squealed several of the girls eating there, clearly stunned by the sudden romantic turn of events.

Most girls could only dream to be surprised so romantically, so there was no way that they were going to be able to remain calm now that such a situation was happening right before their very eyes.

What more, the person confessing was even kneeling on one leg while holding out a bouquet of roses in his hand! No matter how

frigid a girl's heart was, any girl would find themselves melting in sheer delight after being confessed to like this!

Girls just had a general tendency to prefer guys who did such pleasantly surprising things.

Regardless, with such a scene actually being played out before the other girls now, envy and slight hatred were the only emotions currently reflected in their eyes. While the same emotions ran through Yulisa and the rest of Noelle's friends, they were simultaneously excited for her, and they quickly stepped aside to give Preston and her some room. While doing so, they also fished their cell phones out to begin filming this extremely romantic scene.

Now left sitting alone at the table, Noelle could only blush with slight discomfort as she tucked her hair behind her ears. In a shy tone, she then asked, "What on earth do you think you're doing, Preston...?"

"You should very well understand what my intentions are, Noelle... Please understand that I've already liked you for the longest time, and I swear that I'll take good care of you for the rest of my life if you agree to be with me! With that said... Please be my girlfriend!" replied Preston in a serious tone.

"Holy! Go on, accept him!"

“Accept him! Accept him!”

After hearing such a serious proposal, there was no way that the audience was going to remain silent. Upon hearing the audiences’ chants, a smug look instantly formed on Preston’s face.

However, Noelle clearly didn’t look like she appreciated any of this. As she felt her face get hotter and hotter, she suddenly stood up before saying, “I’ve already told you that I have no intentions of getting into a relationship at the moment!”

Following that, she grabbed her bag before turning around to leave!

Clearly not expecting her to just leave like that, the embarrassed Preston immediately called out, “Wait! Noelle!”

Noelle, however, didn’t stop walking. Now that he had failed, the petals on the ground almost seemed like they were mocking him, and Preston ended up tossing his bouquet of roses to the ground in anger.

As he immediately began chasing after Noelle—with slight reluctance—Yulisa and the others excitedly followed after them, hoping to witness what would happen next.

When Yulisa passed by Gerald, however, she made sure to purposely push him to the side with contempt as she shouted, “Move aside!”

For some reason, all the girls simply assumed that Noelle would’ve already agreed to Preston’s proposal and become his girlfriend if Gerald hadn’t caused her to be in a bad mood earlier!

“Can’t you see how many people are trying to pursue Noelle? Despite Preston being such a rich and excellent young man, Noelle still didn’t agree to be his girlfriend! With that in mind, why is someone like you even still courageous enough to ask for her phone number? Just get lost already!” scowled another one of Noelle’s friends—rather unceremoniously—as she glared at him before immediately running off with the other girls.

With all that had just happened, Gerald couldn’t help but let out a deep internal sigh. As if he ever had any intentions of pursuing Noelle! He just wanted to befriend her so that he would be able to get her to willingly hand him a drop of her blood! Whatever the case was, things were now definitely getting a bit too complicated than he would’ve liked.

With that in mind, he was now rather hesitant on whether now was the right time to continue catching up to and pestering her.

As Gerald pondered his dilemma, three people simply sipped on their Coke as they continued looking at him. They had been calmly spectating this entire scene for a while now.

“Hey boss, did you see that? Though that kid looked like he was interested in pursuing that Noelle girl, I guess he was just one step too slow from that Preston kid! Looks like he’s thoroughly regretting it now!” said one of the men with a chuckle.

“Hah! I just can’t help but get mad when I see such wimpy guys, you know? I really feel like beating him up now! One has to be bold and shameless when pursuing a girl, you know? If he was, then he’d definitely have been able to get any girl he wanted!” scoffed another of the three men.

“Since you’re saying that, why don’t you head over there and teach that kid a thing or two then, Zacky? I heard you were quite an experienced lover yourself back in university!” replied what seemed to be the boss of that group as he patted Zacky on the shoulder. While he did so, however, he continued staring at Gerald with a somewhat odd gaze.

“Hah! With my tricks, he’ll be able to get that girl easy! Let’s bet ten meals on whether what I said ends up becoming true or not!” said Zacky.

“I call bullsh*t! Whatever the case is, do be careful. With his heart just freshly broken, he may attempt to beat you up, you know? Of course, if he does agree to let you teach him and he ends up getting that girl, those ten meals will be on me!” added the first man who had spoken with a chuckle.

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“Hah! If he really intends to beat me up then I’d gladly allow him to make the first blow!” sneered Zacky as he got up and began walking toward Gerald.

Gerald himself had just made up his mind that whatever his next course of action was, he still needed to find Noelle first.

Before he could leave, however, he suddenly heard someone calling out, “Hey, kid! Hold on a minute!”

Sensing that a firm hand was attempting to grab onto his shoulder—before he could even turn to see who was calling him—Gerald’s body instinctively went on the defensive.

With Zacky’s hand inches away from his shoulder, Gerald tilted his shoulder slightly, causing a rebound in energy that immediately sent Zacky flying backward!

It was only after knocking over at least a dozen tables and chairs that Zacky finally came to a halt!

“F*ck!” shouted Zacky, feeling as though he had just suffered a massive defeat as he clung onto his now-numb arm.

Even the boss and the other man had already stood up by this point, both having bitter expressions on their faces as their eyelids twitched rapidly. They were both well aware of how strong Zacky was, and under regular circumstances, no normal man could ever hope to defeat him! With that in mind, that broken-hearted kid was terrifyingly powerful!

“Stop right there, kid! You can’t just walk away after hitting someone!” shouted the two men as they instantly began approaching Gerald, intent on grabbing him.

Seeing that, Gerald simply tossed the men out of the Dominoes with barely any trouble.

“Are you guys really that free?” said Gerald coldly as he instantly began leaving without even turning to look at the two confused men who were now lying on the street.

“...M-Mr. Crawford...?” muttered the boss in astonishment after catching a glimpse of Gerald’s face while he was being thrown out. Still frozen in shock, the boss then watched as Gerald stopped walking forward.

Upon hearing that familiar voice, Gerald’s body instantly began quivering as he turned around to see if it truly was him. Upon seeing what the boss looked like, the indifferent expression on Gerald’s face immediately turned into delight as he smiled while shouting excitedly, “Aiden? Aiden, is that really you?”

“Mr. Crawford... So it really is you!” shouted Aiden in return as he immediately got to his feet in his excitement.

The person standing before Gerald now, was none other than Aiden who had previously joined the army. Pleasantly surprised to see his old friend here, Gerald then replied, "It's been ages since we've last met, Aiden!"

With that, both of them quickly ran over to each other in embrace. Since it had been a good two years since they had last met, Aiden was already crying in his excitement.

As it turned out, after Aiden had enlisted in the army to serve as a soldier back when Jett was still wreaking havoc in Mayberry, he had made great progress in the army since Aiden was already a person with a good foundation in the first place.

Once his recruitment company ended, Aiden had joined a special company to further his training. He was now in Mayberry since he had been entrusted with certain tasks.

After completing some of the tasks, he and his men had come over to Mayberry University to grab something to eat before continuing on with their work, which eventually led to the current scene.

"I still remember the massive changes Mayberry had undergone the moment you went missing... Regardless, I only returned about two days ago. After catching up on some things, I had initially planned to

contact Mr. Lyle to ask him where you were. Alas, I found out that at the time, Mr. Lyle had gone on a business trip to Lugaw City!” explained Aiden once all four of them were seated in that Dominoes again.

While listening to Aiden talk, Gerald noticed how much tanner and muscular he was now. In fact, Aiden was also much more mature and stable now, unlike the young and reckless Aiden he used to know. What more, Aiden seemed to be quite a capable boss as well now! It made Gerald happy to see his younger brother all matured and grown up.

Naturally, they had much to talk about, and after a long chat, Aiden turned to look at Gerald before saying, “Still, to think that you aren’t loyal to us at all, brother! After all, despite you doing well and all, you didn’t even bother informing us of your current situation the moment you made it back safely to Mayberry! Instead, you just went off to Mayberry University to pursue some girl!”

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“Now Aiden, you know me well enough to know that I’m not the kind of person who enjoys chasing after girls in the first place! I’m only doing what I did since I need that girl to help me with

something!” replied Gerald as he shook his head, a wry smile on his face.

Gerald chose not to go into detail—about the fact that he needed invigorating blood from a female with a strong yin physique—since he didn’t want Aiden to worry about him.

Since both Aiden and Yoel had already helped him a lot in the past, now that they could finally afford to have a stable life, Gerald didn’t want to drag them into his own problematic situations again. Explaining things in only the most general sense was an active choice on Gerald’s part.

“Hahaha! I see, I see... Well if that’s the case, consider yourself lucky to have bumped into me! After all, if you didn’t already know, I’m an expert at pursuing girls!” said Aiden with a laugh.

“As I’ve said, I’m not trying to pursue her... I’m simply trying to get her to help me do something willingly!” mumbled Gerald in a softened tone.

“I get it, I get it... Well, that sounds similar to trying to pursue her anyway!”

“...Regardless, I do agree that I’m lucky to have bumped into you today, Aiden! After all, I know that you always have all sorts of tricks ready up your sleeves! Since I’m running out of time, I really need you to help me figure this situation out! To think that she’s already had such a major misunderstanding with me before I could even make a proper move... I truly have no idea how to proceed from here!” said Gerald.

Though he was strong, Gerald still had his own shortcomings. For one, he really wasn’t good at picking up girls.

After all, he was both an honest and inferior student back when he was still in university. In fact, he was so inexperienced with girls that he would immediately begin blushing when he came face to face with one back then!

As for Xavia, it was through sheer coincidence that he was even able to be together with her in the first place.

With that in mind, it was an exceptionally difficult feat for Gerald to even attempt to earn Noelle’s trust without the proper foundations.

“No problem at all, brother! But before that... I’m currently busy with a problem of my own as well. You see, the only task I have left involves capturing someone who’s as slippery as an eel! No matter

how many times I've hunted him down, he keeps managing to escape my grasp! We're still searching for him now, but once we manage to locate him, we're planning to besiege and capture him in Mayberry City!" explained Aiden with a sigh.

Since Aiden had always been extremely sincere toward Gerald, Gerald didn't doubt his claims at all. What more, Gerald now understood that Aiden was only looking so exhausted due to him having to chase that thief around.

With that in mind, Gerald simply smiled before saying, "I thought your skills were already pretty good earlier! Is the thief truly that capable? How's he managed to keep escaping right under your noses?"

Upon hearing what Gerald said, Aiden instantly felt his face go red. Skillful? He wasn't even able to land a single hit on Gerald earlier!

"...Well, that man is honestly more of a beast than an actual man... After all, he's a rapist! He's already been involved in many cases, and we were transferred over to help since the initial people on his case were lacking in manpower to hunt him down! While I said that we were still trying to find him, locating him isn't even the largest issue. The problem lies in successfully capturing him! Our current plan is to set up a trap for him in hopes that he'll walk right into it!"

“Very well. As long as you guys can lock onto him, you can just leave the matter to me. I’ll help you capture him once and for all!” replied Gerald with a smile.

“...What? Are you serious, brother?” asked Aiden in surprise.

“Well, capturing a criminal is also part of my duty. With that in mind, I’m more than willing to help you take down such scum!”

The second Gerald’s sentence ended, Aiden’s intercom suddenly began beeping. With the push of a button, a message began playing on the other end of the intercom.

“Group one! Group one! We’ve located Maverick Wakins! He’s currently driving a stolen car on the main road of Mayberry City’s Yonder Street after kidnapping two girls! From the looks of it, he’s headed toward South Street this very moment! Your team has been ordered by the higher authorities to head there immediately to provide support! Reply if you’ve heard the message!”

“Roger that! Received!” replied Aiden as he and his men quickly stood up.

“We’ve found him, brother!”

“Nice! Let’s go then!”

Since Gerald already knew that Noelle could be found on campus, he wasn’t all that worried about locating her again. What more, he truly needed Aiden’s help to seek Noelle’s forgiveness in hope that she would eventually be willing to offer him some of her invigorating blood!

Of course, even if he didn’t require Aiden’s help, Gerald would’ve still helped him in the end. After all, Gerald was the kind of person who wouldn’t hesitate to do his part and offer his brother a helping hand upon realizing that he was facing difficulties.

Regardless, this was how their plan would go...

Chapter 1224

Their current goal was to get the thief to head to South Street. Once he was there, they would force him into the trap and capture him as soon as possible.

With that in mind, Aiden quickly drove there and within five minutes, they arrived at the street.

Upon arriving at the scene, Gerald saw that they were only five personnel waiting for the thief on South Street. Aiden truly wasn't kidding when he said that their manpower was scarce.

"How's the situation?" asked Aiden the second he came close enough to the group that was already there.

"As stated earlier, we've already locked onto Maverick and he's going to be arriving at South Street any second now. We'll be trying to stop him from advancing any further here. Speaking of which, why are there only three of you? Didn't you say that you managed to get more capable hands?" asked the leader of the other team who was a rather tall woman.

Hearing that, Gerald instantly stepped out of the car. He had remained seated inside earlier since he was busy observing the surrounding terrain. After all, if he was going to stop the rapist, then he first needed to check the area for any possible escape routes that the criminal could use.

While Gerald already had excellent skills, abilities, and confidence, he was being extra careful since Aiden had already mentioned that the criminal was an extremely cunning person.

Adding that to the fact that he was also doing this to help a close friend, Gerald wanted to be as careful and meticulous as he possibly could. Another reason he was being this careful because Gerald was well aware that he couldn't use his inner strength yet. If only he could, then he would've easily subdued the rapist without much issue, even if the criminal had managed to run a few kilometers away!

Regardless, he had finished scanning the area anyway, which was why Gerald wasn't hesitant about stepping out now.

However, the moment he revealed himself, the woman—who was standing beside Aiden—instantly said in a surprised tone, “...Gerald? What are you doing here?”

Upon hearing that name, another young man from her team came running toward her side, a hint of jealousy in his eyes.

‘...Maia and Warren...? What are the odds?’ Gerald thought to himself, a bitter smile on his face. It truly was a small world.

From what he could remember, the last he had met both of them was about a year and a half ago when he was still pretending to be Sanderson in order to take down the Schuylers. At the time, Maia and Warren had been there to investigate all the crimes the Schuylers had done throughout the years.

While he had burned down the manor after saving them, Gerald had made sure to leave behind several pieces of evidence detailing the family's crimes for Maia. As a result, Maia took full credit for solving the incident. He was even kind enough to leave a personal note for Maia, stating that he was simply offering a helping hand to his old classmate.

Regardless, after going their separate ways, Gerald hadn't kept tabs with how Maia was doing up till this very day. To think that she had already returned to Mayberry for some time. What more, from the looks of it, she seemed to have been promoted as well!

Of course, that naturally meant that the man with jealousy in his eyes was none other than Warren.

Both of them were well aware of who Gerald was, and Warren in particular felt like he had just received a tight slap across his face just from seeing Gerald again. In a way, for Warren, seeing Gerald simply caused him to feel like a child who was being exposed to something traumatic.

“It’s truly been a long time since I’ve last met you, Gerald. I only heard about what happened to you upon returning to Mayberry City. From what I was told, you broke off from your family and went missing shortly after! Color me surprised to see you in one piece now!” said Maia as she looked at him in surprise.

However, she quickly returned to her snobbish attitude. After all, she was no longer shocked about the fact that Gerald was actually rich now. With that in mind, she then asked in a tone that suggested that she was superior, “So, what are you working on now?”

“I’m not working. I simply returned since I have something to do. I’m also here to help Aiden!” replied Gerald with a wry smile on his face.

“...Help?” said Maia and Warren simultaneously, this time truly caught off guard.

With both of them simultaneously turning to look at Aiden, Maia then asked, “He... He’s the help that you invited over...?”

Chapter 1225

“That’s right!” replied Aiden rather proudly.

Since the Gerald he once knew barely had any fighting capabilities, Aiden had definitely been caught by surprise by how capable and impressive Gerald now was. Regardless, after witnessing Gerald’s true strength with his very own eyes, Aiden was certain that with Gerald’s help, they would surely be able to capture the rapist easily.

If Aiden was going to be completely honest, even the most legendary of fighters in the military district weren’t worthy enough to be Gerald’s opponents at all.

“...So it really is him...?” said Maia as both she and Warren took turns shaking their heads, wry smiles on their faces.

“Is team Aiden really pulling our leg now? While it’s true that Gerald has a prominent background and he was quite a formidable figure in Mayberry City back then, I hope you realize that we’re currently dealing with the very cunning and capable Maverick! As a rich heir yourself, I’m sure you’ve had a good history with Gerald, but are you seriously expecting me to believe that the helper you invited here today is Gerald?” added Maia, sounding incredibly unconvinced.

From how excited Aiden's tone had been when he was on the call earlier, Maia had assumed that he had managed to invite one of the legendary people from the army to help them with the case! To her astonishment, the person he was actually talking about was Gerald!

"I assure you, team Maia, that as long as my Brother Gerald is here, Maverick won't stand a chance of escaping today!" replied Aiden.

As soon as his sentence ended, the intercoms suddenly blared to life at the same time.

"The target is swiftly approaching! Intercept him, quick! Over!"

"Roger that!"

The others had already been prepared for this, and several of them—who were carrying loaded firearms—immediately began setting up the trap!

At that moment, Maia had an extremely serious look on her face. Momentarily turning to look at Gerald, she then shook her head before saying, "I'll have you know that the murderer this time is extremely cruel and ruthless. You'd best keep your distance from him!"

With that said, she immediately began leading her group to South Street.

Gerald himself turned to look at the highway. Maia looking down on him didn't really make him feel anything. Her opinion on him didn't really matter to Gerald anyway. What was important was that he was here today because he wanted to help his brother out.

Soon enough, Gerald spotted a Passat that was being driven wildly down the highway. Several other cars seemed to be chasing after it as well.

Despite how wildly the Passat was being driven, Gerald could tell from a glance that the driver was an expert at his craft. Gerald's assumption was proven when the criminal easily got rid of the cars that were chasing after him with his excellent driving skills.

Now momentarily free from having to deal with the other cars, the Passat continued driving rapidly toward South Street.

South Street itself was a low area with mountains on both sides of the road. It was also an area that didn't usually have much going on.

As long as they were able to subdue Maverick here, then he'd definitely be captured this time.

As Maverick drove closer to the roadblocks that had been set up, both Maia and Warren couldn't help but hold their breaths in their anxiety.

Naturally, Maverick was able to see the roadblocks a mile away. However, he couldn't really reverse the car since there were soldiers chasing after him from the back.

"D*mn it all! What a bother!" cursed Maverick as he figured that the only way he was going to escape capture was by attempting to brute force his way through the roadblocks.

Upon hearing his voice, one of the two beautiful girls in the car—who was crying since both she and her friend had their arms and legs tied up—fearfully cried out, "P-please, just let us go! I beg of you!"

As she was pleading, a bump on the road caused the camera she was holding onto to fall to the car's floor.

“Shut the hell up! You’re being really annoying, you know? Say one more word and I’m killing you right this instant!” roared Maverick.

Maverick himself looked to be in his thirties, and his scare-filled face looked even more hideous and vicious whenever he spoke.

The moment they heard that, the girls immediately zipped their mouths shut.

Seeing that they were finally quiet again, Maverick returned his gaze onto the road ahead. A wry smile on his face, Maverick then laughed before saying, “It’s just a roadblock! All of you must be dreaming if you think that that’ll stop me!”

With that, Maverick began hitting on the accelerator, driving straight for the roadblock... However, at the very last second, he swerved his steering wheel to the left, causing the car to slightly drive up the mountainous slope!

With another sharp turn of his steering wheel, an ear-piercing sound from the friction—caused by the car’s wheels—caused the car to momentarily soar in the air...

Before landing again right atop the road behind the roadblocks!
Hitting the accelerator once more, Maverick then continued speeding down south!

Warren and Maia were left completely dumbfounded by all this. Was the maneuver he had just pulled off even possible? A better question yet, was he actually going to be able to escape again even after being cornered like that?

As he continued looking at Maverick, Gerald couldn't help but smile. Things were starting to get a little interesting now.

Chapter 1226

Seeing that there was a motorcycle nearby, Gerald quickly shouted, "Lend me that motorcycle for a moment, Aiden!"

Hearing that, the one holding the keys tossed it at Gerald. After expertly catching it, Gerald quickly slid the key into the motorcycle before stepping on the gas and driving after the car as swiftly as an arrow!

Watching him go after Maverick without the slightest hesitation, Maia and the others quickly snapped out of it. After making some

rapid adjustments, they began their second phase of the plan by hurriedly—and rather reluctantly—chasing after both Gerald and Maverick.

Noticing Gerald—who was currently on a motorcycle that was sandwiched between Maverick's car and the others who were trying to arrest him—slowly getting closer and closer to him through the car's rear-view mirror, Maverick couldn't help but curse, "D*mn it! His riding skills are pretty good!"

Even the two girls in the car widened their eyes in shock when they realized who was hot on their kidnapper's tail.

"I-it's him! Noelle, that's the guy who broke our camera!" shouted one of the girls as she gulped.

If it wasn't already evident, the two kidnapped girls were none other than the unlucky Yulisa and Noelle.

It was supposed to be a happy day! A day where they were supposed to take group photos with their classmates in commemoration of the end of their freshman year! However, everything started going wrong when the guy—who was currently riding the motorcycle outside—broke the camera they had rented! As a result, Noelle had to fork out her own money just to fix it!

As if that wasn't already bad enough, both that guy and Preston further ruined Noelle's mood while they were eating at Dominoes that afternoon! After eventually managing to get rid of Preston, the group of girls then headed over to North Lane to take some pictures.

To their utter dismay, they encountered Maverick there! The fugitive then captured both Noelle and Yulisa without even giving a reason why!

With his great strength, Maverick then quickly robbed a person of their car! After forcing the two girls into the back seats, Maverick then fled the location until he reached someplace far from where he had hijacked the car. It was then when he had tied both of their arms and legs up.

By that point, both Noelle and Yulisa were utterly terrified. Not only did they not know where the fugitive was taking them, but the turn of events kept reminding them of certain scenes in horror movies. In such movies, hostages like them would always end up getting murdered!

Already frightened to death by then, the two of them actively tried not to think about that outcome. Even so, both girls already felt like their despair and fear couldn't possibly go any deeper.

However, now that Gerald was actually able to catch up to them on his motorcycle, Noelle and Yulisa couldn't deny that seeing him brought back some hope into their eyes.

"You trying to play around with me, young one? I'll have you know that you're still just a rookie!" sneered Maverick as he took a glance to see how far Gerald now was.

However, he quickly found himself utterly shocked when he realized that the motorcycle—that was still rushing toward the car due to inertia—no longer had a rider!

"The f*ck?! Where the hell is he?!"

As soon as Maverick's sentence ended, a loud 'thud' could be heard on the roof of the car, causing the entire car to bobble slightly.

Was he on top of the car?

Looking up at the sunroof, Maverick was greeted by the sight of Gerald looking down at him with a smug smile on his face!

“You... You b*stard! Go to hell!” shouted Maverick as he began swerving his steering wheel from left to right, attempting to toss Gerald off the car. However, no matter how much the car swayed, Gerald barely budged from his spot. In fact, he appeared to be relaxed of all emotions!

Soon after, however, Gerald caught a glimpse of a kindergarten not too far ahead. Seeing that, Gerald knew that he couldn't afford to continue playing around with Maverick anymore. After all, if anything dangerous happened, the losses would most certainly outweigh the gains.

With that in mind, Gerald then laid on his belly as he used one hand to break the sunroof open while simultaneously grabbing onto the driver seat's door handle. With a single tug, Gerald tore the door right off the car before tossing it aside!

“W-what the f*cking hell?! What in blazes is going on?!” shouted Maverick in sheer horror, his eyes widened as strong and cold winds blew directly into his now worn-out face.

Before Maverick could even begin registering what the hell was happening, Gerald had already grabbed onto the handbrake,—through the now broken sunroof—causing the car's tires to screech loudly! The car stopped just in time before a large tree, barely avoiding colliding into it!

Due to the abrupt stop, the girls were thrown forward while Maverick's face was immediately greeted by the impact of the car's airbag!

"Y-you! D-d*mn it all! You're crazy!" yelled Maverick in his sheer terror.

By then, Maia and the others had arrived where the car was, and all of them had witnessed the entire scene play out. Maia could only gulp before her mouth hung open for a while as she stared at Gerald in utter disbelief.

Chapter 1227

Without witnessing it for themselves, nobody would've believed that all of this had truly taken place. After all, no normal person would be able to possess the immense strength to just rip a car door open with such ease while being on an actual moving car driving at such high speeds!

While it was theoretically possible for someone with immense skill, strength, and balance to do so... It was simply too absurd to even think of such a person existing!

Maia herself would've never imagined that her high school classmate—who used to be so thin and frail and was constantly worrying about how he could make more money to properly feed himself every day—could actually end up being so powerful today!

Though she had already accepted that he was a rich young master for quite some time, as it turned out, he was also an extremely skillful person whose power was equivalent to a god-like top master!

Warren was also in a state of utter shock at that moment. After all, he had been sitting beside Maia in the car earlier, which meant that he saw everything she did. However, he also noticed how Maia had been staring at Gerald for a while now.

In a way, Maia was now looking like a girl who had never fallen in love before. A girl who had been longing for a hero to appear in her life for the longest time. As far as Warren knew, all young girls yearned for such a hero to steal their hearts.

Regardless, Warren could now see it clearly reflected in Maia's eyes that her hero had finally arrived.

For a time, Warren had assumed that he was the hero in her heart. After all, he had won the Taekwondo championship in the past!

As it turned out, however, that simply wasn't the case!

As immense jealousy was sparked in Warren's heart, Gerald himself was now busy lifting Maverick out of the car with only a single hand.

Any remaining danger had been subdued and best of all, there weren't even any casualties.

Still, all this had taken place quite close to a kindergarten, and since it was almost time for the children to return home, several parents—who had been waiting to pick their children up—had witnessed Gerald's amazing feats.

Due to all the loud noises outside and the fact that classes had ended at that exact moment, more and more people began turning up to observe the scene.

Because of that, the police present had no choice but to cordon off the entire road.

“What on earth happened here...?”

“Daddy...? What’s going on...?”

While many of the children were now asking their parents what had just happened, even more parents—who had just arrived—found themselves itching to know the details as well.

“It’s a shame you missed it! See that young man over there? He’s successfully captured and arrested the rapist who’s been involved with several crimes in Mayberry City!”

“Oh god! You should’ve seen him in action earlier! He was like some kind of Superman!”

These comments were coming from the few parents who had earlier been present when Gerald finally caught Maverick. Still trembling in excitement, they simply felt the urge to let everyone know about the thrilling event that had just taken place before me.

A few mothers even found themselves completely ignoring their children as they ran over to record videos of Gerald instead.

“Superman! Superman!” chanted the children while looking at Gerald.

“Good job arresting him!” shouted several of the parents, completely in awe of Gerald.

Simply nodding at the parents, Gerald then tossed Maverick onto the ground, prompting Aiden to immediately step in to cuff him.

“D*mn it, d*mn it, d*mn it! How unlucky can I get today?!” growled Maverick who was equally as dumbfounded by the turn of events as he was amazed by it. Even while he was being pushed into the police car, he continued staring at Gerald in sheer disbelief before finally letting out a long sigh.

That guy... it was almost like the laws of physics didn't apply to him...!

“You did great today, brother! You have no idea how nervous I was while watching you chase after that thief earlier!” said Aiden, looking quite envious.

Warren himself could see that Maia was now acting slightly shy and embarrassed. It was quite obvious that she wanted to approach Gerald to have a talk with him.

With that in mind, how couldn't he be jealous?

After taking in a deep breath, Warren then said, "...Since we've already caught Maverick, we should retreat for now. Why don't you go back into the car first, Maia?"

Despite his question, Maia almost seemed like she was unable to even hear him speaking.

Instead, she began walking toward Gerald before saying, "...Did... Did you hurt yourself Gerald...? That... That was really dangerous just now, you know?!"

Chapter 1228

"Not at all," replied Gerald casually.

Though Maia wanted to say more to express her concern, she simply couldn't bring herself to say anything at all. After all, she had earlier looked down on Gerald, even claiming that he was going to give them more trouble than help!

Well, to be more precise, she hadn't treated him seriously at all from the moment they had first met all the way back in high school. Even when they had finally reunited in the bar years later and after Maia found out that he was extremely rich back in the Salford Province, never had she taken him seriously in the least.

Regardless, Maia couldn't help but feel her heart race now that she was standing before this strange, new Gerald. In all honesty, she now had great admiration and respect for him deep in her heart.

Gerald himself barely felt the need to show off in front of Maia. After all, he didn't need her admiration or respect to fulfill his vanity.

Shaking the thought off, Gerald suddenly remembered something. Turning around, he saw—from quite a distance away—that the two girls from earlier were still quivering in the car.

Back when he was on the car's roof, he had heard one of the girls screaming. Upon hearing that familiar voice, Gerald was

immediately able to guess that Maverick must have kidnapped both Yulisa and Noelle!

The fact that Gerald could earlier also feel strong yin energy coming from within the car further solidified his theory.

With that in mind, he quickly headed over to the car.

The girls themselves hadn't been wearing any seatbelts earlier, so—due to the car stopping so abruptly—they had been flung forward, colliding with the back of the front seats! Both of them were never meant to bear this amount of impact, so it was no wonder why Yulisa and Noelle were feeling like their bodies were going to fall apart any second now.

By the time Gerald came close enough, he could see that Yulisa barely had the image of a young lady anymore as she continued bawling her eyes out.

“Everything’s going to be alright... Now come on out. Both of you!” said Gerald as he couldn’t help but smile wryly while looking at the two girls.

The slight bitterness in his smile, of course, had stemmed from the fact that Gerald could tell that all that had happened wasn't just mere coincidence.

Holding onto Gerald's arm, Noelle then fixed her hair with a smile before nodding at Gerald as she said, "...T-thank you..."

When it came to impressing someone, nothing could surpass saving one's life. While Noelle had previously hated Gerald, she now felt a bit more affectionate to him instead.

Regardless, both the victims were asked a few questions from the police before they were allowed to leave and get some rest.

Since Aiden and the others were still busy with quite a bit of things, Gerald didn't ask him to accompany him back.

Instead, Gerald chose to send the two girls back to campus himself. This time, Noelle didn't turn down Gerald's offer. In fact, she accepted his invitation with great pleasure.

Since Noelle was looking a little haggard—since she had, after all, suffered quite a scare earlier—Gerald knew better than to mention the invigorating blood droplets now.

After all, it would be bad if Noelle somehow came to the assumption that he had only saved her since he wanted to get his hands on her blood. That would definitely destroy her image of him for good.

As Gerald continued thinking about it, he was slightly startled when Noelle suddenly looked at him before asking, “I... I’ve been pretty rude to you today... So I’d like to apologize and thank you as well for saving us!”

Upon hearing that, Gerald truly felt that Aiden was quite impressive. After all, before Aiden had left, he had told Gerald that Noelle would definitely apologize and express her gratitude to him sooner or later. According to Aiden, after Gerald replied with a few specific words—that Aiden then shared with Gerald—Gerald didn’t even need to ask her for her contact number anymore.

Quickly repeating what Aiden had taught him in his mind, Gerald then said, “It’s fine. There’s no need for you to thank me. Still, our meeting must be fated since we keep meeting each other over and over again. Maybe it’s just our destiny. Regardless, I’m glad I was able to save you today!”

Watching as Gerald then smiled, Noelle found her breath growing rapid as she instantly began blushing slightly.

The corners of her lips slowly curving upward into a beautiful smile, she remained silent for a while before nodding and saying, "...W-well, we'll be heading back first, then! Farewell!"

Though she said that, she didn't budge an inch, her eyes still affixed on Gerald's.

Chapter 1229

Gerald truly hadn't expected that Noelle would behave word for word like how Aiden had predicted. After all, Aiden had told Gerald that goddesses like her enjoyed playing games of cat and mouse.

In other words, they really enjoyed the process of being pursued. They particularly liked it when the ones they were after truly seemed to care for them.

With that in mind, according to Aiden's guess, even if Gerald truly had saved Noelle's life today, she still wouldn't take the initiative to

hand him her contact number. The most she would do was chat briefly with him before turning to leave. Of course, she wouldn't actually leave right off the bat. Instead, she would wait around a little to wait for Gerald to ask her to stay instead.

This was the reason why it was oftentimes so difficult to pursue most goddesses. After all, what such girls truly enjoyed was the process of being pursued and sought after.

Regardless, each and every one of Noelle's actions were nearly identical to what Aiden had predicted. Seeing that, Gerald then proceeded to relay the script that Aiden had earlier shared with him.

Nodding with a nonchalant expression on his face, Gerald then replied, "Indeed. Since both of you got injured earlier, it'd do you good to get some well-deserved rest. I'll be taking my leave as well since I still need to prepare a special gift for a friend of mine by today. Now if you'll excuse me, farewell!"

After saying that, Gerald slowly turned around and began walking away, calmly. Now then, if what Adrian had told him was correct, Noelle would definitely call out to him at the count of five...

'One... Two... Three...'

As soon as Gerald counted 'five' in his mind, Noelle suddenly shouted, "...Hold on, Gerald! Gerald, wait for a second!"

...Seriously?!

"...Yes? What is it, Noelle?" asked Gerald.

"Well... Where exactly did you learn your skills, Gerald...? If it's possible, I'd like to learn some simple self-defense techniques for women! Would you happen to have any recommendations for me...?" asked Noelle.

Hearing that, Yulisa nodded as well before adding, "I-I'd like to learn as well!"

"...Oh? Is that so? Well, I could give you a public contact number through WhatsApp if you'd like... It belongs to my friend and he's always up to date with such skills!"

By this point, Gerald felt that he truly understood these girls' hearts now. The sentences that Aiden had taught him truly were effective, especially the one that involved him saying that he needed to go prepare a special gift for his friend.

In a way, saying that allowed him to counter the cat and mouse game tactic. Waiting till now to say it was also particularly impactful since he had already played the role of the hero who saved the two beauties.

Aiden's account was called 'Practical Tactical', and Aiden frequently shared information about fighting and martial arts skills there. While Gerald could have just told them the name of the account for them to—rather easily—search for it, Gerald asked to be friends on their WhatsApp accounts instead in order for him to forward Aiden's contact information to them.

However, just as Adrian had anticipated, the girls simply obliged without question. Gerald could now say for certain that the two girls wanting to learn self-defense techniques was nothing but an excuse.

All Noelle was really after was a capable guy by her side who was interested in her, just like Gerald. As long as he kept pursuing her in a considerate manner, Noelle would surely open up more to him eventually.

With that in mind, after parting ways with the girls, Gerald couldn't help but admire Aiden for having such effective tactics on hand.

At the same time, he couldn't help but wonder why he hadn't understood Mila's heart better in the beginning. In the old days, both of them would speak over the phone every night, and eventually, Mila would always be the first to say that she wanted to head to bed.

Of course, being as dense as he was back then, Gerald would always wish her good night almost immediately, telling her to sleep well before heading to bed. Why hadn't he realized back then that Mila actually wanted him to ask her to stay a little longer?

It was now evident to him that she had constantly wanted him to think more about her. To spend more time with her. In a way, it was her way of testing how significant she was in Gerald's heart!

Chapter 1230

Of course, Gerald knew that he was the only one in Mila's heart and that she wouldn't ever treat other guys the same way she did to him...

Snapping out of it, Gerald reminded himself that it was only three days away till the middle of the month arrived. With that in mind, it was impossible for him not to feel slightly more anxious.

He really needed to discuss the matter with Aiden tonight.

At the very least, the good thing was that he already had a good head start now. Both of them just needed to meet up later to discuss the next steps...

“You know, I have a feeling that Gerald isn’t actually interested in you, Noelle... After all, even though you told him that you wanted to learn a few self-defense techniques, to think that he’d actually forward a public contact number to you!” said Yulisa a little later.

“What’s wrong with what he did? I truly am interested in learning, you know? Still, did you see how brave and heroic he looked when he saved us earlier? The more I think about it, the more I feel that there’s an unknown side to Gerald that we don’t know of... How truly mysterious!” replied Noelle in a soft tone as she smiled.

“...Oh? Could it be that... You’ve already fallen for Gerald just because he saved us once? While I agree that he’s definitely powerful, he most probably isn’t rich at all! Even if you truly wish to be together with him with the assumption that it’s simply fate doing

its job, what will your family think?” asked Yulisa, reminding Noelle to carefully consider the pros and cons of her decision.

“I distinctly remember you saying that you didn’t want to get into a relationship now since quite a bit is currently happening within your family... Honestly though, I think that getting a relationship is exactly what you need to solve your problems! By that, I mean you should get a guy who’s able to solve your family’s economic crisis! With that in mind, I think you should be going after Preston rather than Gerald!”

“After all, his family owns a public listed company of their own, you know? They’re filthy rich! As long as you agree to become his girlfriend, then he’ll definitely be able to help resolve your family’s financial issues. I remind you that getting together with Gerald won’t help you solve anything at all!” explained Yulisa as she carefully analyzed the situation while making her way back together with Noelle.

In all honesty, Noelle wasn’t in love with Gerald. She simply felt slightly affectionate toward him. After all, he had left her with a truly favorable impression of him this time around. Aside from that, she was also quite curious about him as a whole.

Though she didn't rule out the possibility of them getting into a relationship upon getting rescued, Noelle had now calmed down considerably, especially after hearing what Yulisa had to say.

While it was true that she still had slight affection and admiration toward Gerald, Noelle was well aware that she had lost the right to choose her partner after what happened to her family last month. Due to that incident, it seemed that she truly had no choice but to look for a rich and powerful person to stay by her side.

As Yulisa had said, a person couldn't really do much without money or the proper connections.

Though Noelle knew that, she had rejected Preston earlier since she wanted to play cat and mouse with him for at least a few more times.

Now, however, she knew that she had to start thinking more about her family and get serious. While she knew that getting together with Preston would definitely help with her family's situation, she had no feelings for him at all.

As for Gerald, she was certainly more attracted to him than any of the previous guys she had come across. That much was certain.

However, unlike Preston, being together with him wouldn't help her family at all. All this made Noelle feel extremely entangled.

“Are you seriously still thinking about the right choice, Noelle? Remember, it's your birthday tomorrow night, and you should know that even though you humiliated him today in front of so many people by rejecting his confession, Preston hasn't given up on you yet. Rather, I heard that he's putting in a lot of effort to get ready for your birthday celebration tomorrow, even though he hasn't even been invited over! With that said, I'm sure Preston will be overjoyed if you allow him to attend your birthday party!” said Yulisa.

“I know, I know... Regardless, I'm also planning on inviting someone else to attend my twentieth birthday party!” replied Noelle as she bit her lower lip.

“You can't possibly be referring to Gerald, can you?” asked Yulisa as her eyes widened.

“Well, no matter what the case is, Gerald still ended up saving both of us today. If it wasn't for him, then who knows what would've eventually become of us! With that in mind, it's only natural for us to express our gratitude to him, don't you think?” said Noelle as she recalled the moment when Gerald had gently supported her out of the car since she had injured her leg. The memory of that alone was enough to make her frozen heart slowly begin to melt!

Both of them then continued chatting before eventually returning to their dorms and telling their roommates that they were safe.

Since the two girls weren't all that interested in actually learning self-defense techniques in the first place, Yulisa simply deleted the number right off the bat.

Later that night, Yulisa's head began hurting rather badly. Assuming that it was due to an injury she suffered when the car had suddenly hit the brakes earlier, Noelle and the others quickly brought her to a nearby hospital for a check-up.

It was around then when Gerald received a birthday invitation message from Noelle.

Just as Aiden had predicted, it seemed that Gerald truly would be able to obtain the invigorating blood that he needed tomorrow. Since it was already extremely close to the middle of the month, that was very good news. As for the Zircobsite stone... Gerald could almost feel it in his hands now...

Chapter 1231

Soon after, the very next day came.

Despite facing a financial crisis, Noelle's family still placed great importance in the preparation process for Noelle's twentieth birthday. After all, Noelle being able to celebrate her birthday happily was the most important thing to her family.

It explained how what was initially a tiny birthday banquet ended up becoming more of a large family gathering instead.

The venue of the celebration itself was a large private room—that could accommodate up to thirty people—in Longthorne International Hotel that Noelle's parents had booked for the day.

Among the thirty people invited to the banquet were Noelle's family members, her classmates, her cousins, and several other relatives including her eldest, and third uncle. They were adamant on making this birthday banquet as festive as possible in order to rid their family of their bad luck.

“Sister-in-law and Second brother! Both of you are truly blessed to have such a beautiful daughter as Noelle! She has such a good

temperament too! I'm sure the two of you will definitely be able to continue living and enjoying a good life together with Noelle in the future!" said Noelle's third aunt with a smile as she looked at Noelle's parents.

"Enjoy life? What even is there to enjoy? You should be well aware of how messy our family's current financial state is, Third! We even have to begin thinking about how we're going to survive the second half of our lives!" replied Zavien as he shook his head bitterly.

Hearing that, Noelle's eldest and third uncle could only sigh.

"...Still, there's no need to get too anxious... Quite honestly, our business isn't doing as terribly as we had initially imagined. As long as we can get someone to invest a sum of money into our business, we'll surely be able to get through this crisis! You know, I heard that Preston, the Wake family's young master, has actively been pursuing after Noelle recently. Do any of you know anything about the Wake family's strength or background?"

The moment Noelle's third aunt changed the topic, everyone's attention immediately fell on Noelle.

In truth, Noelle's eldest and third uncle were people who only did things that benefitted themselves. With that in mind, why were they

even bothering to bring their entire families along just to attend the birthday banquet of a young girl like Noelle?

Putting it bluntly, it was because they were well aware of the benefits that Noelle could potentially bring to their family.

Even Zavien and Gracie had heard about Preston's pursuits of Noelle, so Noelle's third aunt's statement wasn't wrong at all.

From what they knew, the Wake family was extremely formidable. Not only did they own a public listed company of their own, but their family also had the background of the Mayberry Commercial Group! With that in mind, anyone who met or encountered the Wakes would surely give them face.

Regardless, if Noelle truly ended up getting together with Preston—and Preston was willing to have a word with his father about their current situation on their behalf—then the Shadwells would definitely be able to turn things around and resolve their current crisis.

With that said, it was no wonder why Noelle's aunts and uncles had taken their time to come over today just to celebrate her birthday.

“...Speaking of Preston, I heard that Noelle invited him over to the birthday banquet, right?” added her third aunt with a smile.

Gracie simply laughed subtly before saying, “To think that you’re even more well-informed than I am, sister! How did you even find out that she invited him over?”

Smiling awkwardly, Third aunt simply replied, “I... Just so happened to hear about it!”

“I see! For those who didn’t know any better, I’m sure they’d have assumed that you’ve been paying close attention to Preston. Sadly, though Faye is quite excellent, she hasn’t quite had the luck of bumping into someone like Preston at all. I guess she still needs to work harder to gain the attention and favor of someone like him, aren’t I right, Faye?” said Gracie as she looked at her third aunt’s daughter who was the same age as Noelle.

Gracie couldn’t help but feel slightly jealous since Third aunt was able to know quite a bit about Preston after just hearing his name a few times. It simultaneously also worried her that Noelle’s third aunt could be planning to introduce her own daughter, Faye, to Preston. Was she trying to snatch Gracie’s potential son-in-law from her? If that was the case, Gracie’s only comment was ‘dream on!’

After thinking about it a little while more, Gracie continued by saying, “Speaking of which, sister, you may not have heard about this, but Preston gave Noelle an extremely touching confession before the unfortunate incident took place yesterday! He even knelt before her, you know? I heard that many people were watching the entire thing as well! It’s just such a pity that Noelle, being the stubborn girl she is, simply refused to become his girlfriend!”

“...Is that so? My, how amazing Noelle is!” replied Third aunt as she blushed in embarrassment while praising Noelle in a slightly bitter tone.

At that moment, a waiter opened the door of the private room while saying, “Mr. Wake! Please, come in!”

Following that, a handsome young man wearing a white suit and a necktie walked into the room with a bouquet of flowers in hand.

Chapter 1232

“Hello, Uncle Shadwell and Aunt Wauter!” greeted the charming boy as he quickly headed over to them. Of course, the handsome young man in question was none other than Preston.

Preston had been extremely excited from the moment he received Noelle's invitation to her birthday banquet.

Due to that, he had made sure to pay extra attention to how he dressed today so that he could give off the aura of a young master from a rich family.

It seemed that his efforts paid off since soon enough, the Shadwell family began praising him endlessly. Because of that, Preston couldn't help but feel a little smug and arrogant.

Shortly after, they invited him to sit at the main table.

However, it was at that moment when Gracie suddenly realized that her daughter wasn't even around.

Momentarily pausing her chat with Preston before turning to look at Noelle's roommates, Gracie then asked, "Speaking of which, where did Noelle and Yulisa go? I haven't seen both of them in a while!"

"From what we heard, both of them went downstairs to receive someone!" replied one of her roommates as the rest of them continued sipping on their juice.

“They what? Isn’t Preston already here? Who else are they planning to receive? Say Preston, did you run into Noelle on your way up here?” asked Gracie, feelingly slightly puzzled.

After all, Preston was undoubtedly the protagonist today.

“Unfortunately, I haven’t. Since this hotel belongs to one of my uncles, I’ve always used the special VIP passage whenever I move around here. If I had known that she would be waiting for me downstairs, then I’d definitely have used the regular entrance!” replied Preston, hints of excitement and joy on his face.

To be completely honest, Preston had already heard about the Shadwell family’s financial crisis from his father. With that in mind, it wasn’t hard for him to imagine that the Shadewells were only treating him this well because of said issue. After all, they were probably well aware that the Wake family had the support of the Mayberry Commercial Group.

In relation to that, the status of companies such as his family’s—that were under the Mayberry Commercial Group—within Mayberry City didn’t even need to be elaborated on.

Regardless, Preston knew that it was only a matter of time now before Noelle agreed to be his girlfriend. Hell, there was even a possibility that she would accept his confession today!

“Oh? So you came up here using a special VIP passage! That’s probably the reason why Noelle hasn’t come up again yet! Hold on, I’ll call her right this instant!” said Gracie with a smile.

“Oh, there’s no need to call her, Aunt Wauter! I feel pretty bad for having Noelle wait down there for so long so I’ll just go downstairs to look for her then bring her back up!” replied Preston as he shook his head with a smile on his face.

Though Preston had to kneel before Noelle yesterday just to ask her out, now that he had found out about the predicament the Shadwells were in, Preston was feeling pretty confident about himself. With that, he then began walking downstairs without the slightest hesitation.

“Wait for me, Preston! I’m coming along!” shouted Gracie as she immediately followed after him.

Gracie felt like she still wasn’t as close to Preston as she would like to be. After all, she was already treating him as though he was already her son-in-law.

Upon seeing Gracie and Preston leave, Yulisa's roommates then said, "Let's go look for Yulisa and Noelle as well!"

As the small group of people began descending the building, two girls could be seen waiting rather anxiously by the street right outside the hotel.

"Can't we just stop waiting for him, Noelle? He must've been scared off the moment he read from your message that Longthorne International Hotel was the venue! I truly believe that from the venue of choice alone, he must've finally realized how large the difference between both of you were. From the looks of it, he's probably never attended an event at such a grand place as Longthorne International Hotel! With that in mind, there's a high possibility that he may be too pressured to even dare to show up here!" complained Yulisa, her arms crossed.

While Yulisa had a pretty good impression of Gerald in the beginning, after everything that had happened, her impression of him had severely dropped.

Quite frankly, if he hadn't rescued them the day before, Yulisa wouldn't ever have looked up to him again!

Then again, could she really be blamed for being realistic? After all, this was Gerald's own fault for not being outstanding enough.

Humph!

Chapter 1233

"I refuse! After all, he's already said that he would come today! As for all that you've said, I've already taken all that into consideration the night before! That's the reason why I arranged to meet up with him at the entrance of the hotel!" said Noelle.

With her beauty and how meticulous she was with details, it was hard not to call Noelle a goddess.

Just as Yulisa had said, Noelle had taken into consideration that Gerald had probably never stepped foot into a five-star hotel like this before. With that in mind, she had a feeling that he would definitely be feeling slightly timid and pressured. Due to that, Noel had told him to meet up with her at the hotel's entrance so that they could enter together!

However, though they had agreed to meet up at nine that morning, it was nearing nine forty now yet Gerald still couldn't be seen anywhere! In fact, he hadn't even read any of Noelle's messages on WhatsApp!

Due to all that, Noel truly couldn't help but wonder whether Gerald really wasn't coming.

She also remembered him mentioning that he was going to prepare a special gift for a friend of his. Who was that friend? Could it be a girl who was close to him? Could Gerald already like someone else other than her?

If Gerald had just been some ordinary guy, she wouldn't have been bothered about that fact at all. However, Gerald was no ordinary person.

He had several positive points, for one, his greatest being how strong and skillful he was. He was also currently a hero in the minds of several people. In other words, he was an outstanding person.

It was because of this that Noelle couldn't help but feel a little entangled whenever she thought about whether Gerald truly liked her or not.

This wasn't anything out of the ordinary for girls to think about, especially beautiful ones. It was simply something that happened and was completely understandable.

At that moment, Preston, Gracie, and Yulisa's roommates arrived at the hotel's entrance.

"Noelle! There you are! I'm terribly sorry for having you wait for such a long time! I entered through the special VIP passage earlier!"

Earlier when he was seconds away from arriving at the hotel's entrance, Preston had already seen how anxiously Noelle was looking at both sides of a street. Recalling how she had rejected him yesterday and comparing it to how she was today, Preston immediately felt a great sense of satisfaction.

Following that, Gracie then smiled before saying, "Did you know that Preston's brought along a birthday gift for you, Noelle? Also, while I was just planning to call you up through the phone earlier, Preston kept insisting that he go downstairs to personally look for you!"

"Oh. Thanks, Preston! Regardless, you and mom can go back upstairs now," replied Noelle as she smiled briefly at Preston.

Upon hearing that, Preston's face immediately went pale! Even Gracie was slightly taken aback. Something wasn't quite right with her daughter...

Had she not been waiting for Preston this entire time?

As Preston himself began thinking the same thing Gracie was, Gracie asked in a rather impatient tone, "...Noelle? Who exactly are you waiting for?"

"I'm just waiting for my friend... I wonder why he's not here yet!" replied Noelle without considering her words too much.

"A... friend? ...Noelle, is it a he or a she...?" asked Gracie again.

Instead of replying, however, Noelle simply walked further out toward the roadside to see why Gerald still hadn't arrived.

Seeing that, Gracie then turned to look at Yulisa before asking, "Yulisa, who exactly are both of you waiting for?"

With that, Yulisa then began telling everything to her, starting from when she had asked Gerald for his help to take some pictures for them.

After hearing about all that had happened, Gracie finally understood that the person her daughter was waiting for was just some poor person!

Preston—who had been listening to Yurisa as she explained—found himself taking in a deep breath, his sheer jealousy evident on his face.

Noticing the change of expression on his face, Gracie instantly began gritting her teeth as well. And here she was thinking that her daughter knew better! Shouldn't she be well aware that Preston was way more important than Gerald in terms of solving their family's current dilemma?

Fuming in anger, Gracie then instantly walked over to Noelle, reprimanding her viciously.

...

Moving back to Gerald, after receiving Noelle's invitation last night, he had attached great importance to the event. Due to that, he had been well-prepared to head to the banquet from very early in the morning.

By his estimations back then, he should've arrived—in his car—before eight thirty even came.

Instead of driving a luxury or sports car, however, Gerald chose to drive an ordinary one.

This was because after resolving his misunderstanding with Noelle, he realized that he didn't need to use money or any interest to build their relationship up. The only thing he needed to do was attend her birthday banquet and present her with a gift that he had meticulously prepared. Once that was done, everything else would flow smoothly.

Quite personally, Gerald himself felt that it was rather repulsive to drive a luxury car, just to show off his wealth.

Noelle simply wasn't the same as Cundrie was.

Chapter 1234

From what he found, though Cundrie didn't really care about money, Noelle still exhibited hints that she had a little interest in riches.

With that in mind, Gerald was afraid that once she found out that he was actually rich, her feelings wouldn't be sincere anymore. Should that happen, even if he were to successfully obtain invigorating blood from her, it would be completely useless to him. That was the reason why he had refrained from driving a luxury car over today.

Even Aiden had said that there was no need for him to show her his financial resources. Due to that, the car Gerald was driving today was only an ordinary one that cost around ten thousand dollars.

Alas, he truly hadn't anticipated for there to be a traffic jam this early in the morning!

While driving along slowly, the car in front of Gerald suddenly hit the brakes! Seeing that, Gerald instantly stopped his car as well.

While he managed to avoid hitting the car in front of him, the sound of something crashing soon followed from behind him as Gerald's car rocked forward slightly!

It was obvious that whoever it was behind him, they had accidentally stepped on the accelerator instead of the brakes!

Knowing that the back of his car had been hit, Gerald instantly turned around to see a rather pretty yet coquettish girl who was wearing a hat and driving a Porsche behind him. Not only was he stuck in a traffic jam, but now his car was damaged as well! How couldn't Gerald be frustrated!

As if that wasn't enough, the woman—who was also smoking a cigarette—then got out of her car, her handbag in hand, before walking to Gerald and yelling, “You b*stard! Don't you keep your eyes open when you drive? How could you just stop your car like that!”

“I beg your pardon? It's clearly your fault for banging into my car, auntie!” retorted Gerald, truly at a loss for words before this unreasonable woman.

The second she heard him referring to her as ‘auntie’, the woman instantly recoiled in shock. A second later, her entire body began shuddering as her expression turned extremely ugly.

“You... How dare you call me an auntie?! Acting all arrogant before me! I’ve already seen many poor folk like you! Just have a good look at your own car then compare it to mine! I’m warning you now, you’d better be smart and compensate me for the damage! Otherwise, I’m calling my husband right this instant to deal with you!” roared the woman in rage.

Hearing that, Gerald could only shake his head with a wry smile.

Since the traffic was so heavy that the cars literally weren’t even moving anymore, several of the people trapped there began rolling down their car windows to watch the exciting show.

As the sounds of car horns filled the air, Gerald looked at the fuming woman. Since it seemed like she really cared about her face, Gerald could tell that she wasn’t going to let him off that easily before sufficiently having her revenge.

Naturally, Gerald wasn’t going to pay a single cent to her, resulting in her calling her husband over!

It wasn’t long before her husband drove over in a big Hummer. The second he arrived, he immediately dashed across the sidewalk over to Gerald and his wife was.

Sticking closely behind him were several big and sturdy-looking men, each of them wearing gold chains around their necks. Upon getting close enough to Gerald, they instantly slid their hands into their pockets, making sure to crack their necks with loud 'plops' as they smoked their cigarettes rather intimidatingly.

"That's him, husband! He's the one who stopped his car out of the blue and caused me to bump into him!" explained the woman quickly.

"You've got guts to target my woman, young lad. Are you sick of living in Mayberry City already? Tell me, do you know who I am?" asked the middle-aged leader of the group in a frigid tone. In his left hand, was a bag and on his wrist, a golden watch glistened.

"Beats me!" replied Gerald, shaking his head as he took his cell phone out to check the time.

"You f*cker!" shouted the guards as soon as they heard Gerald say that.

As each of them instantly stepped forward, the middle-aged man shouted in rage, "How dare you! You truly are done for today, young man! I'll make sure you won't even be able to stand up once we're done with you!"

“Oh? Who exactly is going to do the deed?” asked Gerald as he casually looked at the woman’s husband.

“Me, of course!” roared the middle-aged man in reply.

Upon hearing that, Gerald simply laughed out loud before shaking his head and glaring straight into the man’s eyes.

Realizing that Gerald was still trying to make a fool out of him, the middle-aged man felt his anger peak. The same went for his men as well who were now all fuming in anger.

“We’re ending you, you mother*cker!” roared all of his men as they tossed their cigarettes to the ground and made a dash at Gerald!

Chapter 1235

As the big burly men immediately surrounded Gerald, ready to assault him, Gerald could tell that this wasn’t their first rodeo doing this.

The woman herself was waiting for the thugs to grab hold of Gerald so that she could give him two tight slaps across his face to vent out all her frustration.

To everyone's surprise, the moment one of the men rushed over, Gerald simply launched a swift kick to his stomach, sending the hundred and twenty kilogram man flying a good twenty meters away! Everyone could only stare wide-eyed as the thug collided with the middle-aged man's Hummer, causing all of the car's windows to shatter into pieces!

As the glass shards scattered across the road, the woman instantly began screaming in shock. Even her husband was flabbergasted by the turn of events. After all, everyone had simply assumed that Gerald was just a poor young man. Nobody could've anticipated him to be this powerful!

After seeing what happened to their ally, the remaining thugs didn't dare to move a muscle anymore, and for good reason too. They could all see that the injured man had now curled into a ball from the pain, and even his mouth was foaming! To think that Gerald had almost killed their ally with a single kick! Only an idiot would dare make another move so soon after witnessing such power.

Seeing that nobody was attacking, Gerald resumed looking at the time on his phone. From the moment the car accident had happened,

quite a bit of time had passed. Adding that to the terrible traffic jam before this, it was now already past nine forty. In other words, it was long past the time Gerald had agreed to meet up with Noelle.

Noelle must have been waiting anxiously for him this entire time, and from what Aiden had told him yesterday, women hated it most when men didn't keep their promises.

As he thought about it, he couldn't help but imagine Mila waiting for him back then.

Unfortunately, he didn't show up in time and he wasn't even able to see her before her disappearance.

If he made Noelle wait for him too long at the hotel, then all the good impressions he had made on her the day before would've been for naught! The thought of that alone made Gerald feel extremely nervous. He truly couldn't afford to delay this any longer!

Turning to look at the middle-aged man who was still paralyzed in fear, Gerald then fished his cell phone out to call Zack.

“Mr. Lyle, send a helicopter over to where I am, immediately! I need to attend a birthday banquet ASAP and I don’t have a proper mode of transportation!”

Following that, Gerald then hung up his phone. He definitely wasn’t going anywhere in his car with such a terrible traffic jam, and he couldn’t just sit here waiting any longer.

With the helicopter, he would be able to reach the hotel relatively quickly. Even so, there was the obvious risk of him exposing his true identity. However, running over there would simply take too long. There truly was no other way other than heading there with a helicopter.

“A... helicopter?” muttered several of the pedestrians who had overheard Gerald’s conversation earlier. Though it sounded extremely absurd, many of them didn’t dare to laugh after seeing how strong Gerald was. Of course, that meant that some of them still did.

“Did he truly just ask someone to pick him up in a helicopter? He must’ve gone bonkers!”

“Maybe he’s gotten a bit too simple-minded after spending all his time only training and developing his fighting skills!”

As more and more people began laughing and making fun of Gerald, the middle-aged man finally returned to his senses again. His opponent was just some kid! Why was he even this frightened by him? D*mn it!

Since Gerald was still staring at his phone, the middle-aged took advantage of the situation by getting his remaining men to surround him again.

A split second later, the middle-aged man revealed a small but very sharp knife! After giving out another order, the other men took out similar knives as well!

With all of them prepared to launch their attack on Gerald, the enraged middle-aged man was just about to order them to attack when suddenly, a droning sound began filling the air!

The men were familiar enough with the sound to know that it was coming from a helicopter, and upon realizing this, all of them froze in place in their utter shock.

“A-A helicopter has truly arrived!” shouted several of the pedestrians as they looked up at the sky.

Hearing that, many of the stuck car drivers instantly got off their vehicles to have a look for themselves.

The helicopter—that resembled a huge falcon hovering in the sky—was now slowly descending, almost as though it was preparing to land. Due to how close it was to the ground, the strong winds it produced were so immense that they could cause a person’s lips to crack!

Soon enough, those on the helicopter pinpointed where Gerald was standing...

Chapter 1236

The helicopter blatantly landed on Gerald’s parked car.

The middle-aged man and woman were both dumbfounded. This was because there were a few big characters printed on the side of the helicopter that read ‘Mayberry Commercial Group’!

This man was actually a member of Mayberry Commercial Group, and it seemed as though his status was not low!

D*mn it! This was too ruthless!

The middle-aged man instantly broke out in cold sweat.

“Mr. Crawford!” A young man came down from the helicopter as he respectfully emptied the cockpit.

“Mm. You can drive the car back on my behalf. Also, I want you to look into the background of these few thugs beside me before punishing them accordingly!” Gerald instructed as he put his cell phone away.

“You can rest assured, Mr. Crawford!” The young man replied as he nodded.

As Gerald was about to leave, he saw one of the thugs holding a knife, and he was just about to stab the knife directly into Gerald’s waist. Gerald glanced at the man who was already frozen in place as he broke out in cold sweat because he did not dare to move.

A guilty smile appeared on his face as he said, “Mr... Mr. Crawford...”

The man flew out directly after Gerald gave him a slap across his face.

“You are such a big man, but you are carrying such a small knife. Who are you trying to scare?!”

Gerald was speechless yet again.

He would have to leave everything else in his subordinate’s hands now. Gerald then got into the cockpit before flying the helicopter away. The passersby were all wailing and trembling in shock. This scene was simply too incredible!

Gerald then guided the helicopter along, and he naturally did not encounter any more interference along the way.

Shortly after, he arrived at Longthorne International Hotel. However, Gerald did not park his helicopter downstairs in a conspicuous manner. Instead, he simply parked directly on the top of the hotel.

After that, he hurriedly trotted all the way downstairs.

After calling Noelle, Gerald realized that Noelle was still waiting for him at the entrance of the hotel.

“Gerald, why did you come out from inside the hotel?!” Noelle could not help but feel surprised when she saw Gerald running out of the hotel.

“Oh! I came from the back door!” Gerald reluctantly explained.

Noelle immediately understood. She felt that since there would be many magnates coming in and out of the entrance of the hotel, Gerald would naturally feel embarrassed too. Perhaps that was the reason why he had chosen to come in through the back door.

“He is the one?”

When Gracie saw Gerald, she had a sullen expression on her face. She was not done reprimanding her daughter yet.

According to her wishes, regardless of whether this man had saved her daughter or not, that was secondary. What was the big deal anyway? At most, she could wait until she resolved their family crisis before giving him a sum of money for saving her daughter, then.

Gracie felt that Noelle should not owe him this kind of affection. What did she mean by inviting him here to celebrate her birthday today?!

When Preston saw Gerald, he could not help but feel even more jealous. It turned out that the person that Noelle had been waiting for was this kid.

She had not only invited him to attend her birthday celebration today, but she had also invited this kid. In any case, Preston instantly regarded Gerald as his love rival.

He could not help but feel even more uncomfortable when he thought about how Noelle had been looking forward to Gerald's arrival just now.

After all, Preston himself was so rich and outstanding, but Noelle did not seem to care about that at all.

"It is fine now that you are here! It is almost ten o'clock now! We should hurry up and go in!" Noelle said and smiled slightly as she looked at Gerald.

“Who are you asking to go in?! You are asking him to come in too?! Noelle, are you really using your brain?” Gracie could not stop herself from scolding Noelle.

Wasn't Noelle deliberately inciting Preston by doing this?! What if Preston became very angry because of this incident and decided to leave Noelle? In that case, the Shadwell family would have missed out on a great opportunity to turn things around!

However, at this time, Noelle had already led Gerald into the hotel.

Gracie hurriedly chased after them.

In the end, only Preston was left behind with a look of anger and resentment on his face.

‘You brat! You actually succeeded in making Noelle treat you so well! I have been chasing and pursuing her for over half a year now, and she has never given me any proper attention before. The both of you have only known each other for two days!’

Preston felt a sense of humiliation sweeping through his entire body.

He ground his teeth angrily before he took out his cell phone to make a phone call...

Chapter 1237

The atmosphere at Noelle's birthday banquet changed as soon as Gerald arrived. This was especially so for Gracie's emotions. It would not be an exaggeration to describe that all of her menopausal symptoms for the next thirty years of her life had an outbreak at this exact moment.

Anyone could tell that her daughter, Noelle, had a very unusual relationship with this young man. As a person who had already gone through all of these experiences before, Gracie could tell that her daughter seemed to be interested in this young man.

However, Noelle was very indifferent toward Preston. If Gracie allowed this to develop any further, it would certainly be very troublesome if Preston was offended.

Under this kind of situation, as Noelle's mother, Gracie could not just let this pass without coming up with a solution. She could not simply

continue watching as her daughter took one step after the other into an abyss, right?! Therefore, Gracie was in a foul mood, and she was very unfriendly toward Gerald during the banquet.

“Your wagyu steak is here!”

At this time, the dishes were finally served.

The waiter also brought the main dish, which was the highlight of the birthday

banquet today, into the room.

After that, the manager also followed the waiter into the room.

The manager was a middle-aged man. In order to show his respect for Preston, he had decided to come here personally to serve the meal and explain it in detail to them.

It could even be said that he was actually giving the Shadwell family a lot of face.

Gracie truly felt that she really had a lot of face.

Gerald had already eaten in many restaurants in Mayberry City before. In fact, he had already long heard that the wagyu steak at the Longthorne International Hotel was very famous, but Gerald had never tried it because he hadn't been here before. This was also the first time that he had ever tried this dish.

“Sir, do you know anything about this dish?”

As Gerald was about to taste the dish, the manager exchanged glances with Preston before he suddenly interrupted Gerald with a cold expression on his face.

“Oh! I don't really know much about it!” Gerald replied as he shook his head.

“Hmph. You look like you come from the countryside, right? Is this your first time coming to the Longthorne International Hotel?” The manager said with a hint of sarcasm in his tone.

Everyone present, including a few of the girls, could not help but put their chopsticks down at this time. It was obvious that the manager was saying these words because he was targeting Gerald.

“What do you mean by that? Even if this is my first time here, did I do anything wrong?” Gerald could also sense the hint of sarcasm in his words, and he instantly raised his head to look at the manager.

“Our wagyu steak is usually eaten by our most prestigious and precious guests at this hotel. It would be a complete waste for someone like you, who obviously has not seen much of the world, to eat this wagyu steak! Men, come and take this dish away from him!” The manager said lightly, with his hands behind his back.

“Who gave you the rights to do so?!”

A look of anger and resentment flashed through Noelle’s face at this time. This manager did not only look down on people, but he had no respect for others at all.

How could she possibly know that this was all Preston’s deliberate arrangement?

As the young master of the Wake family, Preston had a very influential status in this place.

The manager knew this very well too. He knew that his career and business path would certainly go smoothly in the future if he favored Preston. Also, he would be able to build up a good relationship with Preston if he were to humiliate this young lad here today. Therefore, how could the manager possibly let go of such a wonderful opportunity?!

At this time, Preston merely smiled coldly as he stared at the scene before him.

“Wait a minute!”

Gerald put down his utensils.

After that, he looked at the manager, who had a smug look on his face, as he sneered and said, “You are opening an establishment to run a business, so you cannot go overboard. This is the foundation of the business industry. It is your duty to treat each and every customer equally and with respect. This is also the virtue and duty of every businessman. So, Mr. Manager, don’t you think that you are taking things a little too far?”

“Pfft! Young lad, do I look like I need you to teach me a lesson? You look so poor! Everyone here is definitely worthy enough to eat the food in our hotel. You are the only person who is not worthy at all!

In truth, the only reason why I did not kick you out of this place is simply because I am giving Mr. Wake and Miss Noelle face! You are actually trying to talk back and educate me here?! You should take a piss and look at your own reflection first!" The manager said coldly.

He said everything that he wanted to with those few words, and this was exactly what Preston wanted to see.

You brat! You want to play with me? How are you ever going to fight against me?!

"Men, come! Where are the security guards? Drive this person, who does not know his own place, out of our hotel now! I also want you guys to put a sign in front of the hotel stating that this kind of worthless trash is not allowed to step into our hotel in the future!" The manager yelled to his men outside.

Not long after that, about four to five security guards rushed into the private room, almost as though they had already been on standby.

Chapter 1238

It was obvious that everything had been premeditated.

“I was initially planning on giving you some leeway, but it seems as though you do

not want it at all!” Gerald said coldly as he smiled at the manager.

“Gerald, don’t attack him!” Noelle was a little frightened at this time.

At this point, she knew that Preston must have secretly planned for the manager to deliberately humiliate and make things difficult for Gerald. If Gerald were to beat the manager up, Preston would certainly have a way to deal with Gerald for his actions, then. Thus, Noelle wanted to dissuade Gerald from doing so.

“Attack him? Hahaha! I do not need to personally take any actions against a worthless person like him! In fact, at the very beginning, he was still worthy enough to receive a few slaps from me. However, now, he is not worthy at all!” Gerald sneered.

“Young lad, I think you must really be tired of living! Men, come! Throw him out of this place!” The manager sneered.

After that, he looked at Gracie and the others as he said, “Ms. Shadwell and Mrs. Shadwell, I know that I am being rude and disrespectful. However, I truly cannot accept the fact that such a vulgar person is actually sitting at the same table as you. Please forgive me for my actions!”

Gracie immediately stood up as she smiled and said, “Oh, don’t worry! Are you kidding me? You can simply act according to your own discretion. As for some irrelevant people, we do not want to be bothered with them either!” Gracie glanced coldly at Gerald.

As for Gerald, he had already taken out his cell phone and sent a text message at this time.

The security guards had already gathered around as they prepared to take Gerald away.

Gerald said, “There is no need for you to hurry. Your superior should be coming over here in a short while!”

“Mr. Zillan? You are saying that he is going to come over here? F*ck! Do you know who Mr. Zillan is?! Even if you really sent a text message, wouldn’t you simply be reporting a matter to the management anyway? Hahaha! Let me tell you something. The information about the report will ultimately end up in my hands anyway! Young brat, you will certainly be dumbfounded at that time!” The manager said as he laughed.

The few security guards also laughed out loud.

“He is really full of himself!”

Gracie ate a mouthful of food before she rolled her eyes at Gerald. After that, she even poured a cup of water on the ground directly near Gerald’s feet to vent her anger and dissatisfaction.

Just as the manager was about to ask the security guards to proceed, his cell phone suddenly started ringing.

The manager snorted slightly before he took out his cell phone. He was taken aback when he saw his caller ID.

“Mr. Zillan?!” He said in shock.

As for Preston, he played around with his watch at this time as he shook his head with a wry smile on his face.

‘Is it truly a phone call from Uncle Zillan?’

He could not help but feel that Gerald was pretty well-connected as he could actually make a report directly to Uncle Zillan.

The Longthorne International Hotel was a large family-owned enterprise with Mayberry City as the core of its business. It adopted the model of an international hotel chain. However, not anyone could simply report a matter directly to the higher management of the hotel if they wanted to. It was just as the manager had just said. If anyone wanted to report anything, they would have to go through him first. This was also the reason why he dared to act so unscrupulously. What could a poor boy possibly do to him anyway?

However, since Mr. Zillan was the manager of the headquarters, the manager did not dare to neglect his call.

After nodding at Preston, he hurriedly answered the phone call.

“Yes! Yes! Yes!”

“What?”

“I...I understand!”

The manager replied in three simple sentences. However, at this time, he was already turning pale as he started breaking out in a sweat. He was obviously feeling very nervous.

Preston said, "Uncle Zillan is also friends with my father. Could it be possible that Uncle Zillan is really going to teach you a lesson because of this kid? Should I call my father to make a phone call to Uncle Zillan, then?"

"How can it possibly be because of this stinky brat over here?! The headquarters do not know what is happening either. However, he is simply mobilizing all of the staff. Mr. Zillan said that he will be coming over to assemble here at the Longthorne International Hotel in a short while. Even our chairman, who is currently recuperating in the hospital, will also be personally making a trip here!"

"Oh, my God! The company has never encountered this kind of situation before! I have to hurry up to make some preparations for the upper management's sudden inspection!" The manager said excitedly.

Chapter 1239

At this time in the lobby, all of the staff were all dressed up, and they were all ready, solemnly and respectfully. Even the hotel staff were not an exception. All of them had already assembled in the lobby on the first floor of the hotel.

Everyone was very excited when they heard that the chairman was personally making a trip here today. There had never been such a thing before.

The manager, Hazen, had also put on a suit at this time as he stood aside in preparation to greet and meet the chairman.

He was extremely nervous at this time.

“Aunt Wauter, Uncle Shadwell, I know a lot of uncles from the Longthorne Group. Since they are coming over here, I would like to go down and greet them. Otherwise, if they find out that I did not go down to greet them when they are here, they might actually blame me for being ignorant!”

At this time, in the private room, Preston put down the wine glass in his hand and spoke up as he looked at Gracie.

“Oh, of course! Preston, you must know of many big and powerful figures. Longthorne Group is a public listed company. Since their upper management is here to visit, it is only natural for you to go and greet them!”

“By the way, Preston, the Shadwell family’s biggest business is a boutique fast food restaurant chain. Although it cannot be compared to the Longthorne International Hotel, it is still a catering industry after all. I wonder if you will be able to put a good word in for us in front of Mr. Zillan later? It would be great if you could simply hand our business card over to him!” Gracie asked embarrassedly.

“That will not be an issue, Aunt Wauter. Although I do not personally know Chairman Hayes Wadder from Longthorne Group, I am quite familiar with Mr. Zillan!” Preston said as he stretched out his hand to reveal the gold watch on his hand.

After that, he grabbed his wallet and stood up immediately.

“Yes, yes. That’s right. It would be great if we could exchange business cards with Mr. Zillan. It would also be great if we could get to briefly introduce ourselves to him. Let’s go too!” Third aunt and the others laughed at this time.

After that, they stood up and walked toward the door.

At this time, many big and small cars had already gathered outside the entrance of the hotel.

All of the senior executives and upper management personnel were all here regardless of whether it was the human resources department or the finance department. They were here as long as they were a senior officer.

Everyone was supporting an old man who was in his seventies and still trembling as he walked.

“Chairman Wadder!” Mr. Yandle said in surprise. He was already about to kneel at this time.

As for Chairman Wadder, he shuddered as he hurriedly spoke to his personal assistant at this time, “Quick! Head to Room 602!”

At this time, Mr. Zillan, who was behind the chairman, was also very pale as he helped the chairman head upstairs.

At this time, Mr. Yandle suddenly realized that it seemed as though they were not here for an inspection. Instead, it felt as though they were here to deal with something. What was happening? Room 602? Wasn't that the young master Preston's room?!

The Shadwell family members, who were just about to get into the elevator, also happened to run into Chairman Wadder at this time.

Gracie was about to bow down to show her respect to the chairman, but the chairman did not even bother looking at her at all.

To everyone's surprise, Chairman Wadder walked directly into their private room with the help of his assistant.

Something that made everyone feel even more shocked and surprised happened in the next moment.

As soon as they arrived at the door...

Chairman Wadder had knelt on the ground with a thud. At this time, his face was also covered in tears as he trembled uncontrollably.

"Oh, my God!" Gracie swallowed in disbelief.

Preston was also dumbfounded at this time.

“I did not know that you were here, Mr. Crawford! I deserve to die! I deserve to die!”

Hayes had participated in several important and grand meetings with the chamber of commerce, and he had already witnessed Gerald’s grandeur in the past.

Just now, he had received a phone call from the Mayberry Commercial Group saying that his subordinate was trying to throw Mr. Crawford out of his hotel, and the other party had actually asked him what he was going to do about this matter?

Hayes could not believe his own ears, and he had come over here immediately from the hospital.

At first glance, he immediately saw that the person who was sitting at the furthest end of the table was none other than Mr. Crawford!

The reason why Longthorne Group could be so deeply rooted and had such a steady development in the business industry for so many years was simply because Mr. Lyle had always been taking good care of them and looking out for them.

If they were to offend Mr. Crawford today, Longthorne Group would certainly be done for!

“Chairman Wadder, is your subordinate really that impressive? I was simply trying to eat a piece of wagyu steak, and he actually asked the security guards to come over here to throw me out!” Gerald said as he smiled bitterly.

“I have already heard about it!” The chairman cried out before he slowly stood up with his assistant’s help.

“Where is Hazen Yandle?!” The chairman asked as he looked at Mr. Zillan.

Hazen was standing at the entrance of the private room, and he was watching the incredible scene that was unfolding before his very eyes with Gracie and the others.

As soon as he heard the chairman calling his name, Hazen ran over to him immediately.

Chapter 1240

“Chairman Wadder, your body is so frail and delicate now. How could you kneel in front of this stinky brat?! I will find someone to deal with him right now!” Hazen said viciously.

The chairman was instantly enraged as he stared at Hazen in disbelief. After that, he shouted at Mr. Zillan, “Beat him up! I want you to beat him up until his mouth is all swollen!”

Mr. Zillan hurriedly replied, “Yes, sir!”

As soon as he waved his hand, several of the chairman’s personal bodyguards hurriedly came forward directly before pressing Hazen down on the ground. There was even a bodyguard who brought a baton over.

“Chairman! What did I do wrong?!” Hazen was filled with grievance as he cried out loud.

A loud sound came, and the bodyguard had already hit Hazen on his mouth with
the baton.

At this time, Hazen's nose and mouth were filled with blood.

Hazen's eyes were also filled with tears.

When the people on the sideline saw this, they were all terrified, especially Gracie and the other women. When had they ever witnessed this kind of scene?!

The bodyguards continued beating the manager up at this time.

Hazen's teeth were flying out, and he was spurting blood out of his mouth.

In the end, he got beaten up until he was almost half dead. Hazen was convulsing as he lay on the ground.

"Mr. Zillan, what is going on with this matter?! Who gave Hazen Yandle the courage to act that way?" Chairman Wadder asked as he glanced at Hazen before he looked at Mr. Zillan.

"I have already spoken to some of Hazen's assistants just now. I found out that the reason why he dared to do all this is because

someone named Preston Wake called him in advance to ask him to act in that manner!" Mr. Zillan's voice was very cold and stern.

He naturally knew who Preston was, and he also knew Preston's father. However, the Wake family was basically done for at this time. Therefore, Mr. Zillan naturally wanted to cut off all ties with them.

Before he could finish speaking, the bodyguards had already dragged Preston over to the scene.

"Mr. Zillan, what are you guys trying to do?! My father is..."

Before he could even finish his sentence, Preston had already received a tight slap across his face.

"You dare to cause trouble for Longthorne International Hotel?! I cannot tolerate this at all! Continue slapping him on my behalf!" Chairman Wadder yelled out loud.

"What?!" Preston was shocked.

The bodyguards had already stepped forward to do as they were told.

At this time, Gracie and the others were all stunned and dumbfounded.

“Gerald, this... what is going on?”

Noelle was also frightened at this time. She truly did not expect such big trouble and such a huge scene to unfold just because Gerald had made a small report.

When Gracie saw everything that was happening inside the room, she swallowed wildly, afraid that she would also get beaten up.

So, she subconsciously walked toward Gerald’s side because she knew that it would be safest for her to stay by Gerald’s side at this time.

Very soon, Preston was beaten up until his face was all bloody. The four or five bodyguards’ hands were also swollen. After that, they lifted Preston up before throwing him out of the hotel.

After the chairman had apologized repeatedly to him, Gerald finally felt a little satisfied.

Gracie was extremely surprised.

What was going on?

The chairman had actually ordered his men to beat Preston up just because Gerald had made a small report.

This was beyond common sense. Something was not right! Her years of experience instantly made her realize that something was not right! Moreover, it seemed as though the chairman was also very afraid of him.

At this moment, Gracie quietly pulled her daughter, Noelle, aside. She wanted her to ask Gerald about his background and identity.

Why was the chairman referring to him as Mr. Crawford?! Could it be that he was the Mr. Crawford from Mayberry City, then?!

Chapter 1241

“Gerald? Are you full already?” asked Noelle as she attempted to stop him from leaving.

The subsequent birthday party was extremely hasty if anything, mainly due to what happened a while back. Even so, nobody dared to speak up any longer, especially Gracie who had remained obediently quiet this entire time.

“Indeed I am!”

“I see... By the way, Gerald, my mom wanted me to ask you what you did for a living...” asked Noelle in a soft tone, though it was evident that she was curious about that as well.

After all, everyone had seen how Chairman Wadder treated Gerald earlier.

“Me? Good question! I wonder what I do for a living myself!”

Hearing that, Noelle simply replied with a laugh. Gerald was getting more and more mysterious by the second...

“Actually... Could... it be that you’re the legendary and mysterious Mr. Crawford from Mayberry City...?” asked Noelle again, her voice gentle.

By that point, Gracie and the others had gathered behind Noelle. All of them were holding onto their breaths as they anxiously looked at Gerald while awaiting his answer.

Gerald himself simply shook his head with a wry smile on his face before replying, “Is it important whether I’m him or not? To be quite frank, there’s something I’ve needed your help with for some time now, Noelle... I wonder if you see me as a friend enough to willingly lend me a hand...”

His eyes were serious as he stared at Noelle while asking that question.

After observing how she kept looking at him for a while, Gerald could discern that her feelings toward him seemed to be different from before. They felt much more sincere.

With that in mind, Gerald felt that it was finally a suitable time to ask that question. He was honestly also slightly worried that if he allowed those feelings to continue developing beyond this point, he would inevitably end up hurting her.

“Also, regarding the crisis the Shadwells are currently facing... Let’s just say that you’ll be receiving the funding you require before long. Once that happens, you won’t be bogged down by too many worries and all of you will be able to do as you please again!” added Gerald.

Upon hearing that, Gracie and the others immediately took in a deep breath.

If Gerald had said the same thing about an hour ago, then Gracie would’ve certainly assumed that his statement was fake. Now, however, she knew that every word he said was entirely true.

“But of course I treat you as a friend! In fact, I’ve considered you to be my best friend ever since you saved me from that kidnapping attempt! A best friend that has quite a bit of secrets... Regardless, now that you’ve even helped my family, I truly wish to repay my gratitude to you! What help do you need? I’d gladly lend a hand!” replied Noelle, resolution in her tone.

While she had been grateful toward Gerald for a while now, Noelle hadn’t really seen him as anything more than a good friend. After spending more time around him, however, she was now seeing a different side to Gerald. Not only was he shrouded by mystery, but he was also surrounded by a strong aura. Deeply intrigued by these

two attributes, it made her realize that she was starting to get attracted to him...

With that in mind, as long as she could make Gerald happy by helping him, she'd certainly attempt to do whatever he asked for.

Upon seeing how willing and sincere Noelle's reply had been, Gerald immediately grew excited though he didn't show it.

"...However, there's one thing I wish for in return!" added Noelle.

"What is it?"

"Once I help you, I'd like you to tell me your true identity... I don't want you to hide it from me anymore! Is that acceptable...?" asked Noelle as she looked at Gerald with a smile.

"Deal!" replied Gerald extremely straightforwardly.

The second Gerald said that he required a drop of fresh blood from Noelle's finger, Noelle, Gracie, and the others were exceedingly confused and doubtful about his request. Nevertheless, it wasn't that

big a deal so Noelle simply handed him a drop of invigorating blood...

With that done, that meant that Gerald had to keep his side of the promise. Noticing that everyone was extremely eager to see how he was going to explain the incident earlier, Gerald wasn't about to shamelessly break his promise.

After laughing bitterly for a while, he fished around in his pocket before taking out a tiny device. Upon pressing it, two tiny 'beeps' could be heard.

All was silent for a while... Until seconds later, droning could be heard coming from atop the building! Was... Was that a helicopter...?

Their question was answered shortly after when true enough, a helicopter began taking off from the top of the building!

Chapter 1242

The black helicopter—that looked similar to a falcon—was unmanned, and it was currently flying itself toward Gerald’s location through its autopilot system, absolutely stupefying everyone else who saw it.

That helicopter... It had to cost at least fifteen million dollars, right...? Did it belong to Gerald?

Noelle found herself covering her mouth in her flabbergasted state. Gerald had given all of them his answer without even needing to directly say it.

Soon enough, the helicopter touched down and Gerald got into the cockpit.

Looking at Noelle from inside the helicopter, he then smiled before saying, “There’s your answer. If there’s anything else you need in the future, just look for Zack!”

After flashing her another subtle smile, he then flew the helicopter away without even turning to take a second glance.

“...Oh... my... God. He... H-he really was Mr. Crawford from Mayberry! Gerald’s Mr. Crawford! My god, we’re going to be rich!

The Shadwells are going to be living prosperously!” shouted Gracie as she began dancing around in joy.

While everyone was celebrating, Noelle seemed to be the only one who was at a loss. It... It seemed like she had just lost something very important...

Gerald himself had finally acquired his second drop of invigorating blood. As the saying went, true things truly did come to those who waited!

Regardless, Gerald had no time to waste and he immediately tried detecting the yin aura from the blood that he had kept within a small bottle. The results were simultaneously surprising and delightful.

‘Once I’ve received the baptism of heaven, I’ll undergo a rapid increase in strength! In other words, I won’t be helpless anymore before Queena! Speaking of which, the pledge of the holy water is about to begin soon... I wonder how grandpa and the other great masters are doing right now... Could they still be searching for where the pledge of the holy water was being held...?’

Though he was curious about how his grandfather was doing, Gerald wasn’t particularly worried about him. After all, Christopher was there as well, and that old man had undergone such immense

training that Gerald could safely say that he was a powerful person, even among the other great masters.

Even so, he was now under Gerald's control, and Gerald had left the issue of Christopher's life and death to be managed by his grandfather. With that in mind, Christopher was pretty much forced to help Gerald's grandfather, even if he didn't want to.

Whatever the case was, the only thing left for Gerald to do—once he was able to rid himself of his current predestined relationship—was locate the woman in white.

'Once Queena's out of the picture, I'll hopefully be able to find the woman in white without much trouble! Since all the mysteries of the Sun League are connected with the woman in white and judging from how much I've currently progressed, I'm definitely slowly getting closer to the truth!' Gerald thought to himself.

Regardless, now that he was high in the sky in his helicopter, Gerald sprinkled the blood over the jade charm. Immediately after, he sensed that the jade charm was already attempting to locate the stone. With that in mind, Gerald calmed himself as well, hoping to detect the Zircobsite stone for himself.

It wasn't long before Gerald heard a low rumble. The odd thing was, the odd rumble didn't seem to be coming from an external source. Instead, Gerald could hear it coming from the depths of his heart! As the sound continued resonating in his mind, Gerald could almost feel his body pulsating in rhythm with it. It was almost as though his body was interacting with its surroundings.

It didn't take long before Gerald began sensing a particular area that seemed to emanate a mysterious 'repelling' power. In other words, the area seemed to be actively preventing him from heading in that direction.

Gerald knew for a fact that that meant that the Zircobsite was there. After all, the Zircobsite was a stone filled with yang energy. It was only natural for the yin-filled blood to repel against it.

Feeling ecstatic, Gerald then shouted to himself, "I've got you now!"

Without thinking much, Gerald then began flying the helicopter in that direction. It was only when he was halfway there when he soon realized that he was heading toward ...

"...Mountain Top?" Gerald muttered to himself in surprise.

'...Hold on, aren't I headed for Mountain Top Villa now...? Could the stone have been buried in the innermost parts of Mountain Top this entire time...?'

Upon touching down atop the mountain, he got out of his helicopter. With how strongly his heart was reacting now that he was standing here, Gerald got the confirmation that he needed that this was the place he was looking for.

Shortly after his arrival, the entire mountain began shaking, and several of the plants growing there were quick to wither as well! Gerald deduced that the plants were being sucked dry due to the sudden release of yang energy.

Though he was extremely happy to finally have located the stone, Gerald immediately suppressed his joy and gave Zack a call.

He had already told Zack about what needed to be done once the item he was looking for was found. Due to that, the moment Zack answered the call, the project instantly commenced.

Zack himself had already hired an engineering team that consisted of a few thousand people, and they were to begin working as soon as Zack ordered for it. The team was expected to operate for twenty-

four hours without stopping until they were able to penetrate the mountain's surface and obtain what Mr. Crawford needed...

Chapter 1243

Soon enough, a few thousand workers arrived, ready for duty.

Since their task was to penetrate the mountain, they had no real choice but to first demolish Mountain Top Villa.

Of course, with such a major operation happening, observant people soon realized what was happening. With that, news about it began spreading online like wildfire, causing a heated discussion among those in Mayberry.

“Are they really planning to demolish Mountain Top Villa?”

“They are! D*mn it! To even consider demolishing that villa that cost over a hundred and twenty million dollars... How rich they must be!” discussed fans of the building among themselves.

Regardless, even with so much information about the incident circulating the net, the administrative department of Mountain Top Villa hadn't seemed to receive any news about the demolition yet. It didn't help that when Zack wanted something done, he didn't ever explain himself to those from the subordinate departments. After all, to him, there was no need to.

However, it should be noted that for the administrative department, Mountain Top Villa wasn't just some ordinary residence. It had been painstakingly built with the combined efforts of several engineers. To those from that department, it was less of a building than it was a piece of art.

Moving back to the present, as the workers continued performing their tasks, an angry-looking woman—who looked to be around twenty-seven—stomped her way toward one of them before shouting, “Hold it! Who the hell told all of you to demolish this place! Aren't you aware of who owns this place? How very daring!”

“Lady, we get orders from Chairman Lyle, we execute them. If you have any problems with that, then just go meet him directly!” sneered the worker in response.

His response made her so angry that she instantly took in a deep breath to calm her nerves. Raising her head to look at the many other workers—from the demolishing team—who were higher up

the crowded mountain, the woman then frowned before making her way up there.

The moment she arrived, however, she was just in time to hear a deafening explosion, followed by the sight of one of Mountain Top Villa's walls crumbling to the ground!

She was just seconds too late to attempt to prevent something like that from happening. Knowing that, the saddened woman instantly began scowling at all those rude people extremely sternly!

At that moment, both Zack and Gerald were in the garden of Mountain Top Villa.

Turning to look at Gerald, Zack explained, "Based on our estimations, the fastest the project can be completed will be in two days and nights!"

"Noted. Do continue working hard throughout these two days then, Chairman Lyle. Be sure to keep an eye around here and should there be any news, contact me immediately!" replied Gerald.

"Very well, Mr. Crawford!"

As soon as Zack's sentence ended, a bodyguard came running over before saying, "Mr. Crawford! There's a woman attempting to cause trouble out there! She says she's from the Mayberry Organization as well, and she's desperately trying to get in the way of the project! If possible, we'd like to force her out of this place! What do you say, Mr. Crawford?"

"What a b*stard! How dare anyone try to stop Mr. Crawford from doing what he wants! Get that person out of this place no matter who they are!" roared Zack.

"B-before that, she said her name was Rita! She told us that as long as we mentioned her name, you'd know who she was, Chairman Lyle!" replied the guard.

"...R-Rita...?" muttered Zack, stunned as he turned to look at Gerald.

Rita was Mila's second cousin, and she could be considered to be Mr. Crawford's elder sister. With that in mind, Zack's anger immediately dissipated.

Gerald himself was shocked to hear that familiar name out of the blue. After all, he previously had quite a number of encounters with Rita, and he knew for a fact that her relationship with Mila was very good.

‘What’s Mila’s second cousin doing here...?’

Though Gerald had missed both Mila and his own family throughout the two years, he certainly hadn’t forgotten to be concerned about the condition of Mila’s family.

As long as there was a way to compensate Mila’s family, he’d definitely do so without the slightest hesitation. Up till this point, Gerald had made sure that the Smiths would be able to live worry-free for a few generations monetary-wise. It was the least he could do.

Regardless, even though he had returned to Mayberry twice within these two years, he had never personally visited any of Mila’s family members throughout that time. After all, ever since Mila went missing, he had felt immense guilt toward the Smiths.

Mila had chosen to be together with him, yet in the end, she disappeared. What else could that mean aside from the fact that he hadn’t taken good care of her?

He didn’t even know how to face any of the Smiths, so now that Rita was here, Gerald was filled with immense terror.

Chapter 1244

At that moment, the doors to the villa were opened, and in stepped a few bodyguards, dragging Rita along with them.

Rita herself was struggling quite a bit to get free as she shouted, "Unhand me! Unhand me this instant!"

"Cease this at once!" shouted Gerald as he immediately began walking over to them.

"...Gerald?" muttered Rita in a rather surprised tone the second she saw him.

From the moment her cousin had gone missing, she hadn't met or even heard any news about Gerald.

Snapping out of her shock quickly, Rita then thought to herself, 'Humph... Gerald Crawford... The rich heir of the Crawford family with near-endless wealth... Being so powerful, I had my doubts that you'd still think fondly about my cousin after all this time... Hell, you

never even contacted us from the day she went missing! You probably don't even care about whether my cousin's dead or still alive!

Back then, Gerald had only sent Zack over to pacify the Smiths. Relaying what Gerald had told him, Zack told them that they could ask him for help if they ever faced any issues. The Crawfords would definitely try their best to help the Smiths regardless of their requests.

Even so, those from the Smith family knew that Gerald had only said that out of courtesy since Mr. Crawford was attempting to express his regret. After all, with Mila now missing, why would any sort of relationship still exist between Gerald and the Smiths? The Smiths were well aware that they truly had no reason to continue being involved with such a wealthy family anymore.

Understanding that, they simply rejected any financial support that Zack provided them with.

Honestly, if it wasn't for the fact that Rita had found out that they were demolishing Mountain Top Villa, she wouldn't have come over so angrily to meet Zack in the first place. After all, this place was supposed to be Gerald and Mila's wedding house.

'Even though Gerald knows about that... Humph! How ungrateful!' Rita thought to herself, a great wrath within her.

Even so, after two years of not meeting him, Gerald appeared to be much more mature compared to how he had been in the past. What more, he looked much sturdier and muscular as well, an aura of prestigious superiority surrounding him.

Regardless, Gerald nodded at Rita before saying, "Rita! My cousin! I hope you're doing well! How've you been lately?"

"Humph! Like I'd dare to trouble you with my concerns, Mr. Crawford! And since when have I become your cousin? The Smiths are definitely incapable of claiming a relationship with a relative such as yourself!" sneered Rita.

"You b*tch! How dare you talk to Mr. Crawford like that?!" shouted the guards as soon as they heard Rita's mockery.

"There's no need to shout on my behalf! Stand down!" growled Gerald as the guards immediately heeded his words and left respectfully.

Gerald's command had been so domineering that everyone who heard it felt chills run down their spines and simply felt the urge to revere him. Even Rita felt the same thing, and as she looked oddly at Gerald, she thought to herself, 'It's just been two years, has it not? How could he have undergone such a massive change...?'

She was right to feel that it was strange. After all, he had previously been a coward yet now...

"Listen, Rita, I know that we've had some misunderstandings and I admit that Mila going missing is my fault for not taking good care of her. Due to that, my responsibility to find her again. Tell me, do you honestly think that I've already forgotten about Mila?" asked Gerald as he looked into her eyes.

"Haven't you?" asked Rita in a casual tone.

Hearing that, Gerald carefully retrieved a small sachet from his pocket and when Rita saw it, she was instantly stunned.

It was the handmade present that Mila had given Gerald back then. Since she had just learned how to sew from her mother at the time, the sachet itself wasn't very well made. However, Rita remembered that Mila had worked hard sewing it throughout the night. Even the lopsided pair of mandarin ducks were still visible on the sachet.

Rita recalled laughing herself to death back then when she heard that Mila was going to give such a poor excuse of handicraft to the man she loved most. She had been certain that Gerald would've chosen to disregard her poor handiwork and simply accepted the sachet with disdain.

To think, however, that he still had it with him till this very day...

"I never forget even the smallest details in my life, so you can be sure that I won't ever forget about Mila either! I've constantly been looking for her throughout these two years, and as long as I know there's a chance that I can still locate her, I'm willing to go to the very ends of the world just to get her back! With that said, I hope you now believe me when I say that you've misunderstood me, Rita!"

Chapter 1245

"...Is... Is that really true...?" asked Rita.

After hearing his explanation and seeing the sachet again, Rita had to admit that she was starting to believe him slightly. It also helped

that she knew how Gerald was as a person, at least in the past. Regardless, he didn't seem like the kind of person who would just forget someone he loved that much.

"I'm saying it now that I've never personally contacted you throughout these two years since I was too ashamed to stand before any of the Smiths. Why do you think I kept sending Zack over to help you? Even so, Zack's told me that none of you have accepted any of my gifts. Is that true?" asked Gerald who hadn't really questioned their decision before.

"It is. The Smiths have their own dignity to maintain too, you know? Since Mila's gone missing and both of you aren't even married, what right do we have to take your things? At least that's what my grandma keeps saying!" replied Rita now that Gerald had cleared up some initial misunderstandings that she had with him.

With that, she had no problem with detailing how the Smith family was currently doing.

As it turned out, ever since Mila went missing, the Smiths had constantly been enshrouded in gloominess. For the longest time, the loss had been so suppressing that even breathing was sometimes difficult. The mocking and sneering from others only made the Smiths feel like they were continuing to drown even deeper.

The mockery itself had stemmed from the fact that the relatives and friends of the Smith family knew that Mila's boyfriend was an extremely capable and powerful man. After all, he had purchased them a villa that cost at least fifteen million dollars! A person capable of that must surely be immensely wealthy!

However, since Gerald's identity was special, the Smiths had never publicly revealed that their future grandson-in-law was actually the rich heir from Mayberry, Mr. Crawford. Regardless, with so many good things happening to the Smiths, it made many friends of the family both admire and envy them. Many of them even tried their best to fawn on the Smiths in their attempts to befriend Mila's mysterious boyfriend.

The second Mila disappeared, however, huge changes began taking place within the Smith family.

Since Serenity Jordain—who was the old lady of the Smith family and also Mila's grandmother—was a person with great pride and dignity, she quickly returned the villa that Gerald had given to them once she realized that her granddaughter wasn't going to be found anytime soon. With that decision made, the Smiths then returned to where they initially lived.

Serenity even made it a point to reject any charity that Gerald attempted to give their family.

‘With my granddaughter now missing, what would the Smiths even be to Mr. Crawford? There’s no need for us to continue fawning over him so shamelessly!’ That was pretty much Lady Smith’s thought process at the time.

Due to that, they returned to their original lives. Even if people enjoyed their misfortune, so be it.

“...I see. So all of you simply assumed that I had already given up on Mila this entire time, is that right...?” asked Gerald as he took in a deep breath, hints of guilt in his voice.

Though he had been extremely focused on looking for Mila and his uncle, he had to admit that he had ignored Mila’s family. Realizing that now only intensified his guilt.

In response, Rita simply nodded.

“...Then, is Mr. Smith, grandma, and the others doing fine...? Please bring me along. I wish to meet up with them,” said Gerald in a serious tone.

“There’s no way they could be fine... Today’s the birthday of one of grandma’s childhood friends, you know? While that friend of hers ceased contact with grandma as soon as she heard about Mila’s disappearance, recently she’s been constantly inviting all my family members over to her place!”

“It’s extremely evident—at least to those sensible enough—what Georgia Walford means by this. You see, since Mila already had you back then, my family had rejected Georgia’s grandson’s marriage proposal, and boy did they resent that fact. Regardless, Georgia’s family is quite amazing now, and her grandson even ended up marrying a nice granddaughter. With that in mind, she’s clearly been constantly inviting us over just so that she could show off in front of my grandma. Truth be told, if I hadn’t heard that Mountain Top Villa was going to be demolished, I’d have attended the party as well!”

Chapter 1246

Rita bit her lower lip slightly as she concluded her explanation.

“Since grandma already knows that they don’t mean well, why is she still insistent on going?” asked Gerald.

“Well, grandma said that since the Smiths haven’t done anything shameful, our spirits shouldn’t waver. What more, Georgia’s family had invited our family over with great hospitality. With that said, there truly is no reason for us not to be straightforward and just attend,” replied Rita.

“While we’re on the topic, grandma has undoubtedly become more and more stubborn throughout the past two years... It was her birthday yesterday, you know? However, she misses Mila so much that she said that she was unwilling to celebrate it again until the day Mila finally returns!”

“...I see. Regardless, since you’re going to attend the birthday party later anyway, allow me to come with you!” replied Gerald.

Georgia belonged to the Sier family, and in a way, it was quite similar to the Smiths. After all, they were both ordinary companies that weren’t too large or small in Mayberry in the past. Unlike the Smiths, however, the Siers had been developing extremely rapidly in the past two years.

Meanwhile, Lady Smith had just arrived at Georgia's villa along with the others from the Smith family.

The villa itself was a top-notch structure that had quite recently been built in Cloud City. With its construction price being over twelve million dollars, the building was considered to be quite prestigious, topped only by a few other villas inclusive of Mountain Top Villa.

Regardless, upon entering Georgia's home, the Smiths found that many of the guests there were unfamiliar faces.

Even so, just as Serenity had told them time and again, despite having lost Mila, the Smiths couldn't just remain cowardly and simply hide at home. They still had to be daring to head out and meet others!

Anyway, seconds upon their entry, all of the Smiths were greeted by the sight of a sixty-year-old woman—who was being supported by a boy and a girl on either side of her—whose face was beaming as she walked toward Serenity and her family.

Had the guests not known that today was the old woman's birthday, it wouldn't have been a stretch to assume that she was the reincarnation of Queen Elizabeth the second!

Of course, she was none other than the current head of the Sier family, Lady Georgia Walford.

While Georgia and Serenity were rather good friends from when they were young, their relationship had always been rather hard to describe, especially as the two besties continued growing up with each other.

Putting it simply, both of them enjoyed competing with each other rather unrealistically. As kids, they'd compete with each other to see whose clothes were nicer. When they started studying, they began competing to see who got better grades instead. Even after entering society, they continued competing by seeing whose job was better and who married a better husband. Now that they were old, they were still competing by seeing whose family was stronger. Aside from that, they also enjoyed comparing their children with each other, competing to see who had more capable and outstanding offspring.

Even after doing it for so many years, both of them simply continued being competitive. They were just that kind of people.

Regardless, the second the old woman saw Serenity and her family entering, Georgia could already feel the sky being particularly blue that day.

“You’re late, Serenity! I had just brought some old friends of mine over to have a look at the birthday gifts that had been given to me! Why don’t you head over there later to have a look for yourself? In the meantime, I’ll be moving around to serve all the other guests present! There’s just so many of them, you know? Regardless, since a few of my grandsons-in-law and granddaughters-in-law haven’t presented their gifts to me yet, you aren’t too late to the party! In fact, I’d say that you’re just in time to see them present their gifts to me!” said Georgia in a humble tone and a delighted smile on her face.

Gavin couldn’t help but feel embarrassed upon hearing Georgia’s statement. Were there even that many guests present?

Serenity herself began displaying an even more unpleasant expression than she had before. However, she quickly forced on a smile before replying, “It seems that you’re truly leading a good life now, Georgia! A stark contrast to how poor you and your family were when you were younger! I still remember that it was always your family who had to send gifts to others back then! Good for you now that others are sending gifts to you instead!”

Lady Smith wasn't about to show any weakness before Georgia anytime soon. Georgia herself instantly felt her expression stiffen upon hearing that.

Even so, both the old ladies were extremely slick, and neither of them were going to reveal their true emotions without a fight.

“Indeed! Now that I'm much older, I get to enjoy all my wealth and happiness together with my family! Speaking of which, my grandson-in-law got me a new car a while back, you know? I'm already over sixty! I wonder what he was thinking when he bought that new car...” said Georgia as she faked a sigh while making sure to pay attention to Serenity's reaction.

Back then, her grandson had liked Mila a lot. Due to an extremely powerful and rich heir becoming her boyfriend, however, his chance of being together with Mila was shattered. That caused her grandson to suffer a broken heart for quite a long time. Naturally, Georgia had been sad to see her grandson in such a state as well.

Regardless, everything was fine now. After all, her granddaughter had gone missing and that rich heir boyfriend of hers had most definitely forgotten about the Smiths by now.

“Still, remember how my grandson had constantly tried to gain Mila’s affection for a time, Serenity? I wonder if you’re regretting allowing Mila to turn him down now... Though I’m sure you didn’t have much say in that... After all, it’s a matter that concerns only the children! Even so, as the head of the family, you should’ve been a bit stricter in deciding for her, don’t you think? If only you had been, then Mila wouldn’t have acted out of spite and continued furthering her studies in Hong Kong! If that didn’t happen, she could have already married my grandson now and opened a company together! Now wouldn’t that have been great!” declared Georgia as several of the guests who heard that began shaking their heads.

“Indeed! What an absolute pity!”

As comments about the situation continued being said aloud, those from the Smith family found themselves blushing deeply. This was especially so for both Gavin and Helen, the parents of the missing girl.

With Georgia mentioning Mila’s name so many times and continuing to poke their sore spots, the parents couldn’t help but get teary and red-eyed.

The two weren't the only ones saddened either. Mila had been Serenity's most adored granddaughter, and the old woman had watched Mila grow from when the girl was just a baby.

With Georgia saying all this to her face now, all sorts of emotions were beginning to brew within Serenity, and none of them were good feelings.

To think that those people had continuously tried to fawn on them back when Mila was still together with that rich Gerald... Now that they knew that Gerald was no longer supporting them, however, it seemed like they were taking all their past compliments back. In fact, nothing seemed to please them more now than enjoying the misfortune of the Smiths.

Understanding that, the old lady remained silent and simply sat down at a table, her family doing the same soon after.

For the next hour, the Smiths simply remained seated there, observing the expressions of the other guests. By then, several of them had been sitting so still that they found themselves having pins and needles. Just as they were feeling that they were nearing their limit to how much more shame they could take, a servant suddenly walked into the villa with a man and a woman following behind him.

The duo was, of course, Gerald and Rita.

Since Serenity's health hadn't been all that well recently, Rita had been staying close to her at all times to take care of her. However, since Rita had earlier heard that Mountain Top Villa was getting demolished, she wasn't able to stick by her grandma's side till now.

When those from the Smith family saw who was standing beside Rita, all of them ended up gaping in bewilderment as they simultaneously muttered, "...Gerald?"

All the Smiths felt like they were dreaming. It truly was none other than Gerald! But... Why would Gerald be with Rita? And why was he even here today?

Needless to say, everyone was overcome with extreme shock.

"...Oh? Is that Rita I see? Why have you only arrived now? Regardless, who's that beside you? Could he be your boyfriend?" asked Georgia as soon as she saw the two who had just entered.

Since Georgia was quite close with Serenity, she knew Serenity's relatives and friends well. That said, she also knew that Rita was

Serenity's niece, and that she was also a favorite of that old woman aside from Mila. With that in mind, it was natural that she felt the need to inquire about the new face.

Shortly after Georgia's question, Justin Sier—her grandson—and his recently married wife began walking over. Seeing that, her granddaughter—Quin Sier—and her husband walked over to the group as well.

“Grandma,” said both of them in unison as Justin took a peek at Rita.

Following that, he laughed rather bitterly before saying, “It's been quite a while since we've last met, Rita! Not only have you become prettier, but it also seems like you already have someone now!”

“Who is she, hubby? Are you close to Rita?” asked a gorgeously-dressed woman who was standing beside Justin.

“Hmm? Oh, she's the person I mentioned to you before! Mila's cousin! It's a pity though, she could've been my cousin back then as well! Oh well!” sneered Justin.

“Ah, I see!” replied the woman in a cold tone.

From that alone, it was evident that Justin had already told her about the incident of him going to the Smith family's home to propose to Mila.

“Justin, you can't just greet Rita when her boyfriend's standing right next to her. Go ahead and greet him as well!” said Georgia while scanning the ordinarily-dressed Gerald from head to toe.

Since Rita had always been an arrogant and proud girl, Georgia had no idea why she would get herself a person like that. After all, Gerald looked vastly different from all the other rich heirs there.

Chapter 1248

Georgia had purposefully raised her voice to ensure that everyone there heard her.

Now that everyone's attention was on Gerald, Justin smiled subtly before saying, “Ah, so you're my cousin-in-law! A pleasure to meet you!”

He showed no interest in even wanting to shake hands with Gerald, and his wife simply stared at Rita's boyfriend, sizing him up from

her husband's side. While Gerald certainly didn't dress luxuriously, she just had a gut feeling that something was wrong with him.

"Since you're so exceptional, I believe that your boyfriend must be equally as excellent as well! Do introduce him to us!" said Georgia.

"Apologies, Lady Walford, but he isn't my boyfriend," replied Rita as she turned to look at the rest of her family who were still seated at the table.

The Smiths hadn't even recovered from their shock yet, and their mouths simply remained wide open as they continued staring at the duo in silence. Even Serenity hadn't been able to regain her wits in time to reply.

"...Oh? So he isn't your boyfriend? Then what position does he have to own a right to be here today?"

'What on earth are you trying to pull off here...?' Georgia found herself thinking.

"This here, is Gerald. And he has every right to be here today since he's Mila's fiancé!" explained Rita.

“...What? Mila’s... fiancé? But how could that be? Hasn’t she gone missing for at least two years? Shouldn’t her boyfriend have broken up with her a long time ago?” replied Georgia.

She was well aware that Mila’s boyfriend was extremely powerful. After all, he had completely overshadowed them back when Mila was still around. Now that Rita had said such a thing, all the guests in the villa immediately fell silent as they stared at Gerald.

“...Mila’s Fiancé? Him? Is she for real?”

“What on earth is happening...?”

As the others whispered among themselves while discussing the current situation, Gerald said, “Though Mila isn’t here at the moment, I’d like to assume that I’m already part of the Smith family since both of us have already been in a relationship for such a long time. What more, we’ve already decided to marry each other! With that in mind, I’m sure you won’t blame me for coming over since you invited the rest of the Smith family here today anyway, right Lady Walford?”

While it was true that Gerald was using his engagement with Mila as his excuse to be here, he wasn’t lying about both of them verbally agreeing to marry each other. Though Gerald had planned to get

engaged with Mila after her studies ended in Hong Kong, well... All that happened.

Regardless, after hearing what Gerald had to say, Georgia and the rest of the guests instantly became stunned.

“Holy cr*p! Is he really the same boyfriend from before? The extremely wealthy man?!”

“From the looks of it, he truly is! Oh god, he’s here!”

As Georgia felt chills run down her spine after hearing all the exclamations of surprise from the guests, she composed herself before saying, “...But of course I wouldn’t mind! In fact, it’s an honor to our family that you could come!”

Following that, she retracted her hands from the two lovely children who had been supporting her this entire time. There was no need for her to be pretentious before Gerald.

With that, Gerald and Rita then headed over to the table where Serenity and the others were currently seated at.

“Grandma, Mr. Smith, and Mrs. Smith! I’ve returned!” said Gerald as he looked at them with a smile.

“M-Mister Crawford! W-we...” stuttered Serenity who felt like she had just awoken from a long dream.

After all, the Smiths had already assumed that Gerald had long forgotten about them in the past two years.

“I promise that regardless of what happens to Mila, I’ll take care of everything in the future,” said Gerald before all the members of the Smith family.

Hearing that, several of the Smiths including Mila’s elder sister, Irene, began crying in excitement.

They truly had suffered way too much injustice in the past two years.

Suddenly hearing all this truly touched every single one of the Smiths, including Serenity. They now finally realized that they had misunderstood Gerald this entire time, and that Mila hadn't misjudged him.

Regardless, the atmosphere of the setting instantly changed rather drastically now that Gerald was here. Though not many of the guests had even paid the Smiths any attention earlier, more and more of them were now heading over to their table to toast and chat with them in hopes of being able to deepen their relationship with that family. Of course, there were also those who immediately began fawning on the Smiths as well.

Even a few of the presidents were already surrounding Serenity while saying, "Speaking of which, it was your birthday yesterday, wasn't it, Madam? Why didn't you send us invitation cards to attend? Such a pity that we weren't able to celebrate with you... Whatever the case is, we'll certainly make up for it later!"

With all this happening, the person who was suffering the most was most definitely Georgia.

After all, she had initially invited Serenity and her family over to show off her grandson, granddaughter-in-law, and grandson-in-law. To think that Mila's powerful boyfriend would make a sudden

reappearance out of the blue! She definitely needed to be respectful toward him! However, that wasn't even the biggest shock for her.

Gulping, Georgia then asked, "...Madam, what did you say his name was...? Mr. Crawford? Which Mr. Crawford are you referring to, exactly...?"

The second the guests heard Georgia's question, all of them instantly fell silent in shock. After all, everyone present was well aware of who Mr. Crawford was, especially since they were in Mayberry. Hearing his name alone was enough to cause everyone to become momentarily stupefied.

"Which other Mr. Crawford would you assume him to be? Of course he's the Mr. Crawford from Mayberry! I bumped into him while I was at Mountain Top Villa, you know?" replied Rita as she took a peek at the guests' reactions.

Mr. Crawford from Mayberry? Mountain Top Villa?!

Who could remain calm after hearing all this? At that moment, multiple screeching of chairs—being pushed against the floor—could be heard as everyone immediately stood up, flabbergasted expressions on their faces.

Georgia was now barely able to breathe herself.

“Could it really be true? Could Mila’s extremely powerful and wealthy boyfriend truly be Mr. Crawford from Mayberry?”

“Thinking about it now, it shouldn’t be fake! After all, Mila and Mr. Crawford both graduated from Mayberry University! We also know that her boyfriend is exceedingly rich! With that in mind, I have reason to believe that he truly is Mr. Crawford!”

“Oh god! We should have figured out earlier that Mila’s boyfriend was actually Mr. Crawford!”

While all of them were feeling bewildered as they discussed this sudden revelation, they were simultaneously filled with regret. Why hadn’t they just continued maintaining a good relationship with the Smiths? If they had, they would’ve definitely become both prosperous and successful by now.

Staggering slightly, the panting Georgia had to be supported by the two children again to avoid falling. She needed to head over to greet Gerald right this instant!

'Oh god! He truly is the real Mr. Crawford! He even introduced himself as the son-in-law of the Smith family! There is absolutely no way we'll ever be able to compete with Serenity's family now!'

Though Georgia had initially seen fluffy white clouds in the blue sky, all the clouds were now dark and thunder was flashing ever so often. Her heart was completely desolate now.

Just as Justin himself was about to head over to Gerald to kneel as a sign of his respect, Yana Shute—his wife—suddenly said in a doubtful tone, "...Something's off... Why does he look so familiar... The more I look at him, the more I feel like I've met him somewhere before..."

"What's wrong, Yana? What do you mean he looks familiar? Regardless, head over there quickly and help us apologize to Mr. Crawford for neglecting him earlier! He's clearly the real deal!" said Georgia.

"...Hold on, grandma! There's no need to be so nervous! I... I think that he isn't really Mr. Crawford!" said Yana as she held onto her grandmother's shoulder.

"...What? Why would you make such a bold claim?"

“Call it a gut feeling, but I’m fairly certain that he used to be my classmate when I was much younger... The more I look at him, the more he resembles that old classmate of mine!”

Chapter 1250

Yana’s voice sounded much more determined now.

“A... A classmate?” replied both Justin and Georgia, both equally shocked by her claim.

It was as though they were hearing some story from The Arabian Nights, and they had their reasons to be doubtful. After all, such a coincidence was pretty much unheard of! What more, though Yana had a powerful family background, there was simply no way she would have been able to afford or even have the status to be Gerald’s classmate!

“...What kind of classmate could you be referring to? Do note that we can’t afford to make jokes about such things, Yana. I’ll have you know that I have some prior knowledge about Mila’s boyfriend, and I can confirm that he truly is extremely powerful. It’s the reason why so many of us are willing to believe that Mr. Crawford really is her boyfriend after he revealed his identity! If we end up offending him

now, we may not be able to survive in Mayberry any longer!” said Georgia as she began smacking her thighs in her anxiety.

“That’s right, Georgia! You’d best think about it carefully first! Are you really sure he’s your classmate? Please don’t end up mistaking him for someone else!” added Justin.

“I’m fairly certain that he’s my primary school classmate. After all, I clearly remember that during my primary school days, my dad had been focused on expanding his underground forces and had chosen to begin development in Serene County. Due to that, I naturally had to follow him and that’s how I ended up studying in a primary school there. Regardless, there was a person called Gerald in my class, and after hearing that name again after so long, I couldn’t help but start doubting him. After all, the more I look at him, the more familiar he seems. I hadn’t said this earlier since I admit that I couldn’t really remember what he looked like. However, after observing him for a while now, I truly believe that he’s the same Gerald I used to know!” replied Yana as she squinted her eyes in confirmation.

“The Gerald I knew back then... I remember him being in a particularly difficult position since he was so poor... If I’m recalling correctly, both of us even had small talk back then! Regardless, what do you think, grandma? Is it not possible that the Smiths hired someone to impersonate Mr. Crawford?” whispered Yana.

Upon hearing that, Georgia felt her heart skip a beat as she thought, ‘...Honestly, what she’s suggesting isn’t completely out of the question!’

“...Quite frankly, even though I was the one who had invited them over, I hadn’t expected Serenity and her family to actually attend this birthday party. After all, they’d definitely expect me to show off a lot. Despite being aware of that, she actually came! I found it odd that she had been able to remain so confident up till this point. It’s also strange that Rita only showed up now, and with Mila’s boyfriend of all people!” muttered Georgia as she further analyzed the situation.

‘You know, after hearing what Yana had to say, I’m starting to think that Serenity had planned for all this to happen all along! If my guess is correct, then Serenity is definitely trying to embarrass me on purpose! What a vicious old witch!’ Georgia thought to herself, seemingly seeing the bigger picture.

From what Justin and Yana had heard their grandmother say, even they were starting to arrive at the same conclusion she was. After all, all of it simply made sense.

“...Regardless, we still can’t act blindly, Yana. We should at least make sure if he’s absolutely your classmate first!” added Georgia who was clearly still slightly frightened. After all, if they truly had made a mistake, then a major mishap would undoubtedly befall them.

“Haha! Not to worry, grandma! I’m now more than certain that he’s the Gerald I used to know! However, since you’re still worried about it, I’ll double-check just to make sure it’s him! Still, to think that small fry of a pauper would actually dare impersonate Mr. Crawford!” said Yana, with disdain in her tone.

While Yana was already a hundred percent sure that he was her old primary school classmate, she was just taking these extra steps to prove to the old lady that he was no threat to them. With that, she immediately waltzed over toward Gerald without even the slightest hesitation.

Since the table the Smith family was currently sitting at was now surrounded by people attempting to toast and talk to the Smiths—in hopes of deepening their relationships—Yana casually shouted, “Step aside, please!”

Hearing that, the guests simply nodded with smiles on their faces as they replied, “Miss Shute!”

Yana's family background wasn't as simple as one would think. After all, her uncle was a famous head of the underground forces in Mayberry. With that in mind, anyone who knew of her background wouldn't ever dare to offend her, including these businessmen.

Gerald himself hadn't been paying attention to any of their fawns this entire time. Instead, he had been focused on chatting with Mila's parents and grandparents, roughly describing his search efforts throughout the past two years. It was his way of saying that he had never given up looking for Mila, not even for a second.

However, as he was talking, he suddenly felt the back of his head being hit by someone!

Knowing that there weren't any warrior-like people in the vicinity, Gerald had long let his guard down. The fact that he hadn't sensed any approaching murderous intent made him all the more stupefied to realize that someone actually dared to attack him!

Turning around to see who had hit him, he realized that it was none other than Justin's newly married wife! For some reason, she now had her arms crossed as she looked smugly at Gerald.

Chapter 1251

“...And who might you be?” asked Gerald as he looked casually at her.

‘Smacking someone on the head as a greeting... I wonder if she’s lost her marbles...’

After seeing Yana actually smack Gerald on the back of his head, Georgia and the others instantly began trembling in fear. Quickly snapping out of it, all those from Georgia’s family—as well as the guests—quickly ran over and stood behind Yana.

“Are you really still pretending in front of me, Gerald?” asked Yana.

“Pretending? Do we even know each other?” replied Gerald in resignation. He truly had no idea who she was.

“Haha! So that’s how it’s going to be! Maybe this little refresher will help! Let me ask you something. Did you study in Third Primary School in Serene County as a kid?” sneered Yana.

“That I did... Though I’m curious as to why you’d know that...” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Hah! And did you study in the second class in third grade?” added Yana.

“...I did, indeed...” said Gerald, sensing that something was wrong. After all, everything that she had just said was true. Throughout his six years in that primary school, Gerald had always been in the second class.

‘Really though, who is this woman? Why would she even know which class I studied in?’

“Aha! See, grandma? What did I tell you? It truly is him!” shouted Yana in delight.

Having witnessed the scene play out with her very own eyes, Georgia’s meekness turned into hostility as quickly as a flip of a page.

As the old woman continued seething in contempt, Gerald looked at Yana with suspicion in his eyes as he asked, “...Again, I have to ask, who exactly are you?”

“Are you still playing dumb? I’m Yana Shute, of course! Humph! I was transferred over to your pathetic school when I was in third grade and ended up becoming your class monitor! I still remember how poor you were, even to this very day! If you still need a refresher, I’m sure you haven’t forgotten about the incident where a boy stole something from me and placed the blame on you! As a result, I poured water all over your face and I even told my dad to send people over to stop you from leaving! You were so scared back then that you didn’t even dare to go to school for a few days after that!” replied Yana contemptuously.

‘...Yana Shute...?’ Gerald thought to himself as the memories of her slowly returned to him.

As she had said, Yana had transferred into his class out of the blue back when he was in third grade. Back then, everyone was afraid of her since not only was she the class monitor, but she also wore the best clothes among her classmates. With so much power, she definitely didn’t have a high regard for Gerald at all.

Regardless, she had left a rather deep impression on him for the longest time due to a certain incident that involved one of their classmates stealing her eraser. The eraser itself was extremely beautiful—at least to a child—and the one who had stolen it placed the blame on Gerald!

Due to that, the young Yana had grown anxious and—without thinking too much about it—ended up splashing Gerald’s face with water!

Though that sounded harmless on the surface, Yana had failed to mention that the incident had taken place during winter. With that in mind, the water was actually scalding hot when it splattered over Gerald’s face! In a way, it could be said that she almost ended up ruining his face for good!

Anyway, while it was true that Gerald hadn’t gone to school for a few days after that, it wasn’t out of fear. Instead, it was because Gerald had to allow his face to heal after getting some medicine from a clinic.

At the time, he remembered truly resenting her a lot.

Either way, she transferred to another school when they were in fifth grade. With Yana out of the picture, Gerald slowly forgot about her.

‘Still, what a small world this is... Why do I keep bumping into classmates? To think that I’m actually meeting classmates from my primary days!’ Gerald thought to himself with a bitter smile on his face.

“...So it’s you. I remember you now...” replied Gerald with a slight nod.

“I finally remember you now?’ Gerald, are you seriously still trying to play a fool before me? I have to say that I’m quite impressed with how great your acting skills have become after not meeting you for so long! Still, how dare you impersonate Mr. Crawford?” said Yana as her eyes turned stern.

“...What? Impersonating Mr. Crawford?”

Chapter 1252

Undoubtedly shocked by Yana’s claim, everyone turned to look at her in disbelief.

“Don’t buy into his act, everyone! I, for one, know for a fact that this isn’t the real Mr. Crawford! His name is Gerald and he comes from some village in Serene County! He was also an extremely poor loser back when he was young! If you need proof, I’ll get someone to find his photograph in the past, right this instant! All of you will surely believe me after that!”

The photograph she was referring to was a group photo that had been snapped while they were still schooling together. Yana had a habit of keeping photos of herself, and it wasn't long before one of her men brought that exact photo over.

Showing it to everyone, they all saw that the photograph truly did show a young Gerald in it!

“So he really is Miss Shute's primary school classmate! What more, he was wearing such shabby clothes back then!”

As everyone remained momentarily shocked, Georgia laughed loudly before saying, “My, my, Serenity! It's beyond my expectations that you'd actually stoop so low! You were so full of energy back then... I'm well aware that you're sad that Mila's gone missing. What more, the real Mr. Crawford probably doesn't even care about any of the Smiths anymore! While I get that you desperately wish to gain respect in the business field again—since you're so helpless now—there's a limit to how low you should go, you know? We're already this old, Serenity. Was there truly a need to pull off such a dirty trick?”

Hearing that, the guests immediately grew scornful. Those who had initially been trying to toast and get close to Gavin quickly began leaving in disdain, their smiles instantly turning into frowns.

“Impersonating? Stooping this low? Georgia, you’d best watch your mouth! I don’t know what you’re thinking, but he truly is the real Mr. Crawford!” retorted Serenity.

“You’re still being stubborn now? Look, I’m fine with the idea of you hiring someone to impersonate Mr. Crawford, just to gain a little respect. However, you should’ve at least hired someone who’s as handsome as my grandson-in-law! Why’d you have to get someone who looks like this?” said Georgia as she laughed aloud.

“Grandma’s right! Did you honestly think that hiring such a poor loser was a good idea? He barely even gives off the aura of someone as powerful as Mr. Crawford! Still, Mila this, Mila that... All you Smiths ever talk about is Mila! To think that you’re all still hoping for Mr. Crawford to give two hoots about you even after she’s been missing for so long! Do all of you think that Mila’s a fairy or something?” added Yana, hints of jealousy in her voice. After all, her husband had once proposed to Mila as well.

“I don’t know what’s gotten into you, but you’d best not talk about Mila like that, Yana!” growled Gerald.

“Hah! You may not want me to do so, but I’m doing it anyway! Both the old and the young from the Smiths are shameless! To think that all of you would dare find such a poor loser to impersonate Mr. Crawford! Are all of you that keen on disgusting us?!” scowled Yana as she turned to glare at Rita.

Rita herself got up in a rage and retorted, “The hell are you calling shameless? You’re the shameless one!”

With that, she walked over to Yana and pushed her slightly for verbally abusing her family so much!

Of course, Yana had never been treated this way, and the young lady was quickly filled with immense rage. Raising her hand to slap Rita, Gerald quickly stepped in and grabbed onto Yana’s wrist before shaking her off!

“You... How dare you hurt me?!” roared Yana, her eyes widened so much that they looked like they were going to pop out at any second.

“How extremely daring you are, Gerald... Who the hell do you even think you are?! You’re just some loser impersonating Mr. Crawford! Do you actually think you’re him now?!”

'If I had been humiliated by a powerful person, I'd certainly feel honored! However, since such a lousy person like you is doing it, the humiliation is twofold!' Yana thought to herself as she continued seething in rage.

Nobody there had thought that the country boy would actually dare to treat Yana like that!

"Harm you? I was merely protecting Rita. Also, don't you think you've crossed the line a bit too much today, Yana? Don't you plan on leaving some leeway for yourself? I'll have you know that I won't let anyone do anything to those from the Smith family as long as I stand here today. Speak rudely one more time and I won't hesitate to beat you up for real!" growled Gerald.

"Hahaha! You're still pretending? What a joke! You've already hurt me yet you say you're still going to beat me up even further? I'd like to see you try-"

Before her sentence could even end, a loud slapping sound could be heard.

Everyone there knew the kind of person Yana's father was, and it was exactly because of that, that all of them were now completely stupefied.

Looking like a madwoman, Yana shouted, "You... You dare?! You f*cking beggar! You actually dared to slap me?! It's all over for you! Guards! Get in here right this instant! I want all of you to beat him up till he's nothing but pulp! If anything happens my uncle will take care of it!"

Following that, a group of security guards quickly surrounded Gerald, each of them holding onto batons.

Yana herself was now cupping her hurt cheek as she glared daggers at Gerald. It almost seemed as though she wasn't going to be able to release all her resentment until both of Gerald's legs were broken today.

Chapter 1253

Before any of the guards could make a move, however, the receptionist—who had been sitting by a table at the entrance this entire time—suddenly shouted, "A guest has sent over prestigious gifts for Lady Serenity from the Smith family!"

Upon hearing that, everyone immediately fell silent. While Yana and the others simply exchanged glances of dismay, Georgia found herself trembling as all of them slowly turned to look at the entrance, slight curiosity reflected in their eyes.

What on earth was happening? Prestigious gifts from a guest? And they were for the old lady of the Smith family of all people! Given the 'prestigious' part of the gifts, it was clear that whatever the guest had sent over, they were most definitely greater than any of the previous presents that the other guests had gifted Georgia. After all, gifting someone with a prestigious present was far from a common practice.

While it was obvious that the gifts themselves would definitely be of great value, the more important thing was that for a person to be able to hand out such gifts, they most definitely had to have an extraordinary status and identity.

They were all so sure about this since rules of gifting had already been present from ancient times. Essentially, if a person simply presented an ordinary gift, the receptionist was to only mark it down in the entry. If the gift was a large one, the receptionist would then have to stand before expressing their gratitude on behalf of their master. However, if a prestigious gift was presented, not only

did the receptionist have to stand up, but they even needed to declare the gift's presence loudly!

Even if a prestigious gift were to be sent over without the one gifting being present, the receptionist was still expected to follow the rules and declare the gift's presence.

With that in mind, those from the Sier family continued looking at the entrance in amazement. Yana herself—whose anger had peaked from the slap just minutes ago—found her rage momentarily suppressed.

However, she quickly snapped out of it. Still cupping her face, she then sneered, “How absolutely shameless... To think that you’d actually send gifts over to yourselves while attending the Sier family’s birthday party! It’s obvious that you’re the senders! After all, doing so would disallow my grandma to continue ridiculing you! Aren’t I right?”

“I’ll have to agree with Yana on how shameless you’ve become, Serenity... While it’s true that I treated you as a rival in the past, your unbearable hypocrisy makes me ashamed to even admit that now! Have you lived so long that you’re now able to do just about anything?” scowled Georgia as well.

As the guests turned to look at the Smiths with eyes reflecting greater disdain than before, Yana sneered, “Very well then! I’d like to see for myself what this poor loser is capable of presenting to all of you! Haha!”

Hearing that, the guards simply looked at each other before holding their breaths like everyone else already was. Nobody could deny that all of them were both nervous and curious as they waited for the receptionist to announce what the gifts were.

“The first gift is a top prosperity jewelry set!”

“...W-what...?”

Upon hearing that, everyone was instantly stunned. After all, just as its name suggested, a top prosperity jewelry set consisted of only the highest quality jewelry. What more, a set of such jewelry had to cost at least a million and five hundred thousand dollars!

“Next, a set of brilliant and radiant traditional clothes!”

As everyone instantly felt their jaws drop, the receptionist added, “Third is a piece of royal meandering agarwood and sandalwood!”

“The f*ck?!”

As the list went on, every passing gift made the guests feel more and more frightened. Eventually, the receptionist had only one final gift to announce.

“...And for the last gift, a luxury villa worth forty million dollars!”

“...W-what...?!”

By this point, everyone was already in disarray, all the hairs on their body standing on end. After all, none of the gifts that the receptionist had read out cost any less than a million and five hundred thousand dollars. As if that wasn't already magnificent enough, to think that the final gift was a luxury villa worth that much! It was impossible for there not to be an uproar after hearing that.

Even amidst the chaos, however, everyone was simultaneously worrying about two crucial questions.

‘Who was the one who had sent those gifts? And are they even real in the first place?! Forget the Smiths, nobody here is capable of presenting such luxurious gifts!’

Even if the Smiths had presented the gifts to themselves, including the villa, there were still eighteen gifts. Together, they racked up to a grand total of at least a few hundred million dollars! How much money did the Smith family actually own?!

Even if they had gone all out to preserve their dignity, there was simply no way they were able to fork out such a massive amount of money for this, right?

Though Georgia herself had been utterly shocked by the announcement of the prestigious gifts, she quickly regained her wits before looking at Serenity with a broad smile and saying, "...Have you gone mad, Serenity? This isn't the way to brag!"

Hearing that, the guests instantly burst into laughter. However, their smiles soon disappeared as everyone heard a familiar droning. Looking up into the sky, everyone was left stupefied when they saw six rows of helicopters—with three in each row—slowly descending before them!

Upon touching down, a group of people swiftly got off the helicopters.

Chapter 1254

In each of their hands, were the eighteen gifts that the receptionist had earlier announced! As for the most expensive gift—that being the forty million dollar villa—it was presented in the form of a contract.

“...H-how... How is any of this possible...?” muttered Georgia to herself, completely flabbergasted.

“We’ve brought the gifts over, Mr. Crawford! Here’s the list of the gifts!” said one of the bodyguards after walking toward Gerald and bowing respectfully.

“And why are you showing that to me? You should be showing it to grandma instead!” replied Gerald as he turned to look at Serenity with a smile.

“Since it was your birthday yesterday and I wasn’t able to attend, these are my gifts to you.”

Meanwhile, the others had their eyes widened in shock as they took turns muttering, “...M-Mr. Crawford...?”

All of them had heard the guards calling Gerald, Mr. Crawford, and this included Yana. Now feeling completely stunned, Yana and the others could barely believe it as they turned to face Gerald in unison.

‘...There’s... There’s just no way it could be him... Yeah, he’s just some poor loser from a small county in Mayberry! Any gift from that list is already a luxury item for him!’

“I... I refuse to believe this!” yelled Yana as she quickly rushed over to check whether the items the guards were holding were real, especially the estate contract of the luxury villa.

However, after looking through all of them, Yana found herself gulping with much difficulty.

‘...All... of these are the real deal... None of them are fakes!’

Georgia herself had run over by this point to see whether the gifts were actually real. To her dismay, all of them were authentic.

‘H-how could any of this be possible...?’

Serenity herself was now looking at Gerald with an extremely astonished expression on her face as she said, "...Gerald... How could you have bought so many expensive and valuable gifts...?"

"Do accept them, grandma... These gifts are the regards from both me and Mila!" replied Gerald.

Hearing that, Serenity instantly began weeping. From the second Gerald mentioned that the gifts were the regards from him and Mila, Serenity knew that Mila had always been in Gerald's heart. Mila truly hadn't chosen the wrong man.

After all, even after such a long time, Gerald still missed and showed concern for her. He truly did love with all his heart.

This entire time, Serenity had been refusing to celebrate her birthday until Mila was found, even though she knew full well that the chances of actually locating Mila was near nil.

Now that she had heard those words from Gerald, however, she knew that she would be able to rest in peace, even if she were to pass away before Mila was found. After all, even if her granddaughter had a hard life, Serenity now knew that there was a man who would always love her.

Naturally, none of these feelings had stemmed from receiving all those valuable and prestigious gifts. Serenity wasn't that kind of woman, after all.

As Serenity wept on, Georgia continued standing there in a daze. Not only was she feeling deeply humiliated, but she had also offended Mr. Crawford terribly.

Now that all this had happened. Nobody dared to continue doubting Gerald's true identity.

Suddenly coming back to her senses, Georgia instantly ran over to Gerald before begging, "P-please, Mr. Crawford! The Sier family hasn't been insightful enough to know who you were, and it's completely our fault for being so ignorant! Please, please forgive our family! Justin! You and the others have to kneel as well!"

Knowing that they wouldn't be able to survive long after offending Mr. Crawford, Justin instantly fell, quickly tugging on Yana's dress to prompt her to kneel as well.

To everyone's surprise, however, Yana suddenly began laughing almost maniacally!

“You? Mr. Crawford? I still refuse to believe that! Since you’ve already admitted that you’re the same Gerald from primary school, you should still be nothing but a poor loser! There’s just no plausible way that you could ever turn out to be Mr. Crawford of Mayberry! The man with near-endless wealth! If you truly are him, then explain how you got to where you currently are! Until then, I won’t ever believe you!” yelled Yana, a hideous expression on her face.

Gerald himself simply sipped some red wine as his bodyguard handed a white cloth over to him. After wiping his mouth, he simply turned to glare at the insufferable woman before saying, “There’s no need for me to even bother explaining such a f*cking awesome life to you.”

Chapter 1255

Yana had spent most of her life relying on her family’s background, which led to how condescendingly she behaved today. It was also because of that reliance that she had no idea how terribly she was going to suffer, now that she had behaved so terribly before Gerald.

Gerald had made sure to word his previous sentence in a way that warned her that she wasn’t the only one capable and powerful in the world. In fact, there were many others who held much more power than her.

Georgia and the rest of the Sier family members themselves were now so frightened that they didn't even dare to utter a single word.

Regardless, the birthday party had long lost its meaning and after a short while, Gerald and the Smiths simply left their villa.

Though the incident hadn't really taken place for that long, Serenity felt like she had just experienced a roller coaster of emotions. Quite literally as well. By the time the Smiths stepped out of Georgia's villa, the old woman could already feel her blood flow and heartbeat growing unsteady.

Things didn't get better and halfway through their journey home, her limbs suddenly went numb! Feeling extremely dizzy by this point, Serenity could no longer endure the headache— that she had been experiencing for a while now—and ended up passing out! Upon seeing that, all the Smiths grew equally frightened.

Gerald himself was unable to help since he didn't even know that all this was happening. He had parted ways with the Smiths upon exiting the villa earlier since he wanted to check on the progress on Mountain Top Villa before paying the Smiths a visit at their home.

He had reason to be so keen on checking in on the digging process. After all, from what he had been told, excavation of the inner part of the mountain had been rapid and things were going much faster than initially expected. For all he knew, the Zircobsite could very well be located the next day!

Regardless, since Gerald wasn't here to calm them down, the Smiths found themselves momentarily panicking. However, this wasn't the first time they had seen this happening to Serenity in the past two years, so they quickly calmed themselves again. The good thing was that their home wasn't too far off by now. The bad thing was that Serenity's episode this time seemed much more serious than any of the last.

Upon reaching home, the Smiths immediately hooked Serenity up to a machine that supplied oxygen to her.

Following that, they phoned Dr. Jace Mabb and called him to come over quickly to help Serenity.

Jace himself was a sixty-year-old doctor in the military region who was famed for having exceptionally great medical skills.

He had returned to his homeland this year, choosing to work as a professor in a hospital instead. Given his capabilities, he ended up

quickly getting the role of vice president of one of the medical associations as well.

Upon arriving at the Smith family's home alongside his two apprentices—a man and a woman—the trio bumped into Gerald who had come over to visit the Smiths after receiving all the necessary updates on the excavation process.

Both parties simply nodded at each other in greeting before proceeding to the front door together.

The moment they entered the house, however, Gerald saw that Gavin and the others were all panicking. After enquiring what all the fuss was about, Gerald finally learned of what had happened.

As it turned out, Serenity had suffered an attack from her chronic illness on her way home earlier. It was also at that moment when Gerald realized that the trio who had entered with him were doctors that had been called over to have a look at her.

“Is grandma in her room? I hadn't expected her illness to be this bad, so I'll go have a look at her first!” said Gerald who could already tell that there was a problem with the old lady's body from the second he saw her back in Georgia's villa.

Though he hadn't revealed that he was aware of it since the timing wasn't right, Gerald was certain that he could treat her.

Quite honestly, Gerald hadn't decided to come all the way here—after getting updates from Mountain Top Villa—just to have a chat with the Smiths. Rather, his goal had been to cure her illness this entire time.

Before any of the Smiths could reply to Gerald's question, however, Jace's male apprentice—who was standing behind his master and looked to be around thirty—coldly shouted, "Hold it! How insolent you are! Can't you see that my master is here? Are you trying to make a fool of yourself or something?"

Hearing that, Jace's other apprentice smiled subtly at Gerald before saying, "There's no need to behave this way, senior! From what he had said, I'm assuming that he came over to treat the patient as well! Is my deduction correct?"

Gerald simply returned a smile to her, though he was much too worried about his grandmother's illness to be concerned with the male apprentice's earlier taunts. Choosing to look at Gavin instead, he then asked, "How long has grandma been sick, Mr. Smith?"

Upon hearing Gerald's question, Gavin began elaborating on what he knew about Serenity's illness. As it turned out, the illness had been present for quite some time now, and the old lady would suffer from it from time to time. The Smiths discovered a pattern where every time she had an attack, it would always be followed by a few more in rather consistent intervals. Once those stopped, no more attacks would follow until the next time the illness struck again.

Chapter 1256

While the Smiths had also met up with others to attempt to treat the illness, none of them had been able to produce any substantial results. It was around then when they came across the incredibly skillful Dr. Mabb and began asking for his help.

After several visits, those from the Smith family even got to know both of Jace's apprentices a bit better. The man—who was around the age of thirty—went by the name of Walbridge Lumb. As for the other apprentice, she was a twenty-three-year-old-woman by the name of Brianna Zeigler.

Regardless, while it was true that Dr. Mabb had already made multiple visits before this, he hadn't been able to discern what the issue was with her yet.

"...If there isn't anything else, I'm going to go have a look at grandma first. Though all of you needn't be too worried since her illness isn't that major," said Gerald rather confidently.

Upon hearing that, Walbridge's expression immediately turned fierce, though he had already been hostile from the moment Brianna had said that Gerald could be a doctor as well.

'Is this guy trying to steal our business or something? Though he's younger than me, to think that he said that the illness wasn't anything major when even the master hasn't been able to identify her illness! The f*cking nerve of this guy!'

"It'd do you well not to be too arrogant, young man," said Walbridge with a slight frown, clear dissatisfaction in his voice.

"He's right, Gerald... I don't mean to be rude, but I've never heard of you studying medicine before..." added Helen who truly didn't have any intention of looking down on him. However, treating illnesses and saving lives was no trivial affair.

What more, she knew that Gerald was a student from the faculty of literature. Even if he was a rich heir, that didn't automatically mean that he was a master in all other skills as well. While those from the Smith family were willing to believe in Gerald's words, the risks involved were simply too high for them to rest easy.

Sensing that their hesitation was sound and they truly didn't mean anything else, Gerald simply shook his head with a slightly bitter laugh. Truth be told, he had already mastered three religions and nine schools of thought. With that in mind, what was medical expertise to him?

Naturally, Gerald knew better than to blame Mrs. Smith and the others. After all, they knew little about what had happened to him in the past two years. For ordinary people, such a leap in ability would most definitely sound illogical.

Regardless, they saved the chit-chat for later and began walking toward the room where Serenity was in.

Upon entering the sickroom, Rita—who had been staying by her grandmother's side this entire time—instantly turned around to see who had entered. Noticing that Gerald was also present, Rita flashed a smile at him before saying, "So you're here too, Gerald! Regardless, my grandmother's already woken up, Dr. Mabb!"

Hearing that, Serenity—who was still lying on the bed—called out in a weak voice, “Dr. Mabb... Dr. Lumb... Dr. Zeigler... And Gerald... I’m glad to have all of you here... Getting... straight to business, I’ve already been sick for two years now, Dr. Mabb... While it only attacks occasionally, every time it happens, it gets more and more serious... Despite me saying ‘occasionally’, it’s happening way more times than before...”

It was obvious that she hadn’t expected Gerald to want to cure her illness as well, which was why she was only looking at Jace as she explained her recent conditions to him.

“Each attack usually lasts for less than an hour. While I do wake up after that, after a short while, the attacks usually return for another four to five times before finally stopping. I’ll be frank and say that I can’t bear it anymore...!” added Serenity with a sigh.

“There’s no need to be so nervous, Madam Smith. My master’s been researching your illness this entire time. While it’s truly an odd illness, master’s finally managed to gain some results from his investigation efforts. We’ll have you look at it now! I assure you that master’s findings are much better compared to the nonsense some people who lack self-awareness are capable of spouting!” replied Walbridge with a smile as he took a peek at Gerald.

“Haha! I’m afraid that you won’t be able to find anything wrong with me if you’re doing my check-up now... I’ve already seen several other doctors, and none of them had been able to diagnose anything wrong with me until my headache struck!” said Serenity in a smile of resignation.

“...Oh! I... see. Right, right!” replied Walbridge slightly awkwardly as he took a step back.

“...Regardless, if you’ve truly found the solution to my illness, could you treat it immediately, Dr. Mabb? I really don’t wish to suffer so much anymore!” begged the old lady.

Jace himself simply remained silent.

Gerald, on the other hand, simply looked at the wall clock in the room before saying, “There’s no need to be impatient, grandma... Let’s just wait for an hour and five minutes to pass. Your attack should trigger then and I believe that Dr. Mabb will only be able to cure you when you’re suffering your headache!”

“...Oh? I don’t think I’ve mentioned when the next attack was going to be, have I? How’d you make such an accurate guess, Gerald?” asked Serenity, slightly shocked.

“I figured as much. After all, it’s now only an hour before noon. Since there’s going to be a rise in temperature, excess heat in the body is going to cause disruptions within your blood circulation and respiratory system, both of which contribute to causing migraines,” replied Gerald with a smile.

Hearing that, the old lady smiled before nodding approvingly at Gerald as she said, “I hadn’t expected you to know such things, Gerald!”

Upon seeing that, Walbridge—who had been standing at the side—simply sneered, feeling slightly annoyed.

Jace, however, turned to look at Gerald in surprise while thinking, ‘...Could this young man truly be proficient in medicine...?’

Just as Gerald had said, Serenity—who had been talking and laughing cheerily before this—suddenly portrayed an extremely

pained expression on her face sometime around noon. Seconds after that, she began holding onto her head with both her hands, large droplets of sweat rolling profusely down her forehead.

“Please bear with the pain for now, Madam Smith. I’ll be performing acupuncture therapy on you right this instant,” said Jace as he stretched his hand out to check her pulse. Following that, he retrieved a needle bag from his medical kit before taking out a few silver needles.

With great precision, he then stabbed the needles into a few acupuncture points on her body, followed by points on her head and shoulders.

Seeing that, Gerald was slightly stunned.

‘So that’s why he had so much reputation within the military region... He truly is quite capable! Haha!’

As Jace continued performing the acupuncture, he asked, “Speaking of which, mister, are you aware of what kind of acupuncture therapy I’m using?”

“Is there even a need to ask him, master? How on earth would he even know?” said Walbridge coldly.

“Now, now, Gerald accurately predicted when the next attack would occur! With that in mind, it shows that Gerald is quite an insightful man!” replied Brianna as she smiled faintly at Gerald.

“What’s there not to know? It’s just Deadly Acupuncture Therapy,” said Gerald as he looked at the doctor with a smile.

Though Jace was slightly astonished to hear that Gerald knew of the technique, the fact that Gerald had used the word ‘just’ made him feel slightly angrier than he was surprised.

Putting on a haughty expression, Jace then said, “Humph. Not bad. It seems that you truly are insightful to a degree...”

Regardless, once Jace was done with his therapy, Serenity’s pain seemed to have eased quite a bit, judging from her expression.

“Haha! Master isn’t called the most skillful doctor from the military region for nothing! After researching the illness for so long, the results are finally here!” declared Walbridge as he heaved a sigh of

relief. Seeing that Serenity was now looking much better, he turned to look smugly at Gerald.

“You flatter me,” replied Jace with a calm smile.

The second he said that, however, Serenity suddenly began trembling. In just a matter of seconds, her initial eased expression turned into roars of pain as she began holding onto her head again! She was now arguably suffering even more than before Jace’s treatment!

Seeing that, everyone in the room became stunned, especially Jace. Looking at his silver needles, he muttered to himself, “This... This isn’t supposed to happen! It’s impossible!”

Following that, he rushed toward Serenity to check her pulse. Her face pale by this point, the doctor could feel the old lady’s pulse beating at random intervals, even stopping for several seconds at a time before rapidly coming back to life. It was extremely weird, to say the least.

“Please, help her, Dr. Mabb!” cried out the other members of the Smith family as they anxiously ran over to him the second they saw how increasingly serious this attack was compared to the last.

Seeing Serenity's skin go from pale to a purplish-green, Gavin's anxiety peaked and he was now jumping in both anxiety and frustration.

Jace himself was currently in disarray. After all, he truly had no idea what to even do at this point.

Realizing how serious Serenity's condition had grown, Gerald dashed toward her and immediately pulled out the silver needles from her body. Following that, he took six of the silver needles and stabbed them into acupuncture points located around her neck and shoulders.

Though Gerald could already tell what illness the old lady was suffering from much earlier, he wanted to see if Jace truly deserved all the reputation people gave him. If he was truly able to cure Serenity's illness, then there was no need for him to step in and snatch that credit for him. However, now that all this had happened, Gerald had no choice but to make a move.

"...D-Divine Acupuncture Therapy...?" said Jace as his jaw dropped.

"Humph. Not bad. It seems that you truly are insightful to a degree..." uttered Gerald, using the same sentence Jace had used on him earlier.

After having a few more needles stabbed into her, Serenity's expression soon returned to a relaxed one. With the migraine now gone, her face slowly returned to its initial rosiness.

"...Mom...? How do you feel...?" asked Gavin, his delight evident in his concerned tone. To think that Gerald had such capability!

Though Gavin and the others knew little about medicine, everyone—who had witnessed Gerald's and Dr. Mabb's acupuncture skills earlier—was sensible enough to tell that Gerald's skills far exceeded the doctor's.

"I'm feeling much better now..."

Chapter 1258

The old lady had a weak smile on her face as her breathing gradually returned stable.

As Serenity's butler ran over to her to wipe her sweat away, Jace and Walbridge could only stand there, completely flabbergasted.

It was especially shocking to Jace since he hadn't expected Gerald to actually know how to use Divine Acupuncture Therapy. After all, it was a skill that had died out, and Jace had even assumed that the technique had been lost forever. Now that he had witnessed it with his very own eyes, it was natural for him to feel completely stupefied.

Walbridge himself soon began seething with envy as he thought, 'Not only am I a few years older than him, but I've also visited famous masters and learned the ins and outs of medicine from a young age! Even though I'm a professional who's received standard training and education, to think that I actually know less than this b*stard! This... I can't just accept this!'

His jealousy only continued to soar when he saw how happily Breanna was smiling while she looked at Gerald.

"This guy probably did all that by coincidence, master! There's no way someone like him would have any real talent or capabilities!" sneered Walbridge.

Helen herself turned to look at Gerald before asking, “Where did you learn those medical skills, Gerald...?”

Hearing her question, Jace lifted his head to look at Gerald as well, curious of what he would answer.

“Let’s talk about this later. For now, just know that her illness isn’t anything too serious. I’ll be prescribing some medicine for her later, so make sure someone buys them for her! Once she consumes the medicine for about a year, she’ll be entirely cured!” replied Gerald with a smile.

“Is that really so? Oh god, that’s wonderful!” shouted all the Smiths in delight.

“Hold on a moment, Mr. Crawford!” said Jace as he walked toward him.

After witnessing the Divine Acupuncture Therapy technique before his very own eyes, Jace was now starting to have great respect for Gerald.

“What is it, Dr. Mabb?” asked Gerald as he turned to look at the doctor.

“I hope you’ll forgive me for my initial imprudence! Also, if I may ask, from who did you learn the Divine Acupuncture Therapy technique from? Could you perhaps be acquainted with Mr. Sawyer Wytt...?” asked Jace.

“I have no idea who that is... Also, regarding who I learned it from, I’m afraid I can’t share that information with you!” replied Gerald rather casually.

Since Finnley’s identity was extremely mysterious, Gerald couldn’t just reveal it that simply.

“...I see! Well, if you weren’t already aware, that technique is a form of acupuncture therapy that died out years ago! Mr. Wytt was only able to learn three of that technique’s skills by chance. However, due to that, he was able to become a legend in the military region. Though I thought he was the only one remaining who knew how to use the technique, you appear to be even more proficient in the Divine Acupuncture Therapy technique than he is, despite the fact that you’re so young! Quite honestly, I’m finding all this rather hard to believe!” explained Jace, his disbelief evident in his tone.

“...So what you’re saying is that someone else knows about this technique as well?” asked Gerald, slightly shocked by what he had just learned.

The Divine Acupuncture Therapy technique was one of the things that Finnley had taught him, and according to Finnley at the time, the technique had died out ages ago everywhere else. Once Gerald learned the ins and outs of the technique, Gerald and Finnley were the only ones capable of using it. Not even Joshua was given the chance to learn about it.

Gerald had reason to trust Finnley’s words. After all, the old man had always made accurate statements, and he definitely wouldn’t joke or lie to Gerald about the technique being mostly extinct. Finnley had no reason to make himself seem superior in front of Gerald. He just wasn’t that kind of person.

With that said, was it truly possible that someone else knew of the technique?

“So, what I’m hearing is that Mr. Wytt knows of this technique as well? Are you certain about that?” asked Gerald slightly doubtfully.

“I am! His first three skills in acupuncture are similar to yours! Speaking of him, despite Mr. Wytt’s old age, he was truly lucky to

have bumped into the person who had taught him the skills! From what I had been told, the person in question needed help at the time, and Mr. Wytt gave him a hand. As thanks, the person then taught Mr. Wytt the first three chapters of the acupuncture technique...”

Chapter 1259

“...Did you say that someone gave him the first three chapters? Do you have any idea who that person is?” asked Gerald in shock.

“I’ve never personally met him before either, Mr. Crawford. I only heard about it from Mr. Wytt. Regardless, according to Mr. Wytt, he had gotten acquainted with that mysterious person for quite some time. The person himself had come to the military region some time ago, and he apparently asked for Mr. Wytt’s help to place an object somewhere.”

“To show his appreciation, he offered to teach Mr. Wytt the first three chapters of the Divine Acupuncture Therapy technique. Even if the mysterious man hadn’t chosen that to be his token of appreciation, I believe that Mr. Wytt would’ve still helped him. After all, the mysterious man was clearly much more powerful than Mr. Wytt for him to respect him so much. Whoever the person was, he

definitely wasn't anyone young, that's for sure. Regardless, no matter how much I racked my brain, I simply couldn't figure out who Mr. Wytt would respect so much to the point of admiration!" explained Jace.

After hearing all that, Gerald felt his heartbeat quicken. He had a pretty good hunch who that mysterious person was.

'...Could the mysterious person be Finnley? After all, he's the only other person in the world who still knows that technique!'

"...When did all this take place? I need a rough estimate!"

"It was about eight months ago! Even though that isn't too long an interval, Mr. Wytt's medical skills have been near-perfect since then! Of course, you're way more exceptional than even he is! It's truly unbelievable!" replied Jace with a sigh.

'Eight months ago? Was it truly Finnley, then?'

After teaching Gerald a plethora of skills for half a year, Finnley had received some sort of keepsake before leaving in a hurry. Since then, it had been about a year and a half since Gerald last contacted the old man. No matter how much Gerald tried to inquire about

Finnley—after he got into trouble—he simply had no success. It was almost as though Finnley had just disappeared into thin air!

Even so, there was one thing that Gerald was sure of. It was that Finnley was extremely strong.

‘Hell, he’s definitely way stronger than even grandpa and Christopher! Back then, I wasn’t even able to come close to rivaling Finnley, even at my peak strength at the time. Should I be able to meet him again, however, I’ll be sure not to be so passive anymore...’

“...Speaking of which, if it isn’t too inconvenient, could you please introduce Mr. Wytt to me?” asked Gerald.

Whatever the case was, Gerald wanted to at least confirm for himself whether that mysterious person truly was Finnley or not, even though he already knew that his hunch was most probably correct.

“Not a problem! In fact, I think Mr. Wytt would love to meet you as well! Speaking of which, since you have expertise in medicine and I’m introducing Mr. Wytt to you, I wonder if you’d be willing to help me with something... See, I’ve been tasked with saving the lives of over a hundred children, and quite frankly, I have no idea where to even begin tackling the problem! Worry not, however, for curing them shouldn’t be as difficult as curing Madam Smith’s illness. I have

to emphasize that this is more for the children than it is to benefit me, and if I have to, I'm willing to kneel before you!" said Jace as he instantly began kneeling.

However, he was promptly stopped by Gerald.

"Hold on. Over a hundred children? What even is going on?" asked Gerald, feeling bewildered.

At that moment, Helen suddenly said, "Could you perhaps be talking about the peculiar flu that suddenly emerged out of nowhere two days ago? From what I've heard, over a hundred children are currently in danger of losing their lives, and nobody's been able to diagnose their illness yet!"

"That's the one!" replied Jace quickly.

"What exactly are the symptoms?" asked Gerald.

While Gerald definitely didn't label himself as a hero or even a kind person, he wasn't agreeing to help just because Jace was introducing Mr. Wytt to him. No, it was because he now knew that over a hundred children were currently suffering from some unknown flu. Even worse was the fact that their lives could very well be in danger!

Gerald was well aware that he wouldn't ever forgive himself if he didn't at least try to lend a hand in saving them.

Chapter 1260

Following that, Jace began describing the symptoms. By the time he was done, Gerald could feel his heart skip a beat.

'...What? These... These symptoms... They're definitely not symptoms of some kind of flu! These are the exact symptoms I had faced when I was suffering from the effects of Soul Eater! Symptoms that caused part of my blood and oxygen to be devoured! Rather than a disease, it's an evil technique!'

Soul Eater was an evil technique that he had learned from the memories that had been implanted into him. He knew it quite well since he had been forced to use it a while back to escape. There just weren't any other better alternatives at the time.

'Still, why are there so many children suffering from the effects of Soul Eater out of the blue? Could someone else out there know about the technique...?' Gerald thought to himself, perplexed.

However, he knew that now wasn't the time to dwell on that. He should instead head over to the children first to see whether they truly were suffering from the effects of Soul Eater.

"...There isn't any time to lose! I'll go with you!" said Gerald quickly.

"That's wonderful to hear, Mr. Crawford! You know, the dean and several others are having a research meeting at the moment. Let's head there first to see if they've discovered any new symptoms! Once we've done that, I'll lead you to the isolation rooms!" replied Jace.

Soon enough, Gerald arrived at the hospital with Jace and his two apprentices.

Upon entering the hospital's lobby, several parents could already be seen crying there. Of course, any parent would cry if such an incident befell their child.

Walking past them, the four people then quickly made their way into the conference room.

Since Jace already had quite a prestigious status, nobody even questioned about the people he had brought along with him into the room. Instead, they simply chose to stand up and greet the doctor.

Gerald himself quickly seated himself before looking at what was being displayed on the big screen in front of the conference room.

‘In the past three days, over a hundred babies have been sent to us, and all of them are currently in danger of losing their lives. According to the records in the case book, all of the babies are experiencing both vomiting and different degrees of pulmonary infections. The latter has a real danger of causing extensive body organ failure. We still don’t fully grasp what the cause of all this is, but from the hospital’s investigation efforts, it’s safe to assume that the symptoms are caused by the invasion of a new kind of virus.’

The next thing that was displayed was the state of the babies who had gotten sick due to the ‘virus’.

After that, a beautiful—yet worried-looking—anchor woman’s face was shown on the screen, and she turned to look at the tall hospital building before her before saying, “The hospital has established an emergency rescue team consisting of several famous medical experts! We can only hope that they’ll be able to come up with some miraculous treatment that’ll help save the hundred over delicate

lives that are still suffering now! We hope that you'll pray for the full recovery of the children as well, dear audience!"

Following, that, Zane Lowe—the dean of Mayberry First Hospital—signaled for the screen to be turned off before saying, "I'm sure you're all well aware of how serious the current condition that we're facing is. If we fail to save the children, then this incident will surely end up becoming an ugly stain in the history of medicine. With so many great minds present today, failure to save the babies will also lead to a massive medical accident scandal! By then, the credibility of the hospital will be near non-existent!"

"Everyone here today is an expert in this field, many of whom have come from affiliated hospitals and even hospitals that aren't related to us! I hope you all understand that in the face of danger, all of you bear the burden of the expectations from the government and also the people. Regardless, I'm not going to be spouting anymore nonsense. Let's begin discussing how we're going to save the lives of all these children. "

"Until the results of the bacterial culture are out, we won't even be able to come up with a solution. We need to suit the remedy to the case, you know? We can't just randomly prescribe medicine for the illness when we aren't even completely sure of what it is yet!" said a bespectacled middle-aged doctor in a bitter tone.

Many of the doctors present were feeling that it was deeply unfortunate that they had been transferred over to do such a terrible task.

While they were all well aware that succeeding in curing the children would most definitely bring them both profit and fame—even allowing them to gain the chance to enjoy massive publicity, praises, and rewards from their respective hospitals—they also knew that failure would lead to the ruin of any possible future prospects.

There were over a hundred children, and just thinking about the responsibility they needed to bear if they messed up sent shivers down their spines.

“...After checking their pulse, it seems that they’ve been inflicted with a pulmonary infection. While we’ve already tried using all sorts of antiviral medicine, no improvements have been noted,” said an old Chinese medicine practitioner next.

Silence ensued in the conference room for a while after that.

Everyone knew that there were now two options, one being Western medicine and the other being Chinese medicine.

Chapter 1261

Even if any of them had personal opinions on the matter, none of them dared to speak a word. After all, while it was true that they would receive no shortage of awards and recognition should they succeed in saving the children, failure to save them would surely result in them being painted as a villain.

There was simply no way that any of them were going to willingly become a scapegoat.

“...Does nobody have anything to say at all...?” asked Zane, his tone rightfully urgent as he scanned through all the present doctors.

Of course, nobody dared to answer him, and they found themselves averting their gazes whenever he turned to look at any of them.

Seeing their reactions, Zane could only sigh. It seemed that his professional career was going to end soon...

However, just as he was thinking that all was lost, someone suddenly broke the silence by saying, “I have a few ideas.”

Upon hearing that someone was actually willing to make a suggestion, all the doctors in the room immediately turned to see who had spoken. The individual in question had been sitting quietly in the corner of the conference room this entire time. If he hadn't spoken up, there was a high chance that everyone would've simply continued ignoring him.

Regardless, everyone was confused as to why he was the one who had spoken up. After all, everyone had been under the assumption that he was simply one of Dr. Mabb's apprentices, drivers, or even secretaries.

“...Say, who even is he?”

“Isn't he just one of Dr. Mabb's apprentices...?”

“I don't think so! From what I remember, Dr. Mabb only has two of them!”

While everyone was currently discussing among themselves as they looked at Gerald, Gerald himself paid them no attention. The

important thing was that he had already witnessed all that had been shown on screen earlier.

With the addition of rapid organ failure to the list of symptoms, Gerald was already a hundred percent certain that the Soul Eater technique had been the cause of all this.

However, it was evident that the person who had used the technique on the babies had only roughly mastered it. In fact, it wouldn't be a stretch that the person had been using it on the babies as practice!

After all, had the person achieved mastery over the Soul Eater technique like Gerald had, then the babies would have definitely been sucked dry before turning into ashes, just like what had happened to Hendrik and the others!

Gerald himself had only been able to master it that quickly since he had previously undergone training—to hasten learning processes—together with Finnley. It was how he had regained his strength after Queena sealed his inner strength.

Regardless, to think that someone would actually practice the vicious technique on babies... The thought of it alone caused an extremely ugly expression to form on Gerald's face.

However, he wasn't the only one angry. The truth was that all the doctors had been feeling slightly angry and contemptuous toward Gerald the moment he said he had an idea.

"Do you already have a solution to treating this strange illness, Mr. Crawford?" asked Jace in surprise as he instantly bowed respectfully at Gerald.

Seeing how respectfully Dr. Mabb was treating the young man, all of them could immediately tell that the young man wasn't his driver. What on earth was going on here...?

Zane—being a bit more experienced than the rest—immediately sensed that something was up. Looking at Gerald, he then said, "Do you have something in mind, young man?"

"Indeed I do," replied Gerald, ignoring all the stares from the other doctors. His priority was to save the lives of all those babies, and being looked at contemptuously was nothing new to him anyway.

Now that he had everyone's attention, he casually said, "The truth is, this isn't an illness at all. The babies are currently in such a state since someone had drained them of their oxyblood, resulting in their organs failing! Due to their organs being in such poor condition, the babies are currently susceptible to infections!"

The second Gerald's sentence ended, an uproar immediately broke out! Truth be told, several of the doctors wanted to laugh, but they refrained since they were currently facing such a serious situation.

“Young man, I heard Dr. Mabb calling you Mr. Crawford, so let's just go with that. Regardless, I wonder if you've been watching too many movies. Please refrain from spouting nonsense when you don't even understand what is going on here! Someone drained the babies' oxyblood? Are you suggesting that we have a vampire on the loose? What more, the babies are new-borns who've never left the NCIU! Actually, do you even know what NCIU stands for? Since you probably don't, it stands for Neonatal Care Unit! As an extra trivia, the air inside it is completely isolated!”

“To think that I had initially thought that you would actually provide us with a viable suggestion. As it turns out, you know nothing at all! Imagine if news about this gets published to the public! Society would definitely fall into disarray! Who even is this guy, Dr. Mabb?” asked one of the doctors as he continued glaring at Gerald.

“Please, just settle down for a minute, everyone!”

Chapter 1262

Jace quickly attempted to persuade the others to calm down before things escalated too quickly.

To be quite honest, even he had been surprised to hear Gerald say that someone had drained the babies of their oxyblood. It was a statement he hadn't heard of before.

Even so, he had witnessed Gerald's skills and abilities before, so Jace trusted that Gerald knew what he was doing.

"Hah! See, Dr. Mabb? I already told you that his feat earlier was just a coincidence! He's not really capable at all! Being so young, what would he know? You'd think he was here to act in some movie after hearing his explanation!" muttered Walbridge unhappily.

Though he hadn't said that in a particularly loud voice, everyone in the conference room could hear what he had just said.

It was obvious that Walbridge was jealous of Gerald. After all, he had seen the way Breanna—his long-time crush who was also his junior—looked at Gerald earlier. That was certainly the last straw for him!

Infuriated by him, Walbridge had had the constant urge to humiliate Gerald in public.

Upon hearing what his apprentice had to say, Jace's expression instantly turned gloomy as he turned to look at Walbridge before saying, "Quiet, Walbridge! I believe there must be a reason for Mr. Crawford to have said all that! Let's just see what else Mr. Crawford has to say first! What if his deduction is actually correct?"

Gerald himself now had a sour expression on his face. Anyone would feel dissatisfied after being criticized and humiliated in such a way.

"There are still many things all of you do not know about the world!" replied Gerald coldly.

"...If I may, is there a cure for all this, Mr. Crawford...?" asked Jace, choosing to believe in Gerald.

"There is. Acupuncture and medication can be used to condition their bodies. Even so, we have to act quickly. Once the babies' organs completely fail, they won't be able to be saved any longer!"

"Do you have any idea how hasty you're being? You can't just treat the lives of over a hundred children like jokes, Dr. Mabb! He's just

some young boy who barely has any experience! What would he know in this situation?!" shouted another doctor in rage.

"Do you have any better ideas, then?" asked Jace coldly in return.

"While I don't, we still can't take this situation so lightly! Also, giving medication to new-borns? What would happen if their condition worsens after taking the medication? You, of all people, should know that these babies can't take much more! With that in mind, we shouldn't be playing around with their health until we're entirely sure we can help them!" reasoned another person who felt that allowing Gerald to treat the new-borns was no different from giving him permission to toy around with their health.

Zane himself was now looking at Gerald, wondering whether to trust in him or not. Though Gerald's explanation sounded dubious at best, there was just something about the determination and clarity in Gerald's eyes that gave others a strong sense of conviction.

Was Gerald really that sure of his answer?

After thinking for a bit, Zane made his decision. Since nobody else had any better ideas anyway, what choice did he have but to place in trust in Gerald?

“...Let him have a go,” said Zane.

“...Come again? You’re actually letting him try? Then who’s going to bear the responsibility if something goes awry?!”

“I am!” shouted Jace, Zane, and Gerald simultaneously.

Following that, all three of them couldn’t help but turn to look at each other.

“...Fine then! Since all three of you have agreed to take full responsibility over this incident, so be it!”

Since there were now fools willing to take responsibility over the matter, everyone no longer had anything to say. Gerald could try all he wanted to!

If it wasn’t obvious enough by now, these doctors frankly didn’t care whether the babies lived or died as long as they could protect their own interests!

“Are you sure you don’t want to reconsider this, Dr. Mabb? We really shouldn’t be acting so hastily! We’re placing over a hundred lives on

the line here! It isn't just a single Lady Smith anymore!" said Walbridge whose jealousy had spiked now that the dean was also on Gerald's side. How was that even possible?

Walbridge honestly couldn't believe that his master was still buying into Gerald's nonsense. How could Dr. Mabb even be confused by such incoherent ramblings?

Much to Walbridge's surprise, Jace immediately glared at him before declaring, "Walbridge, you... I was wrong about you...!"

Stunned, Walbridge then replied, "...What? I... I just don't want your reputation to go down the drain, doctor! After all, you're a genius doctor!"

"Never have I ever thought of myself as a genius doctor... That's only a title my patients gave me. Walbridge, I'll have you know that if my reputation was all I needed to save these patients, then I'd gladly throw all of it away! You're a thirty-year-old man who's already been studying medicine for so many years, Walbridge... How is your way of thinking still so wrong? If you continue going down this path, I'm afraid you'll never be able to achieve a thing in the medical world!" said Jace as he sighed in disappointment.

His face now green with envy, Walbridge then shouted, "...W- whatever the case is, I still don't believe that he'll be able to cure the children!"

"And what if I'm able to?" asked Gerald as he stared coldly at Walbridge.

That guy had been coming at him this entire time and it was starting to annoy Gerald...

Chapter 1263

"Hah! What do you even mean by that? Fine then. If you successfully cure the illness, then I'll do anything you order me to!" scoffed Walbridge.

From how casually he had made that decision, it was evident that he thought that it was going to be impossible for Gerald to save all those babies who were already near death.

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded before heading off to the isolation room together with Jace and the dean.

Only three people were allowed to enter this time, and Gerald had a change of clothes before setting foot into the isolation room with the duo from before.

By then, all the babies had already stopped crying, and the room was eerily silent. From a glance, Gerald could see that not only were their complexions dark, but their bodies all looked swollen. Even the babies' lips appeared cracked.

Seeing those symptoms and how close those babies were to death, Gerald confirmed that it truly was the effects of the Soul Eater technique! From what he could guess from the damage done, the babies must have only experienced a third of the Soul Eater technique's power.

His deduction explained why their bodies were all looking so swollen. It was due to all the water in their bodies being sapped right out. With barely any means to cool their internal organs down, high fevers were simply inevitable!

"...How utterly cruel...!" growled Gerald under his breath.

If Gerald truly wished to heal them, he knew that acupuncture alone wasn't going to be sufficient. In order to ensure that there was going to be a smooth flow of oxyblood pellets within them in the future, Gerald had no choice but to use the Soul Eater technique to make up for their lost oxyblood.

However, he was also aware that the second he did that, his identity would surely be exposed since he hadn't found the Zircobsite yet. Once that happened, Queena would definitely come running over to hunt him down. Should he get caught, he knew he wouldn't even come close to rivaling her strength.

Gritting his teeth, Gerald reminded himself that even if that was going to be the case, it was still more important to save these lives. Since Gerald had already drained the oxyblood of several adults before this, he knew that he probably had enough to save all of them. As for revealing his location to Queena... He could still use the blood in the jade talisman to deal with that for at least another night.

Since Queena was at her most fragile now, she shouldn't be as scary as she previously had been! With that in mind, Gerald immediately began taking action.

Standing before the baby closest to him, Gerald took a single silver needle and began rapidly—but lightly—pricking on multiple spots on the baby's chest. The spots were by no means random, and all

eighteen areas that he pricked were part of the heavenly meridian, the core meridian, and the prime meridian.

There was barely any hesitation in between each prick, and Gerald's movements were so fluid that it almost seemed like he was performing some kind of magic show. Zane himself—who had been standing next to Gerald—couldn't help but feel slightly dumbfounded.

Turning to look at Jace, he was surprised to see how captivated the old doctor seemed to be over Gerald's perfect needle techniques.

Regardless, once Gerald was done, he quickly snuck his hand under the quilt and held onto the baby's wrist. With the Soul Eater technique, he then immediately began regulating and replenishing the child's oxyblood.

"...Alright, this one's safe now. Remember to properly cover the quilt over the baby! Now remove the clothes off the baby on Bed 2 and bring him to me! Quickly! We don't have much time!" ordered Gerald.

"...What? That was it?" asked Zane, his eyes widened.

“Yes, now hurry on with the next baby!”

“...R-right!” replied Zane with a nod before running off to do as he was told.

“...That... Is that...! Divine Acupuncture Therapy?!” shouted an old doctor in surprise. He had been solemnly observing them through the isolation room’s glass window for a while now, though Gerald’s immense skill had clearly flabbergasted him.

“Divine Acupuncture Therapy, Dr. Lisle?” asked another observer in slight dissatisfaction, though he had to admit that the kid was really good at performing acupuncture.

“Indeed! Divine Acupuncture Therapy is an acupuncture technique that was supposedly lost to time! According to rumors, Sawyer Wytt is the only person proficient in handling up to three steps of this technique!” explained the excited old doctor who hadn’t noticed the expression on the vice dean’s face.

“...Could he be Sawyer Wytt’s apprentice? No, that’s not right! As you’ve said, Sawyer is only proficient with three steps! But that kid there is capable of using up to eighteen! How terrifying!” exclaimed another old doctor who was familiar with the technique.

As several other old doctors—who recognized the technique—began clapping their hands in admiration as they continued staring wide-eyed, it was evident that there were still several people who were still in disbelief.

“He’s still pretty young, isn’t he? How could he possibly know how to use such a sophisticated acupuncture technique?” asked one of the skeptics.

“I’ll have you know that there’s no doubt about it! He truly is using the Divine Acupuncture Therapy technique! After all, I witnessed Mr. Sawyer Wytt using the technique while I was attending a seminar a few months ago! From what I observed, the needle that he used was exactly the same as the one Gerald’s currently using! The needle itself is an inch long, and while performing a demonstration of the technique, he lifted and vented it three times before using the Phoenix Technique to remove the needle. The action itself provides nourishment from the body, and also removes any excess miasma and moisture from within. However, I heard that one requires inner strength to perform the Divine Acupuncture Therapy technique... Could Mr. Crawford actually possess that...?” explained another doctor.

“Hah! You think someone like him could ever possess inner strength? Trust me when I say he’s probably just putting on a show. Whatever the case is, his true capabilities will be revealed through the results!” sneered Walbridge.

Being the envious person he was, Walbridge was already chanting in his mind, 'May those children not be healed by this buffoon!'

Gerald himself wasn't aware of the controversy among those outside the isolation room. After all, he was fully preoccupied with the Divine Acupuncture Therapy technique. With each needle that went in and out—the now pale-faced—Gerald slowly found himself getting more and more exhausted, large beads of sweat dripping off his chin. It certainly didn't help that a lot of energy needed to be used to replenish the babies' oxyblood.

Despite that, he maintained his immense speed and precision. Due to that, it wasn't long before he was done with all the babies in the room!

Throughout his efforts, the babies Gerald had previously cured were already shown signs of recovery. No longer were their faces dark, and on the contrary, their complexions were slowly turning fairer and rosier, clear signs that they were recovering.

What more, the swelling on their bodies were already subsiding as well, and their skin seemed to be returning to normal. In fact, it even appeared that their aura and vitality were even stronger than before!

“T-this...”

After seeing all this, Zane was so relieved and excited that he instantly burst into tears.

Chapter 1264

Even Jace found himself tearing up in joy. Their sheer delight had stemmed from the fact that all of the babies were most probably making it out alive now!

After carefully examining the babies—just for good measure—both men found themselves clasping their hands together while heaving huge sighs of relief to calm their excitement. How absolutely unbelievable!

“Mr. Crawford truly can bring the dead back to life!” cheered both men in immense admiration.

Gerald himself simply smiled weakly at their statement.

Compliments and admiration didn't really mean much to him. As long as the babies were healed, that meant that he had managed to successfully achieve his goal.

Now that he was done with this issue, his mind immediately wandered to the next concern. Who was the person in charge of committing all these atrocities in Mayberry City? And was that person stronger or weaker than him? Regardless, if he didn't find them soon, that person could definitely begin harming others!

He needed to quickly make a move anyway since he had already used his inner strength earlier. Even though he wasn't sure whether Queena would be able to detect him—given that she was currently at her most vulnerable—Gerald knew that he still had to immediately rush over to Mountain Top Villa.

After all, as long as he was close to the Zircobsite stone, Queena probably wouldn't be too keen on approaching him. With that in mind, he quickly made his way out of the isolation room.

Once he was outside, however, he was instantly greeted by looks of excitement and admiration from those who had heard that Gerald had successfully saved the children.

Knowing how proficient he was with the Divine Acupuncture Therapy technique, some of the older doctors even began kneeling before Gerald, hoping that he would take them under his wing as apprentices!

At that moment, Walbridge—who had a cold look on his face—suddenly said, “Amazing, aren’t you? You’re just lucky, young lad!”

Though Gerald was initially planning to leave immediately, upon hearing Walbridge’s words, he turned to face the arrogant man before replying in a cold tone, “...Speaking of which, do you remember your earlier promise?”

“...W-what?” said Walbridge, stunned.

“I distinctly remember you saying that you’d do whatever I asked you to as long as I was able to heal the babies!”

“That’s right, Dr. Lumb! All of us heard you make the promise as well!” said one of the doctors.

Seeing that everyone was now looking at him, Walbridge puffed his chest up—in his attempt to look like an honorable person—before

saying, “Hah! I’ve always been a man of my word! Tell me what it is that you want!”

With how pretentious Walbridge was still being, Gerald could only look at him contemptuously before ordering, “Very well! I want you to fart!”

“...I-I beg your pardon...?” asked Walbridge, clearly taken aback.

“I told you to fart! Do it at least a hundred times in front of everyone here!”

By this point, everyone was already roaring with laughter.

“Y-you... Do you think I can just fart whenever I want to...?” muttered Walbridge, feeling extremely humiliated.

“Why not? It’s just a hundred so it shouldn’t be too difficult! Allow me to assist!” replied Gerald as he swiftly poked one of Walbridge’s acupuncture points with a finger.

Almost immediately after, a loud farting sound filled the corridor. Then another, and another.

As Walbridge continued to fart against his will, his face was already pale from all the humiliation. Try as he might, he simply couldn't hold back at all!

With everyone now focused on Walbridge—as they covered their noses—Gerald took the opportunity to use the chaos to make his escape!

Not long after, Walbridge released one final and extra-long fart before finally crying out, “I-I’m done! One hundred farts in total!”

To everyone’s surprise, Gerald was no longer there! Though some of the old doctors wanted to attempt chasing him down, they quickly realized that it was probably going to be a futile effort. After all, they now realized that Gerald had planned his escape the moment he ordered Walbridge to begin farting as a distraction!

It was a little while later when Gerald began speeding his car toward Mountain Top Villa. The evening sky was already darkening as the car accelerated past a dense forest.

As he continued driving down the desolate road, Gerald squinted his eyes before widening them in shock. Stepping on the brakes, the car

came to a screeching halt as Gerald's eyelids twitched rapidly at the old lady squatting in the middle of the road.

The old lady herself seemed to be burning some papers in hand by tossing them into a brazier of sorts. Whatever the case was, the old lady was by no means an unfamiliar face to Gerald.

Chapter 1265

All it took was a single glance for him to know who she was!

Getting out of his car before casually looking at her, Gerald shouted out, "It appears that it truly is inevitable for enemies to cross paths!"

The second his sentence ended, however, his expression instantly turned cold as he glared at her while saying, "Regardless, were you the one who used the Soul Eater technique on all those babies?"

"What, did you think you were the only one capable of using that technique? Still, it's a pity that you arrived so early... Otherwise, I could have continued draining more oxyblood from babies tonight in order to bring my training to the next level!" replied the old lady as she slowly got up now that she was done burning what seemed to be paper money!

Turning to look at Gerald, there was a firm and determined look in her eyes as she added, "I admit that you truly are powerful, Gerald... Had I not underestimated you at the time, you wouldn't have been able to take the lives of so many members of the Holy Witchcraft! Regardless, I'm not allowing you to escape today! If you know what's best for you, then just follow me back obediently! The magnificent lord awaits you!"

If it wasn't already obvious, the old woman was none other than Tiara, the leader of the Holy Witchcraft! Due to his strength and abilities being sealed back then, Tiara was able to kill his brother, Chester!

Though he wanted to kill her as well back then to avenge Chester's death, he simply couldn't afford to since his priority at the time was to escape.

Regardless, Gerald did remember Tiara being called away by Queena back then... It appeared that the two were acquainted with each other. With that in mind, Gerald then asked in a rather surprised tone, "...The magnificent lord...? Are you referring to Queena?"

“Indeed I am! Just so you know how powerful the magnificent lord is, I’ll let you in on a little something. You should very well be aware that there are three main religions and nine schools of thoughts, correct? Well, I’ll have you know that all three religions are already under the control of our magnificent lord! Due to that, we have religious disciples all over the world! With that in mind, know that you’ll never be able to truly escape from our magnificent lord!” sneered the old woman.

“I had a hunch that someone was poisoning all those babies to force me to reveal myself! To think that I was right! Either way, it appears that you’re now Queena’s lackey as well! I’m assuming she was the one who taught the Soul Eater technique to you then!”

Queena, the woman in white, and the deity came from the same place. With that in mind, aside from the deity, Queena should be the only other person proficient in the Soul Eater technique!

“You think you’re so smart, don’t you? Though I hate to admit it, your deduction is correct! It truly was the magnificent lord who had taught me how to use the Soul Eater technique! However, I’m not the only person she taught the technique to! Your little buddy’s mastered it as well!” replied Tiara with a cold smile on her face.

“What are you waiting for, Chester? Bring them out immediately!” yelled Tiara.

‘...Chester?’ Gerald thought to himself, momentarily stunned.

Sensing the presence of a few others, Gerald found himself looking in that direction... The moment he saw a familiar-looking man—who was pushing a few other familiar-looking people out of the woods—Gerald’s eyes immediately widened.

It truly was Chester, and he appeared to be holding Gavin, Helen, and Rita as hostages!

While it was undoubtedly Chester in the flesh, something was seriously wrong. Not only was Chester emitting immense murderous intent, but the expression he had on his face was unsettling, to say the least. What on earth had happened?

“I don’t know what you’re planning, Tiara, but I hope you realize that I was only weak back then since I just had my strength sealed before confronting you! With that in mind, there’s no reason for me to be afraid of you now!” scoffed Gerald before dashing straight for Tiara!

Tiara, however, simply displayed an indifferent expression as her body suddenly started turning translucent! Almost as though she

had been nothing but an illusion, Tiara vanished completely in the next second!

The moment that happened, Gerald immediately froze in place! That, however, was far from a voluntary action. It felt as though he was being held in place by some ungodly force!

What strength and power! Gerald had first had experience with Tiara's strength and abilities before, and he knew for a fact that she wasn't this strong before.

“To hell with you! Have you any idea how unforgivable it is to kill the members of the Holy Witchcraft?!” roared Tiara as she suddenly reappeared right in front of him—without warning—and launched an attack aimed straight for Gerald's chest!

The second her fist collided with his chest, Gerald found himself being thrown backward! Thunderous sounds followed as Gerald's body continued colliding with several trees, causing them to snap clear in half!

Since Gerald's body was no longer comparable to an ordinary human's and he had just reactivated his inner strength, he was certain that Tiara's inner strength shouldn't hurt this much. After all, the time gap from when they had last met wasn't all that large.

Alas, Tiara's inner strength was now even stronger than his own! Even so, Gerald could sense that her inner strength was 'really weird,' though he couldn't quite pinpoint why.

Whatever the case was, once Gerald finally collided with a tree—that didn't snap from the impact of his body—Gerald instantly vomited blood! As if he wasn't in enough pain already, his limp body soon began falling to the ground! The immense pain of his back colliding with the ground felt so terrible that Gerald could feel acute pain in several of his bones! It was no exaggeration when Gerald thought that his whole body was about to fall apart!

Despite already making him suffer so much, Tiara wasn't about to give him the opportunity to relieve himself of the pain. Reappearing before Gerald again, the old woman immediately began strangling his throat with a single hand.

Her grip made Gerald feel like he was being choked by a pair of giant steel tongs, and when he turned to look at the old woman, he was greeted by the sight of an extremely hideous and vicious-looking face!

“Though the magnificent lord told me to spare your life, I'm afraid I can't do that. I need my revenge, Gerald. I need it more than

anything else! I'm avenging all the lives you've taken from the Holy Witchcraft that day if it's the last thing I do!" roared Tiara.

Gerald truly wasn't getting a break, and he was constantly getting shocked by how strong Tiara had suddenly become! Unable to even free himself from her grasp, Gerald now felt as though he was just some weak and fragile kid.

Gerald's gut had been telling him that something was terribly, terribly wrong, and Gerald whole-heartedly agreed with it. After giving it some thought, Gerald realized that Tiara's current inner strength was actually on par with Queena's!

What on earth had Queena done to her...?

Chapter 1266

"L-let him go...!" shouted the three kidnapped—and frightened—Smiths before Tiara could land another blow on the now bloodied

Gerald. Rita, in particular, was shouting even louder than Mila's parents.

"...Hah! Trash like him isn't worth my energy to kill! With that in mind... Hey, Chester! That's your beloved brother, right? Go ahead and kill that brat who doesn't know what's best for himself! Worry not about the magnificent lord, for I'll take full responsibility for everything that's happened here!" ordered Tiara.

It was evident by this point that the Smiths' pleas for mercy did little to impress Tiara. Instead, they seemed to further enrage her!

Regardless, the way Tiara had ordered her grandson almost made it seem like she was just talking to some random member of the Holy Witchcraft instead of her actual grandson... On second thought, 'dog' would be a better term to describe Chester's relationship with Tiara now. A very obedient and vicious dog... He barely had any resemblance to the old woman's grandson anymore!

Whatever the case was, upon hearing the command, the resurrected Chester instantly glowered with rage as he slowly began walking toward Gerald!

The second he stood before the injured youth, Chester barely had any hesitation when he punched Gerald hard on the face! The punch

itself made Gerald feel like he had just run into a glass door while running, and Gerald found himself instantly growing dizzy.

So even Chester's inner strength had been amplified... What a powerful transformation process...!

"Atta boy! Good job!" said Tiara with a sinister laugh as the corners of her mouth curled into a malicious smile.

"Heh. How does it feel, Gerald? To have the person you regarded as your younger brother beat you up like this... How does it feel to know that even a dog like Chester is more than enough to kill you?!"

Pausing for a brief moment to grin evilly, Tiara then returned to her indifferent expression before tossing a dagger over to Chester's feet.

Momentarily looking at her grandson—who was still overflowing with murderous intent—Tiara then turned to look back at Gerald before saying, "Whatever the case is, since you're going to die here anyway, I may as well have Chester deal the finishing blow! I hope you enjoy the experience of being killed by your very own brother! Chester! This here is the elder brother you love so much to the point of betraying me! I command you to dice him up with that dagger!"

Upon hearing the command, Chester's eyes grew frigid as he picked the dagger up before viciously slashing at Gerald's arm! Gerald himself could feel his arm growing slightly numb as the scent of fresh blood filled the air.

"Atta boy, Chester! Now chop off one of his arms!"

Unlike the first time, however, Chester seemed to hesitate the second he heard the following order. Though the dagger was still in his hand, he was simply frozen in that position. It was almost as though there was some magical force preventing him from doing the deed!

Staring straight into Gerald's eyes, a voice seemed to emanate from within him, screaming, 'No! Don't do it!'

Seeing that, Tiara then shouted, "What the hell are you doing, Chester? Snap out of that daze and slice his arm off already!"

"Y-Yes, master...!" replied Chester as his entire body began trembling uncontrollably!

Taking in a deep breath, Chester then slowly began raising the dagger...

With Chester holding on so tightly to Gerald's neck with his other hand, the bloodied youth couldn't even attempt to dodge it even if he wanted to. Chester's current strength was simply far too immense for Gerald to even begin resisting! With that in mind, there was no way Gerald was going to be able to have his arm intact once Chester did the deed!

Even though he was aware of that, all Gerald could do was watch as the dagger—whose tip was facing downward—got slowly raised to an optimal point... Before it rapidly began descending!

As Gerald's heart beat frantically, he thought about how he had only been a step away from achieving the baptism of heaven. It was supposed to happen tonight too!

To think that he was going to be ended by Tiara before he could even manage to deal with Queena or find the woman in white...

Gerald knew that Chester wasn't to blame since he was nothing more than a puppet to Tiara now, incapable of disobeying her orders... Whatever the case was, Gerald continued focusing on the rapidly descending dagger as his mind braced for the hellish pain to come once his arm got sliced off.

That moment itself felt like an eternity as all sorts of memories began flooding his mind. It was almost as though his mind was no longer bound by any forms of restriction.

Gerald recalled a saying that moments before a person died, their life would quite literally flash before their very eyes within tenths of a second. Perhaps he was experiencing that right now...

Amidst the plethora of memories, Gerald suddenly saw a very clear figure before him...

It was Mila.

'I wonder if Mila's dead or still alive at this point... If she's still among the living, how is she doing in life...? Is her life good? Miserable...? Is she being loved and doted on...? Or perhaps she's being tortured and abused...?'

'The pledge of the holy water is happening soon too... Dad, mom, Jessica, grandpa, and Lyra... Could tonight truly be my final night...? Am I going to die from pain and blood loss after all my limbs are torn from my body...?'

'...'

'...No. I... I can't allow this to just happen! I have to continue living! I have to continue searching for her till the day I can finally see Mila with my very own eyes again...!'

Following that thought, Gerald's body moved on instinct extremely rapidly! He hadn't even been paying attention to where Chester's arm or the dagger was, yet Gerald somehow managed to firmly grab hold of Chester's wrist!

With his arm now restrained and the dagger unmoving in his hand, Chester's eyes grew even more vicious as he attempted to continue trying to attack Gerald!

At that moment, Gerald—who was still bleeding profusely from his wounds—suddenly clenched his teeth before shouting, "Have you already forgotten that you wished to atone for your sins, Chester?! Don't let Tiara continue using you to commit more crimes!"

Hearing that, Chester seemed to become momentarily stunned.

It was then when the jade pendant Gerald had on him—that had been dyed red due to all his blood—suddenly began glowing strangely... Before anyone could react, a golden light suddenly shone out of it!

Chapter 1267

The light itself was rivaled only by the brightness of an intense spotlight, and it instantly lit the entire area with a blinding flash! Chester himself was hit point-blank by the golden light, and the second it connected with him, Chester suddenly began screaming in pain!

Gerald watched wide-eyed as a black glow began seeping out of Chester's body! Slowly but surely, Chester began losing his strength and power. His vitality rapidly diminished as well, and by the time he stopped screaming, Chester was so weak that from just a single push from Gerald, he ended up falling to the ground, instantly going unconscious!

"...Chester...?" called out Gerald as he held onto his still-bleeding wound.

No matter how much he called out, however, Chester truly was out cold.

At that moment, the pendant suddenly switched the golden light out for flashes of all seven colors of the rainbow! Gerald was naturally surprised by all these changes. The jade pendant was acting really strange today!

“...I really hadn’t expected you to be holding onto such a treasure, Gerald!” shouted Tiara, a glint of greed in her eyes.

“After acquiring that treasure, I’ll definitely be able to increase my training even further!” added Tiara as she instantly began rushing toward Gerald with greed-filled eyes!

Before she could get too close, however, several rustling sounds suddenly began coming from all directions. The next thing she knew, eight extremely fast figures had surrounded both her and Gerald!

“Do you really think you’re worthy enough to get your hands on that treasure, old lady? Gerald is ours!” shouted one of the eight men.

The men themselves looked extremely pale, and, putting it quite frankly, they looked like they had already been dead for a few days. Even so, the one who shouted had an extremely dominating and loud voice.

What more, each of them seemed to possess extremely strong skills, with none of them feeling like they were any weaker than Tiara. There were such strong masters with immense presences around this entire time? And to think that all of them would show themselves at the same time! Gerald could only look at them with fear in his eyes.

What the hell was even going on anymore...?

The weirdest thing yet was how strong Tiara, Chester, and the eight men's inner strength were. There were all on a completely different level compared to Gerald's own inner strength, and that fact alone made Gerald terrified.

Remembering how Tiara had mentioned the three religions and the nine schools of thought earlier, Gerald now deduced that there were definitely more than two opposing forces at play.

While Queena was from one of them, the eight men who had just shown themselves seemed to be from another.

Whatever the case was, Gerald was most certain about one thing. Both forces were out to get him.

“Oh? Is that so? Then let’s see if you even have the ability to go against me first!” retorted Tiara as she locked her eyes onto Gerald before rushing toward him!

Seeing that, the eight men did the same! A split second later, both parties grabbed onto Gerald’s arms and legs before starting to tug with all their might!

‘God almighty, I’m going to be ripped into pieces!’

Though Gerald was resolute on making it out alive, it was difficult to maintain such hope when his limbs were literally being torn apart!

‘Jade pendant! Jade pendant! Are you truly a spiritual artifact? If you can hear me, then please help me one more time! I can’t die yet! Please, I don’t want to die yet!’ cried out Gerald in his mind, hoping that the jade pendant would react to his pleas for help.

Unfortunately, there seemed to be little to no reaction from the jade pendant. Utterly grief-stricken and mortified, Gerald found himself spurting out blood as both parties continued spinning him around!

With one final roar of pain, the green veins all over his body suddenly erupted, causing a massive force to envelop his body out of the blue!

The strange force itself felt almost explosive, and the strength of it caused both parties to fly backward extremely violently!

That was the last thing Gerald remembered before his vision went dark and he fainted...

By the time he finally got up again, he realized that he was lying inside a room. Realizing that there was a group of people surrounding him, the still slightly dazed Gerald was able to make out—at the very least—that Rita, Gavin, and Helen were there with him.

Chapter 1268

“Mr. Crawford! You’re finally awake!” shouted Jace who seemed to have been sitting beside him this entire time. Realizing that his wounds had been bandaged, Gerald now knew that Jace had been the one who had stabilized his condition.

“I am... Thank you, Dr. Mabb...” replied Gerald as he held onto his wounds.

Recalling that he had almost been killed by Tiara and those eight men, Gerald turned to look at the Smiths as he asked, “Aunt Helen... Uncle Smith... Were you the ones who had rescued and brought me here...?”

As he awaited their reply, Gerald faintly remembered himself desperately pleading the jade pendant to help him back then. He also recalled the sudden burst of energy that emitted from his body before eventually passing out. Naturally, he had no idea what happened after going unconscious.

“That’s right, Gerald... You almost frightened us to death earlier, you know? You sent all nine of them flying into the air in all directions! Sensing the opportunity to escape, we then quickly brought you back with us!” explained Helen who was very obviously still terrified after witnessing all that had happened today.

Following that, Helen explained how Tiara had brought some of her men with her over to their house not long after Gerald left. Since Gavin, Rita, and Helen just so happened to be serving Lady Smith at the time, all three of them ended up getting kidnapped by Tiara and her men!

Eventually, all that led to Tiara besieging Gerald.

From what Helen had told him, Gerald deduced that Tiara must've previously been unable to find him in Mayberry, even after days of searching. Otherwise, she wouldn't have needed to do all this just to weed him out.

Putting Tiara aside for the moment, Gerald began thinking about the jade pendant. It appeared that the pendant wasn't as simple as Gerald had initially thought. After all, it practically saved his skin earlier.

Before he could delve any further into it, Zack—who had also been present this entire time—suddenly said in a worried tone, “You really scared us half to death earlier, Mr. Crawford! By the time we got there to carry your unconscious body over, you were completely drenched in blood!”

“I truly had a near-death experience earlier, that's for sure... Regardless, where are we?” asked Gerald, suddenly realizing that he was someplace unfamiliar.

“We're currently in a villa that's halfway up Mountain Top. While we're on the topic, I'm glad to announce that we've already managed

to punch a hole through the mountain! We should be able to locate what you're looking for soon, Mr. Crawford!" reported Zack.

"...I see! That explains it!"

Gerald was, of course, talking about how strongly the jade pendant had reacted at the time.

Before Zack was able to inquire Gerald about it, a screaming female could suddenly be heard coming from the room next door! Shortly after, the sound of a plate falling to the floor followed!

It didn't take much to be able to guess that some woman had just witnessed something extremely terrifying, and not long after, a young nurse—who looked to be around the age of eighteen—stumbled into the room while shouting in a panicked voice, "D-dr. Mabb...! The man next door has already awoken, and he's slowly breaking free of his steel restraints!"

"What?!" shouted Zack in disbelief before glancing at several of his men who were in the room. Getting the message, the guards instantly headed for the room next door.

"What on earth is happening?" asked Gerald.

“It’s that man who was trying to kill you with a dagger last night! While we were sure that he was still unconscious at the time we began transferring you here, upon arriving at the villa, we realized that he had tailed us all the way here! Though he was extremely weak at the time, he kept muttering the phrase, ‘I’m going to save you, Mr. Crawford...!’ Hearing that, we couldn’t allow Mr. Lyle to just kill him. After all, we weren’t sure whether he was a friend or foe yet. Due to that, we restrained him with steel chains for the time being!” replied Helen.

“That’s Chester!” exclaimed Gerald as his eyelids twitched. Immediately hopping off his bed, Gerald began rushing over to the room next door.

Upon entering, Gerald saw several bodyguards standing near the door, all of them looking rather stunned.

Turning to see what they were all looking at, Gerald saw Chester standing there, breaking off yet another chain with his bare hands. From the looks of it, he had been tied with at least a dozen steel chains, though many of them were already lying broken on the floor.

Though the guards all had electric batons in hand, not one of them even dared to step forward to attack him. It was evident that this was their first time seeing such an insanely strong person.

Feeling extremely moved to see his close friend alive and kicking again, Gerald called out, “Chester...!”

Hearing the familiar voice, Chester’s body began trembling ever so slightly as he raised his head to see if it really was Gerald. Upon getting that confirmation, Chester called out extremely slowly, “M... Mr... Crawford...!”

The way he was speaking was reminiscent of a toddler who was barely able to speak clearly yet. Despite that, Gerald knew that Chester was fully sober from the look in his eyes alone. He truly had no idea what method had been used to bring Chester back to life.

“Yes, it’s me, Chester!” replied Gerald while looking straight into his brother’s eyes.

Chester had taken a killing blow for Gerald back then to save his brother, and Gerald had always felt guilty about that. Regardless of what Chester even was now, Gerald couldn’t help but feel happy to see him alive...

Chapter 1269

“...Chester, didn't you... you know... Either way... How did you get resurrected...?” asked Gerald as he slowly approached him.

Chester himself seemed like he had a lot to tell Gerald, and while the explanation process was a little slow and awkward, Gerald could still understand what his brother was saying.

As it turned out, after Gerald had personally buried Chester's body, Tiara dug it out again and used a secret technique—that Queena had taught her—to resurrect and turn him into a killing machine!

Chester also took the time to explain the long-standing heritage of the Holy Witchcraft. Apparently, Queena's soul was the one who had professionally founded the Holy Witchcraft, and before she died, she had made special preparations for her own resurrection hundreds of years later!

Upon hearing this, Gerald finally understood everything. So that's why Tiara had been so frightened when she received the letter from Queena's subordinate in front of the manor that day! Queena was actually her ancestor!

As for Chester's resurrection, it wasn't a real resurrection at all! From what Gerald now understood, Queena had used some ancient form of witchcraft to fill Chester's body with vitality, thus in a sense, 'resurrecting' him. Though this form of witchcraft was innately evil, using it on someone would greatly increase the person's strength, Tiara being a living example of that.

Regardless, it wouldn't be a stretch to consider the current Chester to be half-human and half-demon. Chester also added that several people were in the same state that he was now in, and that they too had undergone great transformations due to Queena's actions.

"Throughout this time, I've been living as a bystander... As in, I haven't been able to control my body at all! It was like I was watching some messed up movie where I'd do whatever Tiara ordered me to... I... I've done way too many atrocities that I didn't want to...!"

"...However, the golden light that was emitted from that pendant... It seemed to contain some sort of magical energy. The second I was hit by it, all the guilt and evil from my body just seemed to melt away, allowing me to gradually regain my consciousness and free myself from merely being a bystander!" explained Chester.

Recalling what Master Ghost had told him, Gerald's yang energy was extremely masculine since it hadn't undergone holy baptism yet. Aside from that, Master Ghost had also said that the owner of the jade pendant had an inextricable link to him. With that in mind, the jade pendant was definitely no ordinary object.

Gerald remembered how brightly the jade pendant had shone while Chester was still strangling him. He also recalled how a black glow seemed to have escaped from his body. The jade pendant must have purified the evil nature in Chester's body at that moment!

"...Speaking of which, Chester, who were those eight men? All of you had immense inner strength, and not even mine could ever hope to rival yours now! I don't think I can even hurt any of you with my current strength!" said Gerald.

"Ah, those people... They come from an organization called the Judgement Portal. While Tiara was reporting to Queena, I heard them mentioning that both the Judgement Portal and Queena's Squad of Divine Grimness are still relatively new forces. From what I found out, the Judgement Portal group has constantly been going against the Squad of Divine Grimness. Their group has also been actively trying to locate you! From one of our confrontations with them, one of the Judgement Portal's members said that they wanted to capture you before heading to the Ancient City to look for the corpse of the Celestial Lady!" explained Chester with a cough.

As he had said before, though Chester was controlled physically, his mind had been active the entire time. It was the reason why he could still recall all this, albeit a bit roughly.

'...Ancient City? A Celestial Lady... The woman in white? And what even is the Judgement Portal? Their members are extremely strong!' Gerald thought to himself, puzzled.

From what he had learned, Gerald could deduce at least half of what was happening with the whole Ancient City thing.

Yume was part of the Gunter family and back then, she and that old lady had disappeared in the king of the ocean's palace. Since there weren't even any traces of her left, Gerald could simply assume that she was dead. Now, however, he was thinking otherwise.

Could she have survived? And could she have gone elsewhere to bring the woman in white out? That possibility wasn't completely out of the question!

After all, Gerald had previously sent some of his men to investigate the remains of the king of the ocean's palace. As was expected, the tomb was completely decimated.

Looking at Chester, Gerald then asked, “Do you happen to know where the Ancient City is, Chester?”

Shaking his head in response, Chester then replied, “Unfortunately, all I know is that Queena and the others headed there immediately the moment they found out that the woman in white was there. Before leaving, she sent me and Tiara to go after you. Aside from that, I really have no idea where the Ancient City is!”

“Ancient City? Master Nacol was talking about that just a few days ago! If I remember correctly, the Gunters are living there...” said Dr. Mabb—who had been silent this entire time—out of the blue.

“...Oh? If the Gunters are there and if the woman in white has made an appearance there, then I’m sold that that’s the same Ancient City that Chester’s talking about!”

Chapter 1270

Seeing how intently Gerald was looking at him, Jace then replied, “Well, Master Nacol is currently giving lectures in Mayberry City. If

you wish to meet him, I can surely introduce him to you. What more, he just so happens to be an old friend of Mr. Sawyer Wytt!”

“Sounds great to me! I’ll be troubling you then, Dr. Mab!” said Gerald with a nod.

As soon as his sentence ended, a subordinate suddenly ran into the room, reporting, “Mr. Lyle! Mr. Crawford! We’ve managed to excavate most of the mountain and we’ve located a colorful boulder in there!”

“A colorful boulder?” replied Gerald, startled.

At that moment, Gerald felt an extremely strong masculine aura pulsing continuously from within his body.

“It’s the Zircobsite for sure!” shouted Gerald, feeling overjoyed. He had finally located the stone!

“Zack, I need you to immediately instruct your men to block the surrounding areas around Mountain Top. Nobody is allowed to even get close to it!” ordered Gerald.

“Right away, Mr. Crawford!”

Meanwhile, several of the workers—at Mountain Top—were still feeling dumbfounded as they stared at the multi-colored boulder that was radiating brightly. While all of them were tempted to touch the boulder—feeling that it would bring them auspiciousness—the stone was located right in the middle of a cave.

While that itself wouldn’t have stopped them from entering, the second any one of them got close to the cave’s entrance—to have a better look at the colorful boulder—they would immediately be greeted by near-unbearable scorching heat.

“My god! This is a bit too hot, isn’t it?!” said a few of the workers who had attempted—but clearly failed—to enter the cave as they wiped the sweat off their foreheads.

“Regardless, Mr. Crawford truly is fortunate, isn’t he? I estimate that this boulder should cost at least several hundreds of millions of dollars!”

Several people were clearly envious of Gerald’s luck, and many of them had thought about stealing small pieces of the boulder to take back with them. Unfortunately, none of them were even able to get close to it!

Their plans were interrupted shortly after when several Crawford bodyguards suddenly appeared before the workers and ordered them to immediately descend the mountain. By then, all the roads leading up to the mountain—within a fifty-mile radius—had been blocked, and anyone who had previously been within the vicinity was promptly forced out.

Regardless, it wasn't long before Gerald stood alone before the cave's entrance. Looking into the underground cave, he saw the stone and how brilliant the colorful rays of light—that it reflected—were.

Feeling simultaneously shocked and amazed, Gerald felt as though a strange thought was constantly attempting to communicate with him

From outside, Gerald thought to himself, 'Such a massive hole within the mountain... Could this cave have been equivalent to some sort of mansion in the past...?'

Whatever the case was, Gerald was going to head further in to catch a closer glimpse of the Zircobsite first! Though beads of sweat were already rolling down his forehead at the cave's entrance, the immense heat was nothing to him.

With that in mind, he then jumped right into the cave! Upon reaching the bottom, Gerald flinched slightly from the pain of his still rather-fresh wounds

Though the entrance of the cave was just about the size of a well opening, Gerald found the interior of the cave to be much larger than he had initially anticipated. The area was so large, in fact, that the more Gerald looked around the more he felt that something was off with the cave.

Based on his deductions, the cave hadn't formed naturally. Instead, it had been carved up by men who knew what they were doing.

As Gerald continued scanning through the area—with the aid of the bright and colorful lights radiating from the Zircobsite—his eyelids suddenly began twitching rapidly the moment he looked in a particular direction and saw something that caused chills to run down his spine.

Gerald found himself subconsciously taking a step back from the immobile person who was sitting at the corner of the cave. After a brief moment, however, Gerald realized that the person didn't seem like he was going to make a move at all.

Upon closer inspection, Gerald found himself heaving a sigh of relief when he saw that the person's eyes were peacefully closed. Anyone would've been shocked to see a living man seated within a mountain all by himself!

Carefully approaching the figure—who had his legs crossed—Gerald saw that it was a white-haired old man who had a robe on. His eyes closed and his complexion ruddy, the old man gave off the impression that he was a monk that was concentrating on his mediation.

Heading closer to check whether the old man was breathing, he quickly realized that that wasn't the case!

With that knowledge in mind, Gerald then continued getting closer to the old man to further inspect the body. However, the second he got within arms-reach of the person, the man's face instantly turned blank and his skin dried up extremely quickly! In the blink of an eye, the body had turned into a mummy!

Quickly moving away from where he was standing, Gerald then stared at what remained of the body for a while before turning to look at the Zircobsite that was as tall as a man.

It was only a guess, but Gerald had a feeling that aside from being able to perform the baptism of heaven with it, the Zircobsite stone was capable of preserving a person to make them look youthful forever.

Thinking about it for a moment, he suddenly came to a realization that the previous eternal coffins—that he had come across— were also extremely colorful. In fact, the colors that emanated from the coffins were exactly the same as the ones the Zircobsite was letting out!

Could it be that the bottoms of the eternal coffins were made of Zircobsite...?

As Gerald lowered his head while thinking about it, he suddenly realized that rows of characters had been carved on the wall beside the old man! It appeared to be a suicide note of sorts!

Since he was from the Department of Language and Literature, Gerald could easily recognize and understand what those characters meant.

'I am a man of divine destiny. I became a master at the age of sixty and I've had the honor of participating in the pledge of the holy water. Alas, the journey there was filled with all sorts of danger, and I ended up learning the important secrets behind the pledge. I fled all the way here as soon as I could, but in the end, all is still lost due to my old age! Know that as long as you embark for the pledge of the holy water, there will be no turning back! If any masters or great masters ever come across this note, then please remember to stop everything!'

After reading through what the old man had left behind, Gerald realized that he was actually a great master who had participated in one of the past pledges of the holy water. In fact, he appeared to be the first person to actually be able to escape alive!

The old man had also mentioned that he had discovered the great secret behind the pledge of the holy water. Alas, he didn't actually write it out, and that made Gerald slightly worried.

The pledge of the holy water truly was mysterious... Any person who embarked on the journey had little to no chance of returning

home safely. The biggest mystery surrounding the pledge, however, was still its connection to the Sun League.

Even so, Gerald had the Death Curse on him. With that in mind, he was going to find out the secrets behind the pledge of the holy water no matter what. Not even death was going to be able to stop him!

Shaking the thought off, Gerald then continued scanning through the cave that was within the mountain. Briefly after, Gerald confirmed that the rest of the cave was completely sealed up. He was the first to create an opening to the cave. But then... How did the old man get into the cave in the first place? Gerald simply couldn't figure it out.

Regardless, now wasn't the time to think about that. After all, Gerald still had to deal with Queena's Squad of Divine Grimness and the Judgement Portals, both of which had strong purpose and determination.

Gerald couldn't allow the woman in white to fall into their hands, otherwise, Gerald would surely fail even though he was already so close to succeeding! He needed to focus on the Zircobsite first!

After bowing slightly to pay his respects to the old man, Gerald then walked over to the Zircobsite stone. The closer he got to it, the harder his heart thumped in anticipation.

When his hand finally touched the stone, a burst of heat suddenly rushed out of the stone! The heat itself was transferred into Gerald's body, and it instantly began circulating within him. At the moment, Gerald's pores kept opening and closing as he received the baptism of heaven...

Fast forward to three days later, several figures could be seen jumping around in the vicinity of Mountain Top. It was Tiara and those eight men!

"Hah! You're still alive, old witch? If it wasn't for you, Gerald would've already ended up in our hands by now!"

It had only been a few days ago when they surrounded and subdued Gerald. Unfortunately, the force that Gerald's pendant emitted sent all of them flying in all directions! As if that wasn't enough, all nine of them found that their strength and inner strength had momentarily been sealed off!

Chapter 1272

Due to Gerald having such a powerful weapon on him, the nine people had momentarily fled for fear that Gerald would end up killing them instead.

It was only after they made their escape that they recalled that Gerald wasn't able to properly control the jade pendant's power yet. As all nine of them slowly recovered their strength, they each thought about stealing the pendant off Gerald before taking him away.

With their mind made up, all of them began making their way toward Mountain Top the moment their strength fully recovered. However, both parties truly hadn't expected to bump into each other on their way there.

Being enemies, they naturally fought and bickered the entire way there.

"How unlucky we are to meet you again! Regardless, we'll certainly be the ones who'll end up getting our hands on both Gerald and that jade pendant!"

After continuing to bicker for quite a while, all nine of them swiftly made it past the restricted area on Mountain Top.

Several of the bodyguards noticed their speedy entry and instantly grew frightened. With that, they immediately informed their superiors about what they had just witnessed.

By the time the guards were done passing the message on, the group of people had already arrived at the top of the mountain in no time flat.

“So you’ve finally appeared!” shouted Chester as they approached the cave’s entrance.

Chester had been sitting cross-legged and on guard atop the mountain for days, and when he saw the nine people, a strong sense of resentment was reflected in his eyes. Of course, his hatred amplified the second he saw Tiara.

“You traitor! Still, I really hadn’t expected Gerald to have the ability to restore both your sanity and consciousness!” scoffed Tiara, murderous intent in her eyes.

Clenching his fist, Chester then retorted, “The fact that he’s done so means that Mr. Crawford has granted me the opportunity to take my revenge!”

Though the old woman standing before him was his own grandmother, Tiara had never once regarded Chester as her grandson at all. In fact, he was pretty sure that she had only ever seen him as nothing more than a dog.

She didn't even hesitate to kill him and turn him into a monster that was barely even human! To Tiara, once a dog, always a dog, and that made Chester hate her even more.

"Hah! Take revenge? I guess you now have the same mindset as Gerald after following him around so much! To think that you're actually daring enough to even consider taking revenge on me, Chester! I see how it is! And here I thought that you'd finally be useful for once after I turned you into a killing machine with witchcraft! Yet here you are, planning to betray me! Since that's the case, I'll just kill you again and make sure all your limbs are ripped from your body!" scowled Tiara with a murderous look in her eyes.

"No matter how one-sided it is, I'm still going to fight you! I won't allow any of you to take a single step inside, even if I have to die trying!" declared Chester fearlessly as he got to his feet.

"Hahaha! Say, you old witch! Do you need our help clearing the path for you? If you do, then we'll hand Gerald over to you as a bonus! However, we'll be taking the jade pendant with us! How's that sound? Regardless, he seems to be right inside the cave before us!" said one of the men with a grin.

“Dream on! I’m getting my hands on Gerald, the pendant, and also this traitor today!” retorted Tiara, a malicious smile formed on her face.

The second her sentence ended, her expression instantly turned terrifying as she dashed toward Chester! Her movements were so swift that Chester was only able to go on the defensive.

It certainly didn’t help that Gerald’s pendant had suppressed quite a bit of his strength. Due to that, Chester’s combative abilities were much worse compared to before.

Finding gaps in his defense, Tiara managed to land several hits on Chester’s chest, causing the youth to fly backward! His body ended up colliding with a boulder—which then shattered from the impact—and the second that happened, Chester immediately began vomiting blood!

Despite Tiara using all of her strength in that deadly attack, the bloody-faced Chester still managed to get to his feet, albeit a bit shakily.

“...You... You can only enter over my dead body...!” shouted Chester whose resolute white eyes contrasted his now-reddened face.

“Heh! He’s still standing after you used such a deadly attack on him, old witch! You sure you don’t need our help?” mocked one of the eight men. The men themselves had been standing at the side, their arms crossed as they watched the show.

“Silence! I only need one final attack! He’ll surely die once I break off all the meridians in his body!” shouted Tiara as she prepared to land her finishing blow.

Gritting his teeth fiercely, Chester was sure that this was his end when suddenly, he heard a voice shouting, “Fight back!”

The voice itself seemed like it came from right beside his ears... No. It felt like... it came from within himself.

Chapter 1273

Whatever the case was, Chester didn’t care anymore. As his last resort, he raised his arm to attempt to counterattack Tiara’s finishing blow!

“You’re overestimating your abilities too much, boy!” sneered Tiara as she instantly began doubling the power of her blow! She was

determined to cut off all the meridians in Chester's body once and for all!

As both their fists met, an explosive sound was heard!

While Chester barely moved an inch from the impact, it was a whole other story for Tiara.

The old woman instantly found herself flying backward, breaking dozens of thick-trunked trees as her body collided into them! It was as though she had just been struck by a powerful tornado, and the impact of all those collisions made her body feel like it was falling apart! After leaving a trail of blood on the ground—that she spurted from all the damage she had sustained—she finally lost enough momentum for a tree to stop her from going any further!

By that point, all four of her limbs were bloodied and she had a feeling that most of her internal organs were heavily damaged. Slowly raising her head to look at Chester in both horror and disbelief, she then muttered, "...H-how... How is this even possible...?!"

As Tiara spurted out even more blood, the eight men—who had been watching excitedly with their arms crossed this entire time—had their eyes widened in shock by what they had just witnessed.

Chester himself hadn't expected to have so much power in a single punch.

'...No, that wasn't from me! That wasn't my own power!'

Having already sustained several terrible injuries, Chester slowly turned to look behind him...

And there Gerald was. Chester didn't even know when Gerald had gotten behind him, but he did know that Gerald was now looking and feeling extremely strange...

For one, Gerald's skin appeared to have undergone a major change, now looking pearly white. Even weirder was the fact that Gerald's hair had turned a purplish-black shade! As if that wasn't already odd enough, a faint purple mist seemed to be surrounding him!

From what Chester could understand, there seemed to be some sort of invisible pressure that was forcing the purple mist to envelop Gerald's body while also preventing the mist from dissipating...

Trembling all over, Chester felt as though a heavy load had been lifted off his shoulders as he stuttered, "M-Mr. Crawford...!"

“It seems that I’ve almost gotten you into dire trouble again, Chester! You should withdraw for now! I’ll help heal your injuries later!” said Gerald casually.

“Have... Have you successfully completed the baptism of heaven?” asked Chester excitedly with a nod.

“Indeed I have!” replied Gerald with a slight smile.

Now that Gerald’s inner strength had undergone the baptism of heaven with the aid of the Zircobsite stone, he was able to fully control his functional yin energy. With that in mind, Gerald knew that he no longer had to worry or be afraid that he wouldn’t be able to fight back against Queena, Tiara, or any other person with a strong yin physique for that matter.

“G-Gerald?! How... How the hell did you become so strong?! I know, it’s the jade pendant, isn’t it? It’s giving you all that strength!” shouted Tiara in terror, her entire face bloodied.

“Hah! I knew that jade pendant was no ordinary item! Once we capture Gerald and steal that pendant from him, we’re going to get filthy rich!” said one of the eight men.

Momentarily blinded by greed, all eight of them didn't seem to take any of Gerald's changes into account at all. In fact, they were each extremely confident that they were going to be able to easily acquire Gerald's pendant! After all, if Gerald couldn't hurt them before this, why would he be able to do so now?

"Come and get it if you want it, then!" shouted Gerald with a faint smile on his face.

Hearing that, one of the men instantly waved a hand, prompting the rest of his group to dash toward Gerald like a bunch of mad dogs!

However, Gerald was much faster now. In the blink of an eye, he used his functional yin energy to break seven of the eight men's necks!

"...W-what...?!" stuttered the last man standing as he looked at his dead comrades. None of them had even been able to reach him for this to happen!

Hyperventilating for a moment, the shocked man quickly pulled himself together before thinking, 'I... I can't go against him or I'll die!'

Just as he turned his body around to run, he suddenly felt a strong suction force pulling him into the air! Unable to resist at all, the man felt as all the meridians in his body were swallowed up by some terrible force!

It wasn't long after when he was dropped from high above, and his body hit the ground with a heavy 'thud'!

Chapter 1274

"P-please spare my life, Mr. Crawford...!" pleaded the man as he crawled back up and turned around before kneeling in front of Gerald, trembling in utter fear.

To think that Gerald now felt like an entirely different person after only a three-day gap since they last met! He was simply too strong!

Regardless, the man was wise and he knew better than to continue fighting when the odds were clearly against him. Escape was the only option if he wanted to make it out alive!

“I-if you spare my life, I’ll share a big secret with you, Mr. Crawford!” said the man rather tentatively as he took in a deep breath.

Gerald, however, simply raised his foot and stepped on the man’s head.

Gulping, the man then added, “I-I’ll tell you everything I know as long as you promise to spare my life...!”

Just as the man was about to attempt to retrieve a hidden weapon from his sleeve, Gerald simply replied, “Sorry, not interested.”

Following that, he suddenly amplified the force of his foot, causing a disgusting ‘splat’ to be heard as the man’s head exploded into pieces!

With that out of the way, Gerald turned to look at Tiara.

Her limbs all broken, the old woman could only stare at him with fear as she immediately attempted to crawl away and escape!

“Leave her to me, Mr. Crawford!” said Chester as he walked up to Gerald.

As Gerald nodded in agreement, Tiara's eyes grew red as she roared, "You ungrateful child! You dare kill me? Aren't you afraid of getting retribution?!"

"Oh, but you're wrong, Tiara. No matter how heartless and cruel you were to me, I'd never turn into something as inhumane as you are. Though I won't personally be killing you, I told Mr. Crawford to leave you to me since I have a question for you before you die, and it's a question that's been swimming in my mind for years. Tell me, Tiara. Does family affection or kinship even exist in your eyes?" asked Chester coldly as he stood before Tiara.

"Familial affection? Kinship? Hah! Not one bit! Anyone who dares stand in my way dies, no matter who they are!" roared Tiara in rage.

Watching as Chester clenched his fists as soon as her reply ended, Tiara took that opportunity to gather all the inner strength left in her body to launch a surprise attack at Chester!

Before she could make her move, however, Tiara heard a whistling sound as an extremely fine ray of light went through her neck.

It took her a second to understand what had just happened, but the second she realized that there was now a hole—the size of a fist—in

her neck now, her eyes widened as she flopped lifelessly to the ground. Tiara was no more.

Retracting the Dawnbreaker with his mind, Gerald then walked up to Chester before saying, “Did you honestly expect her to do any sort of kind deeds before she died? When she barely had any traces of humanity left in her? Regardless, I know you’ve always been brooding and feeling troubled due to the matter regarding Lola and your father... However, it’s all finally over now!”

Hearing that, Chester clenched his fists tightly with a heavy nod.

Feeling Gerald pat him on the shoulder, Chester then asked, “...What should we do next, Mr. Crawford?”

“Well, Since Dr. Mabb knows Master Nacol who—in turn—knows about the history of the Gunter Family, I’d like to pay him a visit. The Gunters are an extremely mysterious family and they seem to know quite a bit about the woman in white. Before Yume disappeared, I know she was attempting to look for the woman in white as well. Regardless, though the king of the ocean’s palace has been destroyed, I find it odd that none of my men have been able to locate Yume’s corpse, even after so long. Do you get where I’m getting at?” said Gerald.

“I do, Mr. Crawford. You’re suspecting that there’s a high likelihood that the Celestial Lady has been taken away to the Gunter Manor, correct?” replied Chester with a nod.

“Bingo. Also, you should focus on resting to heal your injuries in the next few days!” said Gerald as he took in a deep breath. Seconds later, his hair started returning to its normal color and the purple mist surrounding him began dissipating as well. Being able to freely control all this was proof that Gerald had gained a fundamental improvement in his inner strength after undergoing the baptism of heaven!

Fast forward to the next day, Master Nacol could be found giving a lecture on charitable donations in a large auditorium within Mayberry City. Since Master Nacol was an extremely famous person in Weston, everyone was brimming with excitement from his presence alone.

Several young people were also within the crowd since they had grown up following the guidance and advice of Master Nacol.

While Jace had initially planned for Master Nacol to personally come over to meet Gerald, Gerald had turned the proposal down. After all, he didn’t want Master Nacol to have to change his schedule because of him. What more, quite a lot of people had been preparing for this donation for a long time. With that in mind, there was no way Gerald

was going to use his influence to coerce Master Nacol into canceling his lecture just because of him. Waiting an hour or two was nothing to Gerald.

Due to that decision, Gerald planned to wait in the auditorium for Master Nacol to be done with his lecture.

As he was walking into the building, he felt someone tap him on the shoulder before hearing them say, "Gerald?"

Chapter 1275

Turning around to see who it was, Gerald was surprised to see Naomi there. Thinking back, he hadn't seen her in days.

"What are you doing here, Naomi?" asked Gerald.

"Well, Master Nacol is giving a lecture today and I'm responsible for leading the most outstanding students in our grade to participate in it! And what about you? Could it be that you're interested in such lectures as well?" replied Naomi as she looked at Gerald with a smile.

Meeting Gerald was always a pleasant surprise for Naomi. In fact, whenever she had sleepless nights, Naomi always felt like calling Gerald up to see what he was up to and ask how he had been doing lately. She wasn't really all that up-to-date with him. After all, Naomi had been actively trying to avoid him since she didn't want to end up falling for Gerald.

Gerald himself was aware of Naomi's feelings for him.

Despite knowing that, Naomi was also well aware that Gerald was completely loyal to Mila. Nothing could get in his way of finding her, and he wouldn't ever reciprocate to anyone else's feelings for him. He simply wasn't interested in any other attachments aside from his and Mila's.

Even so, Naomi knew that deep in her heart, she wouldn't ever be able to just give up on the hope that she could be with him. Due to that, she had always been prepared to go wherever Gerald headed to.

"Not at all. I'm here to discuss some matters with Master Nacol!" said Gerald, not feeling the need to hide the truth from Naomi.

Since it had been such a coincidence for them to bump into each other today, both of them then continued chatting as they walked into the auditorium to look for seats.

It wasn't long before Gerald's cell phone suddenly began ringing. Seeing that it was a call from Jace, Gerald then picked up before asking, "What's wrong, Dr. Mabb?"

"Ah, well, Chairman Dixon Harell—the organizer of this event—finds your presence here today to be extremely important! Due to that, he's arranged VIP seats for both you and Master Nacol! With that in mind, I'm calling to ask whether you'd like to come over to the VIP seats now!" replied Jace with a chuckle.

"There's no need for that! I'm with a friend now, you see. All I need is for you to arrange a private meeting for me with Master Nacol once he's done with his lecture. Thanks for the trouble!" said Gerald with a smile.

"Roger, Mr. Crawford!" replied Jace. The doctor truly admired Gerald, so it was an honor for him to be able to help him.

Regardless, Jace then turned to look at Dixon—who had been rubbing his hands to calm his nervousness this entire time—before shaking his head rather regretfully.

Seeing that, Dixon wiped the sweat off his forehead, feeling slightly disappointed. After all, this was a missed opportunity for him to meet Mr. Crawford! D*rn it!

Looking at Gerald after both of them sat next to her students, Naomi then asked, “Could you perhaps be busy? If you are, you should head along first!”

Though she said that, Naomi was honestly slightly worried that he really was that busy and that he would have to leave again so soon.

Fortunately for her, Gerald simply smiled before replying, “Not in the least!”

With that, both of them continued chatting as they waited for the lecture to begin. Since Naomi’s attention was entirely on Gerald, she wasn’t aware that a few of her male students were running around behind her...

All of a sudden, a loud clatter was heard!

Essentially, one of the boys had been running after another to attempt to grab his cell phone. Unfortunately for him, he

accidentally ran into a waiter, causing the wine tray in the waiter's hand to be knocked over!

While that alone wouldn't have resulted in that big an issue, it just so happened that a beautiful woman—who had her arms locked with a middle-aged man—was walking past that waiter at that moment, resulting in red wine spilled all over her body!

Following that, the woman instantly shrieked in rage!

Anyone attending such grand events would most certainly dress to impress since events like these were perfect opportunities for them to shine. With that in mind, her anger and embarrassment was completely understandable. After all, her dress was now completely drenched with red wine!

“I-I'm sorry...!” cried out the male student—who had unintentionally caused all this—extremely nervously.

Before he could say another word, however, he was immediately greeted by a tight slap!

As the woman glared at the dumbfounded boy, she then roared, “Do you think that apologizing will make everything right?! Are you blind or something?!”

Chapter 1276

“I-I didn’t mean to...!” replied the male student who was still feeling the sting of the slap.

Naturally, the loud woman had gathered the attention of several people, and the student immediately felt extremely humiliated with so many people now staring at him. The student was smart enough to tell that he couldn’t afford to provoke them either. After all, both of them looked extremely wealthy. With that in mind, he could only continue stuttering in embarrassment.

““You didn’t mean to’?! Well of course you didn’t, but my wife is still drenched in wine, isn’t she?! Unless you’re telling me that you planned for all this!” roared the woman’s husband as he instantly kicked the boy in the stomach!

Even from a glance, everyone could tell that her husband wasn’t someone that they should ever provoke.

With that in mind, everyone could only look at the boy sorrowfully as he burst into tears after being kicked quite a distance away.

“Humph! I’ll have you know that this dress cost over ten thousand dollars! Now I can’t wear it anymore! You better compensate me for it, boy!” sneered the young woman coldly.

“I-I’m not from a rich family...!” replied the boy, extremely terrified.

“Hah! Then what’s a pauper like doing here in such a grand function?! It disgusts me to even be in the presence of such a pathetic jerk like you!” scorned the woman before continuing to slap him in the face!

The student himself didn’t dare to fight back or even show any resistance as tears rolled down his cheeks due to the continuous slaps he was receiving...

Since his classmates were now witnessing all this play out, a few of the boy’s female friends quickly ran over to Naomi before reporting, “M-miss Milton! Huxley is being beaten up!”

“What?!” said Naomi as she immediately turned around to see what was going on. To her dismay, she was immediately greeted by the

sight of several people surrounding her crying student—Huxley Loman—as some woman continuously slapped his face!

Huxley himself was clenching his fists tightly, his head lowered as the tears continued rolling down his cheeks.

“Please, stop hitting him! Even if there’s a problem, can’t things be talked out nicely?!” shouted Naomi as she immediately rushed over to Huxley before urging him to stand behind her.

At the time, even the other student—who had initially grabbed Huxley’s cell phone to play around with him—was shocked silent. They truly hadn’t expected their action to cause such a massive scene.

Though Huxley came from a pretty ordinary family, he was an honest boy who studied and worked hard. With that in mind, upon noticing that her other student was simply standing there with Huxley’s phone in hand, Naomi could easily guess that they were simply playing around before all this happened.

Regardless, the second Naomi and that woman’s eyes met, both of them were instantly stunned.

“...Naomi Milton?”

“Xeila Wyser?”

With a sneer, the rich woman scoffed, “If I remember correctly, you entered Mayberry University after we graduated from high school, right? How did you end up being just a mere teacher then?”

If it wasn't evident enough that both of them were acquainted with one another, Xeila's insult certainly confirmed it. Some people were just like this. They simply assumed that they were superior to others just because they were wealthier and had more material possessions.

“Is that really the important thing now? Whatever the case was, how did Huxley even offend you? Why did you have to slap him so badly?” replied Naomi who knew Xeila's character and personality well. Adding that to the fact that she had been constantly humiliating her student, the angered Naomi really couldn't be bothered to make small talk with her.

“Hah! That brat spilled red wine all over my expensive clothes! Does he even think he can come close to affording the compensation?” retorted Xeila.

“Compensation is a monetary issue. You still haven’t answered my question. Why did you have to hit him so badly just because of that?” yelled Naomi as she glared angrily at Xeila.

Hearing Naomi’s righteous words, Xeila was immediately taken aback. Of course, what Naomi had said was right about the compensation being a separate issue. Quite honestly, Xeila had only slapped Huxley so much since she wanted to show off and prove to the others how superior she was to him.

Now that Naomi had questioned her this way, however, Xeila couldn’t help but feel slightly guilty. Realizing that everyone was now staring at her and waiting for her reply, the anxious Xeila quickly turned that anxiousness into anger as she shrugged—with both her arms lifted—before saying, “I’ll hit him if I want to! What’re you going to do about that?!”

As if on cue, Xeila’s husband then looked at his Rolex watch before straightening his suit and taking a step forward as he said, “My name is Zadie Lavington, and I’m-”

Before he could even finish his sentence, Zadie suddenly felt a tight slap across his face! The force of the slap was so hard that by the time he realized that he was flying sideward, the man had knocked over at least a dozen tables!

Naturally this shocked several people, and some of them even began screaming!

The slapper, of course, was Gerald who hadn't been able to tolerate the couple any longer.

In her stupefied state, Xeila turned to look at her hurt and confused husband who was already spitting out a few broken teeth. Quickly snapping out of it, she turned back to look at Gerald, rage in her eyes as she said, "You... You...! Are you courting death or something?! Why'd you hit my husband?!"

Looking at the insufferable woman, Gerald simply casually replied, "Why I hit him? Well, I simply didn't like the fact that his last name was Lavington instead of Ziegler! Makes as much sense as your reasoning for slapping that kid so many times, no?"

Chapter 1277

"You...!"

Xeila was now so enraged that she felt as though she could explode in anger at any second! What an unreasonable person!

Making sure to give warning glares at both Gerald and Naomi, she then hurried over to the middle-aged man's side while shouting, "Husband! Husband, are you alright?!"

Though his mouth was all bloodied, Zadio was still conscious since Gerald hadn't really used that much strength to slap him. Regardless, the man was now seething in rage as he viciously roared, "Call Chairman Harell over, right this instant! And don't let that kid escape! I'm killing him if it's the last thing I do!"

Hearing that, Xeila instantly began making a phone call. As she did that, those from the crowd were already whispering among themselves.

"Say, the one who got beaten up... He's Mr. Lavington, right? Mr. Lavington from Dakota Real Estate Inc.?"

"Indeed. Everyone knows how ruthless Mr. Lavington is. Not only does he engage in real estate development, but he's also Chairman Harell's cousin! Still, to think that young man would actually hit him just because Mr. Lavington's wife beat up that poor student!"

“Whatever the case is, it’s definitely all over for him! There’s no way he’s going to get out of this situation unharmed!”

While several people in the crowd sighed with sympathy for Gerald, many others were simply excited to watch what was going to happen next.

It wasn’t long after before the whispers grew even softer. This was because another middle-aged man could be seen walking over with a few of his men.

Everyone present already knew who he was. He was Dixon Harell, the king of real estate development!

“What on earth is going on here?” asked Dixon in a chilling voice as he turned to look at how badly Mr. Lavington had gotten beaten up. In a way, Lavington being treated like this was equivalent to Dixon being humiliated as well.

With that in mind, to think that there was actually someone who was actually daring enough not to give him face! Said person could only be asking for death!

Noticing his presence, Xeila then quickly ran over to Dixon and told him everything. Once she was done, she then crossed her arms as she walked toward Naomi with a sneer.

“Weren’t you speaking oh, so, righteously just moments ago, Naomi? Come on, show me how great you are now!” scoffed Xeila as she glared triumphantly at Xeila.

“As for both of you! I’ll be finding out where both of you live later, and I’ll make sure that your entire families suffer as a consequence of your actions!” added the sinister woman in a loud voice as though she was trying particularly hard to convince everyone who the superior one was. It also served as a warning for the others to never dare offend her.

Upon hearing that, the boy became so terrified that his legs instantly began trembling. After all, not only was Xeila going to give him trouble, but she was going after his family as well! Anyone would become terrified after hearing that!

“So you’re daring enough to hit someone on my site, hmm? I guess you truly must be tired of living!” said Dixon, fury reflected in his eyes.

“But she was the one who hit my student first!” retorted Naomi adamantly.

Surely Dixon wasn’t going to only listen to Xeila’s half of the story, right? Was he truly going to act unreasonably in front of so many people?

“Where’s the student she hit? Tell me, right this instant!” commanded Dixon.

Watching as everyone’s eyes turned to look at the boy in question, Dixon slowly walked up to him... Before giving him a tight slap!

This was naturally beyond anyone’s expectations. To think that instead of doing the right thing, Dixon simply chose to slap the student more! The slap itself had been so hard that Huxley instantly fell to the floor!

“Did she slap him like that?” sneered Dixon as he looked right into Naomi’s eyes.

“...Y-you... You...!” said Naomi who was now so angry that her face had gone pale.

“Humph! I’ll have you know that I’m the organizer hosting today’s event. While I didn’t want to make things difficult for you, mercy is only reserved for those who don’t cause trouble on my site, and you’ve already done enough trouble for one day! What to do... Hmm... How about this? You can call all your family members over to kneel before my cousin and ask for his forgiveness. If you succeed in that, I’ll let all of you go!” retorted Dixon coldly.

Upon hearing that, those from the crowd instantly began whispering among themselves again.

“Chairman Harell has always been a domineering person! Whenever an issue occurs, he never just targets a single person! Instead, he’ll go after their entire family! He’s extremely ruthless!”

“Those people are definitely done for!”

“M-miss Milton...! Let’s just go...!”

Chapter 1278

Huxley was now crying even harder than ever, utterly terrified about his and his family’s fate. His family wasn’t all that well-to-do

in the first place, and he knew for a fact that it wasn't easy for his parents to work hard and support the family. Yet here Chairman Harell was! Ordering for his parents to come over and kneel before Mr. Lavington! The boy could only tremble in fear as feelings of powerlessness swept through him.

"Leave? You honestly think you can leave that easily? I'll have you know that the conference is about to begin soon, so you'd best not continue wasting my time. Also, you have to call all the leaders from your school as well as all your family members over immediately. Daring to hurt my cousin... You're giving me a proper explanation for all this if you ever hope to leave!" sneered Dixon who was extremely thorough when it came to things like these.

The other students were so frightened that none of them even dared to breathe too loudly. This has turned into a rather large issue.

"Do you finally get it now, Naomi? While it's fine to act all righteous and all, you should also know that there are some people way out of your league that you should never provoke!" declared Xeila particularly loudly, her arms still crossed.

"Leave them be. If you truly want people to come over, I'll just ask my family to come over instead!" said Gerald as he looked at Dixon coldly.

Gerald honestly wasn't planning on causing any trouble in the first place. He simply wanted to teach Xeila and her husband a lesson. However, since someone was now clearly trying to turn this into a major issue, Gerald wasn't against showing dealing with them the hard way.

Hearing Gerald's taunting words and seeing how smug he looked, Dixon simply sneered, "Fine then! I'll be expecting your family to come over instead! Let's see how great you truly are!"

With that, Gerald then began making a phone call...

It was around ten minutes later when several expensive-looking luxury cars appeared before the auditorium. As everyone wondered who had arrived, their question was quickly answered when several powerful and wealthy businessmen in Mayberry stepped out of the individual cars.

"C-Chairman Lyle...?" said Dixon who was so shocked that he was paralyzed in fear. Xeila herself had her jaw dropped, utterly flabbergasted by the turn of events.

Turning to look at Gerald, Dixon found himself gulping. This man... Who the hell even was he...?

Glaring back at Dixon, Gerald then sneered, “Well, here they are! Why don’t you head over to have a talk with them?”

“So, is this the person who offended you, Mr. Crawford?” said Zack as he walked closer to the group.

The second Dixon heard that name, he almost wet himself. The hell? Mr. Crawford?!

Thinking back, Dr. Mabb did mention that Mr. Crawford was already here... In fact, Dixon remembered that he had even invited Gerald to sit with him at the VIP area! To think that the person he had offended was none other than Mr. Crawford in the flesh!

By this point, Dixon was so shocked that he couldn’t even catch his own breath.

As for the others who had been standing around witnessing everything, they quickly—and respectfully—stood aside the second they knew who Gerald truly was.

Gerald himself simply led Naomi and the rest of her students back to their initial seats.

Watching as the group sat down, the terrified Xeila said, “T-to think that that man was actually Mr. Crawford...! Who knew Naomi had such a strong person backing her up?!”

Before she could say another word, Dixon slapped her right in the face!

“You... You b*tch! You’ve really got me into deep trouble this time!” roared the embarrassed Dixon extremely angrily, feeling like he could kill Xeila right here and now!

Even so, all of them knew that this was simply a minor hiccup for Gerald. Whatever the case was, Dixon already knew what kind of end he was going to face.

Though Dixon remained shocked by all this for quite a while, the conference simply proceeded as planned.

Fast forward to two hours later, Jace—who had definitely heard about all that had happened—quickly ran over to Gerald before saying, “I... I’m so sorry, Mr. Crawford! To think that you almost suffered injustice...! Still, that Dixon Harell... He truly was asking for it!”

“It’s fine. The situation’s been dealt with anyway. Speaking of which, did you make the arrangements with Master Nacol?” asked Gerald.

“I have! He’s currently waiting for you in a private room, Mr. Crawford! I actually came over just to lead you to him!” replied Jace.

Chapter 1279

After walking for a bit, both of them arrived at the private room in question. Stepping inside, both of them saw Master Nacol sitting cross-legged and with his eyes closed next to an incense burner, seemingly meditating.

Upon hearing Gerald and Jace’s footsteps, Master Nacol opened his eyes before greeting, “Here you are, Mr. Crawford!”

Wasting no time, Gerald simply replied the greeting before getting straight to business. Jace himself had already given Master Nacol a quick rundown on what Gerald was here for today. From what Master Nacol understood, Gerald intended to find out where the Ancient City was.

Master Nacol was willing to grant an audience to Gerald since not only had Gerald made a massive donation for his conference this time around, but he had also heard—from Jace—that Gerald had saved the lives of all those babies! With that in mind, Master Nacol honestly had great respect for Gerald.

“It’s true that I know where the Ancient City is. In fact, I once went there with a teacher of mine who—quite unfortunately—is no longer here. Still, my experience there back then has been embedded deeply in my mind till this very day!” said Master Nacol as he took a small sip of tea. His expression—as he reminisced—suggested that the memory was a thrilling one.

Following that, he then looked at Gerald with a smile before asking, “I wonder if you’d be interested in listening to my story, Mr. Crawford?”

“By all means, please share your tale, Master Nacol!” replied Gerald with a nod.

Hearing that, Master Nacol then began telling a tale that took place some forty years ago...

At the time, Nacol had been in his twenties when he followed his teacher—Master Barron Xilts—over to Ancient City after receiving an invitation from a mysterious family to help enlighten an old benefactor who had heavy thoughts weighing on his mind.

Ancient City itself was a small city that was located within a mystifying mountain, and those who lived in it had been isolated from the world for so many generations that no one ever dared to go there to cause any trouble. After existing for thousands of years, it was a city filled with endless secrets and mysteries.

Even from ancient times, very few people even knew about the city, and fewer yet were those who were able to communicate with those living within it. Master Nacol's master was one of the few lucky enough to know about it.

Regardless, upon arriving at the foot of the mountain, both of them came across a young man who was about to kill ten young men and women!

They later found out that the cruel man had been persistently trying to force the Gunters to come out and show themselves, no matter how vicious he had to get. In fact, by that point, he had already murdered several people from the nearby villages since the Gunters kept refusing to see him. From that fact alone, it was obvious that he was also very good at scheming.

Moving back to when they first saw him, Nacol's master managed to stop him from killing them right in the nick of time. However, the cruel man was extremely skillful, and his master fought him for an entire day and night before finally managing to subdue the man.

Upon realizing how many people he had already killed, Nacol's master wanted to kill him as well to make him pay for his actions.

The young man, however, begged Nacol's master to spare his life, saying that he had no choice but to do all this since he wanted to take revenge.

After constant begging, Nacol's master's heart eventually softened. He then promised to spare the cruel man's life for the time being, ordering him instead to follow Nacol and him into the mountain.

At the time, they had thought that once they got in touch with the Gunters, they would be able to get the truth behind this matter. Quite honestly, Nacol's master would've simply ended that young man's life if he truly was evil.

After thanking his master repeatedly, the young man promised to build a magnificent monastery for him. Though he was apparently extremely rich, Nacol's master still ended up turning the offer down.

Traveling along the road together, all three of them eventually arrived at Ancient City.

“He couldn’t have secretly schemed against your master just to enter Ancient City, right...?” asked Gerald rather curiously.

“Scheme? He completely deceived us, that’s what he did!” replied Master Nacol with a bitter smile as he shook his head.

As it turned out, the young man had been extremely strong, even stronger than Nacol’s master! He was also, however, extremely good at hiding his own strength. It was the reason why Nacol’s master had assumed that he wouldn’t have any trouble subduing him again if he began acting up.

Regardless, the young man was able to tell that both he and his master were headed to meet the Gunters since he realized that they had received an invitation from that family. With that in mind, he had lost to Nacol’s master on purpose, just so he could beg his master for mercy.

He was doing all this since though he was strong, he simply couldn’t get close to the Gunters at all.

Either way, it was late at night by the time they entered Ancient City. After walking for a while, the young man suddenly exposed his true nature and began slaughtering the Gunters who had received them!

Naturally, the second Nacol's master saw this, he immediately attempted to subdue the young man again! Alas, his master was no match for him...

Chapter 1280

Nacol's master had desperately attempted to defend Nacol at the time, even ordering him to flee to the Gunter Manor to seek refuge and call for help!

By that point, the young man had already killed eighteen people without even breaking a sweat. Nacol and his master quickly found out that he knew how to use black magic as well! His magic seemed to stem from a weird-looking flower that he held in his hand.

Sometime after Nacol began running, the young man caught up to him and somehow imprinted the flower against his chest! Immediately after that happened, Nacol had felt as though his soul was being torn apart, and a dizzy spell instantly swept through his entire body.

Even so, Nacol knew that he couldn't allow himself to fall at that moment. After all, his master was still waiting for the rest of the Gunters to come over and rescue him. With that, Nacol gritted his teeth and continued crawling forward as he listened to the near-endless shrieks of dying people behind him.

He was too terrifyingly strong... None of them were even close to being his opponent!

After crawling for a long time, Nacol eventually arrived at Gunter Manor. Throughout his crawl there, however, the flower petal—that had been imprinted onto his chest—seemed to have continuously gnawed on his soul, if that made any sense. Either way, Nacol had felt as though all his strength had been drained by that point.

Thankfully, Lady Gunter and a few others had noticed him, and they quickly ran out of their manor.

Unbeknownst to Nacol, however, the young man—who was already drenched in fresh blood—had already caught up to him by then. In other words, he was standing right in front of Gunter Manor as well!

Though Nacol had been near-unconscious at the time, he could still hear the young man demanding the Gunters to hand him

something... The Gunters themselves seemed to have something against him, and eventually, both parties began fighting.

When Nacol eventually woke up again, he heard from one of the Gunter family's servants that the young man was defeated. After having his inner strength sealed, the young man had quickly fled the Ancient City.

After all that had happened, the Gunters made sure to send their men out to assassinate him. The Gunters were, after all, a family that even the four major societies awed upon.

Regardless, the situation had been extremely chaotic, and the Gunters had ordered the other major societies to hunt him down in secret as well. The Moldells and the Naplocks, in particular, had searched desperately for that young man all over the place.

Of course, Nacol himself had attempted to find him. After all, his master had been brutally murdered by that b*stard! Revenge was the only thing on his mind at the time.

Even so, the young man himself had only been around the age of thirty-five. With that in mind, it was truly a wonder how a young person like him could've garnered that much strength.

After hearing all that, Gerald then asked, “...So, did you manage to find him in the end...?”

Shaking his head, Master Nacol replied, “It was almost as though he had completely disappeared off the face of the earth! Humph! Not only had he killed so many of the Gunters, but he had also killed any people—from the nearby villages—who were unfortunate enough to bump into him! To think that he would just disappear like that after brutally murdering so many people! Nobody’s even there to pay the blood debt at all!”

“Indeed... Still, what did he want from the Gunters for him to behave so insanely...?” asked Gerald.

“About that... The Gunters kept it a secret from me as well. However, I do have a vague feeling that it’s related to that strange flower that that young man had imprinted on me...” said Master Nacol.

“...May I see it?” asked Gerald in curiosity.

Hearing his request, Nacol then exposed his shoulder for Gerald to see... And there it was. A flower that only had two petals!

Instantly getting to his feet the moment Gerald saw it, he then shouted, "It's the Dead Annie!"

There was no way Gerald was going to mistake the flower for anything else after suffering so much from it. With this new discovery, Gerald immediately began pacing around the room.

"...Oh? You know of this flower, Mr. Crawford?" replied Master Nacol, feeling slightly surprised.

"I do. Let's just say a friend of mine mentioned it to me before. That friend in question is from the Gunter family, and I intend to find them!" said Gerald.

Since Jace had already told Nacol that Gerald wished to head to Gunter Manor, to find and possibly save someone, hearing Gerald say it in person didn't really surprise him.

Whatever the case was, though Gerald still appeared calm on the surface, his heart was in complete disarray.

'How odd... That old lady had utilized Dead Annies as well... Even grandpa had fields of them though he mostly only kept them for their beauty and rarity... Regardless, to think that that young man

had killed so many people so brutally using the Dead Annie... From the way Master Nacol described it, the young man is arguably more skilled at using it compared to that old lady! Those god*mn flowers were even in huge amounts back in the king of the ocean's palace! Gerald thought to himself, feeling slightly confused and frustrated at all these snippets of information that didn't really tell a full story.

Was there something hidden within the Dead Annies...?

Chapter 1281

Gerald was very puzzled when he heard Master Nacol's story.

However, there seemed to be a voice telling him that there was some hidden secret behind the Dead Annie.

Nevertheless, Gerald did not intend to reveal all of the doubts he had to Master Nacol.

After all, Master Nacol was also a very simple and refined man.

Since he was no longer the young and inexperienced person he used to be back then, he had already let go of all of his hatred and resentment. He simply concentrated and focused on his meditation nowadays.

He truly admired the fact that Gerald had rescued more than a hundred babies' lives. So, Master Nacol would answer whenever Gerald had any questions for him.

In the end, Master Nacol had even written a special letter to personally introduce Gerald to the Gunter family!

This would save Gerald a lot of unnecessary trouble.

Although he rarely made any contact with them, Master Nacol still had some ties with the Gunter family because of his master.

Gerald was extremely grateful, and he thanked Master Nacol again and again after receiving the letter from him.

After that, he bid farewell to him.

Gerald thought about everything that Master Nacol had said on the way back, and he began sorting out all of the recent events in his mind. This was because Gerald felt that there were simply too many complicated things that had been happening lately.

He felt as though he was about to collapse just by thinking about it.

Firstly, he could already confirm that Mila's disappearance was directly related to the mysterious Sun League.

This was because the circumstances surrounding Mila's disappearance were exactly the same as his second uncle's mysterious disappearance back then.

It was the Sun League who had taken both his second uncle and Mila away on two separate occasions.

All of the mysteries had started ever since then.

Even if Gerald were to simply disregard the situation regarding Mila first, when his second uncle, Peter, had been carrying out the

Crawford family's Prophecy of Destruction back then, he had wanted to head to the Fenderson family to look for the other half of the jade pendant. However, before he could even do so, he had already been captured by the Sun League.

As for his grandfather, he was also in this state because of the Crawford family's Prophecy of Destruction. He had taken the picture of the sun away with him and begun living in seclusion before subsequently disappearing.

It was an absolutely irrefutable fact that the picture of the sun was definitely related to the Sun League.

As for Gerald, his situation was related to the Prophecy of Death.

He would eventually be dismembered, and this would lead to the fulfillment of the Crawford family's Prophecy of Destruction.

Meanwhile, there was also a mysterious man who had not revealed himself, but had already helped Gerald out several times!

He had guided him so that he could find the eternal coffin, and that was how Gerald had found the deity who had the same appearance

as him. After that, the mysterious man had also continued guiding him as he continued searching for the lady in white.

Gerald could not help but wonder whether the deity and the lady in white would end up being the only ones who would be able to save him.

Could it be that they would be the ones who could help him decipher and break free from the Prophecy of Death?

In the end, there was just the pledge of the holy water left. This was probably the final piece of the puzzle to the complicated Sun League mystery.

As long as he could participate in the pledge of the holy water, Gerald would be able to obtain a lot of information that he never knew before.

However, Gerald was also afraid that he would not be able to return anymore after participating in the pledge of the holy water.

Moreover, Gerald had to be famous and well-known to be able to participate in it.

If he were to combine everything together, Gerald realized that all of these events were somehow connected to one another because of one factor, and that was none other than the Sun League!

His second uncle and Mila's disappearance, the mysterious man, the Crawford family, the picture of the sun, the Gunter family that had suddenly emerged at this time, the King of the Judgement Portal who had never shown his face to anyone, the incident where the deity had descended to earth, and also Finnley, who had disappeared and gone missing, were all related to the Sun League.

As Gerald thought about this, he could not help but let out a long sigh.

All these things were like dark clouds which were slowly consuming him, and Gerald felt so depressed that he could not even catch his breath at times.

He felt like he was falling into a bottomless abyss. The deeper and deeper he sank into it and the more he struggled, the more mysterious things became!

But Gerald would not give up even if he were to die.

He wanted to give a just explanation and answer for everything—to his family members, Mila, and even himself!

The Sun League felt like a mouth that was constantly trying to swallow people up, and it seemed as though it was watching every step that Gerald made.

Regardless, Gerald was not afraid!

Three days later, Gerald set off together with Chester.

The location of the Ancient City was located within a large mountain, and this mountain existed in a place known as Qerton City.

Chapter 1282

Chester's injuries were almost completely healed.

So, Gerald brought Chester and the letter along with him as they set off, and they arrived in Qerton City at dusk that day.

“It is already getting dark. Should we head into the mountain today?” Chester asked.

“We will look for a hotel to stay in for the night first. We will head into the mountain early in the morning tomorrow!” Gerald replied as he looked up at the sky.

He also looked around Qerton City.

This seemed to be a mountain city that was surrounded by countless towering mountains.

So, Chester found a hotel for them before he booked two separate rooms.

After placing their luggage into their respective rooms, the both of them went out to eat at a simple and small restaurant.

They ordered a few local specialty dishes and returned to the hotel after satisfying their hunger.

However, at this time, the receptionist at the front desk suddenly called out to them.

“Sirs! I am truly sorry!” The receptionist came over with an apologetic smile on her face.

“What’s the matter?” Chester asked.

“Well, the thing is, our hotel is almost fully booked. So, we checked both of you out of your rooms. This is your luggage, and we have been keeping watch over it at the front desk all this while!”

They had already booked the rooms, and they had already checked in and settled themselves into the rooms.

Yet, the hotel had gone into their rooms and brought the guests’ luggage out of their rooms without any prior notice before forcing them to check out of the rooms.

This was simply too unreasonable.

The receptionist also knew that this was absolutely unreasonable and unacceptable, and that was the reason why she was so flustered, her face flushed red.

“What?! You already checked us out of our rooms? Where is your manager?!”

As for Chester, he was already filled with rage and anger, and he could not help but yell at the receptionist at this time.

The receptionist was so afraid that she could not stop herself from taking a few steps backward. At this time, she also glanced at a woman who was sitting in the corner of the lobby. The woman was enjoying tea with a few people who looked like her bodyguards.

“You don’t need to yell at her. I am afraid that this was not her idea, either!”

Gerald immediately understood what was going on as soon as he glanced at the woman who was drinking tea.

“I have two friends who will be coming to visit from outstation, and this is the best hotel in Qerton City. So, I asked the receptionist to check both of you out of your rooms. If you want to stay in a hotel,

you can go and look for another hotel then!” The woman who was sitting on the sofa said in a cold voice.

At the same time, she also glanced at Gerald and Chester with a contemptuous look on her face.

“What are you?! You actually dared to simply check us out of our rooms?! Did you think you can check us out of our rooms whenever you want to? Who do you think you are?!” Chester said as he walked a few steps closer to the woman.

As for the woman, the corners of her mouth curved up into a smile that carried a hint of ridicule.

The four bodyguards beside her had already stood up as they walked towards Chester.

“Stinky brat! Open up your eyes. Can’t you see that this is the eldest young lady of the Sime family? Are you really sick of living?!” The bodyguard asked coldly.

“I don’t care whether she is Miss Sime or Miss Some. No matter what it is, who gave you the right to check us out of our rooms without our permission?!”

Chester clenched his fists tightly as he prepared to fight them.

When the bodyguard heard Chester's ridicule and insult, he was also ready to fight back.

"Chester, forget it. This is our first time here. It would be best for us not to cause any trouble. Since the friends of the eldest young lady of the Sime family will be coming, we will just take a step back, then!"

Although Gerald was also angry, he did not want to cause any trouble or be bothered because of this kind of trivial matter.

Therefore, he patted Chester on his shoulder before pulling their luggage over. After that, they prepared to leave.

Without any warning, one of the bodyguards kicked Gerald's luggage directly, and Gerald's luggage flew out and smashed into the fish tank in the lobby.

The loud and crisp sound of broken glass and the sound of water flowing could be heard throughout the lobby.

“The both of you are still thinking about leaving?!”

Chapter 1283

“Kneel and kowtow in front of Miss Sime! Perhaps Miss Sime will forgive you if she is happy and satisfied, then!” The bodyguard said in a cold voice.

“Brother, you should be forgiving when you can afford to be forgiving. You don’t have to go overboard. We did not mean to offend you in any way!” Gerald said.

After that, he walked over and picked up his luggage that the bodyguard had kicked away before he prepared to leave again.

“Pfft! Did I say that you were allowed to leave?! Who was the one who said that he did not care whether I am Miss Sime or Miss Some just now? Dave, I want you to break all of his teeth!” As for the young woman, she also stood up coldly.

Chester was very furious and angry, and he could only hold back his anger.

When one of the bodyguards heard Miss Sime's words, he kicked away the luggage that Gerald had picked up again.

"You are courting your own death!" The four bodyguards yelled out in unison.

As they spoke, they took out their batons before they tried to smash it directly on Gerald and Chester.

"Hmph?"

Although Gerald did not want to hold it against them, the people from the Sime family were simply too domineering and arrogant.

Any ordinary person would not have been able to handle it if they were to suffer a blow from these batons to their heads.

It was already bad enough that they were forcing others to check out of their rooms, but now, they were even actually intending to beat them up and force them to kneel before Miss Sime.

No one would be able to tolerate this.

“Do it!” Gerald said to Chester.

As for Chester, he had already been holding his anger back for a long time.

So, he raised his arms as the four bodyguards slammed their iron batons directly on his arms.

All four of the iron batons were broken in an instant.

The jaws of the four bodyguards were also torn apart.

“What?!”

The four of them were all in a state of shock as they trembled uncontrollably.

Even Miss Sime stood up again in shock, and she was obviously a little frightened.

The next scene was even bloodier.

Chester caught one bodyguard on each hand, almost as though he was playing a game of catch, before beating all four of the bodyguards up until they were almost unrecognizable.

“Ahh!”

The woman was finally afraid, and she was no longer as calm as she was before.

“You... you actually dared to attack us?! Do you know where you are?! Are you really sick of living?!” The woman yelled out loud.

As for Gerald, he simply walked over to the woman before he lifted her by her collar. Then, he threw the woman out the door directly.

The woman was thrown directly into a large pool outside the hotel.

She was instantly turned into a huge mess.

“Ahh! You guys are simply courting your own deaths! You are asking for it!” The woman yelled angrily.

After she was done speaking, she did not even bother about her own subordinates, and she simply ran away in a hurry when she saw Chester walking outside.

“D*mn it! Did you really think that a young lady like you could bully us so easily?!” Chester cursed.

As for the people in the hotel, they were all silent and dumbfounded out of shock.

“Help us check-in and make up for the room that you checked us out of. Otherwise, we will demolish your hotel!” Gerald said as he slammed his hands angrily on the table.

“Yes! Yes! Yes!”

The receptionist and the hotel staff nodded repeatedly.

Although they could not afford to provoke the Sime family, they could not afford to provoke the two guys in front of them either.

So, they could only do as Gerald asked.

After booking the hotel rooms again, Gerald and Chester went up to their respective rooms once more.

As Gerald thought about the scene just now, he could only smile bitterly.

After all, there were no wealthy or influential families in Gerald's eyes.

When they arrived at their room level, the elevator door opened.

There happened to be a group of people who were about to take the elevator down.

“Big Brother!”

Amongst this group of people, a young man shouted out in surprise as soon as he saw Gerald.

Gerald raised his head to take a look, and he was also a little surprised.

“Aiden? Why are you here?”

The person in front of him was none other than Aiden.

Chapter 1284

Aiden was with a group of men and women.

Gerald could not help but glance at them a couple more times because there was a faint inner strength lingering around all of them.

It was obvious that they were all martial arts practitioners.

“I arrived earlier in the morning today, Big Brother! Why are you here? Are you here for the training too?” Aiden asked in surprise.

“What training?” Gerald asked.

“Cough! Ugh!”

At this time, a girl standing next to Aiden could not help but cough slightly as she signaled for Aiden not to continue saying too much.

“This is my elder brother. The both of us are going to talk for a little while. The rest of you can go on first!” Aiden said as he looked at them.

Gerald had originally planned to nod at them before greeting them.

After all, weren't they Aiden's friends?

However, none of them looked at Gerald or even said hello to Gerald at all.

They simply went straight into the elevator.

“Who are they? Are they from the military region?”

Gerald could not help but ask in confusion as soon as they arrived in Gerald's room.

This was especially so because Gerald was extremely curious about the training that Aiden had mentioned earlier.

“Not all of them are from the military region. They are all martial arts elites from all over the country, and they were recommended by the Martial Arts Association. Some of them are elites from the military region. Many top international martial arts practitioners are also here this time!” Aiden said.

“Will there be a joint training event held here?” Gerald asked.

Aiden lowered his voice before he said, “No. We are going to be trained by an ancient secret family. Every year, they will be several elite soldiers and martial arts practitioners from the military region and Martial Arts Association who will gain a few spots to train under this secret family. They have outstanding abilities as a result of participating in this training. Although I am the weakest, I was fortunate enough to gain one of the spots!”

Aiden smiled.

“Could it be that you will be going to the Gunter Manor?” Gerald finally understood what was going on.

According to what Master Nacol had said, if it was an ancient secret family, then at this place, who else could it be besides the Gunter family?

Aiden was startled, and he asked, “Brother, do you know about the Gunter family too?”

Gerald nodded as he smiled wryly.

“Yes. The Gunter family is a family that I did not have access to before. I recently found out that there are many secrets hidden in this world that many of us do not know of at all. As for the Gunter family, they are but one of those secrets. The Gunter family have already trained many great people with excellent and outstanding abilities!”

“The reason why I could gain a spot during the selection process was because of the breathing technique that you taught me some time ago. My physique improved greatly in just a few days!” Aiden said as he showed off his muscles.

When Gerald had helped Aiden to nab the thief back then, he had also taught Aiden a skill or two.

After all, Aiden would be in the military, and it would be of great use for him to possess this kind of physique.

Moreover, Aiden was originally not supposed to tell Gerald all this since it should be a highly classified matter.

However, Aiden had already personally witnessed Gerald's strength and abilities for himself. Therefore, he had nothing to hide from Gerald.

"By the way, Brother, why are you here then?" Aiden asked again.

"Our purpose is similar. I am also going to the Gunter Manor!" Gerald replied truthfully as he smiled.

At this time, Aiden's cell phone suddenly rang.

As soon as Aiden answered the call, a girl started cursing from the other end of the line: "Hmph! Aiden Baker! You came all the way to Qerton City! Didn't you say that you were going to bring me out to

have some fun? I have already been waiting downstairs for you with my friends for such a long time, but why haven't I seen you yet?!"

"..."

"Okay. Okay. We can talk later!" Aiden said before he hung up the phone directly.

"Hehehe. That was one of my university classmates. She knows that I am here in Qerton City, and she came to look for me so that we can go out and have some fun together. There will be a banquet in Qerton City today, so she wanted me to go and enjoy the banquet together with her!" Aiden explained.

Gerald and Chester exchanged glances with one another before they smiled. Who knew what Aiden was up to this time?

"By the way, Brother, it has been such a long time since the both of us had fun together! You were so busy when we ran into each other the last time. Why don't we go out and look around together tonight? After that, we can head to the Gunter Manor together tomorrow, right?" Aiden asked excitedly.

To be honest, Gerald didn't really want to go. But after seeing the expectant look on Aiden's face, Gerald could not bear to turn him down.

It was true that they had not had the opportunity to drink and play together after they had graduated from university.

"Alright, then! We can go out and have some fun together!" Gerald said as he smiled.

At this time, there were four to five girls who were dressed up very innocently and beautifully waiting beside the bus stop outside the hotel. They were holding onto their bags as they chatted amongst themselves.

"Hmph! He is coming down in a short while. Seriously! He also said that he will be bringing two handsome guys with him. Sisters, you will have to take a good look at them later! The person who makes the first move will gain the upper hand!"

One of the girls who had a ponytail said as she laughed wildly.

Chapter 1285

“Hey! Aiden, over here!”

Not long after that, Gerald, Aiden, and Chester walked downstairs.

Several girls also saw them, and they hurriedly greeted Aiden.

Amongst these girls, the leader of the girls was a girl named Lijane. Both Lijane and Aiden had graduated from Sunnydale University.

After graduation, Lijane had returned to work at her hometown, Qerton City.

However, she had always been in touch with Aiden.

Amongst the girls, although all of them were very outstanding, they could still be divided into different classes and ranks.

Lijane could barely rank second.

This was because there was a girl with extremely long hair amongst the group of girls. She had an extremely beautiful and perfect figure—she was tall and fair, and she had very light makeup on.

Whenever she smiled, it seemed as though all of the air particles around her were completely frozen in the air.

Some of the guys who were waiting for the bus at the bus stop next to them also took out their cell phones with malicious intentions. All of them took the most pictures of the tall and beautiful girl.

Her name was Xola, and she was very good friends with Lijane.

All of them had come out today to play and have fun together. They were all prepared to let Aiden take them to participate in the banquet today.

If it weren't because Aiden had run into Gerald and was eager to chat with and reminisce about the past with Gerald, they would have already arrived at the banquet a long time ago.

“Are those the two handsome guys that you were talking about?”

Lijane was clearly a very carefree person. At this time, a look of disappointment flashed through her pretty face when she finally saw the two long-awaited 'handsome guys' that Aiden had brought over with him today.

One of them looked a little pale, cold, and scary.

That was far from Lijane's expectation of how a handsome guy should be.

As for the other guy, although he looked like a rather ordinary person, he was actually quite handsome.

However, he did not possess the same kind of extravagant and luxurious attitude that a young master like Aiden generally possessed. Instead, he gave people a more mature and refined feeling.

This was also a very big gap from Lijane's expectations.

Gerald was obviously the kind of boy that would be more suitable for marriage rather than being a person's boyfriend.

He was so boring!

Several other girls also thought about it at the same time.

“Okay! What are you girls looking at?” As for Aiden, he did not think too much. After all, he was already very happy that he could come out and have fun with Mr. Crawford today.

Everyone chatted with each other along the way.

After that, they arrived at the venue where the banquet was being held.

Gerald also noticed that most of the girls’ attention was completely focused on Aiden. None of them could even be bothered about him or Chester at all.

What was the reason?

It was because Chester’s current appearance scared and frightened them a little.

As for himself, he was too honest.

On the other hand, Aiden had always been the kind of person who had a very flamboyant and unrestrained attitude. So, he naturally attracted a lot of attention to himself.

However, Gerald did not mind even if they did not pay any attention to him. That did not mean anything to him at all. After all, the reason why Gerald had come out tonight was simply because he wanted to accompany and have some fun with his brother. They would have to head to Ancient City tomorrow.

He was not here to look for a partner!

The venue of the banquet was the largest hotel in Qerton City.

Moreover, due to the influence of the Gunter family in Ancient City, many people in Qerton City were all into martial arts, and they enjoyed watching boxing and fighting matches.

Upon entering the lobby, they could see a specially built arena in the center of the huge lobby. There were also fighters inside the ring at this time.

The seating inside the lobby was also extremely interesting.

The front row was naturally for the most distinguished guests. Gerald could see that it was the group of people who were initially with Aiden.

Nevertheless, Gerald could clearly tell that Aiden did not feel at ease with them. Therefore, Aiden naturally did not want to be together with them.

It just so happened that Gerald also did not want to go over there to make small talk with them.

To be honest, these people came with a strong sense of superiority, and they felt as though they were the best in the world. They did not even want to take a second look at anyone else at all.

Gerald could not be bothered with them.

So, the few of them sat at the most remote table.

Gerald did not notice that his arrival had attracted the attention of one of the waiters who was at the scene. The waiter secretly glanced at Gerald several times.

After confirming Gerald's identity, he put down the plate in his hand before he turned around and left. At the same time, he also said something into his walkie-talkie.

At the same time, a beautiful woman who was dressed up in an extremely dignified and elegant manner also made an appearance at the venue, and she instantly attracted many people's attention.

She had a devastatingly beautiful smile on her face as she walked directly toward the table at the front, which was filled with people from the training team.

"Fernando! You're here!"

She smiled as she spoke to a man with squinting eyes who was seated at the table amongst the group of people.

Then, she blushed, and her beautiful face was flushed red as soon as she saw the man called Fernando.

“Matilda, long time no see!”

As for Fernando, he simply raised his eyes before he forced a smile on his originally cold face.

“Miss Matilda! You promised to come here with Fernando and the rest of us. However, you had already disappeared after we got out of the elevator. Fernando was waiting for you for quite some time!”

A big and burly man who was sitting beside Fernando spoke up.

“Ah. Don’t mention it anymore. Something happened at noon today, and it made me very angry! I also got injured. After I bandaged up my injuries, I wanted to go back and find those two guys, but they had already run away. If it weren’t because my father wanted me to take this banquet seriously, I would have already searched all over the world just to find those two men!” Matilda said angrily.

“Oh? Someone actually dared to provoke you, Miss Matilda? Just tell us who it is, and we will avenge you!” The big guy next to Fernando said as he smiled.

“Sigh! It’s a pity I can’t find them at all! However, I have photos of them from the surveillance camera. I believe that they will not be able to escape too far before I find out about their whereabouts!” Matilda said out of hatred and resentment.

After that, she looked at Fernando before she said, “By the way, Fernando, the Dawson family has always been very close to the Sime family. There are many of our friends from all walks of life, especially those from the Martial Arts Association who came to participate in the banquet today. My father wanted to ask you if you could display your strength and abilities on stage during the finale of the banquet later. This is what I wanted to tell you earlier in the afternoon!”

“After all, you are the first member in the training team who is going to undergo training under the Gunter family. Your presence will certainly ensure that the Sime family can be even more deeply rooted and established in Qerton City!”

“Matilda, you should know that I have never liked to show off my strength and abilities. Do you honestly want me to go on stage and fight like those people over there who are nothing more than a piece of trash?”

Fernando narrowed his eyes before he shook his head with a wry smile on his face.

He clearly looked down on all of the contestants who were up on the stage. They were nothing more than garbage to him.

Someone in the training team spoke up. “That’s right, Matilda. When have you ever seen Fernando showing off his strength or abilities on stage? I can still remember that Fernando went up on stage to compete against a master when he was just twelve years old. At the end of the day, Fernando ended up digging out both of the master’s eyes, and he also twisted and broke all four of his limbs. The master ended up being crippled for life! Hahaha!”

As for several of the girls in the training team, they could not help but look at Fernando because they wanted to gain his favor too. After all, Fernando was truly very strong and powerful.

“Fernando, could you just help me out this time?”

There were suddenly tears welling up in Matilda’s eyes.

However, before Fernando could reply, the sound of a few hurried footsteps sounded.

It was a few bodyguards who were rushing toward Matilda's side at the same time.

"Miss Matilda! We found them!" The bodyguards said excitedly.

Matilda naturally knew who the bodyguards were referring to when they said that they had already found them.

"Hmph! So, where are they? Could it be that they have already left Qerton City?" Matilda asked angrily.

"No. The both of them are actually here on the scene. We have already confirmed it! They are indeed very courageous, and they even dared to come and attend the banquet today!" The bodyguard said.

"What?!" Matilda was horrified.

The tears in her eyes welled up even more intensely and she was about to burst into tears.

“Alright, then. Since Fernando does not even care about my life and death anymore, and since he is not willing to help me in any way, I will just go against them and fight them on my own even though both of them are really strong and skillful!” Matilda choked as she spoke.

Fernando could not help but shake his head with a wry smile on his face as he said, “You always act this way, and you are using the same method again! Alright, then. Since someone actually dared to provoke you, and since they are masters who are already here at the scene, I will go up on stage to help you resolve your grievances with them so that I can take revenge on your behalf too, okay? That way, I would have already agreed to do everything that you asked of me, right?”

“Hahaha! I knew it! I knew that you doted on me the most, Fernando!” Matilda cheered excitedly out of joy.

Chapter 1287

At this moment, Fernando also happened to see the two men after he looked in the direction that the bodyguard was pointing at.

There were already dozens of bodyguards surrounding the two men at this time.

“B*stards! You guys are certainly done for this time! Fernando, I also want you to dig his eyes out and break all of his limbs!” Matilda said angrily as she clenched her fists.

Fernando nodded in agreement.

As for Gerald, Chester, and Aiden, they had all been focusing on the fights that were going on inside the arena.

To be honest, these two fighters had clearly been training hard for a long time. Their skills and abilities were also abundant. Therefore, their fight was actually extremely enjoyable.

“Mr. Crawford, something does not seem right. I think that those bodyguards seem to be coming for us. Moreover, I also saw that young lady that we met earlier in the afternoon!”

Chester said as he was drinking his juice while keeping his eyes on the fight that was going on in the arena.

“Mm. I already noticed it a long time ago. I saw that someone was keeping an eye on us as soon as we stepped into the banquet. I truly did not expect the young lady of the Sime family to be so unreasonable!” Gerald said as he smiled wryly.

“Big Brother, is something wrong?” Aiden asked softly as he also noticed that something was wrong.

“It’s okay. We can just wait and see what they are going to do first!” Gerald replied lightly.

“Aiden! Aiden! Why are you calling this guy your big brother?” Lijane suddenly asked as she grabbed Aiden’s arm at this time.

Why did it seem as though this man named Gerald was even more powerful as compared to Aiden? Why did it seem like Aiden was just his younger brother?

“There are some things that you should not be asking. Just live honestly. If there is a fight later, you girls should just step aside. They will not make things difficult for you as this matter does not concern you at all!”

Aiden clenched his fists as he waited to start fighting as soon as Gerald gave him the order.

As for everyone else in the venue, none of them were stupid either.

When they saw so many bodyguards suddenly entering the scene, who would still dare to speak up at this time? Everyone simply looked in Gerald's direction quietly as they wondered what was going to happen next.

At this time, the sound of a red wine bottle falling to the ground and shattering into pieces broke the silence at the scene.

Someone had intentionally broken a bottle of red wine directly next to Gerald's table.

It was a woman who was coming aggressively at them.

“The both of you are truly great! I looked all over for the both of you and I thought that you had already run away. However, I never expected that you would actually dare to come and attend a banquet hosted by my family?!”

This woman was none other than Matilda SIme.

She sneered as she stared at them.

She was going to take revenge for the humiliation that she had suffered and avenge herself in front of everyone today.

“This time, I don’t need to go around looking for you everywhere anymore!” Matilda said as she sneered.

“Based on these few guys’ abilities? Hahaha! It will be useless even if you send ten times the amount of people here!” Chester said as he laughed.

“Who is so amazing? If she were to send ten times the amount of people, that would be about five to six hundred people, then. Even if there were five to six hundred pigs, you don’t need to catch them all at once, right? Since you are so amazing and powerful, you should really go against Fernando! So, I want to ask you if you dare to come up and compete with Fernando, then?”

A big and burly man walked over, and he had a satirical look on his face. As he spoke, there was a murderous intent in his tone, and it

made it seem as though the air around them had instantly become very cold.

“Come on, kid. You have the opportunity to compete on the same stage as Fernando. So, even if you were to get your limbs abolished, and even if you were to turn into a cripple, you can already brag about it for a lifetime since you had the opportunity to fight against Fernando. There are so many experts from the Martial Arts Association here at the scene today. So, why don't you ask them about Fernando Dawson's name and reputation, then?” The burly man said.

“Fernando Dawson?”

Chapter 1288

As soon as this remark came out, everyone started trembling uncontrollably out of fear.

Fernando's skills and cultivation base were extremely famous and well-known throughout the Martial Arts Association. Ever since Fernando was a teenager, even the existence of someone who was already a top master was no longer his opponent.

Fernando was extremely talented, and he was a very terrifying person!

Moreover, at this time, everyone could see that a young man who had a very majestic aura was already slowly walking up the high platform as he squinted his eyes slightly.

After that, he pointed at Gerald before he said coldly, "I heard Matilda say that you are particularly good at fighting. So, why don't you come up and accept my challenge, then? Let me see how strong and powerful you truly are!" Fernando simply shook his head and smiled wryly as he scanned through the zealous eyes of the people in the audience.

As for Aiden, he obviously did not expect that Matilda would actually be able to get Fernando to fight on her behalf.

So, he was already breaking out in cold sweat all over his forehead at this time.

"Sorry, but I am not interested at all!" Gerald simply replied without much interest.

Gerald really did not want to be too extravagant, and he did not want to attract too much attention to himself on this trip. Moreover, there were many people here who were related to the Gunter family. Gerald did not know what was going on with the Gunter family, so he did not want to act too rashly.

“Not interested? I think you must be afraid and do not dare to go against him, right? You b*stard! I didn’t see you acting this way when you hit me in the afternoon today? So, why are you so afraid, and why aren’t you doing anything now that Fernando is challenging you?” Matilda said coldly as she was extremely angry.

At the same time, she also truly despised and looked down on Gerald.

She was the eldest young lady of the Sime family in Qerton City, and she had never been subjected to this kind of insults and ridicule in her whole life.

In truth, the Sime family had already sent their men to intercept Gerald and Chester at the hotel, but unfortunately, both of them were not in the hotel.

Matilda had initially thought that the both of them had already fled and run away after finding out about her background and strength.

Unexpectedly, they had not left, but they even had the guts to come and attend the banquet hosted by the Sime family!

It was indeed true that when a person searched all over for something, they would not be able to find it. However, they would easily encounter the thing or person that they had been searching for without putting in any effort at all when they were not looking for it.

This time, she would certainly have to teach these two men a lesson in order to get rid of all the anger and resentment that she held in her heart.

“What?! You with the last name Crawford, you actually dare to turn Fernando’s challenge down?! You are not giving him any face at all?! Fernando is allowing you to become his opponent! Moreover, it would actually be your greatest honor and glory to be defeated by Fernando! You dare to turn him down?!” At this time, the big and burly man next to Fernando stepped forward before he walked over to Gerald and spoke up angrily.

His name was Yuno Liler. Aiden had given him a brief introduction of this guy, and it seemed as though he was one of the core figures in their training team this time.

Now that Gerald was openly refusing and turning Fernando's invitation to challenge him down directly, Yuno could not help but feel as though this was equivalent to Gerald giving Fernando a slap across his face.

Fernando was also obviously a little unhappy. He opened up his slightly squinting eyes as he looked at Gerald with a frown on his face.

"So, what if I refuse to give him any face?" Gerald asked as he raised his head and stared at Yuno with a hint of ridicule in his smile.

"You..." Yuno's face immediately flushed red out of anger, and he was really very tempted to beat Gerald up at this time.

Aiden hurriedly rushed toward Gerald's side.

Although Mr. Crawford was extremely strong and powerful now, and even though Aiden had been exceptionally surprised at the strength and abilities that Gerald had shown when he had helped him to catch the thief, the person that Mr. Crawford had offended this time was Fernando, who was a freak.

Aiden could not help but feel a little nervous. After all, even though Maverick was already very difficult to deal with in the first place, if this arrogant and presumptuous Fernando were to make a move, Maverick would not even be seen as a threat at all.

So, Aiden was truly worried about Mr. Crawford's safety if both Fernando and Yuno were to attack him at the same time.

"Fernando, Yuno, there must be some sort of misunderstanding here. Can you give me some face? Why don't we sit down and talk things over a drink instead?" Aiden said.

"We can sit down and have a drink, and we will certainly satisfy you no matter what kind of compensation you want from us!"

In order to ensure that Mr. Crawford would not be met with any harm, Aiden could only give in and plead with them.

"Aiden, I understand your kind intentions, but I don't have the time to sit down and talk to them!"

Gerald patted Aiden on his shoulder. He naturally knew that Aiden was only doing this for him because he was afraid for his safety.

However, Gerald was also telling the truth. He simply wanted to keep up the peace and do his own part. He did not want to cause too much trouble.

It could be said that Gerald would make a concession as much as he could when it came to certain matters.

At this time, he looked at Matilda before he said, "If you have any unresolved grievances with me, you can ask your father to head to Mayberry City to look for Mr. Crawford. I believe that you will be able to obtain the answer that you want, then!" Gerald said as he sneered.

"Huh? Mr. Crawford from Mayberry City?!"

As soon as Gerald said these words, everyone at the scene was shocked again...

“Mr. Crawford from Mayberry City?” Matilda was also taken aback.

“Impossible! Hmph! You are simply pretending to be the Mr. Crawford from Mayberry City because you know that you are going to die here, right?” Matilda hurriedly said after she had made up her mind.

As for the girls who had come with Aiden, the way that they were looking at Gerald now kept changing.

“I guess he can only pretend to be the Mr. Crawford from Mayberry City now since he has offended Miss Sime. That is probably the only way he can save his own life today. Otherwise, he will end up being a cripple!”

There was a lot of discussion going on at this time.

As Gerald was about to leave, Yuno took the lead as he walked over and stood on the high platform, glaring coldly at Gerald.

“You brat! If you dare to take another step forward, I will make sure that your blood will be splattered everywhere on the spot!” Yuno yelled coldly.

“Yuno is also a master from the Martial Arts Association. It seems as though he is not going to let this guy who is pretending to be Mr. Crawford from Mayberry City off just like that today.”

“I guess it is because this young lad is just too hateful. Who gave him the courage to pretend to be the young master of the Crawford family?! He is really courting his own death!”

Many people were filled with righteous indignation at this time.

“How about that? So, are you brave enough to take another step forward, or why don’t you agree to fight against me first?” Yuno asked as he sneered.

“All of you will still have to participate in the training under the Gunter family tomorrow. However, it is truly unnecessary for you to fight with me.” Gerald replied as he shook his head.

“Hahaha! You are indeed a useless piece of trash! Do you mean that you will hurt me if I were to fight with you?!” Yuno was very confident.

Moreover, Gerald's words seemed to be the biggest joke in history to Yuno, and he could not help but continue sneering and ridiculing Gerald.

"It looks like..." Gerald looked at Yuno before he smiled and said, "You are bent on fighting with me today?"

"Why? Are you afraid?"

Yuno walked over to Gerald before he started poking Gerald in the chest as he said, word by word, "If you are afraid, don't lie or brag anymore in the future. Also, you should cut off your own hands in front of Miss Matilda."

Gerald snorted coldly before he said, "I am just afraid that you are not worthy enough to become my opponent."

"I am not worthy enough to become your opponent?!" Yuno thought that he had heard Gerald's words wrongly.

He turned around before he said in a loud voice to the people around him, "This kid thinks that I am not worthy of becoming his opponent to fight against him! Don't you guys think that this is really hilarious?!"

As soon as Yuno said these words, there was an uproar.

“He actually dares to say that Yuno is not worthy of being his opponent. Hahaha. This guy who is pretending to be Mr. Crawford must really be insane!”

“Yuno is the second-best fighter amongst the younger generation in the Martial Arts Association. Aside from Fernando, who else would dare to say that they would win in a fight against Yuno?!”

“Who knows? Perhaps he is actually a hidden martial arts master? Hahaha!”

When everyone at the scene saw that there was going to be a good show, they hurriedly put everything down and came over to join in on the excitement.

In truth, many people had felt some pity for Gerald at first. After all, simply by comparing their body shape and physique, Yuno was over 1.9 meters tall, while Gerald was just over 1.7 meters tall. At first glance, Gerald was naturally on the weaker side as compared to Yuno. Therefore, everyone pitied and sympathized with Gerald.

Yet, Gerald had actually said these words, and everyone instantly felt as though he was being way too ignorant.

First, he had offended the eldest young lady of the Sime family, and now, he was actually simply shooting his mouth off.

He really did not know what was good for himself.

Aiden was also feeling very nervous at this time.

After all, these people were all the elite amongst the elites.

“Come on! Just wait and see how I am going to deal with you, then!” Yuno said as he hooked his punches in an attempt to provoke Gerald.

After that, he stretched his neck and moved his hands and feet briefly.

Yuno started throwing some punches, and each of his punches was so strong that it seemed as though it was strong enough to kill a tiger.

Unexpectedly, Gerald snorted disdainfully as he said, “You are just throwing some highly impractical punches with fancy footwork.”

As soon as he said those words, it was not only Yuno’s expression that had changed drastically, but the expression on the faces of everyone in the Martial Arts Association. Even Fernando’s expression changed at this time. Some highly impractical punches with fancy footwork?! Gerald was not only insulting Yuno alone, but he was also insulting the entire Martial Arts Association.

At this moment, the spectators around them also completely lost all of the sympathies that they had initially felt for Gerald.

Chapter 1290

After all, it was important for a person to have self-knowledge. Since Gerald was still shooting his mouth off at a time like this, this only made others look down on him even more.

“Start fighting! Teach him a lesson!” Someone yelled out in dissatisfaction from amongst the audience.

“Young lad, you are indeed courting your death!” Yuno yelled angrily before he rushed directly at Gerald.

Yuno’s skills were indeed very sharp as compared to an ordinary person. Regardless of whether it was a flying kick or a side kick, all of his moves were very simple but powerful. If he were to hit a person directly on his head, that person could easily be knocked into a coma.

The crowd of people quickly hid and avoided them, out of fear that Yuno would injure them too.

However, Gerald simply put his hands into his pockets calmly as he avoided many of Yuno’s flying kicks and side kicks several times in a row.

When Gerald saw that Yuno was going all out to attack him, he could not help but hum slightly before he raised his foot fiercely and ferociously, as if he was raising a giant ax.

Yuno raised his hand in shock as he instinctively put his hands in front of him. However, he flew out directly and fell to the ground on his knees after Gerald had kicked him.

Fortunately, there was soft cushioning on the ground. Otherwise, Yuno would certainly have had to lie down on the hospital bed for half a year at least.

“He won?!”

Everyone on the sidelines was in shock.

Even Aiden was so shocked that his eyes were about to pop out of his sockets.

He had initially thought that Gerald would certainly be utterly defeated by Yuno. This was because even though Gerald possessed great strength and abilities, no matter what it was, Yuno had received and undergone special martial arts training from an early age, unlike any other ordinary person.

Yet, Gerald had actually defeated Yuno with just a single kick?!

“Yuno is too weak, right? He can’t even handle that young lad.”

“It seems as though he was not bragging at all. He truly has some skills of his own.”

There was a lot of ongoing discussion amongst the audience, and some of them were looking at Gerald in a different light now.

Everyone had initially thought that he was only good at bragging and provoking others. However, since he could easily defeat Yuno, this could only prove that he was actually rather powerful and skillful.

This scene also caused the expression on Matilda's face to change slightly.

She really would not have expected Gerald to win. Moreover, he had won so easily. Matilda knew of Yuno's strength very well, but he could not even accept a single attack from Gerald?!

Matilda was filled with anger and resentment for Gerald at this time.

Only Fernando frowned as he walked over to take a look at Yuno. Both the meridians in Yuno's arms were broken, and both of his kneecaps were completely shattered. At this time, Yuno had already fallen unconscious because of the pain. Fernando then turned around and looked at Gerald as he said, "You are pretty skillful, but you should not have dealt such a heavy blow to him. You have ended

his martial arts journey completely here! Now, things are not as simple as you offending Matilda anymore!”

“Even if we were to forget about the fact that he was the one who provoked me in the first place, let’s say one of his previous kicks had hit me directly, what would have happened to me, then?” Gerald asked lightly.

Fernando frowned again.

If a normal person’s side kick were to hit a person in the head directly, that person would certainly suffer from a mild injury.

Yuno was about 1.9 meters tall, and he weighed more than a hundred kilograms. If he were to hit a person in the head with all of his might, if his opponent was an ordinary person, that person would certainly end up in a vegetative state.

Strictly speaking, Gerald had already been very merciful toward Yuno.

Fernando stood up and said, “Very well. Since you have such strength, you are indeed worthy enough to die in my hands, then!”

Fernando spoke coldly.

As soon as his words fell, the audience were all staring at them with their eyes wide open in shock. Fernando was already feeling anxious, so they were in for a great show, then!

“You still want to fight with me?” Gerald asked as he narrowed his eyes slightly.

Fernando still dared to step up and challenge him to a fight even after he had seen how Gerald had kicked Yuno earlier. So, it seemed as though Fernando had not shown his true strength yet.

“You should not think that I will not hold back at all if we were to go all out in a fight,” Gerald said lightly.

“Pfft! Do you honestly think that you will be able to defeat Fernando?!”

As soon as Gerald spoke up, there was someone who was extremely dissatisfied amongst the audience. It was Matilda who had spoken up as she snorted coldly.

“That’s right. His kick just now was actually not even that powerful. It was just a little faster and stronger.” Another girl said at this time.

Although Gerald had defeated Yuno easily and swiftly earlier, everyone was still filled with confidence in Fernando’s strength and capability. After all, Fernando had proven his strength and abilities in front of countless people throughout all these years.

Even Matilda was a little more rest assured at this time. If Fernando were to step up and go against this person, that person would certainly be done for, then!

Chapter 1291

“You...! Let’s do this then! I’ll go easy on you on your first ten blows!” declared Fernando as he looked at Gerald before shaking his head, a wry smile on his face.

Following that, Fernando rested his arms behind his back and even closed his eyes before turning to face away with Gerald.

The way he was behaving almost suggested that he was in some sort of strange environment. That everything else in the entire world was meaningless to him.

“...Does Fernando not plan to make an attack...? His wordless taunt is so merciless! Fernando being Fernando, I suppose!”

“He’s doing that for a reason! Did you know that the Dawsons have mastered a secret martial art skill called the Art of Counter Injury?”

“The Art of what now? What does it do?”

“From what I’ve heard, practitioners of that martial art will allow you to hit them any way you want. However, the more vigorous the attacker’s blows are, the heavier their hands will start to feel!”

“Good lord! To think that such a mystical skill even exists in the world!”

As everyone in the crowd was busy discussing the current situation in between squeals of shock and awe, Fernando had now enveloped himself within a mystifying-looking veil... If he was already mysterious before, he was even more so now.

Seeing that, everyone could only hold their breaths as they kept their eyes peeled.

Gerald himself had no idea what the Art of Counter Injury was. However, he did know that there was a high chance that he would be unable to leave today unless he resolved this incident.

With that in mind, Gerald closed his eyes as his body quickly began emanating his immense inner strength... The second he opened them again, Gerald immediately began dashing toward Fernando!

“He’s made his move! Fernando’s definitely going to counter that!”

Everyone had their eyes glued to the scene as they watched as Gerald successfully landed a swift kick on Fernando!

Following a loud ‘thud’, the sickening sound of bones cracking became evident a split second later as the crowd watched as a body was flung backward... and began colliding with rows upon rows of tables and chairs!

However, the now messily-arranged chairs and tables were the least of everyone’s concerns. Since several members of the Martial Arts Association had been sitting right in front of Fernando’s path of

destruction, many of them ended up flying all over the place as well, either in their attempt to dodge the attack or due to being directly hit by the incoming body!

Eventually, the body finally stopped when it hit against the large hall's glass revolving door, sending it shattering into a million pieces with a loud 'crash' ...!

And of course, the body itself was Fernando's.

Everyone was momentarily too stupefied for words, and this was especially so for Matilda.

When she was finally able to break from her utter shock, the stunned woman simply muttered, "...H-how... How is this even possible...?"

Despite being completely shocked, those from within the crowd were already starting to discuss the situation again.

"...Maybe Fernando has some other tactic he hadn't revealed...?"

“...You may be right! After all, he can’t have been defeated that easily! I’m sure he has another tactic up his sleeve...! ...Right?”

As everyone continued thinking about how unbelievable the current events were, Fernando himself had been vomiting blood, his shock and fear clearly reflected in his eyes as his body trembled vigorously.

In a way, the sheer force of that kick alone almost seemed to have—somehow—inflicted damage on his entire body. Due to that absurdity, Fernando’s mind was now completely blank as he continued lying on the ground.

Gerald, however, simply stood atop the platform before looking at Fernando and shouting, “Hey now, that was only one blow! You still owe me nine more hits!”

“You should have enough energy stored by now, Fernando! Get up!”

“Is Fernando finally going to reveal his unique skill? It’s definitely over for the other guy now!”

Listening as everyone continued cheering him on, Fernando slowly began crawling back up. Though he eventually managed to—after

great difficulty—he immediately began vomiting blood again, forcing his entire body to kneel.

It was then when everyone realized that he truly had lost all his strength, prompting all of them to think the same thing.

‘...What? Could... Could Fernando actually have been defeated...? To think that he even said that he’d go easy on his opponent for the first ten blows... All he managed to take was a single hit!’

As Fernando blacked out from all his internal injuries, Matilda ran over to him while shouting, “Fernando!”

“You’re so powerful, Mr. Crawford!” cried out Aiden immensely joyfully.

‘Worship’ couldn’t even begin describing how awe-stricken Aiden currently was.

“Whatever the case is, I’m assuming that nobody’s going to stop me from leaving now, don’t you think?” replied Gerald as he glared at the bodyguards while gently patting Aiden’s shoulder.

Seeing his frigid glare, the guards immediately felt cold sweat running down their foreheads as they stepped aside to let him pass.

“Humph. Let’s go!” declared Gerald as he and his party strode off, the rest of the Simes not even daring to raise their opinions anymore.

“Go easy on Mr. Crawford for the first ten blows you said... Hah!” sneered Chester as he spat contemptuously when he walked past the unconscious man.

Chapter 1292

Upon stepping out of the large hall, a few women instantly began surrounding Gerald rather excitedly. Finding him to be increasingly stable and attractive, several of them were keen on inquiring him about some things to get to know him better.

“So you were this powerful, Gerald!”

“Indeed! Speaking of which, Gerald, are you really the legendary Mr. Crawford from Mayberry...? Aiden never said a word about this to us!”

“So what if I am? Is that important?” asked Gerald casually.

Hearing that, the women immediately pursed their lips in disappointment. It was obvious that Gerald wasn't interested in them in the slightest.

Regardless, Fernando himself was now half-crippled due to that single kick. In other words, as soon as he woke up, he found that he couldn't use the force around his arms anymore.

Since the Dawsons and the Simes had been sharing a good relationship for generations, the incident definitely caused quite a major uproar among the Simes. After all, not only was Fernando a rising star in the Martial Arts Association, but he was also the one who had received special training from the Gunters, one of the major secret families.

He had been planning to participate in the trial training the following day too, but it was obviously impossible in his current state.

To think that Fernando had ended up being beaten up this badly just because of some misunderstanding the Sime family's young lady—

Matilda—had with Gerald! The Simes had simply paid too much attention to that misunderstanding for their own good.

Whatever the case was, both Shandon Sime—the master of the Sime family—and a middle-aged man from the Gunter family—who was there as a guest—were greeted to the sight of Fernando’s terrible state as the other Simes were carrying him in. This, of course, prompted Shandon to inquire his daughter about what had happened. The middle-aged man himself was well acquainted with the Dawsons, so he knew that Fernando was a person who had undergone cut and dried training.

Either way, after being questioned by her father, Matilda didn’t even dare to miss out on a single detail. She even made sure to show him Gerald’s photograph as she fully detailed everything that had led to this point.

Once she was done, the middle-aged Gunter took a look at the photograph before immediately narrowing his eyes as he said, “You... To think that you’ve actually offended him!”

“...Oh? You know who he is, Third master? Is he really the rich heir from Mayberry then?” asked Shandon, stunned.

The third master went by the name of Shaun Gunter, and his role was to mediate communication between the Gunters and the outside world. Due to that, it was no surprise that he was quite close to the Simes.

“I’ve seen photographs of him before, and this is undoubtedly Mr. Crawford from Mayberry. You have no idea how vicious and potent his mysterious martial arts are. I’ll have you know that this person single-handedly ended the lives of all the Moldells from the North, the Longs, and even the Schuylers from the Salford Province!” explained Shaun.

Hearing that, Shandon’s eyes widened so much that they looked like they were going to pop out of his head at any second. Matilda herself was already covering her mouth in fright.

Following that, both father and daughter asked in unison, “Is... Is that really true...?”

“Is there even a reason for me to lie? Regardless, since he’s already here, I assure you that he’s come to meet the Gunters. In fact, Lady Gunter—the master of the Gunter family—had predicted that he would come sooner or later quite some time ago. With that in mind, she had ordered me to receive him upon his arrival. Lady Gunter truly has amazing insight!” replied Shaun with a sigh.

“If that’s the case then... does that mean he’s a prestigious guest of the Gunters?” said Shandon, his fear evident in his voice.

“I’d say so. Regardless, just to remind you how powerful he truly is, I heard that people from both the Squad of Divine Grimness and Judgement Portal have sent exceptional people after him before. However, even their strongest followers were unable to kill him! With that in mind, I have to emphasize your lack of insight for offending such a person!” replied Shaun while shaking his head.

“H-how was I supposed to know that he was that powerful... Hell, if I had known, I wouldn’t have even dared to offend him in the first place!” said Matilda fearfully.

“...Still, why would those from the Squad of Divine Grimness and the Judgement portal want to capture him in the first place? Not only that, but the Gunters are also...” asked Shandon as the end of his sentence trailed off.

“Let’s just say that he has something special with him. As long as one is able to obtain that special something, a major secret will definitely be revealed to them!” replied Shaun.

“A major secret...?” said Shandon as his eyes momentarily lit up.

After some thought, he then looked up again before whispering, “...Could it be that the Gunters also wish to-”

Shandon’s sentence ended midway the second he saw Shaun giving him a warning gaze. Even so, due to that, Shandon knew that his deduction was most likely correct. With that in mind, he quickly breathed a sigh of relief in his mind.

...

It was a little while later when Gerald finally returned to his hotel. Of course, the private room in the hotel had been ruined by those whom Matilda had sent over.

After seeing the chaotic state of the room, Chester immediately wanted to head off and kill those from the Sime family! Gerald, however, stopped him before he could even leave the room.

“If I may, this isn’t your usual style, Mr. Crawford! With the Simes targeting us so many times, surely we can’t just let them off that easily!” said Chester.

Gerald simply shook his head before replying, "Let's just say that I've been feeling ill at ease throughout this period of time... With that in mind, I truly don't wish to waste my time and energy on the Simes, at least for the moment!"

Before Chester could reply, the corner of his eye caught a glimpse of something lying on the table in the room. Squinting his eyes slightly, the puzzled Chester then said, "...Mr. Crawford, it appears that someone may have entered the room..."

Looking at the mess before him that Matilda had caused, Gerald then frowned as he replied, "...Yes, I figured as much..."

"...Wait, no, that's not what I'm talking about! Look there! On the table! Someone's left you a note of sorts, inviting you to meet them!"

Chapter 1293

Hearing that, Gerald turned to look at the table. Seeing that what Chester had said was true, he then walked over to pick the note up. On it, was a row of words that stated, 'Let us meet at the Sky Bridge in Qerton City at exactly midnight today!'

Aside from that straightforward message, nothing else was on the note. There wasn't even a signature to indicate who had sent it.

"...Could the sender have been Matilda...? After all, she couldn't find us in the beginning... Though she did eventually manage to invite us over, I don't think it would be a stretch to think that she was the one who left that note here," deduced Chester.

Shaking his head, Gerald then replied, "Knowing her, she'd most probably continue madly looking around till she eventually managed to find us. Leaving a note behind is too delicate for a person like her!"

Still, what a strange incident...

'I don't even know anyone from Ancient City... Who could be the one inviting me over for the meet-up...?' Gerald thought to himself. Whatever the case was, Gerald had made his mind up that he would be heading over to have a look anyway.

"I'll be heading over alone, Chester. In the meantime, you should stay here," said Gerald.

"Affirmative!"

Sky Bridge itself was located near the Southern suburbs of Qerton City, and it connected two chunks of land separated by a large river. By the time Gerald got there, it was half an hour before midnight and everything was dark and slightly terrifying.

Since Gerald still didn't know who it was who it was who had called him out, Gerald had been extremely vigilant throughout his journey to the river. While he had passed by a few people earlier on his way here, none of them seemed to be the ones who had called him out.

All of a sudden, Gerald saw a wooden boat—with tiny lanterns at its sides—rowing toward him.

With the aid of the dim moonlight, Gerald was able to see a standing figure wearing a straw hat atop the boat. The person himself was dressed in a way that suggested that he was a villager who had retired to live deep in the forest. Regardless, with how steady and quickly the person was rowing the boat, Gerald couldn't help but feel that the person was a little extraordinary.

As Gerald continued looking at the person, his ears twitched as he suddenly began hearing the—oddly—rhythmic shackling of iron coming toward him from all directions.

Soon after, six figures stepped out from the darkness, and inclusive of the person on the boat, it was a fair guess that Gerald was going to have to deal with seven enemies.

“So you actually came!” sneered one of the men.

Hearing that, Gerald looked at the note in his hand before glaring at the man and replying, “Well you did leave me a note telling me to come over... It would’ve been unreasonable for me to turn down such an obvious trap. Still, did you really have to go through all that trouble just to tell me something? Or is there something else you have in mind...?”

Despite how cold Gerald’s expression was, what seemed to be the group’s leader simply shook his iron shackles slightly before replying with a smile, “There’s no need for you to ask so much. Regardless, we’re giving you a choice now. Are you going to be coming along with us willingly? Or would you prefer us capturing you by force instead?”

Upon hearing that, Gerald then slowly began walking toward the leader as he asked, “Come along, you say? Where to? Also, are you here on behalf of the King of Judgement Portal? Or are you perhaps Queena’s people?”

Seeing how sensibly Gerald seemed to be behaving, the leader couldn't help but break into a smile. Even though he had caught wind of the fact that Gerald had killed both Tiara and Belzebob, it appeared that he wasn't really anything out of the ordinary.

"Again, there's no need to be so inquisitive! After all, you'll find out sooner or later once you come along with us!" replied the leader with a smirk.

"So be it!" said Gerald.

Following that, Gerald closed his eyes for a second... And when he opened them again, his already cold gaze had turned even more frigid as his inner strength began rapidly pulsing throughout his body!

The next thing everyone knew, Gerald had already disappeared from his spot. Before anyone could even react, a loud 'thud' could be heard.

Turning to look at the source of the sound, everyone's eyes immediately widened as they watched as one of their allies flew a good ten yards away! As it turned out, Gerald had moved so fast that within moments, he had already kicked the chest of that—now-flying—man!

As the victim of the kick spurted blood all over the place—clearly suffering from terrible internal injuries—the rest of his allies found themselves momentarily stupefied.

They truly hadn't expected Gerald to just attack without warning. Whatever the case was, it was now evident that his martial art skills weren't as simple as they had initially expected.

“How... How dare you?!” roared one of the men as he immediately threw his iron shackles straight for Gerald's neck!

Chapter 1294

Gerald, however, simply caught the shackles and tugged the person toward him! Due to the sudden tug, the person fell onto the bridge, struggling the entire time as Gerald pulled him closer and closer! Once he was near enough, Gerald simply positioned his foot before kicking him right in the face! Flying backward, not only did the kick cause the person's head to explode like a watermelon, but the headless body's collision also ended up destroying at least ten of the bridge's guardrails!

Following that, cries upon cries of pain could be heard as Gerald swiftly dealt with the men. Though Gerald wasn't at his strongest

now, his current training still far surpassed his strength before he underwent the baptism of heaven.

What Gerald found strange, however, was the fact that all these people were similar to Tiara in the way that their inner strength seemed to have undergone some rapid and immense changes. Gerald used the term similar since there definitely were slight differences between these men and the duo—Tiara and Belzebob—whom he had killed, though he couldn't quite put his finger on what the differences were yet.

Still, why were there so many exceptional people who had suddenly undergone such rapid changes in their inner strength? Whatever the case was, Gerald made short work of all the remaining men, save for the one on the boat.

Speaking of him, the now wide-eyed man—who hadn't moved an inch from his boat—barely even registered that his straw hat had just been blown away by the wind.

Despite the fact that he gave off the first impression that he was someone extremely skilled—based on the way he dressed—after witnessing Gerald's true strength, he was now in deep shock. Even so, he knew better than to stick around, so he quickly began rowing his boat away.

'He's far too strong...! If I don't leave while I can, I'll be next to die!'

Of course, there was no way that Gerald was going to just let him escape like that. With a massive leap, Gerald landed right onto the wooden boat with a loud 'crunch'!

As massive ripples formed due to the wildly bobbing boat, the man—who was about to attempt to dive into the water—ended up losing his balance and was momentarily tossed into the air! When his feet touched the boat again, however, he found—to his horror—that he was now right in front of Gerald!

Before he could make another move, Gerald instantly held him by the neck. Now being strangled, he heard as Gerald asked in a frigid tone, "I only have one simple question. Who was it who sent you?"

"Humph! As if I'd ever tell you just like that! After all, I'll be dead the second I share that information! How about thi—"

Before the man could even finish his sentence, a soft 'crack' was heard.

Looking at Gerald with sheer disbelief in his eyes, the man heard as more tiny cracks followed with Gerald's slowly intensifying grip. Knowing that his neck was going to snap clear in half soon, the man wondered if Gerald truly didn't wish to know who had sent him.

With his life now flashing before his eyes, he thought about how he had planned—just seconds ago—on manipulating his secret technique in his final attempt to make it out alive. The technique in question involved using Dead Annie flowers!

In fact, all seven of them were proficient in the secret technique. They simply hadn't felt that it was necessary to use it on someone like Gerald when they first saw what he looked like.

Alas, Gerald's attacks were swift as they were fierce.

To think that he had assumed that Gerald wouldn't kill him as long as he refused to tell the truth... At the very most, he had thought that Gerald would only resort to torturing him! Oh, how wrong he was!

That was the last thought the man had before he went completely limp.

With that, Gerald tossed the corpse into the river. Watching as it floated near the head of the bridge, Gerald then said, “If you refuse to tell me, so be it!”

Following that, Gerald went silent for a while as he fell deep into thought.

Up till today, three powerful groups had already assaulted Gerald, each seemingly intent on killing him. Regarding who was orchestrating all this, Gerald knew—at the very least—that Queena and the King of Judgement Portal were heavily involved.

Regardless, all of his assailants were similar in the way that they had undergone immense and rapid changes in their inner strengths. Even so, Tiara, Belzebob, and the seven he had killed tonight all seemed to have acquired their surges of inner strength slightly differently from each other.

Speaking of the seven, they were clearly from a new group separate from the Divine Grimness and the Judgement Portal. In other words, he now had another group of powerful people going after him. The fact that his location and identity had now been exposed only served to make the situation worse.

As Gerald continued pondering on his next move, the corner of his eyes suddenly caught a glimpse of a few strange petals drifting away from one of the floating corpses in the river...

Gerald, for one, was certainly no stranger to them.

'...Dead Annies...? They brought Dead Annies with them?! Could they be from the Gunter family then? Were they the ones who wanted to capture me?'

As Gerald continued speculating the situation, he jumped in fright upon hearing coughing sounds out of the blue! Looking around, the sound seemed to be coming from the cabin on the wooden boat... Judging from how high-pitched the coughs were, Gerald simply assumed it was a female.

Regardless, Gerald carefully lifted the curtains to clear his doubts... And there, lying on the floor, was an unconscious woman.

From how much she was coughing and wrinkling her brows in her knocked-out state, Gerald could guess that her mental state was currently under attack by Dead Annies. Even so, that wasn't what shocked Gerald the most.

No, what made Gerald momentarily stupefied, was the fact that the woman in question was none other than Yume...

Chapter 1295

“...Yume?”

‘...It really is her...! So it’s true that she wasn’t actually dead!’

Both of them had gotten acquainted with each other on their way to the king of the ocean’s palace. Gerald himself had already saved her on multiple occasions before her eventual disappearance.

Speaking of her disappearance, Gerald had constantly been troubled and filled with self-reproach from the moment she went missing after he fainted—due to a Dead Annie attack—at the entrance of the king of the ocean’s palace. Upon waking, he remembered how he felt as though she had just vanished off the face of the planet.

He even went so far as to send people out to carefully search for Yume—regardless of whether she was dead or still alive—in the area surrounding the king of the ocean’s palace for over a month, though to no avail.

It was around then when Gerald first started wondering if Yume had actually been saved by someone else. After all, he knew that she was looking for the woman in white as well. For all he knew, she had already found the woman in white's corpse!

Well, his speculation of her being saved was true at least.

'Still... Why is she even here...? She's a Gunter too, no...?' Gerald thought to himself, filled with questions as he helped her regain consciousness using a secret technique.

Due to Gerald's help, Yume's expression turned way better in no time at all. Soon enough, Yume's eyelids began fluttering open ever so slowly, revealing her beautiful eyes...

When she saw Gerald, however, she immediately jolted awake. Though she was definitely shocked, she quickly snapped out of it and grabbed onto Gerald's arm before shouting, "There are people out to get you, Gerald! You need to run! Quickly!"

Helping her to her feet, Gerald then turned to look at the corpses floating on the river before asking, "You mean them?"

Staring wide-eyed at the dead bodies, Yume replied in sheer disbelief, “You... You killed all seven of them...?”

“Indeed. Also, correct me if I’m wrong, but all of them are from the Gunter family, no?”

Upon hearing Gerald’s question, Yume instantly lowered her head, revealing a slight blush on her charming face.

“...They are, indeed. All seven of them are- well, were, exceptional people from my family... Still, I truly hadn’t expected them to stalk me! After realizing who they were—before I got completely knocked out by their Dead Annie attack—I immediately knew that they had followed me to deal with you!”

“...I see. Regardless, it seems to me that you didn’t tell me the truth about many things back then... For one, I couldn’t detect the strange inner strength—that I’m currently sensing from you—back then... Were you simply pretending to be weak at the time?” asked Gerald, now that he had a much clearer understanding of the situation.

“I... I admit that I lied to you before, but after getting to know you better, I’ve long lost any intentions of hurting you!” replied Yume, looking seemingly afraid that Gerald was going to further misunderstand her.

“So you admit to it. Well, now that you have, why should I continue believing in you? After all, you’re the high and mighty young lady of the Gunter family!” said Gerald with a bitter smile.

“Even if you choose not to believe in me, please understand that you can’t stay here any longer! I’ll eventually give you a clearer explanation, but for now, please just follow me! We really need to hide!” replied Yume.

While Gerald felt that her eyes seemed sincere enough to be trusted, he was no longer the same person he was two years ago. He knew for a fact that the more beautiful a woman was, the more deceptive she could be, and Yume was extremely charming.

Since he now knew that he had already been fooled once by her, he couldn’t help but have his guard up.

Though it was true that he now sensed immense inner strength from Yume, that wasn’t what worried him most. No, the truth was, while Gerald was sure that she wouldn’t be able to beat him with her current strength alone, he knew he would be no match against her if she chose to attack him with Dead Annie’s!

With that in mind, if she was actually fooling him again, it would definitely be extremely difficult for him to retreat, thus his hesitation to believe her.

Seemingly reading Gerald's thoughts, Yume then said, "Look, I know you're afraid of the Dead Annies. Here, I'm tossing all of mine now! Since you're capable enough to kill those seven exceptional Gunters, you should know that without the flowers, I'm practically harmless to you! So please, please just believe me and let me stay by your side...!"

Following that, Gerald watched as she tossed any petals she had on hand into the river.

"There, I have none on me now! With that said, know that I only asked you out since I wanted to explain all this to you... I never expected Lady Gunter to send these people to stalk me! I... I truly never meant to harm you, Gerald...!" explained Yume, her eyes now starting to slightly tear up.

Chapter 1296

After a momentary pause, Gerald took in a deep breath before saying, "...Fine. Since you don't have any Dead Annies on you

anymore, I can at least be sure that if you intend to do anything suspicious, you'll go down with me!"

With that said, Gerald then grabbed Yume by the shoulder before making a giant leap together with her! Once they landed safely on the shore, Yume told Gerald where the hiding spot was, and Gerald made sure to hold on tightly to her as the duo swiftly made their way there.

Knowing that he currently lacked the strength to brawl against both Queena and the King of Judgement Portal, Gerald couldn't help but constantly have his guard up now that he knew that he was potentially about to confront the mysterious Gunters.

Soon enough, they got to a cave that was located in the outskirts. Upon entering, Gerald immediately sealed a few major blood vessels in Yume's body!

"...Are you serious? You still don't believe that I'm not planning to harm you?" said Yume as she took in a deep breath to attempt to suppress her disappointment.

"I'll have you know that I give no second chances to anyone who breaks my trust! Now as promised, tell me the truth about the incident!" replied Gerald coldly.

“...I see. Before that, allow me to ask you something. Not only have you saved me on multiple occasions, but you’ve also constantly looked out for me to the point where after realizing that I had gone missing, you actually sent your men out to tirelessly locate me for well over a month! Hell, you even told the locals to report to you if any of them saw me! With that in mind, I wish to know. Did you do all that just to gain answers from me, or was it because of something else?” asked Yume as she stared at him with reddened and teary eyes.

From her explanation, Gerald now knew that she was aware of everything that he had done up till this point. So she had been keeping an eye on him this entire time...

“The truth is, I had initially promised to bring you to the king of the ocean’s palace since I was worried that it would be too dangerous for you to head there alone. I won’t lie that I was also hoping to gain more clues from you. Regardless, after you went missing, I was filled with regret, and that prompted me to try all means possible to search for you!” replied Gerald.

Though Gerald had initially only helped her for slightly selfish purposes, his worry about her treading into such unsafe territory quickly outweighed that. It was the reason why he had promised to

bring her along. By doing so, he could at least keep her out of harm's way.

Despite that, to think that she would actually go missing right under his nose! With the very real possibility of her being dead, Gerald had brimmed with both grief and self-reproach for the longest time.

If he had known that all this would happen, he would've simply chosen to give up on finding out about Yume's secrets rather than bring her along with him.

After hearing Gerald's reply, Yume couldn't help but break into a gratified smile. After all, she now truly knew that Gerald had simply been treating her as a friend this entire time.

While she did have slight feelings for Gerald, it was due to all those times Gerald had saved her and not because of the d*mned marriage stone of Master Ghost's.

She remembered a time when she had wanted to secretly kill Gerald, though in the end, she simply couldn't bring herself to do so. If she had, well, Gerald naturally wouldn't have arrived at the king of the ocean's palace in the first place!

Of course, she hadn't fallen for him yet at that point in time. She simply found herself unable to do the deed.

Regardless, after she went 'missing,' Yume began secretly keeping an eye on Gerald. It was then when she realized how much he cared for her. After all, Gerald had left no part of the ocean—surrounding the king of the ocean's palace—unchecked. He simply refused to give up on his search for her until well over a month—after her disappearance—had passed.

She had also witnessed him sitting at the beach for an entire day and night in silence, simply staring out at sea the entire time.

Eventually, she watched as he threw a small ornament—that had been salvaged from the ocean—into the sea. It was then when she realized just how great his guilt for losing her truly was. He really did treat her as his friend.

Seeing that, Yume—at the time—couldn't help but feel an odd emotion welling within her, though it wasn't a bad one. Rather, it felt sweet. After all, nobody had ever treated her the way Gerald did.

It was only when she was thinking about the moments she had shared with Gerald that she finally realized something. Master

Ghost's marriage stone was truly an object that was both strange and evil.

After all, she actually began missing him every day after that, constantly worrying about his safety. The more she thought about it, the more anxious she became, and thus came the restless nights...

'Could my love story truly end this tragically? Have I really fallen in love with a person who will never love me back...?'

Even if that was the case, Yume had sworn to herself that she wouldn't lie to Gerald for a second time. With that in mind, she took in a deep breath before saying, "...Fine, I'll give you the truth! I'll tell you everything I know, but once I'm done, our friendship will be over, you hear? We simply can't be friends anymore! Humph!"

Chapter 1297

With that out of the way, Yume then slowly began sharing what she knew about the situation.

As it turned out, there was already a scheme targeting Gerald from the very beginning. Under the orders of her family, Yume had two main objectives. The first was to locate the woman in white in the

king of the ocean's palace. As for the other, it was to capture Gerald in secret before bringing him back to the Gunters.

It was the reason why she had pretended to be frailer than she actually was. By 'getting injured' she knew that she would eventually be able to gain Gerald's pity.

Even after she gained his pity, however, she was unable to make any moves on him. After all, she hadn't expected to be that moved by Gerald's actions. She simply couldn't bring herself to do the deed.

Eventually, both of them embarked for the king of the ocean's palace together. Of course, the old woman that they had met was none other than Yume's grandmother—and also the master of the Gunter family—Lady Gunter.

Regardless, she was well aware of Gerald's weakness to Dead Annies. It was due to that knowledge that she was able to inflict heavy wounds on Gerald in the first place. Even so, she had made sure to seal her own strength back then for fear that she would accidentally kill him.

Whatever the case was, Lady Gunter had wanted to make her move back then since Gerald was already in such a weak state. However, Yume kept signaling—by twirling her hair with a finger—and

shooting warning glares at Lady Gunter every time she made an attempt to hurt Gerald.

In a way, it almost seemed like she was saying, 'If you dare hurt Gerald, I'll die before you right this instant!'

After several more gestures warning her grandmother not to make a move, Lady Gunter eventually got so infuriated that she pretended to be injured before making her escape.

Even so, it was evident that she wasn't ever going to allow Gerald to locate the woman in white. After all, the king of the ocean's palace—that Gerald would later enter—was formed according to the Dead Annies, theory, 'Two petals bloom, and each petal represents a world.'

In other words, Lady Gunter had used that secret technique at the entrance of the king of the ocean's palace to lead Gerald into a completely different—yet similar-looking—world.

As for Yume's 'disappearance', it was due to her being taken along with Lady Gunter to the real king of the ocean's palace. They even succeeded in transferring the real woman in white's corpse away!

After hearing all that, Gerald then replied, "...I see. That doesn't explain why my subordinates weren't able to detect your life signals, though."

"Well, it's not very well-known, but not only can Dead Annies be used to disrupt one's mental abilities, it's also capable of disrupting magnetic fields! With that in mind, Lady Gunter has the ability to make herself near-invisible with the aid of the Dead Annies! Using that ability, even a person standing right in front of her wouldn't be able to tell she was there!" explained Yume.

"...None of that explains why your family even wants the woman in white's corpse in the first place. Also, why does it seem like me being captured plays a huge role in this scheme of yours? I can barely see the relation between those two objectives!" replied Gerald.

"Well, from what grandma told me, there's a massive connection between you and the woman in white... Apparently, there's a large secret hidden within both of you, and the first person who manages to uncover that secret will be able to gain mastery of the strongest power!"

"...A... secret...?" replied Gerald, clearly puzzled by this sudden turn of events.

No wonder the King of Judgement Portal had been targeting him... Hell, even the Gunters were starting to make their moves now. So this was what they were after.

‘Still... What secret could lie within me...?’

Yume, for one, definitely didn’t look like she knew any more than she had already told him.

“Regardless, you need to escape quickly while you still can, Gerald! You’re no match against those from the Squad of Divine Grimness, Judgement Portal, or even my family! Should you end up falling into either of their hands, then your death won’t be out of the question anymore!” pleaded Yume.

“Also, I’ll have you know that the Judgement Portal has already sent out an extremely strong person out to hunt you down! He goes by the name of Hogan, and... Well, let’s just say with how strong he is, even grandma is terrified of him! He’s barely even human anymore! Putting that aside, again, I implore you not to step anywhere near my family. Otherwise, escape will truly be impossible!” added Yume, intense fear in her eyes.

“You’re saying that Lady Gunter is afraid of this Hogan person as well?” replied Gerald, stunned.

To think that once upon a time ago, he had assumed that Kort was the strongest opponent he would ever have to face. Of course, then came Christopher and now there was this person called Hogan as well...

From the looks of it, Christopher had only been the tip of the iceberg. While normally that would've been the peak difficulty for any of Gerald's opponents, looking at how things were going, Gerald could now safely assume that there were many more dangers that hadn't even come into contact with Earth.

"Look, if you still refuse to leave, maybe this will scare some sense into you... When I said that Hogan was barely even human anymore, I meant that quite literally. You see, from what grandma told me, he's actually a corpse that had been revived by the King of Judgement Portal. A zombie with consciousness, you could say. Regardless, while he obeys the King of Judgment Portal, Hogan himself very much deserves the title of the king of poison. After all, upon getting attacked by him, you'll most certainly get afflicted with an extremely potent poison. With that in mind, even if you manage to escape from instant death, you'll eventually still succumb to the poison!"

"She's so well aware of all this because... Well, those from Judgement Portal once came over to our family, and we had a fight against

him... Unfortunately, all of my family members involved in the fight were promptly defeated by him, and they suffered from immense poisoning as well. Had the Gunters not sought out a compromise with the King of Judgement Portal, then I'm afraid my entire family would've been wiped out there and then! So please, if you ever bump into him, you have to hide!"

Chapter 1298

With how serious and fearful her voice was, Gerald could tell that Yume's warning was the real deal.

"...Still, why did the King of Judgement Portal even come over to seek out the Gunters? Could he actually have anticipated that I would come over?" asked Gerald rather doubtfully.

"That could be one of the reasons, though I'm honestly not too sure... I'm aware of their other objective, though. From what I've heard, it seems that they're planning to head to the Ancient Mountain in Ancient City! In case you didn't know, strange incidents happen on that mountain every few years!" explained Yume.

"What sort of strange incidents...?" asked Gerald curiously.

“That I’m not too sure of,” replied Yume as she shook her head.

Despite that, Gerald was slowly succeeding in piecing together more and more pieces of the puzzle.

From what Gerald now knew, there were three powerful groups hunting him down. Even though he had already received the baptism of heaven, he knew that he still wasn’t completely out of the woods yet.

At his current strength, Gerald was well aware that he still wasn’t going to be a match against Queena, and she wasn’t the only threat either. After all, he still had the other Gunters, the Judgement Portal, Hogan, and the King of Judgement Portal to deal with.

The more he thought about it, the more he realized how dangerous his current situation was. After all, from the way things had been progressing, he could get caught by any of them at any moment.

“Whatever the case is, just continue hiding in the meantime... Since I’ve already told you all this, I’m assuming I’ve repaid all your kindness from back then! With that in mind, we’ll be enemies the next time we meet again! Until then, take care!” said Yume as she looked one final time at Gerald before dashing off into the night.

It was a little while later when Yume snuck into the Gunter family's manor. To her utter shock, her entire family was seated in the spacious hall, seemingly waiting for her to return!

As everyone turned to look at her, Yume quickly realized who had planned all this.

"L-lady Gunter!" exclaimed Yume, her face reflecting her brimming anxiety.

"If I recall correctly, I've grounded you from leaving the manor ever since we returned from the king of the ocean's palace... I guess you've suffered a bit too much to want to sneak out that badly!" said Lady Gunter with a faint smile. The way she said it suggested that the old lady knew exactly when Yume had snuck out earlier.

With that in mind, Yume immediately knelt with a 'plop' before replying, "I... I know you already know everything that I've done earlier... While it's true that I ruined your plans by meeting up with Gerald, I... I just wish to repay his kindness... He's honestly a kind person who's not even remotely close to how evil you've described him to be! He truly is kind, so please, Lady Gunter...! Please let him off!"

Though Yume's eyes were now red and teary, the other Gunters simply intensified their glares after hearing what she had to say. Lady Gunter herself looked especially enraged.

“You b*stard of a granddaughter...! It seems that it wasn't wrong of me to worry about you! You've been bewitched, you hear! None of the Crawfords are good people, especially that pretentious Gerald! He only used you to help him look for the king of the ocean's palace! Even after that, to think that you would actually go behind my back and inform him about all this in secret! You truly are a textbook example of biting the hand that feeds you! Let me remind you that you're the indirect cause of the deaths of seven exceptional people from our family! If I hadn't intended to beat him at his own game, you wouldn't be able to escape from undergoing family punishment!” scowled the old lady, the corner of her lips twitching in rage.

While Yume now knew that Lady Gunter was aware of the seven deaths, something else her grandmother had said sent shivers down her spine. Trembling, she then asked, “...Beat him at his own game...? Lady Gunter, what do you mean by that?”

“Humph! Since Gerald has come to Querton City, do you honestly think that Lady Gunter will let him off that easily?”

Chapter 1299

“That’s enough! Lock her up in her room, and be sure to guard her closely! From today onward, she’s prohibited from leaving her room!” shouted Yreth. Hearing that, a few guards ran over and instantly led Yume to her room, as per Lady Gunter’s orders.

Now that her granddaughter had been taken care of, Yreth was confident that she would be able to gain what she wanted from Gerald.

Gerald himself was now swiftly running away from the cave in the dark of night. After learning more about the three groups’ plans to capture him, he didn’t dare linger around for any more than he needed to.

His current plan was to first find Chester then leave this place together with him.

However, just as he was about to leave the suburbs—and re-enter the city area—Gerald suddenly heard rustling sounds coming from the surrounding forests.

From how loud and swift the rustling was, one would normally assume that it was some kind of extremely fast animal. However, Gerald had a gut feeling that that was no animal. Stopping in his tracks, Gerald then went into high alert to figure out what—or who—he was dealing with.

If he was going to be completely honest, Gerald now felt like the temperature had just plummeted. Whatever was out there, it was sending intense chills down his spine.

‘What—or who—on earth is targeting me this time...?’ Gerald thought to himself as endless beads of sweat rolled down his forehead. The fear he was currently feeling was almost primal in nature, and it was unlike anything he had previously felt.

Eventually, Gerald slowly raised his head... And there, he was.

Standing under the faint moonlight—atop a close-by tree—was a towering and sturdy-looking man who had his arms crossed as he stared down at Gerald. While the man’s face was a purplish-black and his lips a dark shade of purple, his eyes gleamed in scarlet hues. Adding that to the fact that darkness just seemed to exude from that man, Gerald could only describe him as corpse-like!

As he continued staring at Gerald without moving a muscle, Gerald himself now knew the source of all his fear. It was as though his entire being was being suppressed just from the sight of that imposing man alone.

In his terrified state, Gerald found himself taking a few steps back before saying, "...Hogan?"

The second he said that, Gerald watched wide-eyed as Hogan's massive body leaped into the air... and landed gently atop a fragile-looking branch! While that alone was impressive enough, Gerald barely even had the time to react as Hogan used the slight rebound of the branch to launch himself at Gerald at lightning speed!

Being more accustomed to danger than others, Gerald quickly snapped out of his daze and instantly began attempting to retreat!

Before Gerald could even get far, however, he felt a massive tremor as Hogan landed heavily on the ground! Turning back to look, Gerald watched as Hogan spread out his arms and revealed both of his hands...

The tips of Hogan's fingernails looked as sharp as a hungry wolf's fangs, and in a way, it almost felt like Hogan had iron claws instead

of actual hands. What more, a strange darkness seemed to be enveloping both of Hogan's hands.

At that moment, Gerald realized that Yume hadn't been exaggerating at all. Hogan truly was more of a weapon than an actual human at this point. A weapon brought to life by reanimating a corpse.

"Running away? From me? I'll say it now that it won't be easy, boy! Now come with me! My master and Lady Gunter are waiting for you!" said Hogan before screeching in a way that resembled a crow's cry.

Watching as Hogan then immediately—and swiftly—began walking toward him, Gerald quickly activated his inner strength. Fully ready to lose his artifact, as he commanded in his mind, 'Dawnbreaker!'

With that, the black short blade came to life.

Since Hogan's entire body almost seemed to be completely plated with iron, Gerald felt that his only means of fighting against that hulking man was by using the Dawnbreaker.

Regardless, the blade then shot out of Gerald's sleeve at almost breakneck speed, aimed right for Hogan's neck!

To Gerald's utter horror, the usually trusty Dawnbreaker wasn't even close to posing a threat to Hogan. After all, the massive man had simply pinched the blade between two of his claw-like fingers like it was nothing!

Tossing the blade to the ground, Hogan then grunted before coldly saying, "I told you to come with me!"

'This... This person is far too strong...!' Gerald thought to himself, his sheer disbelief evident on his face.

However, Hogan was done waiting. Gerald could only see Hogan's blurry figure as the giant of a man began rushing toward Gerald at immense speed!

The next thing Gerald knew, a huge and powerful-looking hand was inches away from his stomach...

Chapter 1300

There was no way in hell that Gerald was going to be able to dodge that attack. A split second later, Gerald found himself flying backward as every inch of his body throbbed in immense pain!

Soaring on, Gerald could taste something sweet in his mouth before vomiting blood briefly after!

Eventually falling to the ground, Gerald ended up rolling several times before eventually coming to a stop. If he had to describe what he was currently feeling, it almost seemed like all his internal organs had shifted from their initial positions from that one punch.

Even so, this was no time for him to wallow in pain. Attempting to gather his inner strength, Gerald quickly realized that he couldn't do so due to how terribly he had been injured!

'Is this truly my end? Will I be defeated here in Qerton City? Jade pendant, if you're there, please lend me your aid...!'

Though Gerald had hoped that the jade pendant would save his life since he was now in such critical condition—just like the previous time it had activated—he found, to his dismay, that no matter how much he cried out to it, it simply didn't respond!

Soon enough, Hogan was right in front of him again, a frigid expression on his face. Easily lifting the injured Gerald up, Hogan then said in a chilling voice, "So you attempted to kill me, huh? Then it's only fair for me to torture you in return before I bring you back to master and Lady Gunter!"

With that, he tossed Gerald again without warning! Finding himself flying backward once more, Gerald felt as his now-limp body crashed into tree after tree, leaving a trail of tumbled tree trunks before him! By the time Gerald's body finally stopped—after breaking at least eight study-looking trees—he felt as though all his bones had already turned to dust as he slowly lost consciousness from all the pain.

Hogan, however, was far from done.

To him, as long as Gerald could still breathe and he was successfully delivered to the King of Judgement Portal, Hogan's task would still be considered to be a success. As for why he was so keen on torturing Gerald, it was because Gerald had attempted to kill him earlier. Due to that, Gerald was essentially his enemy now.

With that in mind, Hogan then began smashing his fists into Gerald's stomach, ruining all his internal organs! Following that, he also made sure to smash all four of Gerald's limbs by stepping on them!

Gerald himself kept waking up due to the immense pain before falling unconscious again. It was truly a living hell for him, and Gerald didn't even have the means to fight back anymore.

Eventually, Hogan stepped on Gerald's stomach, forcing the injured youth to vomit what little blood remained in his body. Watching as Hogan lifted his hand, Gerald was conscious enough to realize that he was aiming his iron claws right for his chest!

At the very last moment, Gerald managed to wiggle just enough for the iron claws to avoid his chest. However, they still managed to pierce deep into Gerald's left shoulder!

'You f*cker...!' Gerald thought to himself as surges of immense pain filled every inch of his body. Now completely dazed, Gerald was in too much pain to remain conscious, but at the same time, the pain also kept him awake.

Smiling coldly as he watched Gerald's lips turn dark, Hogan knew that the poison was taking effect.

At that moment, he suddenly began hearing 'swooshing' sounds. If Hogan had to describe it, it almost seemed as though near-countless arrows had just been shot.

Straightening his body, Hogan then stopped torturing Gerald for a second before looking around while asking in a wrath-filled voice, "...Who goes there?"

In response, however, the sound he had initially heard only seemed to get louder.

It was then when Hogan finally saw it. Eyes widened, Hogan watched a ray of light fell from the sky at extremely high speeds... And it looked like it was heading straight for him! In a way, it almost seemed like a meteor that was intent on landing on him.

From where he stood, Hogan could sense that the ray of light was capable of ripping apart even space, and that fact alone was enough to cause panic to arise within him.

'That... That thing's dangerous!' Hogan thought to himself as he immediately began taking a few steps backward, not even bothering about Gerald anymore.

In fact, he was so terrified that he actually tripped and fell on his buttocks before quickly getting up again and dashing away! When he turned back to check on the light, however, his eyes instantly widened to the point where it almost felt like his eyeballs were going to pop out.

The ray of light was homing in on him! No matter where he ran, the light simply continued following him around! It was almost as though the ray of light had eyes or something!

Hogan knew he couldn't keep running forever, so he dragged his—now-heavy—body to a large tree, hoping that by taking cover, the ray of light would somehow miss him.

Alas, that did little to help him as the ray of light blasted right through the tree and right into his back! Howling in pain, Hogan felt almost disgusted by how badly he wanted to leave this place as he was sent flying dozens of feet away!

His entire body now as limp as a broken kite, he ended up tumbling onto the ground, but that wasn't the end of his pain yet. Hogan now realized that white smoke had been rising from his body from the moment the light had hit him! Screaming in pain as he covered his chest, he noticed as black blood began oozing profusely out of his chest!

Even in so much pain, he knew that he couldn't afford to linger around any longer. With that in mind, he forced himself up before fleeing the area in the dark of night.

As for Gerald, well, he had watched all this happen though from an extremely blurry perspective. Trickle of blood dripping from his open and foaming mouth, Gerald felt as the pain finally soothed enough for him to faint in peace.

Before his eyes shut, however, he watched as a middle-aged man—donning black clothes—quickly walked over to him...

Chapter 1301

It was a little while later when a young woman—who looked to be around the age of nineteen—called out, “You actually found him, uncle!”

The girl herself was standing by the door of a home that was located within a shantytown west of the city’s suburbs. From the looks of it, she appeared to have been waiting there for quite a while.

As for the person she was speaking to, it was a middle-aged man who had just ridden his tricycle into the home’s compound. Behind the tricycle, lay a bloodied and unconscious youth.

Regardless, she immediately got up to walk over to the man after greeting him.

With the youth looking so battered up, any normal woman would’ve already covered her mouth and screamed by this point. This woman, however, seemed completely unfazed by him. In fact, she instantly

began patting his unconscious face a few times before turning to look at the middle-aged man!

“I have to say, this fellow here is quite fortunate! After all, he’s still breathing after suffering from such terrible injuries! As if that wasn’t already enough, he’s also been inflicted with extremely potent poison!” said the woman as she curiously held onto his chin before observing both sides of his face

“Stop fooling around already, can’t you see how badly beaten up he is? Thank god he’s undergone the baptism of heaven and is close to reaching the Spirit Earth Realm! Otherwise, he’d be long dead by now!” replied the man as he shook his head with a sigh.

“How ignorant can one get? To even consider going against the Gunters and the King of Judgement Portal with what little strength he has!” retorted the woman with a pout.

“That’s quite enough cynicism from you! He’s just trying to save people despite not know what the world is like! Now hurry up and prepare the herbs for me! I’m focusing on saving his life first!” ordered the man as he began carrying the youth into the courtyard.

The woman herself looked around to make sure that nobody had seen any of this. Once she was sure, she then quickly pushed the blood-stained tricycle into the house.

Following that, she retrieved a small emerald battle from her sleeve before sprinkling what seemed to be neon green powder around the area. The powder itself quickly dissipated into the air.

With that done, she then entered the house to begin preparing the ingredients.

Meanwhile, the man was already hard at work in one of the rooms, trying his best to save the youth. Naturally, the youth—who was now lying on a bed—was none other than Gerald.

Soon after, the woman entered the room as well before sitting at the side. It was clear how little she cared about the situation since she even had a lollipop in her mouth!

“Still, he’s a bit too young to be possessing such strength, isn’t he? I find it quite unbelievable, honestly! Didn’t you say that the Nebula Realm was the limit for human beings? Hell, let’s not even go there yet! It’s already difficult enough for regular people to gain access to their inner strength, even if they spend their entire lives honing it!

Yet this youth here is powerful enough to have almost reached the Spirit Earth Realm!”

The man himself didn’t immediately reply, fully focused on healing Gerald. Eventually, he paused to take in a deep breath before replying in his hoarse voice, “As I’ve said, he’s no ordinary person!”

If one took the time to properly observe the middle-aged man’s features, they would be able to see how hideous and strange his scar-filled face was.

“Then how wonderful is the realm of martial arts, uncle? From what I’ve been able to observe, this youth’s physique is built differently from others. He also doesn’t seem to conform to the general principles at all. It also seems like he’s gone through a special body-refining process through the use of herbs! Based on what my grandpa once told me, this mysterious method of refining the body should, by right, be long lost!” said the woman.

“There’s no limit to the realm. I’ll have you know that someone is always much more powerful than the others! Still, you never have any interest whenever I talk about affairs regarding martial arts!”

After giving a bitter smile, he then quickly began reconnecting Gerald's disjointed bones before swiftly and skilfully bandaging all his open wounds.

"I'll admit that I wasn't really that interested in it in the past, but I'm intrigued now! After all, he truly is quite puzzling!" replied the woman.

"Hah! The martial arts you're interested in learning about isn't something that ordinary warriors can achieve! The requirements to reach the Nebula realm are simply too harsh! Even possessing the right blood won't grant you easy access into that realm! You should know by now that many of the families here have blood types different from typical people, and that's because they're part of secret societies. People from secret societies are reliant on their extraordinary physiques, and they'll always be one step closer than others when it comes to reaching the limits of human beings. Even so, only those assiduous enough—from those families—are able to control their inner strength and potentially arrive at the Nebula Realm!

"However, in the eyes of some of the cryptic families, secret societies are nothing. I wouldn't blame them since those from cryptic families are capable of using secret techniques while manipulating their inner strength! Regardless, those from cryptic families reach the Spirit Earth Realm through a process that involves a second transformation of their inner strength. While secret societies and

cryptic families may not seem all that different from each other, I'll have you know that their capabilities are so vastly different that family members of secret societies could never even dream of surpassing those from cryptic families! In case you didn't know, the Gunters are a cryptic family as well! From what I've heard, after members of that family gather enough inner strength, they'll be enlightened to their family's secret technique which will aid them in reaching the Spirit Earth Realm!" explained the middle-aged man.

Following that, he then looked at Gerald before adding, "As for Gerald here, he relied mostly on his physique being changed by someone—through the use of some special secret technique—to get to where he currently is. Adding that to how unique the Crawford family's bloodline is, his training grows rapidly with every passing day. From what I can see, he successfully went through the initial, middle, and final stage in less than a year to arrive at the Nebula Realm!"

"After that, he surpassed the Nebula Realm by undergoing the baptism of heaven. That, of course, landed him at his current stage, the initial stage of the Spirit Earth Realm. In fact, I can see that he's already approaching the middle stage. Even so, his current strength alone seems extremely strange. To put into perspective, even exceptional people who have arrived at his current stage won't be a match for him at all!" said the middle-aged man with a bitter smile.

“...I see! Then for Gerald to not even come close to defeating Hogan... How strong even is Hogan?” asked the woman curiously.

“Him? From what I can tell, he should be at the middle stage of the Spirit Earth Realm, though do note that he’s already arrived at that realm for several years. I’m guessing he should only be a step away from the final stage! With that in mind, there’s no way Gerald could’ve ever hoped of defeating him!”

“I understand... Speaking of which, I recall you saying that Lady Gunter and those from that new group—the Judgement Portal—seemed to have already achieved the final stage of the Spirit Earth Realm. With that in mind, I do pity Gerald! Why hadn’t the person who had helped change his physique told him about any of this?” replied the woman as she scratched the back of her head.

Though she said that, she still found the person who had helped Gerald to be extremely extraordinary. After all, his aid had allowed Gerald to transform to his current state.

“Hmm... I have a feeling that that person hadn’t told him about it since he hadn’t even expected Gerald to grow so rapidly. My guess is that Gerald has had other chance encounters that allowed him to further hone his training. However, he must keep rushing into messes like this due to his lack of knowledge! While he was definitely capable of dealing with any weak people he previously

bumped into, the Gunters are on a whole other level! If he gets successfully cornered by them, I'm afraid he'll be as good as dead!"

"Alas! By the way, are there any other realms beyond the Spirit Earth Realm, uncle?" asked the woman.

After briefly hesitating, the man simply shook his head before saying, "Haha! Even if there is one, it's pretty much meaningless. After all, there's already a massive gap between the middle and final stage of the Spirit Earth Realm. I'll have you know that even if one spends their entire life training, there's a high chance that they won't ever make a breakthrough. There's even less possibility of that happening considering the fact that aside from the Gunters, very few ever make it to the final stage of the Spirit Earth Realm. The Gunters themselves have a naturally higher chance of achieving that realm due to how strong their family's blood type is. With that in mind, exceptional people from outside that family find it difficult enough to even imagine themselves achieving the final stage of the Spirit Earth Realm, what more a realm beyond that!"

"But... Then why are there so few people who have achieved the Nebula Realm when so many more have already arrived at the Spirit Earth Realm? Isn't that rather illogical?"

"Haha! Didn't your grandpa ever tell you about the mystery that's been troubling the world of martial arts? Essentially, those who've

arrived at the Nebula Realm tend to go missing in groups every once in a while. However, since cryptic families have access to secret techniques, they're able to quickly surpass the Nebula Realm and achieve the Spirit Earth Realm, essentially minimizing the threat of going missing along with the others—outside the family—who are still in the Nebula Realm. This is also the reason why secret societies used to be the strongest families. After the disappearances began, however, things slowly went downhill for them, subsequently raising the ranks of those from cryptic families,” explained the man.

“So that’s what happened!” replied the woman, finally seeing the bigger picture.

At that moment, she noticed a small pouch that Gerald had on him. Curious, she couldn’t help but to open it and look at its contents.

Upon realizing that there were numerous small photographs in there, the woman laughed before saying, “Though he’s a high and mighty rich heir, to think that he had such a hobby! Look! He keeps several small photographs of women with him at all times!”

Following that, she held them in hand to have a closer look at them. From what she could immediately assume, Gerald had a habit of keeping photographs of those most precious to him close by. Out of the many photographs, the woman found the pictures of Gerald’s parents, Mila, and his cousin—Queta—to be most interesting.

“Say, uncle! There’s a charming beauty among these photos who has eyes that resemble yours a lot! Haha!” said the woman as she held out the photograph in question with a smile.

“Stop spouting nonsense! With how ugly I am, how could anyone even come close to resembling me? Also, stop looking at his personal belongings! It’s rude to do so!” replied the man with a wry smile before sighing in resignation.

Chapter 1303

“But it’s true, uncle! I’m not pulling your leg at all! Just take a look if you don’t believe me! I’m telling you this charming little lady’s eyes resemble yours a lot!” persisted the woman.

As he watched her signal for him to take the photograph from her already outstretched hand, the old man simply looked at her for a while before giving in and taking it from her.

The second he got a clearer look at the person in the photograph, he seemed to momentarily freeze in place. He was so shocked that he couldn’t even hold onto the photograph properly, resulting in it falling to the floor.

If it wasn't obvious enough, the girl in the photo was Queta.

Seeing him trembling like that was a first for the woman. Adding that to the fact that his expression had changed so much upon looking at the photo, the woman couldn't help but ask in a worried tone, "...Uncle? Is something the matter...?"

Quickly picking the photograph up again, he then replied, "...I'm fine. Everything's fine... Speaking of which, I'm done bandaging Gerald and I need to head out for a bit. Take care of him in the meantime!"

With that said, he then hastily turned around before leaving.

"...He's acting rather strange..." muttered the woman to herself as she scratched the back of her head.

Though she was mischievous in nature, she always obeyed that man's words. With that, she then sat by the bed with her eyes closed, both hands over her cheeks.

Opening an eye to look at the resting youth, she was instantly caught by surprise. Since the middle-aged man had wiped the blood off

Gerald's face earlier, she now saw that Gerald was, in fact, quite handsome.

Stretching her hand out, she gently pinched his face before saying, "You look quite handsome, you know? Still, the more I look at you, the more I feel that your eyes resemble uncle's slightly... I wonder why..."

In truth, the woman had always secretly admired that middle-aged man. After all, though he was ugly, that man's demeanor was always graceful and his behavior was nothing short of gentlemanly. What more, he was also extremely mysterious.

Whenever she asked him about how he had gotten all those wounds on his face, he always replied with the same thing, stating that he was simply burned badly. As for photographs of him in the past, there were none to even speak of.

That fact alone saddened the woman greatly. After all, she was extremely interested in knowing how he looked in the past.

After staring at Gerald for some time, her ears twitched as she turned to look at the door. There, the man sat as he smoked quietly.

'...He really is acting extremely strangely today!' the woman thought to herself.

The man himself was looking at Queta's photo again as he continued smoking. If one were to pay closer attention to him under the light of the moon, they would be able to see his body trembling slightly as tears slowly began welling in his eyes, his gaze at the photograph filled with adoration.

After being in a daze for quite a while, he eventually kept the photograph carefully. Looking up at the night sky, his initial tears were no longer there. Instead, it was replaced with a look of resoluteness and ruthlessness.

"The incident will be settled sooner or later... It isn't far from now!" declared the man coldly as he glared daggers at a large and remote mountain in the distance...

...

Meanwhile, the Gunters and those from Judgement Portal were currently assembled at the Gunter family manor's brightly lit hall within Ancient City.

At that moment, Yreth—the old lady of the Gunter family—was sitting at the seat of honor as she exclaimed in shock, “...What? Hogan’s been defeated? But how is that even possible! Gerald’s merely a weak, small fry compared to Hogan! How was he actually able to escape?!”

Hogan was an exceptional man who had already achieved the middle stage of the Spirit Earth Realm. With that kind of strength, he was a frightening man who could do pretty much whatever he pleased.

The Gunters themselves were well aware of how terrifying he was, since before they had formed an alliance with Judgement Portal, they had attempted to fight that beast of a man. Despite how exceptional the Gunter family members were, none of them were any match for Hogan, and they all ended up getting utterly defeated. That alone painted the image of how strong that man truly was.

Since the Judgement Portal had sent Hogan over to capture Gerald this time around, the Gunters had assumed that everything was already in the bag. They were so sure, in fact, that they even had Gerald’s jail cell prepared!

Shockingly enough, not only was Gerald able to escape, but Hogan also ended up getting terribly injured!

Hogan himself was currently lying on a chair, his expression extremely ruthless as members of the Judgement Portal continued bandaging his wounds.

Chapter 1304

“He was saved in the nick of time by someone extremely strong! Had I been a move slower, I wouldn’t be alive now!” explained Hogan, feeling utterly humiliated.

“And who exactly is the assailant?” asked Yreth as she frowned deeply.

“Since I was too focused on evading his attack, I wasn’t able to see him properly!”

“...Could it be that there are other powerful forces that are secretly helping Gerald...?” muttered Yreth to herself as she fell deep into thought.

For a person to beat Hogan up that badly, they needed to at least possess the strength equivalent to the final stage of the Spirit Earth Realm. Even though she could deduce at least that much, Yreth simply wasn't able to figure out what kind of force would even step forward to help Gerald.

At that moment, she suddenly heard a voice saying, "Could it be that Gerald is the one causing you so much trouble, Lady Gunter?"

Looking up, she watched as an extremely handsome youth entered through the door—leading outside—with both his hands folded behind his back. Upon stepping inside, his first reaction was to imposingly scan through the hall with cold and stern eyes that only served to further amplify his already extraordinary aura.

Now aware of his presence, the thirteen Judgement Portal members—who consisted of both males and females donning strange clothes and portraying queer expressions—took turns nodding at the youth as they greeted, "A pleasure to meet you, Young Master Gunter!"

The Gunters now had, after all, an alliance with the Judgement Portal.

Regardless, the youth went by the name of Felton Gunter, and he was Lady Gunter's great-great-grandson. To Yume, he was her eldest cousin.

Felton was known to be extremely strong, and he was pretty much the most powerful individual among those from the Gunter family's younger generation.

With that in mind, Felton was definitely Yreth's most beloved great-great-grandson. As for her most adored great-great-granddaughter, Yume naturally had that role.

Even so, her love for Yume wasn't as strong as her adoration for Felton. After all, Yreth had personally trained Felton to be the heir of the Gunter family.

Due to that, the moment she saw him, a smile instantly formed on Yreth's face as she said, "Here you are, Felton!"

Smiling coldly, Felton then replied, "Gerald's honestly so trivial a person that he's probably only comparable to a stray dog! Despite that, to think that Master Hogan would actually fail to capture him!"

“Well, according to Master Hogan, someone was apparently helping Gerald in secret. That someone also seems to be an exceptionally powerful person!” explained Yreth.

“Fear not, Lady Gunter, for even if exceptional people truly are secretly aiding him, all I need is a few days for me to get to the bottom of all this! Just leave everything to me! As for the forces who are still keen on helping him... I’m going to make you reveal yourselves, one by one!” declared Felton with a confident smile on his face.

Felton had always been this confident, and those who knew him would oftentimes find him to be quite overbearing. It was almost as though there was nothing in the world too difficult for him to deal with.

True enough, however, as long as Felton put his mind to it, he was able to accomplish anything that he wanted to, regardless of who the other party was. It was due to that that Yreth had such great trust in Felton.

“Very well! Truthfully, I was previously thinking about having you investigate it as well! Regardless, try to find out more about the forces aiding Gerald and report your findings to me as soon as you get any hints! As for your methods of acquiring that information, feel free to do as you please!” replied Yreth, a gratified smile on her face.

“Affirmative!” said Yreth as he smiled back at her before turning to leave.

The second he arrived at the door, however, a female servant just so happened to be entering with ginseng tea in hand. Due to her slight surprise, she found herself accidentally bumping into Felton!

“I-I apologize, Young Master Gunter! Please forgive me!” squeaked the female servant—who looked to be around the age of sixteen—as she immediately knelt before him.

“Insensible scum!” shouted Felton with a frown before immediately slapping her on the cheek!

Following that, blood began flowing down the young woman’s fair face, her body now limp on the floor... She was dead!

Seeing that, the thirteen members from Judgement Portal could only look at each other in dismay.

Yreth herself simply revealed a smile as she looked at Felton before saying, “Pay it no heed. I’ve simply spoiled Felton ever since he was young!”

Waving a hand at the rest of the servants, Yreth then ordered, “Get that corpse out of here!”

“Y-yes, Lady Gunter...!” squealed the servants in unison, utterly mortified by what they had just witnessed.

Chapter 1305

With that, the Gunters and those from Judgement Portal agreed to cooperate to hunt Gerald down. It was evident that seeking Gerald out was crucial for both Yreth and the King of Judgement Portal.

At the same time, both forces were also well aware that even Queena—who owned the Squad of Divine Grimness—was looking for Gerald. Unlike them, however, Queena’s aim of finding Gerald was to make him marry her.

Despite the clear differences in their interests in finding Gerald, both Lady Gunter and the King of Judgement Portal still made sure to keep a close eye on Queena’s actions.

Regardless, the task of seeking out Gerald was given mainly to Felton and Hogan.

While the Gunters were indeed in full control over Ancient City, their true influence spanned the entirety of Querton City.

With that in mind, the Gunters immediately ordered the Simes— from Querton city— to aid them in their search for Gerald by utilizing large groups of people as well as by providing them with any necessary resources.

Even with so many people dedicated to hunting Gerald down, however, Yreth was unable to find him at all despite having investigated every spot she could think of in Qerton City! Naturally, this greatly infuriated her.

Eventually, every nook and cranny in the city had been searched, though there still weren't any signs of Gerald... All that was left, was the vast shantytown...

By that point, both Felton and Hogan were already feeling extremely anxious due to their failure to locate Gerald, even after a week. With that, both of them then headed to the shantytown with a team— provided by the Simes—that consisted of around two hundred people.

'If we still failed to find him here, then Dordwell Heights is the only place left for us to search...' Felton thought to himself extremely sternly.

He knew for a fact that Gerald hadn't left the city since his grandmother had previously used the Dead Annies to check for Gerald's presence. But where the hell was he...?

...

Meanwhile, an adorable little girl—who had her hair tied in pigtails and looked to be around six—could be seen standing in a small courtyard of a house within the shantytown as she delightfully said, "I'll be heading off for school now, Brother Crawford and Sister Monica! I'll come play with you again tomorrow! Oh! And these are some eggs that my mom told me to hand over to you!"

Turning to look at the elder brother and elder sister figures, she then smiled before adding, "Since you're sick, be sure to eat more eggs to get healthier sooner, Brother Crawford!"

Upon hearing that, the woman—who had been standing at the side—instantly burst into laughter.

Naturally, the 'Brother Crawford' in question was none other than Gerald. Though he was now doing far better after that man healed him, his body was still extremely weak at the moment. As for 'Sister Monica', she was the woman that had been looking after Gerald—along with that middle-aged man—this entire time, and her full name was Monica Leonard.

“What a good girl! But yes, I’ll make sure your Brother Crawford eats lots of eggs till he gets healthy again! Don’t worry, I’ll keep an eye on him!” replied Monica with a grin.

Knowing that the child meant no harm with her words, Gerald simply laughed along as he looked at the young girl with adoring eyes.

Still, he truly had suffered from massive injuries this time around, and it wasn’t a stretch to say that he could’ve easily died back then after being tortured so much by Hogan. By the time he was rescued, not only had most of his veins and bones already snapped, but he was also suffering from terrible internal injuries as well as from highly potent poison.

Even so, from the middle-aged man’s point of view, Gerald already had it good enough since he had managed to escape with his life

intact. Still, while the man had estimated that Gerald would only regain consciousness after at least a month had passed, he truly hadn't expected the youth to wake up just three days later!

The fact that his broken bones and internal injuries were healing so rapidly honestly made Monica both frightened and jealous of Gerald's unique—and quite frankly abnormal—physique.

While it was true that he had regained consciousness on the third day he was there, he was only able to get out of bed on the sixth, which was the day before.

Due to how weak Gerald currently was—since his body was still recovering—the middle-aged man had set off for Dordwell Heights first thing in the morning to gather herbs for him again.

Speaking of that man, ever since Gerald had regained consciousness, he had found the middle-aged man to be extremely familiar and friendly, though he wasn't quite sure if that was just a biased viewpoint since the man had, after all, saved his life.

Both Monica and the man were quite mysterious to Gerald.

After all, when asked where she originated from, Monica refused to give him a clear answer. All he knew about her was that she had stayed by that man's side for a good two years by now.

The man himself was even more mystifying. After all, even though Gerald had asked him time and again why he had appeared all of a sudden to save him, the man simply avoided giving a direct answer. Not wanting to continue being rude to his savior, Gerald soon decided not to pry any further.

Instead, he chose to obey the man's orders to simply remain in the shantytown—for the time being—to recuperate with peace of mind.

As for the little girl from earlier, she went by the name of Sierra. Throughout his time awake, Gerald had gotten to know the cute and kind girl fairly well. From what he was told, she was the youngest daughter from Elias Leakin's family, which was one of the families here in the shantytown.

He also found out that when she was younger, she had fallen terribly ill. Ever since she was saved by that man, however, she had treated him like her godfather, which explained why she kept coming over to his house whenever she could.

In fact, she was there so often that she was tasked with wiping Gerald's face for him every day. Additionally, she even brought lots of food for him! The fact that the food mostly consisted of candies and snacks—foods of which Sierra treasured most—certainly warmed Gerald's heart.

Regardless, Gerald waved at the girl—who was now running off while waving back at him—before shouting, “See you, Sierra!”

From what he had been told, the girl was studying in the middle class of kindergarten...

Chapter 1306

“With how cute she already is, I'm sure she'll grow to be an extremely beautiful woman,” said Monica with a smile.

“I agree. I'm sure she'll be quite similar to you in terms of beauty!” replied Gerald with a smile.

Seconds later, he immediately cupped his mouth with a white towel—that he had been holding onto—as he began coughing rather terribly.

Watching as the towel slowly got stained with blood, Monica frowned slightly before saying, “It’s best that you don’t start walking around just yet. After all, your injuries haven’t healed yet, you know? Truth be told, I still can’t get over how abnormal your body is!”

Following that, Gerald turned to look at her and found that she was staring rather intently at his chest. Feeling weirded out, Gerald then said, “...Why are you staring at my chest like that...?”

“You best not be getting any weird ideas! I’m just looking at your jade pendant! It’s shining again, you know? From the day you were brought here, it’s shone at exactly the same time every morning and night. Thinking back, it must have done so at least a dozen times by now!” replied Monica rather grumpily as she rolled her eyes at Gerald before pointing at the round jade pendant hanging from Gerald’s neck.

“...What? It’s shining again?” said Gerald as he looked down to see for himself.

Even he had been aware that the pendant shone quite regularly ever since he woke up. However, he had no idea what they indicated.

The jade pendant was truly extraordinary. After all, it had previously saved his life on several occasions by giving him aid at the most crucial moments. Despite that, it hadn't activated this time, even after Hogan had beaten him into a pulp!

'What on earth is even happening...?' Gerald thought to himself, feeling quite puzzled.

After giving it some thought, he came to the conclusion that he wasn't going to be able to figure it out just by dwelling on it. With that in mind, he then followed Monica into the house.

Meanwhile, a group of bodyguards dressed in black—under the lead of a few Gunters—had just made their appearance right outside the shantytown, fully prepared to go door to door to look for Gerald.

From what they knew, the hundred over families living in this shantytown all shared cordial relationships with each other. Due to that, its inhabitants were all pretty united, and that was made evident by how the other families immediately walked out to take a look when they saw the guards barging into one of the houses there.

Despite their initial protests, they soon ended up returning to their own homes after the guards began scowling and threatening to beat them up if they planned to meddle any further.

At that moment, Felton himself was sitting at the back of a luxury car, momentarily resting his eyes. After slowly opening his eyes a little while later, he found himself frowning when he saw a young girl walking across the street.

Noticing that he was staring at her, the girl was temporarily frozen in fright.

A second later, what seemed to be her parents broke through the interception from the bodyguards—who had been standing in front of their house—before rushing over to the girl while ushering, “Sierra! Come back here! Quickly!”

Though the other families—who had been watching all this take place—wanted to help, they were simply too frightened to move, knowing that they couldn’t afford to offend the person launching such a massive operation.

After continuing to stare at Sierra for a little while longer, Felton gave his subordinate a glance before pointing at the girl. Easily understanding what Felton meant by that, the subordinate then

walked over and instantly carried Sierra up, even though she was just about to run back home!

“M-mom!” cried out the now utterly terrified Sierra.

Her parents were equally as terrified for her safety, and they immediately began running over to her. However, their advances were halted by a few other guards who quickly kicked both of them to the ground before shouting, “Beat it!”

“W-what are you doing?! We’ve never offended any of you! She’s my daughter and she’s still so young! What are you planning on doing to her?!” cried out the distressed mother.

“You’d best behave yourselves! One more move from either of you and you’ll both be dead!” threatened the guards as they placed knives close to the duo’s necks.

With her parents unable to make another move, the subordinate holding onto Sierra then brought the young girl to Felton.

Once she was before him, he took in a sniff before narrowing his eyes.

“...There’s a peculiar herbal scent on this girl... Herbs that ordinary people wouldn’t ever be able to brew!”

Hearing that, the subordinate then glared at Sierra before growling, “Have you come across any odd patients recently? Spit out the truth, you bad girl!”

“I-I don’t know...!” whimpered Sierra in her fright.

Though she was young, she was bright enough to know that they were looking for Gerald. Even so, she had promised her godfather that she would never reveal his location, and she was going to keep that promise no matter what.

“Don’t test me, young girl. You’d best be obedient and tell me the truth, else I’ll be giving trouble to your parents right after I slaughter you!” growled Felton next as he got out of the car, making sure to flash a cold smile as he said that.

Glaring right into Sierra’s eyes with his stern gaze, he then added, “Now then, are you still unwilling to tell me what you know? Just so you understand, for me, killing you is as easy as killing an ant!”

Chapter 1307

“I... I really don’t know!” cried out Sierra as Felton lifted her into the air.

No matter how much he threatened her, however, Sierra simply continued denying that she knew anything. Quickly understanding that he wasn’t going to be able to get anything out from her, he then fixed his cold eyes at Sierra’s parents before asking, “And what about you two? Know anything about this?”

Seeing that both of them weren’t too keen on answering, he then held onto Sierra’s neck before slowly increasing the force of his grip.

Seeing that, both Elias and his wife—who was already crying in grief by this point—could only gnash their teeth in their panicked states.

While both of them knew for a fact that Felton was looking for Gerald—the young man who had been saved by the middle-aged man—they were extremely loyal to that man, and would never even dream of betraying him.

With that in mind, both of them simply shook their heads.

“...Humph! I see how it is! I guess you won’t fear the consequences until you get a personal taste of it! Allow me to demonstrate!” sneered Felton as slowly raised his arm...

Before lowering it again extremely quickly in a swiping motion! At that moment, everyone froze, unsure of what Felton had even done.

A second later, however, Sierra’s parents’ eyes widened in horror as blood began gushing out of Sierra’s right shoulder! Her right arm had just been dismembered and was now lying on the ground!

With her arm now sliced clean off her body, Sierra instantly began screaming in pain, “M-my arm...!”

Sierra’s mother, on the other hand, was brimming so much with strong emotions that she ended up passing out on the spot!

As for Elias, his eyes had turned bloodshot as he roared, “You... You b*stard of a man! I’ll kill you!”

However, no matter how much he tried to rush past the guards to attack Felton, there was simply no way that he was going to be able

to get past those from the Gunter family. Soon enough, he ended up being flung backward, landing on the ground in his sheer rage.

“That was just the beginning. If you still refuse to tell me where she had gone to get that scent on her, her head will be the next thing that flies off!” taunted Felton with a wicked smile on his face.

Upon closer inspection, the weapon Elias had earlier used to slice the girl’s arm off was a white knife. With it, dismembering her arm was as easy as breaking off the arm of an insect.

Even after hearing that threat, Elias—who currently had his head stepped on by one of the guards—simply remained silent as he desperately tried to struggle free.

“...Nothing? Have it your way then!” said Felton as he shook his head with a bitter smile. Following that, he brought the knife close to Sierra’s neck. From the way he angled it, everyone watching knew that a single slash was all he needed to end her life.

Just as he was about to do the deed, however, the crisp sound of metal clanging could suddenly be heard.

Blinking, Felton realized that the white knife—that had only been less than an inch away from Sierra’s neck just a split second ago—was now no longer in his hand!

It had all happened so fast. All he remembered was seeing a white light intersect the blade, sending it flying!

Speaking of the blade, Felton instantly turned back to see the knife flying in the direction of a tree...

Before sending the tree exploding into a million pieces! From what Felton could tell, the tree’s diameter was wide enough for at least seven people to hug before they were able to hold hands with one another!

‘What a massive aura...!’ Felton thought to himself, feeling his eyelids twitch as debris flew all over the place.

Felton’s immense shock was justifiable since being in the middle stage of the Spirit Earth Realm, nobody should have been able to knock his weapon out of his hand that silently and easily.

Even the Gunter family’s subordinates were now on high alert, occasionally turning to look at each other in worry.

“What are you still waiting here for?! Leave the area!” ordered Felton with a roar before bounding away from the area, not even bothering to get into his car!

Seeing that even Felton was running, the rest of his men immediately scattered as well!

Soon enough, the shantytown was cleared of any remaining Simes and Gunters.

With them out of the picture, Elias immediately cried out, “Sierra!”

Felton had tossed her to the ground before fleeing, and there was now a puddle of blood where the now-unconscious girl’s right arm should be.

As he lifted his daughter up with a roar of fatherly pain, a figure could be seen from afar, running toward him at high speeds. On the person’s back, was a bamboo basket...

Chapter 1308

If it wasn't already evident enough, it was the man who had just returned from collecting herbs for Gerald.

He had sensed the danger even before he even re-entered the shantytown. Knowing that he wouldn't be able to make it to the scene in time, he had grabbed a divine thought and tossed a knife to disengage Felton's own knife that was about to slice Sierra's neck.

Alas, it was only when he got to the scene that he realized that Felton had already dismembered Sierra's arm!

"Hand her to me and keep her dismembered arm safe! She can still be saved!" ordered the man as he quickly held onto the unconscious young girl before dashing all the way home. Since there was quite a distance between his house and Sierra's, the man knew he had no time to waste.

Regardless, upon arriving at his house, both Gerald and Monica were immensely shocked to see Sierra in such a state. However, they quickly snapped out of it and began helping the ailing girl.

Since Gerald knew the art of setting bones and the middle-aged man had immense medical mastery, both of them seamlessly cooperated to reattach Sierra's arm. All the while they did so, Elias explained the entire story that led to Sierra's current state.

"That b*stard!" growled Gerald who had to stop moving his hands for a second since they were now trembling so much with resentment.

As it turned out, the Gunters had been searching for him. Sierra had only gotten to her current state since Felton had caught the scent of rare medicinal herbs—that the middle-aged man had used on Gerald—lingering around her. She had suffered so much just because of him...

"You Gunters... To think that you aren't even willing to let a child go!" added Gerald, his murderous intent clearly reflected in his eyes.

"First of all, be mindful of your wounds. Secondly, don't stop moving your hands! Focus on saving Sierra!" said the man as he placed a hand over Gerald's shoulder to ease the anger in him. From how red Gerald's eyes already were, the middle-aged man was afraid that the sudden stress would result in his internal organ getting harmed again.

While Gerald was aware of what the man was trying to do, he still couldn't bring himself to just calm down after finding out about all this.

Thankfully, after quite a bit of time, both of them finally managed to reattach her arm to her body. It was truly a good thing that both of them had such exceptional medical skills.

However, though they managed to get her arm functioning again, there was still a large scar left behind. That, however, wasn't impossible to remove. All they needed was just a few special herbs.

Whatever the case was, it was late at night when they finally bandaged all of Sierra's wounds and placed her in bed. Elias trusted the middle-aged man enough to leave her here, so he simply headed home to take care of Sierra's mother next.

As Monica sat by Sierra's bed to keep her company, Gerald himself sat outside to take a smoke.

Thinking about all that had happened today, Gerald couldn't help but clench his fist.

Though Sierra was just a naïve child, she was a kind and bright one. Had the man not rushed back in time, then Sierra's life could've very well ended because of him. If that had truly taken place, then Gerald would surely not even have the will to stay alive anymore.

Clenching his fists so hard to the point where minor cracking could be heard, Gerald muttered to himself, "The Judgement Portal and the Gunters... I'm not letting either of you off that easily because of this...!"

"Still filled with self-reproach, Gerald?" asked the middle-aged man out of the blue as he walked over and sat beside Gerald.

"...Indeed. Speaking of which, I have to thank you, sir... Had it not been for your quick actions, Sierra could have..."

Watching as Gerald lowered his head, the middle-aged man then took out a cigarette of his own before prompting Gerald to light it. Once Gerald did, the man slipped it into his mouth before replying, "That's quite enough. There's no point in dwelling in things like this. If you have the time to blame yourself, why not use it to figure out how to arrive at the middle stage of the Spirit Earth Realm sooner instead? By doing so, you'll hopefully be able to deal with the Gunters and the Judgement Portal group since they're still so keen on pursuing you!"

Before this, the man had taken the time to tell Gerald what the world truly was like. He also made sure to share what cryptic families actually were.

With that in mind, the man then continued, "I'll say it right now that unlike the other geniuses who've trained to get to your level, you have exceptional advantages compared to them, both talent and physique-wise. I've been meaning to talk about this for a while, but on the night I saved you, I saw you using rather exquisite techniques as you fought against Hogan. Now then, I'd like to know something. Did someone teach them to you? Or...?"

The old man had truthfully been curious about this throughout the entire week.

"I just learned them by chance," replied Gerald.

"I see. It seems that you truly have good blessings. Regardless, now that you've gained more knowledge on all this, it's high time you began training to further improve yourself. If you don't, well... Your next encounter with the Gunters won't be any different from the last!" advised the man as Gerald nodded in response.

‘Well, it’s true that I didn’t really have a teacher... After all, I had inherited knowledge of all these rare martial arts skills from this pendant... Still, how odd it is that I’m learning all these through memories and experiences that have been implanted into my mind in great detail...’

‘Regardless, while I wasn’t able to practice more of those skills before since I hadn’t gained access to the Spirit Earth Realm in the past, things are different now.’

Now, he finally had enough strength as well as the right to practice all those skills in his mind.

“I understand. I’ll need to get much stronger to deal with my current ordeal! While I used to do many useless things in the past, things have changed. With that in mind, I agree that I need to make full use of all my great resources!”

Chapter 1309

Following that, Gerald then chatted late into the night with that man. However, even after finally returning to his room, Gerald chose not to sleep.

After having that conversation with that man, Gerald now knew how important it was to properly train himself. After all, though it was true that Felton had been scared off today, Gerald knew that he would eventually return even stronger than before.

With that in mind, Gerald then sat cross-legged in his room as he searched through the many memories—of the deity—that had been implanted into him. He had acquired them back when he was in the ancient tomb within the palace that was located in the desert.

Eventually, he came across the memories of extremely ancient breathing techniques. Gerald recalled a time when he had attempted to practice those techniques, though to no avail. No matter how much he practiced them, he simply wasn't able to get them right.

Though he was only able to master that evil technique—Soul Eater—in the past, the man had told him that after undergoing the baptism of heaven, Gerald had successfully entered the Spirit Earth Realm, which meant that his inner strength had vastly increased. Not only that, but Gerald was apparently only a step away from achieving the middle stage of the Spirit Earth Realm, which meant

that he should—by right—be finally able to practice and succeed in mastering the rest of the memories that had been implanted into him.

With that in mind, Gerald then selected an ancient breathing technique called the Thunder Eruption. According to the memories, the technique was used to swiftly improve the refining speed of essential qi. In other words, it was a technique that would allow Gerald to further improve himself, and that was exactly what he needed now.

With that, Gerald then calmed himself before beginning to train his qi according to the steps of the technique.

Soon enough, his chest began rising and falling extremely quickly as he trained on.

It wasn't long after before he was finally able to complete the training for the technique, and it was made evident when a violet-colored aura suddenly emerged from his body. The aura itself kept changing colors according to the rising and falling of Gerald's chest.

Whenever he inhaled, the aura turned scarlet, though when he exhaled, it returned to being violet. Another evident change—as he continued practicing the technique—was the appearance of a milky-

white mist that exited Gerald's mouth and nose whenever he exhaled.

Since he was concentrating so hard on his training, Gerald himself wasn't aware of any of these changes. However, he was able to feel traces of qi surrounding his pubic region. The qi itself seemed to be constantly getting stronger.

Meanwhile, a figure could be seen standing right outside the room's window. It was the middle-aged man, and he currently had his hands behind his back as he observed Gerald's progress.

Seeing that things were coming along just fine, he nodded—while looking at Gerald—before breaking into a gratified smile.

'You have a massive burden to carry in the future, Gerald, and life itself will be extremely difficult for you to live out.... Not only will the fate of your family be in your hands, but your own fate will also be dependent on how hard you're willing to work... With that in mind, I hope that you'll continue striving the way you currently are...! Still, how odd... Who was the one who had changed your physique? And who could've been capable enough to teach Gerald these ancient breathing techniques that he's just mastered...?' Thought the man to himself with a frown.

Though he was bewildered by all this, after looking at Gerald again and confirming that the youth was making good progress, the middle-aged man then returned to his room.

It was only when morning came that Gerald finally opened his eyes again. As he did so, a hint of violet momentarily flashed across his eyes. He had trained the entire night, and this was honestly the first time he had ever devoted himself to increasing his training so professionally.

This was due to the fact that in the past, he could easily defeat people like Kort and Christopher with his advantageous physique alone. In other words, he didn't require a lot of training back then since his opponents were always much weaker than him.

Now, however, Gerald was dealing with enemies far stronger than he had ever encountered before. With that in mind, he needed as much training as he could get.

Regardless, upon checking on his injuries, Gerald found that almost half of his injuries had already been healed by this point. What more, his inner strength seemed to have recovered.

Both surprised and delighted to find out that he now had his strength back, Gerald then muttered to himself, "How truly

mysterious Thunder Eruption is... I never expected these ancient breathing techniques—that the deity bestowed upon me—to be this useful!”

Finding himself slightly infatuated with the feeling of owning power again, Gerald snapped out of it when he heard a knock on the door followed by Monica shouting, “Gerald! Breakfast is ready! Also, uncle has something to tell you!”

Raising his hand toward the door—with his palm outstretched—Gerald then tilted his palm downward slightly... And the door suddenly flung open on its own with a loud ‘bang’!

Clearly caught by surprise, Monica then said, “...What? What are you even doing? You scared the crap out of me!”

She clearly hadn’t expected Gerald to know such elusive techniques like the ones the middle-aged man knew.

Though she was surprised by that, she was even more shocked when she saw Gerald's condition. Covering her mouth as though she was looking at a monster, Monica then said, "You... Gerald, you've already recovered your strength...?"

"Indeed! Honestly, I hadn't expected those breathing techniques to be so useful! They're truly priceless treasures!" replied Gerald rather excitedly as he looked at both his hands.

"Do... You think you could teach me a technique like that?" asked Monica as her eyes instantly lit up. It was apparent that she was greatly interested in the breathing techniques that both Gerald and that middle-aged man were capable of performing.

"Of course! If a chance presents itself in the future, I'll definitely select a suitable technique or two for you to learn!" replied Gerald with a smile.

By this point, Gerald already treated her as a friend, so he wasn't against teaching her some of the simpler techniques. He had specified on the term 'suitable techniques for her' since learning something like Thunder Eruption was pretty much impossible for Monica at her current state. What more, Thunder Eruption behaved similarly like a talisman of sorts, and one needed a great comprehension of it before training on the technique could even begin.

Even so, Monica still looked excited as she said, “Remember, you’re the one who promised me that! Haha!”

With that, both of them then headed to the hall together. Upon arriving, both of them saw that the man had already fully prepared breakfast for them.

The man himself turned to look at Gerald, and despite seeing all the changes that Gerald had undergone, he didn’t look too surprised. Instead, he simply said, “Alright, let’s eat! Once the meal is over, however, I’d like you to head someplace to exchange a few herbs back, Gerald!”

Nodding in response, Gerald then asked, “Are the herbs in question going to be used to remove Sierra’s scars and also strengthen her bones? I had—quite honestly—been wondering whether I could go to Dordwell Heights to look for those herbs!”

“I’ll say it now that those herbs are very difficult to look for. Just take this letter here and go to Sunhill Rise on my behalf. There, you should seek out the master of King Valley. He’s my friend, you see, and if all goes well, he should give you access to the herbs needed to cure Sierra!” replied the man as he took a letter out and handed it to Gerald.

Gerald himself was fully aware that Sierra was only in such a sorry state at the moment because of him. With that in mind, anything that the middle-aged man ordered him to do—involving Sierra—was really a no-brainer.

“Speaking of which, do you still remember what I told you yesterday?”

“I do. You told me that no matter how much one trained, their power would always be limited to a certain extent. I understand that!”

The man truly had put a lot of thought and care when it came to Gerald. After all, even though Gerald was being sent to King Valley to do what was rightfully his duty—for causing so much pain to Sierra—the man was still willing to hand him a letter which would definitely ease the process of obtaining the herbs that he needed. From all that, Gerald could tell that this man truly was a kind soul.

“While we’re at it, I have to admit that I’ve never contacted anyone from Sunhill Rise... Do those living there belong to a cryptic family as well?” asked Gerald with a slight frown.

“They are, though aside from martial arts, they very much prefer honing their secret techniques of making pills more. It’s the reason

why they've collected all kinds of herbs in the first place. Regardless, note that Sunhill Rise lies within this mountainous region, and within it, you'll come across seven large valleys, one of which is the King Valley. There, you'll come across a multitude of exceptional people who have already arrived at the final stage of the Spirit Earth Realm. Despite that, I feel that the master of King Valley may pay us some respect and give us the herbs without much hassle as long as you provide him with this letter!"

"I see... Very well. I'll head there immediately once I'm done with my meal!"

True to his word, the second he finished his breakfast, Gerald instantly entered the mountain to look for the valley in accordance with the man's directions.

While memories of the art of pill-making had also been implanted into his memory, Gerald wasn't really sure if what he knew was even comparable to the pills made by the cryptic family.

Regardless, Gerald quickly made use of his lightness skill to hasten his journey there. The large mountain was called Sunhill Rise, and though Gerald was fast, the journey to King Valley took quite a while since the mountainous region was extremely large and complicated to navigate through. It was only after running through eight

neighboring cities when Gerald finally arrived at King Valley around noon.

As its name suggested, King Valley was one of the area's many valleys, and connected to it, was a highway that led to the outside world. Since the place was well-known among tycoons—many of whom were from international levels—for their mastery of the art of pill-making, it was no wonder why so many luxury cars were parked at the entrance of the valley.

From what Gerald had heard, these people had come to beg the master of King Valley to sell them pills. Of course, such incidents were carried out with utmost secrecy. Even if they knew about it, no media companies would ever dare to expose this place to the public.

Whatever the case was, Gerald was stopped by two guards as he approached the valley's entrance. Seeing that, he gave them the letter and one of the guards headed off for a while.

A short while later, a middle-aged man donning a suit ran out excitedly as the guard from before calmly walked back to his initial post.

Looking at Gerald extremely friendly, the middle-aged man then gleefully said, "Could you be my benefactor's disciple? Actually, hold

on, where are my manners! I go by the name of Myles Yateman, and I was the master of the valley's driver in the past! The benefactor once saved both me and the master of the valley, you know?"

The benefactor... That should be that man, right? While Gerald saw that Myles was already treating him as that man's disciple, it didn't really bother him too much.

"A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Yateman. Getting straight to the point, we're in urgent need of those three herbs!" replied Gerald without beating around the bush.

"That... Actually, it's rather inconvenient to speak about that here. Please, come with me, mister!" said Myles in an apologetic tone before cheerfully holding onto Gerald's arm and walking by his side into the valley.

As they walked off, the two guards at the entrance of the valley simply gave contemptuous looks at Gerald—with no intention of being subtle about it—as they both thought, 'Where did that bumpkin even come from?'

Chapter 1311

The owner of King Valley went by the name of Rupert Yateman.

While that name didn't usually stand out among ordinary people, it was one that was extremely well-known among world-class powerhouse circles. This was made evident to Gerald since—as he continued following Myles—all sorts of signs could be seen on display around the valley. The signs themselves were of celebrities from all over the world.

From what Gerald could guess, those who had their signs here had once come here to ask for medicine.

Regardless, as they walked on, Myles further elaborated on how that man had gotten to know the master of the valley in the first place. As Myles had earlier said, he was once the personal driver of the master of the valley, and back then, both of them had traveled together a lot.

One day, however, both of them came across enemies who were intent on killing them! Things got so bad that Myles even had to carry the master on his back as they fled for their dear lives!

Thankfully, they eventually came across that man while they were still trying to shake off their pursuers. The man himself had been on

his way home, and seeing that they were in trouble, he brought both of them back with him.

Thanks to that, the duo were finally able to escape their pursuers after days of running from them.

To express his gratitude, Rupert had told the man that if he had anything he wished for in the future, he would definitely attempt to fulfill it.

Hearing that, Gerald figured that Rupert had only assumed that the man was a simple farmer. In turn, that probably led him to think that whatever the man would eventually request for wouldn't be that hard to fulfill.

Regardless, since the pursuers let the duo off that easily, Gerald had a feeling that the man had dealt with them prior to meeting up with the duo.

Whatever the case was, this seemed to be the full story between the man and Rupert.

From what Gerald could see, Myles didn't seem to be a bad person. After all, he took his debts rather seriously.

As they walked on, Myles turned to look at Gerald with a smile before asking, "Speaking of which, what's your name, mister?"

"Just call me Crawford," replied Gerald, figuring that his real name was now a sensitive word, especially around this area.

Understanding that he didn't wish to give his name, Myles simply smiled back and didn't try to pry any further.

A little while later, both of them arrived at a pavilion in the valley.

As soon as they sat down, Myles began saying in an apologetic tone, "Mr. Crawford, I'm afraid that while you wouldn't have needed to notify the master of the valley for the three medicinal herbs and I could've instantly gathered them for you in the past, things are quite different now. All the disciples in the valley are currently very busy, you see, so all the herbs here are under the supervision of the second elder of the valley. Sadly, I'm currently at extreme odds with the second elder, and I'm not really ranked that high here either. Adding that to the fact that the herbs you requested are quite rare, there's a possibility that I may not be able to fulfill your request!"

From the way he looked, Gerald could tell that he truly was rather helpless in this situation. Gerald had also been able to tell that Myles

wasn't really someone with a high position from the way the guards at the entrance had looked at him earlier.

Also, the way Myles had explained the situation earlier suggested that while Myles himself still remembered the man's act of kindness to him, Rupert, on the other hand, could have potentially already forgotten all about it. With that in mind, there was a chance that the man's 'friend' wasn't actually going to be willing to hand the herbs over.

"Still, since my benefactor has given me a chance to finally repay his favor, I'll definitely use whatever power I have to fulfill his request! If you don't mind staying here for a few days, I'm willing to try my very best to get those three herbs for you!" declared Myles.

Though Gerald wanted to tell him that it had better not take more than three days—since obtaining the herbs beyond that time frame would render them useless to him—after seeing how determined Myles looked, Gerald couldn't bring himself to say it. With that in mind, the only thing he could do now was wait and see what would happen.

"Since I'll need at least a few days, I can clean up a small room for you to stay in for the time being. I'll notify you once it's ready. In the meantime, I'll be looking for the master of the valley in hopes of obtaining the herbs for you!" said Myles, making sure that the letter

was still with him before hurrying off to get the appropriate arrangements done.

In the meantime, Gerald was free to do as he pleased in the King Valley.

As Myles led him to the pavilion earlier, Gerald had noticed several pill-making methods carved onto the low cliffs that surrounded the area. Remembering that there were quite a few secret pill-making methods embedded in his memory, he recalled how he had previously been keen on understanding the pill-making process on a deeper level, though he never actually found the time to look deeper into it.

Since he now had free time anyway, Gerald decided to take a walk and have a look around.

Upon arriving at the low cliffs again, Gerald saw that most of the secret methods of pill-making in the King Valley were mainly focused on refining manual labor. From what he could see, the extraction methods of the medicine seemed even more troublesome.

This was honestly far too different from what had been implanted into his memories.

To show how different his memories and the carvings on the cliffs were, while the cliffs stated that herbs needed to be distilled before being purified with a special potion to properly be extracted, his implanted memories simply told him that he could just stimulate his inner strength for the extraction and purification process.

Chapter 1312

As for the refining and heating process, Gerald had memories of a skill called fire control that—while was more profound than the process carved on the cliffs—was also much easier to do.

However, since Gerald hadn't even practiced the art of pill-making before, it was hard for him to pinpoint the more minor differences.

Regardless, just as Gerald was about to head back—now that he was done looking at the carvings—he suddenly heard a sweet voice from behind him saying, “Hello there, handsome! Could you please help me out? My kite's gotten stuck in a tree and I'd appreciate it greatly if you gave me a hand!”

Turning around to see who the owner of the voice was, Gerald was immediately greeted by the sight of an extremely beautiful and pure-looking girl—who was wearing white sportswear and had her hair tied up in a ponytail—looking at him from under a tree, her expression rather anxious.

Due to how distressed she looked, Gerald found it rather hard to refuse her request, so he simply headed over to her.

True to her word, the kite could be seen lodged atop a tree, and though Gerald could've easily gotten it for her—through the use of his skills—under normal circumstances, the incident that had happened back at the Gunter mansion had taught him not to display his skills so openly.

With that in mind, not wanting to put his life at risk just to make things a little easier, Gerald then headed over to the tree to begin climbing it.

Just as he was about to start climbing, however, he noticed the girl taking a step back... before a large net sprang up from the ground!

The next thing Gerald knew, he was already hanging under the tree!

Since the net was made of gold wire, Gerald knew that he needed to use his inner strength to break free. Not wanting to resort to that just yet, he then glared at the girl before coldly asking, “What do you think you’re doing?”

At that moment, several young men and women—donning traditional clothing—began revealing themselves as they walked toward the scene from multiple directions.

“Hahaha! We’ve caught one~! We’ve caught one~! Go call Sister Fleur over and tell her we’ve caught some bait!” cheered the girl from before in glee.

After someone ran off to notify that ‘Sister Fleur’ person, it wasn’t long before they returned together with a woman who looked to be around the age of twenty-three.

The moment the boys in the group saw her, their eyes instantly lit up with excitement as they nodded respectfully toward her before greeting, “Sister Fleur!”

“Sister Fleur, look! I remember you saying something along the lines of being short of bait, right? Well, I’ve caught one for you!”

“Yenna, do you even know who this is...? And why have you hung him up like that?” asked Fleur as she walked over with her arms crossed, studying Gerald the entire time.

As Fleur looked at her younger sister with a bitter smile, Yenny Yateman then replied, “Beats me! While I was initially planning to capture one of the lower-ranking people here, none of them dared to come over despite my excellent acting! Just when I thought all hope was lost, I saw this stinking guy wandering casually around our valley! Who could’ve guessed that I would be successful in capturing him! Haha!”

“Yenny, what if he’s the son of one of the wealthy businessmen here who’ve come to ask for medicine? If that’s really the case, then we’ll surely be in a lot of trouble!” reasoned one of the youths there as Fleur waited for her younger sister’s response as well.

“I doubt it! After all, I’ve observed this guy for quite a while before actually capturing him! Also, I really don’t think that he’s a big shot since he’s dressed so ordinarily. Since he just came over to help without even questioning my motives, he’s clearly an idiot as well! Haha! Though, if you need confirmation, I’ll just ask him now!” replied Yenny triumphantly.

With that, she picked a branch off the ground before pointing it at Gerald and demanding, “Hey! Brat! Tell us, are you the son of some rich businessman or something?”

Gerald wasn't even sure how to reply. After all, he didn't really have a clear grasp of the situation yet. From what he could tell, these youths were all from the valley, though he still had no idea what they were planning.

Not knowing what to do, he simply shook his head.

“Hah! See? I told you he wasn't anyone important! Also, since he was acting pretty sneakily in those ordinary clothes of his, I have a hunch that he actually snuck in! With that in mind, it's only right for us to use him as bait!” declared Yenny.

After giving one final glance at Gerald, Fleur finally gave in and instructed, “...Alright then. Hold onto him and take him away!”

Chapter 1313

“Could I at least know where you’re taking me?” asked Gerald.

“Humph! You’d better shut your mouth if you know what’s good for you, you stinking brat! If everything goes smoothly and you follow all of Sister Fleur’s orders, we guarantee that you’ll be fine! However, make one mistake too many and you could very well lose your life!” sneered Yenny.

With that, a few guards—belonging to Yenny—quickly held Gerald down the second the net was lowered. After tying Gerald’s wrists and legs tightly with iron chains, they then shoved him into a car.

‘What the hell is even with these kids? If it wasn’t for the fact that I came over to ask for medicine, I would’ve already beaten them up by now just for pulling that trick on me earlier!’ Gerald thought to himself.

Though dissatisfied, he quickly calmed himself and simply went along with what they were doing. Gerald then watched as the line of cars drove out of the valley...

Eventually, they arrived at a large stadium-like building. At the building’s entrance, several luxury cars could be seen gathered

there. Quite a number of well-dressed men and women could be seen entering and leaving the building as well.

Looking at the two guards Yenny had brought along, Gerald then asked in a hushed voice, “What is this place?”

“Humph. It’s a colosseum, of course! You’ve never seen one before, have you? It’s no surprise since only young masters from secret societies or young ladies from international rich families are allowed to enter! With that in mind, you should be blessed to even be able to be here!” snorted the guard in response.

“...Alright then. Also, I heard something about me being used as bait... What’s up with that?” asked Gerald as he furrowed his brows.

Rich internal families his a*s... Gerald was the second generation of the richest family on the planet! He had already witnessed scenes like these on multiple occasions before!

“...Well, the master of Fairleigh Valley caught a savage quite some time ago, and the savage in question is just way too strong, you know? While the savage was successfully escorted to the colosseum by the valley master’s son—Seamus Fairleigh—his brutality hasn’t lessened in the least. He’s already taken down countless masters in the month that he’s been here!” replied the bodyguard who seemed

rather excited when it came to the savage, even though he wasn't really all that keen on paying attention on Gerald earlier.

Following that, he continued, "Due to how strong that savage is, it's been quite difficult to tame him. With that in mind, Master Fairleigh had to keep using electric shocks to corner him into a room. Unfortunately, once he was inside, the savage had utterly refused to leave that room! Now, since we knew that the savage was a bloodthirsty cannibal, we had been hoping to get someone to be used as bait and lure him out! Once he's finally out of that room, the masters from our valley will be able to beat him up and, once the savage has been defeated, we'll gain the right to bring him back to our valley! Of course, once that happens, Miss Fleur will have also won the bet, and Young Master Fairleigh will have to start greeting her with the title 'sister' whenever he bumps into her after that! Haha!"

As the bodyguard yapped on in his excitement—at the thought of the upcoming battle—Gerald himself felt like he could finally piece together the gist of the situation.

Essentially, Fleur had made a bet with that Young Master Fairleigh to take down that undefeated savage. In order to do so, they first needed to get him out of that room, which was where Gerald came in. Once Gerald successfully baited the savage out, then Fleur would have her valley's masters brawl against him.

Regardless, if what the guard had said was true—about the savage being a cannibal—then any regular person would definitely get eaten up by him. How utterly cruel!

Furrowing his brows, Gerald then coldly asked, “The masters you spoke of... Are you sure they’re capable enough of defeating him?”

“...What did you say? Hmph! You d*mned brat! How dare you question the masters from King Valley! Each of them were carefully selected by our mistress, you know? How dare you underestimate them!” snapped the guard.

Hearing that, Gerald chose not to say anything further and he was pulled out of the car—by the two guards—shortly after.

Naturally, Fleur was the one to lead the group inside.

Not long after, a young man—who had his hair dyed white—walked over to Fleur. One hand in his pocket, he then smiled at her before saying, “Here you are, Fleur! We’ve been waiting quite a while for you, you know?”

Looking at him, Fleur simply calmly replied, “There were just some delays on my end!”

Chapter 1314

“Oh? Is that so! Haha! And here I was thinking you weren’t coming over since you were afraid you’d end up losing!” replied the white-haired man.

“My sister? Afraid of you? Seamus Fairleigh, I hope you realize that you aren’t invincible just because you’ve managed to capture some ugly savage! We’ll definitely be showing you the power of King Valley today! To hell with your undefeatable God of War bullsh*t!” growled Yenny without any filter to her words.

“Alright, alright, calm down... We’ll just have to wait and see what happens in the end. Speaking of which, I hope you don’t end up regretting what you promised me, Fleur!” replied Seamus with a sly smile.

“Oh, you’ll be the one regretting it. Get ready to call me ‘sister’ soon!” said Fleur without even sparing him a glance as she led her group toward the VIP area. Naturally, Gerald was dragged along.

Looking around, the place was a near-perfect replica of a real ancient colosseum, with a massive space in the middle and all. Noticing a darkened area north of the open space,

Gerald had a feeling that the savage was currently hiding in there.

Regardless, Gerald could estimate that the colosseum could easily accommodate up to five hundred people, and of the many decorated seats around the circular area, around three hundred of them were currently occupied.

As the guard had previously mentioned, the audience consisted of rich young masters and ladies who had come over for some excitement. Drinking wine and shouting in their excitement, the hollering from the crowd could give anyone a headache.

Once Gerald and his group sat down, Fleur immediately turned to look at the seven masters of the King Valley—who had been present this entire time—before saying, “I’m saying this now, seven masters, but that savage doesn’t seem easy to handle... I heard that though the Fairleigh family had sent out several masters of their own, none of them were able to handle that savage, even when he was severely

outnumbered! With that in mind, I do hope that none of you get too complacent or careless! Though I know all of you are powerful, just for extra measure, I'm sending all seven of you into the arena together!"

"With all due respect, mistress, we're just dealing with a savage from the deep mountains, are we not? The way I see it, Seventh brother alone is sufficient in killing him! Sending all of us out is overkill!" said one of the older masters in the group.

Among the seven, the oldest member was around the age of sixty, whereas the youngest was only around forty.

"I'm glad you're confident, but I can't afford to lose, especially after making that bet with Seamus. I truly think that it's better for all seven of you to head in there together. To ease the process of luring that cannibal out, I even prepared this bait for you. Make sure the savage is out in the open first before any of you make a move, understand?" replied Fleur as the seven masters—slightly reluctantly—agreed.

Following that, Fleur turned to look at her guards before pointing at Gerald and ordering, "Bring him in!"

Meanwhile, a rather small servant headed over to Seamus's side before whispering, "Young Master Seamus, are you truly sure that those from King Valley won't be able to take down the undefeated God of War...? I know those seven masters, you see, and from what I've seen, each of their strengths can be quite unpredictable. Just so you know, even Master would consider them to be significant people if he ever came across them!"

"What are you even afraid of? The savage is so powerful that his strength was well beyond Father's expectations when we first met him! Besides, even you've seen how cruel that savage is in battle! With that in mind, I'm sure he won't get defeated that easily! Regardless, I've been waiting to devour Fleur for the longest time... Every time I see her dangling before me, I can feel my soul dissipating from how dazzling she looks alone! How lucky I am to have been able to force her into taking that bet! Once she loses, only good things will come! Haha!"

"Still, I can't help but be worried!" replied the servant.

"Again, there's really nothing to be worried about. Everything's been prepared nicely, and once they enter, they'll never come out again!" declared Seamus as he glanced both coldly and lustfully at the fair-skinned Fleur.

By then, Gerald and the seven masters were already standing in the coliseum's open area, prompting several from within the crowd to stand and begin deafeningly chanting, "God of war! God of war!"

Seeing how riled up the crowd was, all seven of the masters took turns looking at Gerald as they shook their heads with pitiful smiles.

"For mistress to use you as bait, you truly are unlucky, boy... Worry not, for we'll definitely avenge you! Now go ahead and lure that savage out!" said one of the masters.

Gerald himself simply ignored them as he stared tentatively at the darkened area.

Even from where he stood, he could feel massive killing intent exuding from the mouth of the area. Beast-like roars could also be heard exiting the darkness.

'What kind of savage beast are they even up against? How could a savage have this much power...?' Gerald thought to himself as he furrowed his brows tightly.

“Sixth and Seventh brother! Both of you take him in and bait that savage out!” ordered the eldest among the masters.

“Affirmative!” declared the duo as they instantly grabbed Gerald by his arms and began walking toward the darkened area’s entrance.

Gerald himself was already secretly channeling his inner strength so that if things turned ugly, he would at least have a higher chance of escaping.

From what Gerald could sense, all seven of the masters were simply at the first stage of the Spirit Earth Realm. In other words, they were at the same level as those whom he had beheaded back at the Gunter Manor. While he was sure he could take them on—if he eventually needed to—he still didn’t know what the strength level of the savage was.

Regardless, as all three of them stepped into the darkness, the roaring became louder than ever. The roaring alone was comparable to continuous thunder strikes, and two masters couldn’t help but feel slightly startled.

“...Sixth brother, I have to admit that my heart is now beating rather anxiously and nothing I do seems to make it go away... I don’t think this is an ordinary savage... I don’t think we should proceed any

further. After all, if we accidentally bump into it in this darkness, we'll certainly end up in a lot of trouble!" proposed the seventh brother in a slightly meek voice.

After thinking about it for a second, the sixth brother then nodded before replying in a hushed voice, "...I agree. Let's just toss that kid further in first to see what kind of monster is lurking behind there!"

Immediately nodding back in agreement, the seventh brother then looked at Gerald with a cold smile on his face.

"Well, you heard us. Do be tactful and walk yourself in! Worry not, we'll be right behind you!"

Gerald then watched as the two brothers exchanged grins with each other. It was obvious that they weren't expecting him to make it out alive.

Even so, Gerald himself wasn't really sure what to do at the moment. After all, while it was true that he was strong, according to that man, he still wasn't anywhere close to being the strongest. With that in mind, if he were to bump into someone like Hogan again, he was definitely going to suffer terribly.

Understanding that, Gerald wasn't about to do something as stupid as walking straight into the mouth of danger.

After a short while, the sixth brother sneered, "...Hey, why aren't you walking, boy? Do you need us to force you forward or something?"

"You'd best cooperate, boy! Otherwise, we'll just kill you now and toss your body in!" threatened the seventh brother.

"Actually, why don't both of you head in first?" replied Gerald with a faint smile.

"...What did you say?" asked both of them, stunned.

Before any of them could even retort, Gerald instantly used his bone crush skill to release himself from his restraints. In one fluid motion, Gerald was able to accurately poke their acupoints, and just like that, the tables had turned! The shocked duo wasn't even capable of struggling now!

Neither of them had expected Gerald to actually possess this level of strength. From what they could tell, he was already nearing the advanced stages of the Spirit Earth Realm.

'You...!' Thought both Sixth and Seventh brother. Though they wanted to yell that out, not a single word came out of their mouths.

As they desperately tried to regain control over their bodies, they both felt something hitting the back of their necks extremely quickly, with each hit producing a distinct snap... The next thing they knew, they had gone fully limp as their consciousness left their bodies forever...

If it wasn't obvious enough, Gerald had broken their necks! Not wanting to waste any more time, Gerald then kicked the two fresh corpses further into the darkness...

At that moment, heavy thuds began echoing throughout the area. Soon enough, Gerald was able to vaguely see a massive black figure—that stood at around six feet tall and one and a half feet wide—walking out from the depths of the area.

The savage was so massive that before he was even that close, his shadow had already fully enveloped Gerald!

Taking a step back, Gerald couldn't help but wonder, '...Isn't this a bit too powerful...? Is the one in there truly a savage...?'

Before he could ponder any longer, however, the savage—who didn't want to leave the area, just as the guard from earlier had said—let out a deafening roar before digging his hands into the ground. By the time Gerald realized what was happening, the savage was already rocketing toward him with the additional boost his arms had given him!

From how fast the savage was alone, Gerald could instantly tell that he was as fast as Hogan had been. In other words, this wasn't good!

Just as Gerald was about to book it, his eyes widened in shock as he suddenly saw a massive and powerful-looking hand reaching out to him! By god! That hand was as big as a coffee table!

Chapter 1316

By that point, all of Gerald's hairs had stood on end, and he knew for a fact that he wasn't going to be able to dodge the attack. With that in mind, he gathered what strength he could to brace himself for impact!

A split second later, the colossal hand slammed against Gerald, causing an explosion of energy and white smoke to form as Gerald found himself flying backward! The sheer force of the impact alone

had caused Gerald's clothes—especially on his back—to instantly get torn to shreds, and soon enough, Gerald's back collided against the area's stone walls!

Immediately coughing out blood, Gerald no longer had to wonder how the savage had killed the other Spirit Earth Realm masters. From what Gerald could tell, killing them off must have been as easy as pounding garlic with the savage's immense strength! He was way stronger than Hogan!

If it hadn't been for the fact that Gerald had recently sharply increased his strength—by learning and utilizing the art of Thunder Eruption—then there was a good chance that he would've already died from that one hit.

Regardless, now wasn't the time to stop and think about all this. Using all the strength remaining in him, Gerald instantly activated his lightness skill to dodge around the hulking man before silently—and quickly—climbing to the area's rock ceiling. Once he gripped on tightly enough, he immediately held his breath.

Thankfully, the monster of a man below him didn't seem to know where he had gone. Gerald further confirmed this when the savage began running around the area to locate him! What a predicament he was in!

Though he was now sweating, Gerald was thankful that he could at least catch his breath for the moment... Or at least that was what he thought.

Never would he have expected for the jade pendant—that had been hanging around his neck—to slip out of his now-tattered clothes due to the awkward angle he was currently in!

While that alone was already worrying enough, it certainly didn't help that the dangling pendant instantly began shining brightly!

Similar to turning on an extremely bright light in the middle of a pitch-black room out of the blue, everything within the area could now be seen extremely clearly.

'For the love of god, even if you don't wish to help me, there's no reason for you to harm me!' Gerald thought to himself as the giant man slowly raised his head to see where the light was coming from.

Their eyes now affixed with one another's, the brief moment of silence between the two felt like an eternity as Gerald found himself hyper-focusing on the savage's physical characteristics.

'I was wrong before, he isn't six feet tall, but he's actually close to seven! His hair is all over the place and he also has a shaggy beard that covers most of his face! As for his eyes, they're an unusually bright blue, and his muscles... They're like piles upon piles of reinforced steel that plate his body, filled to the brim with explosive power!'

That was the last thing Gerald was able to register before the savage finally let out another roar.

Gulping, Gerald truly wished he could just fly out of there.

While Gerald was confident in his speed, he knew that there was always a chance that the savage would be faster. However, he was currently in a do-or-die situation.

Before he could even execute his plan, however, the savage suddenly leaped off the ground! Unable to even block the attack, Gerald found his neck being clenched before instantly losing his grip on the ceiling... and being pushed right into the ground!

Though that definitely hurt, Gerald immediately began struggling in his pathetic attempt of escaping the savage's grasp.

Was this his end? Was his neck going to be twisted, just like he had done to the sixth and seventh brother earlier?

As fearful thoughts continued running through Gerald's mind, he suddenly realized that the savage wasn't finishing him outright. Surprised, he slowly turned to see what was keeping the savage...

To his astonishment, the savage was now staring at the jade pendant that was lying on his chest! What more, his grip on Gerald's neck was slowly loosening over time!

Following that, Gerald watched as the savage carefully removed the pendant off Gerald's neck. Since the pendant itself was only the size of a newborn's palm, in the massive man's hand, it looked more like a grain of wheat.

After seemingly studying it for some time, the massive man used the light of the pendant to illuminate Gerald's face...

The second he did so, he instantly placed the jade pendant back on Gerald's chest before taking a few steps back in fright. If Gerald had to describe the look on the savage's face, it was as though he had just seen the devil!

As if that wasn't already surprising enough, the savage quickly knelt before him with a loud 'thud' before declaring in a deep and hoarse voice, "Forgive me, Master Deity, for I have sinned!"

Momentarily startled, Gerald quickly regained his wits and—after tucking the pendant back into his still-tattered shirt—replied, "...Master Deity?"

"Yes, Master Deity! This lowly one goes by the name of Leo, and I greet you with the utmost respect!" shouted the savage before lowering his head to the ground.

From the looks of it, the savage seemed to be somewhat similar to Queena. After all, both of them were acknowledging him as some sort of deity. Could Leo and Queena have originated from the same place...? If that was the case, how that meant that Leo had to be at least thousands of years old!

As Gerald was marvelling over that fact, he started wondering why the jade pendant had chosen to light up again now, of all times. The warm sensation that had last appeared a few days ago was now present as well.

Could it be that the jade pendant had sensed that those from this place were nearby and would eventually appear?

Chapter 1317

Whatever the case was, since the man could speak, that meant that he was definitely no savage. Seeing that the killing intent from earlier had been switched with immense respect, Gerald then asked, "...Do you know who I am? Or are you simply familiar with the pendant?"

"I've seen a portrait of you before, Master Deity, and I know for a fact that the dragon blood jade is your personal magical weapon! All my life, I never thought that I'd actually be able to be within your honorable presence, Master Deity! With that in mind, I hope that you'll forgive me for my recklessness earlier!" replied Leo who was still kneeling on the ground.

Gerald's mind was now brimming with questions that he wanted to ask Leo. After all, it wasn't easy for him to meet someone who came from the same place as Queena and the woman in white had. Leo was definitely going to be a treasure trove of information.

Just as he was about to start shooting questions at him, however, he suddenly heard footsteps entering the area. From what he could guess, it was most probably the five brothers who were heading

closer to investigate why the sixth and seventh brothers were taking so long.

Naturally, Leo had also heard them, and he raised his head, looking at Gerald in confusion. In a way, it seemed like he was asking what Gerald's relationship with those people was.

Understanding that, Gerald then replied, "They're nobody special, though I do wonder. Since you're far stronger than even I am, how did you manage to get imprisoned by them?"

Sighing, Leo helplessly replied, "While I'm not afraid of them, they possess magical tools that can produce blue light! Those tools are able to mimic lightning in the sky, and being hit by them slightly stuns my body! While I did attempt to escape before, they then created a heavenly lightning formation! In the end, I didn't dare to go against such heavenly powers and ended up being cornered into this place!"

Hearing that, Gerald could only laugh bitterly in his mind.

From what he could tell, Leo had mistaken stun guns as magical tools. As for the 'heavenly lightning formation', it was probably what he considered the power grids outside to be.

Of course, electric charges like those would've meant nothing to Leo. Gerald would know since such weak charges definitely wouldn't be able to even come close to harming him.

Judging from how Leo had used the terms, 'heavenly' and how he 'didn't dare to go against such heavenly powers', however, it seemed evident that he was only refusing to leave out of sheer respect for the divine.

Now getting the gist of the situation, Gerald then looked at Leo before asking, "Do you wish to leave?"

Instantly nodding in response, Leo then replied, "Are you willing to save me, Master Deity? If this lowly one manages to leave this d*mned place, then I'm willing to follow you by your side and be anything you wish for me to be!"

Just as he was about to lower his head again, Gerald quickly reached out to stop him as he said, "There's no need for that. Regardless, get to your feet, Leo. Now listen carefully and just do as I say. If you follow all my orders, you'll definitely be able to leave!"

After using quite a bit of effort to pull Leo off the ground, Gerald then leaned closer to his ear before whispering his plan...

Shortly after, Leo nodded.

Meanwhile, Fleur—who was still sitting outside—was getting increasingly anxious as she muttered, “What on earth is going on? Sixth and Seventh brother have entered for quite a while... Why aren’t they out yet...?”

Ten minutes had already passed, and even if the duo weren’t able to draw him out, there should at least be signs of movement inside...

“...Could Sixth and Seventh brother be fighting him inside...? Is that why they’re taking such a long time? Do you think that’s why the five other masters went in to help? Because they couldn’t detect any signs of movement from the duo either?” analyzed Yenny.

“...Maybe. Though I feel that something just isn’t right... I mean look at Seamus! He’s been sneering this entire time! I’m sure he’s up to something!” replied Fleur who was now so anxious that she couldn’t even sit still.

Just as even the crowd’s anxiety reached its peak, a deafening roar could suddenly be heard coming from within the darkened area!

The roar itself felt somewhat magical in nature, capable of taking everyone's breath away as the entire coliseum almost seemed to tremble from how powerful it was.

A second later, a massive gale of wind began violently blowing outward from within the darkened area, sending sand flying everywhere!

Everyone was simultaneously stunned and amazed by what they were currently witnessing.

The five remaining masters, however, instantly began taking a few steps backward when they saw all this. Just from that roar alone, they were more than certain that the savage was no ordinary being.

At that moment, a massive figure could be seen rushing out of the darkened area, sending the audience into an excited uproar as several people among the crowd began shouting, "It's coming out! It's coming out!"

With everyone's eyes now fixed on the darkened area's entrance, they watched as the seven-foot tall Leo dashed into the open area! Despite how large his build was, his speed was terrifying!

Taking advantage of all the dust and sand in the air, Leo rushed toward one of the masters and, with a seemingly effortless smack to the master's shoulder, he was sent flying a good few dozen meters away!

With his shoulder now clearly dislodged, the master ended up colliding against the open area's stone walls, causing the coliseum to almost quiver from the massive impact!

Coughing out a mouthful of blood, the master then lost consciousness and flopped feebly to the ground...

Chapter 1318

While he wasn't dead—since Leo hadn't hit any of his vital organs—there was no way in hell that he was going to be able to continue fighting.

Releasing another deafening roar, everyone was forced to cover their ears this time due to how close Leo now was to them.

Before anyone could even register what was happening, however, Leo was already on the move again. By the time the audience

opened their eyes again, Leo was already standing before the four remaining masters.

With four precise and lightning-fast strikes, Leo proceeded to take each of them down. The way he did it made it look easy, and it almost suggested that he was dealing with nothing but mere insects.

Upon seeing that, those who were still seated instantly found themselves getting up and taking a few steps backward.

Fleur, however, was arguably even more shocked than anyone else from the crowd, and her expression had taken a drastic change by this point. After all, all seven of the masters—who were each highly ranked within King Valley—had been taken out in single blows from Leo. No wonder Seamus had been so confident this entire time!

Even Yenny's expression had changed for the worst, her heart throbbing from the scene she was currently witnessing.

Finding Leo's actions to be unusual, Seamus found himself getting up from his seat as well as his now pale-faced servant said, "I-It's simply too fierce, Young Master Seamus! I believe that all the electric shocks we've given him have stimulated his potential, making him far stronger than before! By this point, it really isn't a stretch to call

him an unstoppable force! Still, we... shouldn't be worried that he'll suddenly rush out, right...?"

"...There's no need to worry about that. After all, he's afraid of electric shocks! Just in case something bad happens, I want you to order the ones in charge to charge the power grid to full power!" ordered Seamus, his face now getting increasingly pale as well.

Now that all five of the masters were lying on the ground, unmoving, the massive Leo began rushing toward the entrance gates just as Seamus gave that order!

With how fast that titan-like man was going, there was no doubt that the gates weren't going to be able to hold against that charged attack!

Understanding that, the panicking Seamus instantly ordered, "Hurry up and turn the power grids on already! Electrocute him while we can!"

By that point, the entire coliseum had descended into chaos, and many of the audience members were already running for their lives.

Even those from King Valley were already tugging onto Fleur's arm, urging her to leave while shouting, "Miss, we must leave immediately! It's too dangerous here!"

"But, the seven masters! They're still in there...!" cried out Fleur, tears already in her eyes.

Moving back to Leo, he was just inches away from the entrance when all of a sudden, the gate seemingly came to life, cackling loudly as blue jolts of electricity danced along its surface!

However, Leo was no longer afraid of the electricity as he had been before. As he landed an immense blow onto the metal gates, electricity surged through his body! Though he suffered physically, he was no longer worried about receiving heavenly retribution. After all, he now knew that this electricity wasn't heavenly lightning at all!

With an explosive sound, he then easily tore open the steel gates with that single punch!

Upon realizing what had just taken place, the chaos in the coliseum got even worse as screams of terror filled the area.

“The hell? He isn’t even afraid of electric shocks anymore?!” yelled Seamus in his utter disbelief.

His horrified servant, on the other hand, had already seen countless Fairleigh bodyguards being tossed into the air to know that it was high time to make a run for it.

“Young master! We need to run!” pleaded the terrified man.

“We can’t! If we allow this immensely powerful savage to escape, my father will surely have my head!” replied Seamus, seemingly unwilling to just let things end like this.

“Let’s not bother about that just yet, Young Master! If you don’t run now, it’ll truly be too late for us!” shouted the servant as he instantly began dragging Seamus to safety before he could even protest.

The entire coliseum truly was the embodiment of pandemonium at this point.

Regardless, after rushing out of the place, Leo didn’t even look back. Following Gerald’s instructions, he was currently headed deep into the mountains to look for a cave—that Gerald had told him about—to temporarily hide in.

Gerald himself was now taking in a deep breath as he scanned through the coliseum that now very much resembled a place where no man had traveled before.

Looking at the thick stone walls, the metal gates, and the electric fences that Leo had completely decimated, the shocked Gerald found himself thinking, 'How utterly terrifying...! And here I thought Hogan was already extremely strong! If he were to ever combat Leo, Leo probably wouldn't have any trouble with him at all!'

Leo's true strength was already way stronger than his own, despite Gerald already nearing the advanced stage of the Spirit Earth Realm!

Chapter 1319

Regardless, Gerald hadn't followed Leo since rushing back to King Valley was the priority.

As for the cave he had sent Leo to, it was one that was quite well-concealed. Gerald had previously come across it while heading back to the valley alone, and since he didn't know how far the Fairleighs would go to recapture Leo, Gerald figured that the cave was Leo's best bet of avoiding detection.

Of course, Gerald knew that Leo was no longer afraid of stun guns, and while Gerald didn't really care about the lives of the Fairleighs, if Leo simply began killing them off—and causing a massive bloodbath—then the target on Gerald's back would definitely grow bigger.

To put it simply, Gerald didn't want to attract the attention of both the Gunters and those from Judgement Portal. With that in mind, it was definitely better for Leo to remain hidden for the time being.

Regardless, he needed to hurry back to King Valley to obtain the three herbs to cure Sierra.

Just as he arrived at the familiar yard, Gerald saw a middle-aged man—who looked to be in his forties—and two of his subordinates standing before Myles.

“Humph! Who do you even think you are, Myles? To just allow some random person into the valley... Hell, you even went ahead and prepared a room for him!” scoffed the man.

Despite the man’s clear arrogance, Myles respectfully replied, “You may not be aware of this, Steward Sam, but that man is me and the master of the valley’s benefactor’s disciple! He’s come to ask for medicine, which is why I’ve allowed him to temporarily stay!”

“...What? Not only has he come over to ask for medicine, but he even used the master’s name? Why haven’t I heard the master talk about this before then? Regardless, the King Valley isn’t a place for ordinary people to enter all willy-nilly! Now cease this nonsense and vacate that room for me! It’s reserved for Mr. and Mrs. Cate’s son! Also, I remind you that you’re no longer the steward of this place, Myles. You’re just a handyman in the King Valley now! Whatever the case is, you’d better focus on serving their son and carrying out your duties properly, otherwise, you’ll have to answer to me!” sneered Sam as he waved his hand.

While Myles had no idea who Mr. and Mrs. Cates’s son was, he soon got his answer.

As one of the guards took one step to the side, it revealed an exquisite-looking box—typically made for babies—and in it, was a

puppy! So... The 'son' of Mr. and Mrs. Cates was nothing more than a dog...?!

Anger flashed across Myle's face.

He was someone who would live and die for the sake of both the King Valley as well as the master of the valley. Despite that, not only were they now ordering him to live with a dog, but he also had to serve it?! Anyone living on the planet would feel dejected by that!

Even so, Myles could only clench his fist, not daring to say a word.

As he turned to look at Sam again, however, the corner of his eyes caught a glimpse of Gerald who had been standing near the entrance this entire time.

Realizing that, Myles then forced on a smile before saying, "...Ah, Mr. Crawford! Where have you been? I was just about to go look for you!"

Though Gerald had clearly seen everything that had just taken place, he simply pretended that he hadn't and replied, "I was just taking a stroll to have a look around."

Clearing his throat, Myles then shook his head before saying, "...I see! Speaking of which, Mr. Crawford, I... have something serious to attend to that I'm afraid I can't share the details of! With that in mind, I'm sorry to say that I can't help you this time! In the end, I'm just a low-ranked person in King Valley and nobody takes me seriously, though I'm sure you've already seen what happened earlier..."

Hearing that, Gerald knew that there was no point asking about the medicinal herbs now. After all, if even being here was an issue, what more obtaining those rare herbs?

At that moment, Sam—who had momentarily walked off when Gerald came over earlier—returned with a bag in hand. It was Gerald's luggage.

The contents of the luggage bag itself weren't anything special, at least to Gerald. Just a few books that the man had told Gerald to hand over to the master of the valley. As far as Gerald knew, the books held records of important information about folk remedies.

Of course, in addition to getting the herbs, it was clear that that man's goal was to further expand his network with new forces.

Whatever the case was, Sam snorted loudly, “What’s this, what’s this? Whose broken bag is this?”

“That’s mine,” replied Gerald as he looked at the mustached steward.

Upon hearing Gerald’s reply, Sam then tossed the bag which landed right at Gerald’s feet before shouting, “Oh, I’m well aware! Now pick that up and leave already!”

Infuriated, the now red-faced Myles then retorted, “What is the meaning of this, Sam?! I’ve already told you that Mr. Crawford is here on behalf of me and master’s benefactor! Treating Mr. Crawford like this... Do you not care one bit about me at all? Let me remind you that had I not recommended you back then, you wouldn’t have been promoted to steward today! You should know what you’ve done for me to overreact like this! Don’t step over the line!”

“I don’t get a single word of what you just said, Myles! Not one word!” growled Sam, his expression now dark as he took a few steps forward before stomping on Gerald’s bag!

Watching as Sam proceeded to apply extra force on his foot, just to rub it in, Myles’s breath instantly began heaving rapidly.

Chapter 1320

“Oh? What’s wrong? Are you planning on hitting me or something? Haha! It’s so satisfying to see you enraged like some untamed bear! Come on, hit me! Make my day!” taunted Sam as he began patting Myles’s face mockingly.

A second after he said that, Sam’s eyes widened as he found himself flying in the air, a burning sensation now on his right cheek. Just as he was about to scream from Gerald’s immense slap, all the wind got knocked out of him the second his body collided against the corner of a wall! As Sam began vomiting blood, a few teeth could be seen mixed in with the crimson liquid.

As Sam’s two bodyguards stood frozen in place, completely stunned, Sam slowly crawled to his knees, glaring daggers in his utter disbelief at the man who was currently standing beside Myles.

“You... How dare you hit me...?!” growled Sam as he watched Gerald pick his bag up.

Dusting the dirt of the bag, Gerald then replied, “What? You were the one who was asking to be hit, no? Are you satisfied now, you blabbermouth?”

“You... You...! You’re courting death! Kill him!” yelled Sam furiously at his two subordinates as his entire body trembled, too hurt to even get off the ground.

“No, wait! Don’t do it!” shouted Myles in a panic, knowing full well that every bodyguard within King Valley was extremely well-trained.

What happened next, however, caused Myles eyes to widen in shock.

Before the guards could even make a move, Gerald had swiftly moved up to them! In a single kick, both of them ended up flying quite a distance away!

Realizing that both of them were unable to even get up after receiving that attack, the horrified Sam instantly cursed, “F-f*ck!”

Not wanting to stay there any longer, Sam immediately began trying to get to his feet to flee the scene. To his utter dismay, he quickly felt Gerald's foot stomping down on his head!

"Oh? Did you think you were going to be able to leave just like that?" asked Gerald coldly.

"Y-you better not mess around with me...! This is King Valley, you know? Stepping on the head of the most powerful person here... You have a death wish or something...?!"

"Quite frankly, I truly had assumed that those from the King Valley were all exceptional people before I came here. I was even convinced that the master of your valley was some top-notch person. Sadly, everyone from the valley that I've come across—except for Myles—has been utterly disappointing. With that in mind, why should I show even the slightest respect to a useless steward like you? Also, who was it who gave you permission to even touch my belongings? A bit daring for such a useless person, don't you think?" replied Gerald as he slowly began exerting more pressure on Sam's neck.

Now both terrified and in massive pain, Sam found himself soiling his pants due to how increasingly difficult it was for him not to think about his neck snapping if Gerald continued adding more force to his foot.

“...P-please, have mercy...! Please, let’s just talk this out...!” pleaded Sam.

“I’m glad you finally realize where you stand. Now then, while I’m fine with letting you go, you first have to do something for me. Remember how you stepped on and dirtied my bag? Clean it up!” ordered Gerald as he tossed the bag before Sam.

“R-right away!” replied Sam as he quickly began wiping the dirt off the bag with his hands.

Barely a second later, however, Gerald landed a kick to his face!

“W-what did I do wrong...?! I’m doing what you ordered me to...!” whimpered Sam.

“Oh really? I don’t remember telling you to clean it with your hands... Use your tongue to lick it clean like the mutt you are!” growled Gerald.

Seeing how fierce and ruthless Gerald’s gaze was, Sam could only instinctively tremble in fright.

Taking in a deep breath, Sam then thought, ‘...You may have the last laugh today, but I’ll surely have my revenge one day...! Just you wait!’

Regardless, Sam then stuck out his tongue and began licking the bag clean, knowing full well that this was the only way he was going to avoid getting into more trouble.

Not really expecting Sam to actually obey his orders, the disgusted Gerald then kicked the injured steward out of the yard while shouting, “Now beat it!”

As Sam scurried off, Myles—who had been standing there this entire time—could only continue staring wide-eyed at Gerald, utterly dumbfounded by what he had just witnessed.

Chapter 1321

Myles had initially thought that Gerald was just some ordinary young man who just so happened to become the disciple of his benefactor, a clinic doctor.

He would've never imagined for Gerald to hold such strength. People could usually tell a real expert from a fake when the 'expert' made their move, and from what Myles had seen, Gerald was a hundred percent the real deal. In fact, he was so strong that he was possibly even stronger than some of the masters in King Valley! That fact alone made Myles momentarily stunned speechless.

Eventually, however, he snapped out of it and immediately began sincerely praising, "M-Mr. Crawford! To think you had such immense skill!"

Myles was so overjoyed that it almost seemed like he had forgotten that Gerald had just heavily injured the steward of King Valley!

"You flatter me too much, Mr. Myles. I was simply upset with the way he was treating you!" replied Gerald with a wry smile.

"Speaking of which, Mr. Myles, is the master of the valley aware that I need the three herbs? Regardless of whether he has or hasn't, I'd like to meet up with him!" added Gerald rather bluntly.

After his absurd encounter with those King Valley siblings who treated other peoples' lives like they were mere playthings, Gerald's initial respect for those in the valley had long plummeted.

As if that wasn't enough, the master of King Valley was obviously being ungrateful since he had clearly forgotten about the man who had rescued him back then. The man in the shantytown hadn't even thought twice about saving Myles and the master of King Valley at the time, so getting such a cold response in return now certainly irked Gerald.

"I'll be honest and say that had I attempted to introduce you to him before this, not only would he have declined, but you most certainly wouldn't have been able to get the three herbs you wanted either. Now that I know that you have such skill, however, that changes things entirely. You should know that the master admires martial artists the most! Also, while the King Valley may appear to be peaceful on the surface level, it's actually in the middle of a crisis now. With that in mind, the master is currently busy recruiting masters from all over the world! Regardless, let's go, Mr. Crawford! I'll take you to the master of the valley right this instant!" explained Myles with a laugh.

Choosing not to say anything in response, Gerald simply followed after Myles. Quite honestly, he was curious as to what sort of deity-like person Rupert Yateman—the master of King Valley—was.

As they made their way there, Myles started talking about some of his bitter experiences here with Gerald. Essentially, after being

Rupert's personal driver for quite some time back then, he ended up getting promoted to the position of steward.

At the time, he had treated Sam like his very own brother, constantly praising him. However, things took a turn for the worst when the previous master's wife fell seriously ill.

Sam had been placed in charge of taking care of her at the time, but due to his negligence, he ended up mixing the wrong medicines and almost caused the master's wife to lose her life! To avoid punishment, Sam abused his trust with Myles and framed him for being the one responsible for all that!

Due to that incident, Myles was immediately demoted to a low-ranking handyman, whereas Sam was given the role of steward instead.

By the time Myles got to that part of the story, both he and Gerald had arrived at the conference hall, the place where the master of the valley usually received his guests.

Upon entering, both of them saw that there was already a crowd of people inside. From what Myles could tell, there was a rather important meeting going on, seeing that a number of core members of the King Valley were present.

All of them were seemingly too engrossed in some girl's story that nobody even noticed Gerald and Myles's presence.

"Dad, I'm serious! That savage is way too powerful! He killed over a hundred people there, you know? Thank god sis and I were rather well-trained in martial arts, otherwise, we wouldn't have been able to escape!" explained the girl, hints of fear in her voice.

Finding the voice to be somewhat familiar, Gerald squinted his eyes at the girl, and sure enough, it truly was Yenny Yateman.

"I didn't expect the Fairleighs to have such a master in Fairleigh Valley. Thankfully he appears to be on the run. If he were to obey their bidding, King Valley would definitely be in for a world of trouble!" replied a middle-aged man—from where he sat on a sofa—calmly as he turned to look at Fleur.

Chapter 1322

“As for you. How many times have I told you not to get involved with any of the Fairleighs? Knowing Seamus, who knows what he had in mind when you made that bet with him? It should’ve been clear as day that he wanted to cheat you! Had it not been for the savage running wild, you would’ve definitely lost the bet!” reprimanded the middle-aged man.

To those who knew him, he was none other than the master of King Valley, Rupert Yateman. He was a father to two daughters, them being Yenny and Fleur Yateman.

Being the younger daughter, Yenny had quite the bizarre attitude, and her personality was flippant as it was insincere. Fleur, on the other hand, was much more mature and stable-minded.

Regardless, Rupert couldn’t help but feel irked this time. After all, the bet his daughter had made had cost the lives of seven of the King Valley’s most highly ranked masters.

“All of you should know how covetously the Fairleighs have been eyeing us this entire time! With that in mind, everyone should be extra careful whenever they decide things! None of you should get involved with the Fairleighs, is that clear?” instructed Rupert.

Following that, he then turned to look at his daughters before angrily adding, “As for you two, go back to your rooms! You’re grounded until further notice!”

After the slightly pouting duo walked off to enter their rooms, Myles took a step forward and bowed before saying, “Greetings, master! This lowly one has a request!”

Frowning slightly, Rupert then asked, “Go on, what is it?”

“Well, I know you’ve been recruiting martial arts masters from all over the world, master. With that in mind, allow me to introduce you to Mr. Crawford here! He’s the disciple of our benefactor back then!” introduced Myles.

Upon hearing that, Rupert turned to look at Gerald before replying in an indifferent tone, “What benefactor?”

“...You know, the one who... Well, back in the shantytown...” mumbled Myles.

“Ah, so that’s what you’re talking about. So you’re telling me that he accepted some disciple who just so happens to be proficient in martial arts?” replied Rupert while shaking his head.

As someone who had been through a lot, Rupert could tell from a single glance that this young man was simply here to collect the grace from that year. Thinking about it, Rupert remembered wanting to offer the farmer money back then, though that man had declined. At the time, Rupert had wondered what kind of airs that farmer was putting on. To think that that man had been saving that request all this time till he eventually figured out what he wanted from Rupert.

“Whatever the case is, just go tell the accountant and hand this boy fifty thousand- no, actually, give him a hundred thousand! With that, I hope the matter will be done and over with!” ordered Rupert as he furrowed his brows while waving for them to leave.

‘Hah! Martial artist... It’s obvious that he’s just some naïve kid!’

“To think that we came all the way here just to see a liar! Do you think you can just waltz into King Valley all willy-nilly? What do you think this place is, boy?” said one of the rather extraordinary-looking elderly men in the room as the other old men present took turns shaking their heads with wry smiles on their faces.

Raising a slight brow, Gerald could feel murderous intent building in his heart. If things were really going to proceed this way, then he wasn't against taking the medicine by force.

Seeing how displeased Gerald was, Myles quickly replied, "B-but master, Mr. Crawford isn't here for money! Instead, he's here in hopes of obtaining three rare medicinal herbs!"

Now sighing in irritation, Rupert then responded, "Three rare medicinal herbs you say? What favor did that man even do for us to deserve that! Look, I'm getting really annoyed right now, so if you don't leave with the money already, you'll be going home empty-handed!"

At that moment, a young servant fumbled into the room while shouting, "N-not good! Things aren't looking good!"

Watching as the boy fell to the ground, Rupert's frown deepened as he asked, "What is it that's gotten you into such a panic?"

"I-it's the master of Fairleigh Valley, master! He's leading lots of people over, saying that it was our peoples' fault for letting some undefeatable God of War on the loose! I'm not sure what they meant by that, but they're claiming that those from our valley caused the Fairleighs to suffer massive losses! They want us to compensate

them now, and if we don't, they're planning on barging in!" explained the servant.

"...What?! Those utter b*stards!" roared Rupert in fury as he slammed both hands onto his table.

"Gather our men immediately! I'm the dignified master of King Valley! Who do those Fairleighs think they are just doing as they please here?!"

Chapter 1323

"The master of the valley is coming!" shouted one of the King Valley's bodyguards excitedly. Hearing that, the other guards—who had been facing off with those from the Fairleigh family—felt like a massive weight had just been lifted off their chests.

Over sixty bodyguards from the King Valley had been groaning and howling in pain as they laid on the ground. Upon realizing that Rupert was coming, however, all of them instantly began supporting

each other up—albeit all of them being a little wobbly—before staggering over to hide behind Rupert’s back.

Rupert himself was frowning deeply, his fists clenched tightly as he shouted, “Hershel! Bradley!”

Hershel was the master of Fairleigh Valley, and Bradley was Hershel’s younger brother.

While the present-day King Valley specialized in the art of pill-making and the Fairleighs were known for their expertise in martial arts, there was once a time when those from the Fairleigh Valley also specialized in pill-making. After all, the founder of Fairleigh Valley was actually a subordinate from the King Valley who managed to escape!

With that in mind, it was already pretty clear that the two families had a long history of grievances.

Regardless, despite the fact that Bradley was the younger brother, he was extremely powerful. If Rupert had to pick between whom he was more worried about, the answer would most definitely always be Bradley. If the rumors were true, Bradley’s level of strength was already nearing the advanced stage of the Spirit Earth Realm! That

was honestly the reason why Rupert had begun gathering so many masters in the first place.

Even with that precaution, however, it was now evident that none of them were even a match for Bradley. After all, Bradley had simply taken the opportunity to go wild today, as seen by the sixty-over injured guards now cowering behind Rupert. He had truly underestimated how strong Bradley truly was...

Gerald himself—who had followed everyone out—was now observing the man donning black clothes and shoes who was standing in front of the other Fairleighs. Looking to be around the age of forty, a large scar on that man's face only served to make him appear even more ferocious than he already was.

“What's wrong, Master of King Valley? From the looks of it, you've invited quite a number of masters to deal with the Fairleighs! Is my guess correct?” asked Bradley as he took a step forward while looking straight into Rupert's eyes with a smile.

Being a big boss, Rupert repressed his shock before replying, “How presumptions both of you are today! To think that you've brought so many of your men over on such short notice! You've even injured so many of our valley's men!”

“An eye for an eye, Master Rupert! Don’t you remember how you gave my brother that scar on his face? Back when you used the King Valley’s medicine to hire a master to ambush us? If my brother hadn’t risked his life back then, I wouldn’t have even been able to escape in the first place! Mind you, I won’t ever forget how that scar came to be!” replied Hershel with a cold laugh.

The two families had been at odds for far too long, and Bradley had been particularly vengeful about it.

Following that, Bradley then added, “It’s high time we ended this nonsense, Rupert Yateman! Not only do we still have old unsettled scores, but to think that your daughter would actually free the undefeatable God of War that we so painstakingly captured! Have you any idea how many men we lost just to capture him? Our families have already been fighting for a long time, Rupert! We’ve come today to settle our hatred, both old and new! Let’s put an end to all this today!”

Not only were Bradley’s words intimidating, but whenever he opened his mouth, the scar on his face seemed like it was executing some ferocious tribal dance.

Regardless, Rupert remained momentarily silent. It was true that he had previously sent someone to assassinate the brothers. What more, those from the King Valley had had increased conflicts with

the Fairleighs quite recently. Now that the Fairleighs were even blaming his daughter for releasing their savage, Rupert could already tell that they had been waiting for an excuse to do all this. To think that they were finally going to actually do it!

However, even though it was clear that the Fairleighs were looking for a fight, given the current situation, Rupert feared that not even all the masters that he had gathered and trained over the past six years would be able to take on Bradley!

With that in mind, Rupert then lowered his voice before saying, “Don’t think you can just do whatever you please just because you’ve reached the advanced stage of the Spirit Earth Realm... I’ll have you know that we here in the King Valley haven’t just been twiddling our fingers all these years either!”

“Hah! I assure you that everyone knows how strong the King Valley is, and that naturally includes us! Look, the less you struggle, the easier it’ll be for all of us! Know that none of your ‘masters’ have even been able to withstand a single blow from Bradley! With that in mind, stop wasting our time and offer yourselves to us already! Of course, if you still wish to fight back, then it can’t be helped. Seamus! You stay back! There’s not even a need for your second uncle to take action! If they’re reluctant to cooperate, just clean up the rest of those so-called masters!” snorted Hershel as he turned to look at Seamus.

Upon hearing that, the elders from before—who had mocked Gerald—instantly portrayed extremely ugly expressions.

Those from the King Valley had been famous for the longest time. To think that they were being taken so lightly now! As if that wasn't already humiliating enough, the Fairleighs were just leaving a junior to deal with them!

Chapter 1324

Among them, however, Rupert seemed to be the most humiliated. Taking in a deep breath, he then nodded before shouting, “Master Croft, Master Jones, and Master Keay! It's high time we took action!”

Hearing that, the three masters then nodded in unison before turning to look at a young man who was standing beside them.

“Go deal with the young master of the Fairleigh family, Peter,” said one of the three masters, prompting the young man—who was donning tight-fitting clothing—to nod before walking toward Seamus and facing him.

After Peter made a gesture that suggested that he was saying, ‘after you,’ another of the masters then said, “Peter’s the oldest disciple under me, and he’s been training with me for over ten years. He’s already at the final stage of the Nebula Realm, so dealing with this young master shouldn’t be an issue for him.”

As the three masters took turns nodding confidently, Bradley simply smirked before looking at Peter and saying, “Hah! So they’re sending you out to your death, huh? To think that a mere child like you even dares to go against my nephew! Make sure not to hold anything back, Seamus!”

“You’re the one courting death,” replied Peter.

Being a young man who practiced martial arts day in and day out, Peter wasn’t about to let himself get affected by taunts like these.

With nothing to lose, Peter then dashed toward the sneering Seamus who had his arms crossed.

What happened next took place so quickly that the next thing everyone knew, a figure had already been flung backward! Upon the person's collision, the impact of it alone was enough to cause the entire ancient-looking building—that they were flung toward—to quiver!

“P-Peter!” shouted all three of the masters in unison, their eyes now fully widened after witnessing what had just happened.

His body sticking against the building's side, everyone could now see that it truly was Peter who had been punched backward. Anyone paying close attention to Peter's body could tell that it was a punch since there was a clear fist mark embedded in his chest.

“Humph. It appears that my nephew is still a bit soft-hearted. Rest assured that your disciple isn't dead yet. Regardless, it's now your turn...” said Bradley with a grin, bloodlust reflected in his eyes.

Seeing that, all three of the masters felt chills running down their spines. After watching their strongest disciple fall from a single hit, the trio no longer had the confidence they initially had. Just how vast was the difference between their skill levels?

Whatever the case was, in the end, all three of them knew that there was no other way than to bite the bullet.

With that, under everyone's expectant gazes, the three masters then slowly walked over to face Seamus before one of them shouted, "Cease this madness at once, you loquacious child!"

"Humph! Is there even a need for me to fear you three pretentious old things? Just come at me already!" retorted Seamus.

"Don't get too cocky just yet!" replied another of the three masters. Though the trio knew that together, they were near-invincible, they still couldn't help but feel irritated by Seamus's taunting.

With that, all four of them then began gathering their inner strength... And a split second later, both sides had already exchanged up to eight blows!

To the untrained eye, all they could see were black shadows jumping about in the open space, causing destruction wherever they landed. To make matters more intense, each blow was so fast that it caused the air surrounding their fists to whistle!

As the four people fought on, Rupert couldn't help but break out in cold sweat as he thought, '...How... How terrifying...! To think that even the third generation of the Fairleigh family was already this strong...!'

After all this time, Rupert finally realized that he had been a textbook example of being a frog in the well. After occupying Sunhill Rise for over ten years, he had assumed that he was second in the world, bested only by the heavens itself. Why hadn't he ever considered the fact that there were many others in the outside world capable of killing him with just a simple pinch?

'Once this battle is over, no matter what it takes, I'll definitely have to recruit a bodyguard with at least the same amount of strength that Bradley has. Otherwise, nobody would even find out if I were to suddenly be assassinated!' Rupert thought to himself as he continued praying that the three masters would win. If they did end up losing, then those from the King Valley would truly be unable to weather through this catastrophe!

At that moment, one final explosive sound could be heard as the silhouettes of all four people hopped back to opposing sides of the field. While one of them stood in the spot he had started from, the other three had retreated a good few steps away from where they had begun from.

Everyone's eyes were now fully widened as chills ran up their spines.

The staggering trio who had retreated were the three masters...

Chapter 1325

"How unexpected for a greenhorn like you to have achieved such immense inner strength!" said one of the masters. All three of them had looks of disbelief and bitter smiles on their faces as they stared at Seamus whose entire body seemed to be steaming with excess heat.

Though Seamus was now panting slightly, it was obvious that he had persevered well in his fight. Knowing that, he then cockily said, "I hope you now understand what my father and second uncle had meant! Just surrender already so that lives can be spared! Let this be a warning that if I have to continue fighting, I won't be holding back anymore! Understand that our visit today is solely aimed at Rupert! If you don't wish to die, then step aside!"

Hearing that, all three of the masters could only sigh. Barely any fighting spirit left in them, they were well aware that if they were unable to take down Seamus even after combining all three of their efforts, then they could certainly forget about ever being Bradley's opponent.

Seeing that, Rupert and everyone else from the King Valley felt as though they had hit rock bottom. Understanding that there was no longer anything to lose, Rupert glared daggers at the Fairleighs before shouting angrily, "Do it!"

Upon hearing the command, two gunmen instantly revealed themselves from behind the courtyard's many rocks! Both of them had been hired with massive sums of money, and they had each claimed to be gods of marksmanship. With that in mind, Rupert had placed them as his last line of defense.

Regardless, just as both of them were about to open fire, Bradley suddenly used his inner strength to lift two stones off the ground before launching them directly at the two gunmen! The stones themselves hit each of them right between their eyebrows, causing both of them to scream in unison as they fell to the ground!

Up till this point, the Fairleighs had only made their appearance for about ten minutes. Despite that being the case, many of Rupert's more capable men were already seriously wounded and down for the count. Though he still had about a hundred and fifty bodyguards at his command, Rupert knew better than to increase the casualties for the sake of it. From what he could tell, the only ones left who were capable of momentarily holding their ground were himself and a few other elders. However, that was about it.

As he pondered his next step, Bradley suddenly shouted, "Step back, Seamus. I'll be taking over from here!"

With a frosty glare, Bradley then slowly—and menacingly—began walking toward Rupert.

At that moment, both Fleur and Yenny ran up to the square—utterly panicked and surprised by the huge mess they were currently witnessing—as they shouted, "Father...!"

By this point, Rupert's face had gone completely pale. With trembling legs, he then slowly turned to look at his two beautiful daughters... Though he clenched his fists tightly as he tried his hardest to resist, in the end, he knew he had to do it.

“...Say... Bradley, Hershel... Quite honestly, we never really resented you back then... It was a blessing, really, that your ancestors managed to learn the art of pill-making from our King Valley. After all, it eventually led to the creation of Fairleigh Valley! Regardless, I’ve always had a hunch that Seamus was interested in our Fleur... What say you to us turning this enmity into friendship...?”

“Hah! You really think my nephew likes your Fleur? Let’s cut the bullsh*t and just let me kill you already! Once that’s done, I’ll just take your daughter so that my nephew can satisfy his urges!” scoffed Bradley, not even worried about filtering his words anymore as he began walking menacingly toward Rupert. From what everyone could see, his murderous intent was already overflowing by this point.

At that moment, Myles rushed over to stand before Rupert while shouting, “Master!”

However, the second he got there, Bradley simply smacked his hand against Myles’s shoulder, causing him to crumble to the ground, completely unable to stand!

Patting Rupert’s face with the back of his hand, Bradley—who was now standing right in front of the man—then said, “You know, once you’re out of the picture, Rupert, Fairleigh Valley will finally be able to take what we’ve always wanted. With that in mind, did you

honestly think that we would even need to covet to your petty bargain?"

"B-Brother Bradley, I admit to my faults...! I was blind back then, so please forgive me...! Before you do anything rash, please remember that your ancestors were only able to make their fortune because of the King Valley! With that in mind, you can't just wipe out the roots of your forefathers...!" pleaded Rupert. Now that he had nobody else supporting him, the trembling Rupert knew that he was no different than an ordinary man.

A split second later, Rupert's right cheek was immediately greeted by a slap!

"Can't just wipe out the roots of our ancestors?' You talk as though you're even worthy to call yourself that! I'll say it now that to me, killing you is as easy as squashing a bug! Regardless, once Fairleigh Valley takes over the King Valley's industry, I'm sure the other valleys won't have anything to say about it, am I correct?"

"Y-yes! It's as you said! With that in mind, please spare my life, Brother Bradley!" begged Rupert who simply couldn't bear the pressure of death anymore. He was so terrified, in fact, that he immediately knelt before his daughters and everyone else with a loud 'thud' before hugging onto Bradley's legs and bumping his forehead onto them.

Regardless of how much of a bigshot he was, he was only human and still feared death. He had only persevered for so long since he had tasted power and wealth before. In other words, he had been more afraid of losing his material belongings than death up till this point.

Watching as his former enemy knelt and begged like a dog, Bradley instantly laughed triumphantly, his dissatisfaction—that he had held in his heart for over ten years—seemingly slowly dissipating.

As for the three masters from before, they could only hold onto their chests, unable to advance nor retreat. Sighing internally, all three of them simultaneously thought, ‘Today truly has been a mistake... We’ve now lost everything...’

Looking at how pitiful the once majestic boss of Sunhill Rise currently was, everyone’s hearts felt extremely bitter. After all, no matter how much he knelt or begged for mercy, that man was still their lord.

“M-Master, you mustn’t do this...! Kneeling today will only make you the joke of the other valleys as well as our international businessman customers!” said Myles, his eyes reddened.

Chapter 1326

“I...I’ll fight it out with all of you!” shouted the furious Fleur out of the blue.

Revealing a hidden dagger, she then rushed toward Bradley, intent on piercing it right into his chest! Since she had always liked martial arts and had been practicing several forms of them ever since she was a child, Fleur was rather confident that she could at least land a hit.

To her utter dismay, all it took was a single kick from Seamus for him to disarm her. She wasn’t even able to get anywhere close to Bradley!

As the dagger fell to the ground, Seamus grabbed Fleur by her wrist before pulling her into his arms.

Seeing that, the terrified Yenny then rushed forward, hoping to rescue her sister as she shouted, “I-I’ll fight you too!”

Screaming as she ran toward Seamus, another young master from Fairleigh Valley simply stepped in and grabbed her wrist before hugging her tightly in his arms, just like how Seamus was doing with Fleur.

Laughing sinisterly, Seamus then said, "You have no idea how long I've been waiting for this moment, Fleur! I have a proposal for you! If you obey my every order tonight, then I'll tell my father and second uncle to spare your life! Hell, I'll even make you the young mistress of the two great valleys! Due to how generous I am, I'll even allow you to keep half of King Valley! How about it?"

"Unhand me, you b*stard!" shouted Fleur, despair reflected in her eyes as she turned to face the hundred and fifty King Valley bodyguards who were still standing there.

"What are all of you even doing? Stop standing there in a daze and attack already!"

Upon hearing that order, all of them finally snapped out of it and took a step forward, intent on fighting till the very end! However, the second Bradley turned to look at them, all of them simply froze in place again!

After witnessing how strong the Fairleighs—who had been living in seclusion for so many years—were, everyone knew for a fact that they weren't going to even come close to being their opponents.

“F-Fleur, just be a good girl and listen to Mr. Fairleigh! Please agree to whatever he wants and save your father...!” pleaded Rupert shamelessly.

“Hah! Save? You're dying no matter what happens today, Rupert!” scoffed Bradley as he knocked Rupert to the ground.

“Quit dawdling with him, Bradley. It's high time we got rid of him and all his people from King Valley! The sooner you do it, the quicker we'll finally be able to take over this place!” said Hershel with a smirk.

“Loud and clear! Well then, Rupert! I'll be handing you your one-way ticket to hell!” snorted Bradley as he slowly raised his arm, aiming for Rupert's head.

Rupert himself was so frightened that he ended up closing his eyes.

Before Bradley could land the finishing blow, however, Myles—who had finally managed to struggle to his feet—suddenly shouted, “Stop!”

Now that everyone’s eyes were on him, Myles then knelt with a ‘thud’ before Gerald before begging, “Mr. Crawford! The master of the valley was wrong, so please accept my apology on his behalf! I, Myles Mateman, am willing to offer my life in exchange for another, so please, please save the master of the valley! I’ll repay his debt with my life...!”

As Myles continued kowtowing till his forehead was all bloodied, Hershel shouted, “What are you waiting for, Bradley? Do it!”

Hearing that, Bradley snapped out of it and raised his palm again, this time intent on finishing Rupert...

However, at the very last second, Bradley instinctively took a step back as something lightning-fast rushed past his eyes! Quickly looking in the direction the object had flown toward, Bradley was just in time to see it colliding against one of the courtyard’s many rock structures...

Before sending the rock exploding thunderously into a sea of debris!

Even as the dust finally settled, none of the people there were able to break free from their silent paralysis.

Chapter 1327

“...W-what...?!” shouted Bradley, an utterly horrified and incredulous expression on his face as he stared wide-eyed at Gerald.

Bradley was already someone who possessed immense strength. With that in mind, how could an ordinary person like Gerald—who looked no older than Seamus—actually cause him to flinch from attacking?

Had he not witnessed Gerald’s sudden attack just seconds ago, he wouldn’t have believed how capable the youth truly was! But this was illogical, wasn’t it?

As Bradley—in his shock and horror—continued trying to make sense of the situation, Hershel could simply frown as he turned to look at his younger brother.

Rupert, Fleur, and the others from King Valley, on the other end, were now feeling like they had finally been graced with hope after being pushed into such a desperate situation earlier.

To think that he had such ungodly strength... Thinking back, since none of them had been able to discern how powerful he truly was earlier, it was lucky that they didn't offend him too badly...

Regardless, when Rupert saw that Gerald—who was arguably even stronger than Bradley—was now defending him, he immediately got to his feet.

Fleur herself had already wiggled free when everyone was still dumbfounded earlier, and she had just successfully freed her sister as well at the moment.

Running back to where most of the King Valley guards were, Yenny panted before saying, "S-sister! It's him! I hadn't noticed his presence earlier, but it turns out that he isn't dead!"

“Hush! Don’t say anything first!” replied Fleur who was equally as surprised as Yenny was.

With the atmosphere now extremely cold and solemn, Bradley eventually frowned before asking, “...Who are you?”

Though he had already noticed Gerald’s presence long before Peter had even begun fighting Seamus, Bradley hadn’t really paid much attention to him, especially since he looked so young. Instead, his attention was fully preoccupied with the three masters, Rupert, and the two gunmen from earlier.

He now knew, however, that this kid possessed truly extraordinary strength. With that in mind, it was obvious that he had something to rely on.

Bradley was a person who had survived countless rains of bullets throughout the years, and aside from using brute force, the reason why he was still alive was because he had always been extremely careful. Even if he was facing a seemingly ordinary man, he knew better than to underestimate his opponent. After all, he was experienced enough to know that everything could go wrong because of a single wrong judgment.

Seeing that Gerald wasn't replying, Rupert—who was now finally regaining a bit of confidence—cleared his throat as he said, "...Well then! I hadn't expected our benefactor from back then to raise such an outstanding apprentice! I admit that I was a bit too rash and impetuous just now... If I remember correctly, Myles had said that you wished to collect three Cherish Herbs, correct? If you help us deal with the Fairleighs, forget three, I'll give you ten of them! Hell, I'll even throw in another seventy-five thousand dollars! How about it?"

Upon hearing that, Gerald simply turned to look at him before smiling coldly as he replied, "I hope you understand that I only saved you earlier due to how sincerely Myles was begging me to! Are you honestly attempting to use those simple terms, thinking you can just dismiss me after I deal with them? When you're currently at such a critical moment that could easily spell your death?"

What Gerald had said was no exaggeration. Had he not felt Myles's immense loyalty, Gerald wouldn't even have considered saving Rupert's life. After all, he could've just obtained the medicine on his own once Rupert was dead.

Hearing Gerald's reply, Rupert instantly felt his heart clench.

Since Gerald looked like a country bumpkin who hadn't seen much of the world, Rupert had assumed that Gerald would definitely be

surprised by his sudden offer. In the end, however, Rupert was the one who was surprised since Gerald didn't seem to care about the offer at all!

“...Do you not think that my offer is good enough, young lad? What do you wish for then? Just say the word and I'll give it to you as long as you're willing to help get rid of my enemies for me!” bargained Rupert.

“Oh, what I want is quite simple. I just wish to own a fifth of the King Valley!” replied Gerald with a laugh.

“...I... I beg your pardon...?” replied Rupert, his eyes widened in shock.

Even Fleur hadn't expected Gerald to be this greedy!

“Oh? Hmm... Well, I said I just wish to own a fourth of the King Valley!” said Gerald with a smirk.

Now breathing frantically, Rupert finally realized how seriously he had underestimated the kid. To think that this young country bumpkin would even dare to ask for a fifth of the King Valley! As if

that wasn't already outrageous enough, he was now asking for a fourth!

“...I'm sure I heard you said a fifth earlier... Regardless, I won't lie that it's exceedingly difficult for me to just hand over a fifth of my valley to you! How about this? Should you be willing to help me deal with them, I'll give you a tenth of this place! It'll certainly be more than sufficient for you to lead an easy and carefree life from the money generated from that area!”

Chapter 1328

Rupert found himself frowning as he said that. Naturally, he was going to be reluctant to part with his assents, and since he was still alive, he was definitely going to at least attempt to negotiate further.

Fixing his gaze on Rupert, Gerald simply replied, “A third!”

Hearing that, the elders found themselves exchanging glances with one another. It was already obvious that the knife was at Rupert's throat, so there really was no reason for him to continue trying to bargain with Gerald. With how things were currently going, the elders knew for a fact that there was a very real possibility of Rupert losing the entire valley to Gerald by the time all this was over.

Taking in a deep breath, Rupert—who was still unwilling to just agree like that—then said, “Please don't take advantage of us knowing that we're already at our weakest, young lad! So be it! I'll hand you a fifth of the valley, just as you've asked before! Is that agreeable?”

“Half of King Valley! Nothing less if you still want me to help you!” replied Gerald with a smile.

Rupert instantly knelt on the ground upon hearing that. He truly was caught in a dilemma since it wouldn't be right for him to simply accept Gerald's condition like that.

Quite honestly, he was wondering if Gerald would truly end up being useful in the end. After all, not even the three masters and two gunmen he had hired were able to deal with the situation. In the end, however, he knew that Gerald was his final ray of hope, and he couldn't just let him walk off now that he was already on the verge of death.

He now also knew better than to continue trying to trick Gerald, knowing full well that if he attempted it one more time, Gerald would most certainly end up getting the entire valley.

If only he had known that things were going to end up this way, then he would've definitely attempted to build a better relationship with Gerald earlier. To think that Gerald had simply started off asking for three Cherish herbs... There were at least a million of them stored within King Valley after collecting them for hundreds of years! Why hadn't he just given three of them to him and be done with it?

Now extremely frantic, Rupert could almost feel himself losing his temper. However, he refrained, knowing that whether he got angry or not, there was still not going to be any other way out.

With that in mind, the master of the valley gritted his teeth and stomped his foot hard on the ground before saying, "...Very well! I'll... I'll give you half of King Valley! Now please, please, help me get rid of those enemies!"

"Now wouldn't it have been better for you not to play any of your petty tricks in the first place...?" replied Gerald with a grin before turning to look at Bradley and the others.

From what he was able to tell, Bradley's strength was close to the middle stage of the Spirit Earth Realm, the same stage that Gerald currently was on. While that would technically signify that he and Gerald were equally matched in terms of strength, Gerald was clearly superior when it came to the amount of training both of them had experienced.

"...Don't get cocky too soon! From what I can sense, both of us are equally matched in terms of our inner strength! Furthermore, I have my brother and nephew here with me!" grunted Bradley. While it was true that he was a very cautious person, his anger had overtaken most of his rationality. He was so infuriated, in fact, that blood was already starting to seep from his old facial scar, making him look all the more ferocious!

Looking straight into Bradley's eyes, Gerald then replied, "Oh? You don't believe that I can take you down? Hmm... What to do... I guess I'll just have to prove my point by having all three of you come at me at the same time! How about that?"

"...You...! You're really asking for death, aren't you?!" roared Bradley as his eyes instantly flared up with murderous intent.

In the end, Bradley was someone who placed his worth even higher than his life. With that in mind, despite Gerald clearly having an

immense amount of strength, Bradley was more than determined to break him into pieces after being humiliated so much by him!

“Once I’ve torn off your head and limbs, I’ll be tossing all of them into the river for the fish to feed on!” growled the enraged Bradley who now looked so terrifying that everyone present instantly turned pale in fright.

‘You really are just a young kid who doesn’t know what’s good for you! Look at the situation you got yourself in! Couldn’t you sense how terrifying Bradley already was? Why did you have to provoke him even further? While it’s true that you’re talented, you should know that Bradley’s already a veteran!’ thought the three masters as they helplessly watched on.

Myles himself was completely dumbfounded by the turn of events. While he already knew that Gerald was arrogant, he hadn’t expected him to be this arrogant! Was he really going to attempt to fight all three of them at once...?

Before Myles could wonder any further, he saw Gerald straightening his body before casually replying, “Oh? Is that so?”

Following that, Gerald suddenly outstretched his right hand before clenching and turning it ever so slightly... It gave the impression as

though he had caught the wind... As everyone wondered what he was trying to do, Gerald then retracted his hand toward his chest before seemingly tossing an invisible knife toward Bradley...

Only rather than just being mere mimicry of tossing a knife, everyone stared wide-eyed as a white light shot out from his palm! As if that wasn't already shocking enough, the crowd watched in astonishment as the ground split slightly apart as the orb of light continued flying toward Bradley!

In the light's path, however, was a rather large boulder. Everyone now curious to know what would happen to the light upon collision, their question was quickly answered when it simply shot through the boulder!

...But wait, it didn't just shoot through... A split second later, the boulder split into two clean halves, with both sides cut so clean that they gleamed like the surface of a mirror! Expensive-looking tiles cracking apart as the light surged on, it finally stopped moving the second it arrived inches away from Bradley's face.

As Bradley stood paralyzed in his utter shock, the others found themselves too dumbfounded to even make a sound as well.

Everyone now looking at the deep gash on the earth that Gerald had caused, the entirety of King Valley became momentarily enveloped in silence.

Chapter 1329

“...B-by god... Is he... Is he a human or a god...?”

Though Myles’s mouth had been hanging open this entire time, he couldn’t care less about how he looked as he trembled while muttering that question.

Even the three masters were utterly stunned. After all, while Bradley was more powerful, faster, and more skillful compared to regular people, his capabilities were still—at the very least—predictable and understandable. Gerald, on the other hand, was a completely different story.

After all, he had just split the earth and even a large boulder clear in half just by waving his hand in the air! Nobody could've predicted that! Several others were having similar thoughts as well.

Regardless, following a long silence, one of the three masters—after staring at the marks left on the ground this entire time—murmured, “...That wasn't a celestial technique... Instead, it was a strange martial art... It... It was the airbending skill...! Adding that to the fact that that boy has already conquered the Nebula Realm and owns the Power of the Hundred Divine Fists, it wouldn't be a stretch to say that he would be able to easily kill a person standing ten meters away! I had always thought that all that was simply the stuff of legends... Now that I've witnessed it with my very own eyes, I can safely say that I can die without any regrets...”

Before anyone could even respond to that, the steps of feet pattering could be heard, prompting everyone to turn around... Only to realize that Bradley was retreating!

“Retreat! Hurry!” yelled Bradley.

“...What? He's... he's attempting to escape...?!”

Of course he was. After seeing how Gerald had launched such a powerful attack just by fiddling with his fingers, Bradley instantly realized that he had just dug his own grave.

To his utter shock, not only did Gerald exhibit signs of superb training, but he also possessed extremely powerful martial art skills! Understanding that, Bradley knew that he was no longer worthy of being Gerald's opponent.

What an extraordinary being! Bradley knew for a fact that even if there were ten of himself, all of his copies wouldn't even come close to defeating Gerald!

"To think that he's already entered such a realm at his age! How utterly unbelievable! Even my genius of a master back then wasn't able to enter that realm till he was around fifty, and he's a top master as well as a hero! How could a martial artist with such an ordinary background even possess such godly skills?!" muttered Bradley under his breath as he continued dashing away, hoping that his head start would allow him to escape.

Just as the other Fairleighs—who were now starting to get increasingly worried—were about to turn around and book it, Gerald simply looked at the escaping man before sneering, "Finally planning on leaving? I'm afraid it's much too late for that!"

Following that, Gerald took in a deep breath before activating his Thunder Eruption skill! His palms now reddened, Gerald then flicked his fingers, sending three, white, silk-like strands shooting out like bullets toward Bradley, Hershel, and Seamus's backs!

Upon—flying over ten meters and—hitting their backs, Seamus was the first to scream as he instantly began spurting blood out of his mouth before falling to the ground shortly after.

Bradley himself found his eyes turning black as he felt the blunt force—that felt similar to being hit with a hammer—on his back. Being flung forward by how hard the force was, Bradley ended up smashing directly into a wall!

Witnessing all that, the three masters could only tremble in fear as one of them said, "...Both his inner and external strength are equally as extraordinary...! He really is capable of killing with just a snap of a finger! He's a living god on earth...!"

While the young man only looked to be around the age of twenty-five, none of the masters had any further doubts that he was a true apex great master as well as someone extremely—and mysteriously—well-learned in the realm of martial arts

Regardless, the masters were glad that they had earlier held their tongues. After all, they would've definitely been slapped by Gerald had they said what was previously on their mind, that being, 'How could there possibly be a great master under the age of thirty? They're already extremely rare in the world, and they're comparable only to living masterpieces! With that in mind, one can't simply brag about being a great master!'

Whatever the case was, with all three of the commanding Fairleighs now completely defeated, it was now their family's subordinates' turn to not dare to make any further moves.

Seeing that the tables had now completely turned, Rupert finally fully recovered from his initial shock and ran over to Bradley before kicking him right in the stomach! Following that, he then laughed before saying, "I bet you never imagined that things would end up this way, did you, young lad? Remember that if I could humiliate and toss you out like the miserable outcast you were back then, then I can just as easily kill you today! Hahaha!"

The second his sentence ended, however, he suddenly heard a faint voice behind him saying, "I assure you that Bradley isn't dead yet... He's simply unconscious for now... You had best be careful that he doesn't wake up from your kick..."

Hearing that, Rupert instantly stopped laughing before turning around to look at Gerald, a pleasant smile on his face.

“...Mr. Crawford- No, Master Crawford... What... did you mean by that...? Didn't you kill this murderer...?”

Rolling his eyes, Gerald simply replied, “No matter what the case is, he's still a learned great master, and his inner strength is almost as good as mine. I only had the upper hand since my martial arts skills are a little better than his. With that in mind, why would I kill him? He's only unconscious now!”

Chapter 1330

The second he was finished speaking, Gerald walked over to Bradley before patting his body a few times.

“...Alright, I’ve severed all of his vital energy points. Even if he has any inner strength left, he won’t be able to use it for the time being. I’ll be leaving him to you then,” said Gerald.

“T-Thank you, Master Crawford! I truly am in awe of your extraordinary strength, greatness, and techniques!” flattered Rupert as he stood beside Gerald.

Watching as the man nearing his fifties tried his best to flatter a much younger person would make anyone watching the scene tempted to laugh out loud. It certainly didn’t help that his attitude before and after he found out how strong Gerald was had taken a complete one-eighty!

Upon hearing that, Gerald himself could only shake his head with a wry smile on his face.

What Gerald didn’t know was that after experiencing a roller coaster of emotions today, Rupert had long given up on maintaining his dignity and image anymore. All he wanted to do now was to get into Gerald’s good books, and what better way to do that than to keep flattering him!

Rupert's thought process was that if he had such a learned great master backing him up, then he surely wouldn't have to worry about any other champions, legends, or even masters in the future!

'No matter how strong my future enemies are, they'd never come close to even being as powerful as Master Crawford, the youth who can kill with just air!' Rupert thought to himself.

At that moment, the three masters walked over to Gerald—disregarding the injuries on their bodies—before asking, “Master Crawford, will he truly be unable to use his strength after you severed his vital energy points?”

A warrior's inner strength stemmed from their elixir-of-life field. With that in mind, if Gerald truly had interrupted his main acupuncture points, then Bradley would no longer be able to access his inner strength for real!

“I simply used a unique method of interrupting his body's meridians at several points. Due to that, his inner strength will constantly be scattered all over the place. If he can't collect his inner strength, then he's pretty much rendered powerless,” explained Gerald casually.

The three masters were dumbfounded once again. How utterly amazing! This youth truly was a god on earth!

Even Fleur and Yenny were now blushing. No wonder he hadn't been afraid when they first caught him. Even when he was sent to such a dangerous place, both of them had found it slightly odd that there wasn't a trace of fear on his face! Now that they knew how powerful he was, it made sense why he hadn't been frightened in the least!

"Regardless, now that I've solved your issue, I think it's high time you fulfilled your promise to me, master of the valley," said Gerald as he clapped his hands.

"...Promise?" replied Rupert as he placed his hand over his head as though he had just regained his senses.

Now that his enemies had been taken care of and there was no more danger, Rupert was starting to feel slightly unwilling to part with half of his assets...

"...Hmm? Could you perhaps be planning on going back on your word...?" asked Gerald with a frown as he glared at Rupert.

The moment Gerald's eyes met his, Rupert felt as though he had just been electrocuted. Trembling as he gritted his teeth in panic, Rupert

then replied, “N-no! Of course, not! Worry not, Master Crawford, for I’ll definitely fulfill my promise!”

Knowing that Gerald was even more ferocious than Bradley, Rupert was afraid that his life would be on the line if he didn’t keep his word.

Even so, that didn’t stop him from trying to think up countermeasures. As his mind continued racing, he suddenly heard Gerald say, “As long as you don’t go back on your word, you’ll be fine. Speaking of which, I’ll soon be taking my leave first, but before that, I need you to get me the herbs that I asked for as well as a few oxyblood pellets. I’ll be using them soon!”

“R-right away, Master Crawford...!” replied Rupert in a clearly depressed voice.

‘What on earth should I even do here...? I can’t just hand over half of my assets to this young kid! He’s not worthy of all that power! I’ll have to find a way to get rid of him... But until then, I guess I can only continue delaying the process of handing the valley over... I’ll never hand half of King Valley to him...!’

Just as he was deep in thought, Rupert suddenly felt his brows going cold. It felt as if something had... just entered his brain?

Turning around quickly, he was just in time to see Gerald moving his hand away.

Touching his forehead, Rupert then asked, "...Master Crawford...? What were you doing...?"

"Oh, nothing much. I simply inserted poison into your brain! After all, with half of the King Valley being put on the line, I have a feeling that you may try to delay things till you find a way to get rid of me! Of course, if that's not the case, all the better for you!" replied Gerald with a smile.

"...T-that... I... I would never..." stuttered Rupert, now completely dumbfounded.

Chapter 1331

“Mr. Crawford, this is the oxyblood pellet and herb that you asked for!”

Not long after that, one of the servants brought the things over respectfully.

Gerald checked everything carefully.

The fact that Rupert had been poisoned by Gerald was not just to scare him.

Gerald had indeed poisoned Rupert with the secret poison.

Although Rupert was a very greedy person and afraid of dying, besides half of the Cherish Herbs in King Valley, he was still pretty useful to Gerald to a certain extent.

Gerald would not be afraid that Rupert would go back on his words in the future as long as he could threaten him with the secret poison.

After leaving King Valley, Gerald did not return to his uncle's home immediately.

Instead, as per his agreement with Leo, he arrived at the cave that Leo was hiding in.

Gerald could not help but feel a little dumbfounded when he saw the scene in front of him upon arrival at the cave.

Leo had used a pile of weeds to block the entrance of the cave and was simply sitting inside the cave motionless, just like a young schoolboy who had made a mistake and was being grounded at home.

“My lord! You’re back!” Leo said as he stood up excitedly as soon as he saw Gerald.

“Were you hiding here in this position the entire time?” Gerald asked as he laughed.

“Well, my lord, you asked me not to move. So, I hid here without moving at all after finding this cave. I was waiting for you to come back and pick me up!” Leo said as he scratched his head.

“You shouldn’t keep calling me your lord! Leo, speaking of it, you are my elder. I simply look like your deity, but I am not the same deity that you are thinking of!” Gerald replied frankly.

“That is impossible! You have the dragon blood jade pendant. Based on your aura, I can already sense that you are the deity!”

“After getting locked up by those men in the cave, I have already felt my heart throbbing over the past few days. It turns out that it is because my lord, you are here!” Leo said respectfully.

Gerald hesitated for a moment.

Queena had said that he was the deity.

Also, this jade pendant seemed to have recognized the existence of the deity. That was the reason why it gave Gerald so many memories at the very beginning when he touched it.

Now, Leo could actually sense the deity’s aura from Gerald’s body?!

Could it be that he was truly the deity? Could it be that the deity was in his body? Could it be that he was indeed the reincarnation of the

deity? To be precise, could it be that the deity was Gerald in his past life, and he was the deity's present life?

Gerald had already had these doubts in his mind for a long time.

All of these coincidences that were connected seemed to affirm and confirm this fact too.

“Regarding my identity, we will talk about it in the future. However, you should stop referring to me as your lord. It sounds a little too awkward!” Gerald said as he smiled wryly.

Leo was a little nervous, and he said, “My lord, could it be that you despise me and don't want me to stay by your side to serve you?”

“That is not what I meant... Sigh... if you really want to, you can just call me by my name, then. My name is Gerald.”

Leo scratched his head before he said, “In that case, can I simply call you Mr. Crawford just like everyone else? They also called that other person Mr. Fairleigh!”

“Okay!”

Gerald could only nod his head helplessly as he asked, “By the way, where did you come from, Leo? You don’t look like a local.”

Both of them found a place in the cave to sit down before Gerald questioned him out of curiosity.

Leo was truly in awe of Gerald. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that he was in awe of the deity. That was why they had this relationship now.

In addition, Gerald had saved his life. Leo was especially attracted to Gerald’s handsome appearance and the way that he spoke, which made him seem kind and approachable. This made Leo feel at ease.

It was also this feeling that made Leo want to recognize Gerald as his master. He felt as though he had finally found someone that he could rely on in this unfamiliar place.

So, he would naturally tell Gerald the truth at this time.

“Mr. Crawford, I escaped from a big flying battleship before coming to this place unknowingly. Moreover, I felt as though this place was somehow very strange and yet very familiar. I felt as though I had lived here before, but then again, at the same time, I felt as though this place was very strange and unfamiliar to me!” Leo said.

Gerald felt his whole body tensing up as soon as he heard Leo’s words.

“Big flying battleship?” Gerald asked in surprised.

Chapter 1332

Then, he listened carefully as Leo explained the whole story to him.

It turned out that when Leo was very young, he could vaguely remember that he was on a large flying battleship. He could not remember how old he was at that time, but Gerald assumed that he was about three to four years old then.

Moreover, many people were on that flying battleship, and there were a lot of children who would play together with him.

All of them were taken to a place together where someone took special care of them, and Leo had grown up there.

Leo had received various training, and he had participated in various fights ever since his childhood.

He only knew how to fight.

Moreover, there had always been a very mysterious legend in that place, that was none other than the deity.

The place that they were at had two huge stone statues in place. It was a statue of a deity and a lady in white.

They had grown up under the legend of the deity.

“You mean to say that you were taken away by the flying battleship? And your physique changed and became this way when you were there?” Gerald asked curiously.

He felt as though there was a mysterious door leading to a certain door hidden in the dark which was slowly opening to him.

Leo nodded.

“Yes, but Mr. Crawford, the Leo that you are looking at now is the me after my transformation!” Leo said. It seemed as though Leo felt a little embarrassed with his current rough and boorish appearance.

“After your transformation?”

“Yes. I am currently injured, so I can’t transform and change back to how I was before. I did not look like this previously. In fact, it is really strange. I started planning my escape from the big flying battleship about one month ago. After I escaped, I went into the sea. After that, a big palace at the bottom of the sea exploded. It seems as though someone had used witchcraft and some special technique on the palace. I was hit hard by this mighty power, and I fainted. When I woke up, I had already been turned into the state that I usually am in, when I am fighting and I cannot transform anymore!” Leo said.

“Into the sea? An explosion of a palace?” Gerald replied as he thought carefully.

“What happened after that? Didn’t they try to capture you?” Gerald asked again.

“I do not know. I was unconscious then. When I woke up, I found myself on a deserted island. After that, I started hiding inside the woods until a few days ago when I ran into the people from the Fairleigh family. They used some electric baton to capture me!”

Gerald was deep in thought. The explosion that Leo described seemed to be exactly the same as the one he had witnessed when he was at the palace of the king of the ocean.

Could it be that the explosion at the palace of the king of the ocean was the same explosion that had caused Leo to faint?

“Then, can you give me a general description of how the big flying battleship looks like?” Gerald asked.

Leo began to use his bare hands to draw on the ground. A few minutes later, Leo had already drawn the outline of the flying battleship.

“Sun League!”

Gerald stood up excitedly as soon as he saw the drawing.

Although Leo had only drawn a rough outline of the flying battleship, its appearance was almost exactly the same as that of the Sun League flying battleship which was depicted on the murals on the stone wall.

Gerald's eyelids began twitching wildly.

Leo was one of the people who had escaped after getting captured by the Sun League?!

Moreover, that mysterious flying battleship had actually not been too far from him when he had dived into the bottom of the sea that day?!

Gerald began sweating all over.

In that case, Leo was one of the people who had been captured, but he had successfully escaped!

Gerald made a bold conjecture. He felt as though this was extremely possible.

“By the way, do you know this sign?”

Gerald hurriedly took out the token of the holy water which had the logo of the Sun League on it.

Leo’s eyes widened immediately.

“That is the mark that was engraved on those people’s chests!” Leo’s expression became a little flustered when he saw the logo.

That’s right! True enough, Leo had indeed escaped from the Sun League. This meant that Leo was his biggest clue in solving the mystery of the Sun League!

Chapter 1333

“What is the place that you were at, Leo? It seems as though you came from the same place as the deity and the lady in white. You likely were one of the people that the Sun League had captured from earth!” Gerald said.

After some exchanges, all of Leo’s descriptions seemed to correspond to the many clues that Gerald had obtained from the murals together with the evidence that Gerald had gathered from the palace of the king of the ocean, as well as the underground palace in the desert.

Gerald was almost certain that the Sun League had captured many people from earth, and Leo was simply one of them.

Moreover, the Sun League definitely had an inseparable connection with the lady in white and the deity.

This way, Gerald could determine that he was certainly on the right path. Queena had also come from the same place. If she could survive in the form of a soul, it would not make sense that the lady in white would not be able to do the same.

The life experiences that Chester had had as a child were proof that the lady in white had indeed been active before.

At this time, Leo said, "That place is called Jaellatra. It is very different compared to this place, but there is also a seventy to eighty percent similarity."

"Jaellatra? So, do you mean to say that everyone who was captured along with you was all brought to this place called Jaellatra?" Gerald asked excitedly.

Leo nodded as he said, "That's right. All of us were there, but we did not know how we could escape. Fortunately, when we were sent on another mission, we boarded the flying battleship again, and I managed to rush out and make my escape!"

"Moreover, it seems as though it would not be long before ordinary people like you would suddenly appear to receive training there!" Leo continued speaking after thinking for a while.

"Then, what were all of you training for?" Gerald asked curiously.

"I don't know. Everyone was given their own jobs and responsibilities. The few of us were responsible for building weapons. I do not know anything else!" Leo said as he shook his head.

In this case, Gerald had a major clue now, and that was the place that was referred to as Jaellatra.

Mila and the others had been captured and taken away by the flying battleship.

It was no wonder why Gerald had used all of the financial resources and manpower that he had to find all of the clues that he had in the past year but to no avail. It turned out that they had been taken to some other place by the Sun League.

Although Leo did not know where Jaellatra was exactly, at the very least, Gerald was no longer as confused and lost as he was before.

“Mr. Crawford, you told me that you were looking for someone just now. Could it be that someone close to you had also been caught and brought to Jaellatra?” Leo asked curiously.

“Yes! They were taken away by the Sun League!” Gerald replied as he nodded.

Leo scratched his head and said, “But you are a legend from where I came from. So, you should know the way to Jaellatra. There is also a

long-standing legend in Jaellatra. Shortly after you gained fame and became famous, you suddenly disappeared. Unexpectedly, you actually came here!” Leo said excitedly.

“I cannot explain everything to you in one or two sentences. However, I am not the deity that you are talking about. As for him, his body is currently stored in an underground palace. Moreover, the lady in white also came here with him. I am currently looking for the lady in white because I want to help the two of them to be reunited once again. This is because I think that there are more secrets hidden where the lady in white is at, but I can’t seem to find her at all. Furthermore...”

Gerald had been feeling very depressed over the past few days. He had so many pent-up feelings inside, but he did not know who he could talk to at all.

When he saw that Leo seemed to be an honest and trustworthy person, he was willing to open up and talk to Leo about all of these things. Moreover, Leo was also very happy to be his confidant.

“I have also heard of some of their legends before. The possessed Queena that you spoke about seems to be her elder sister. She is extremely strong and powerful, but she is also very wicked. She disappeared at the same time as you too, deity! All of them came here! Moreover, it seems as though she had condensed her

consciousness and thoughts to form a soul. Now that she has found a suitable body, it is equivalent to her getting reborn!” Leo said.

Since his thinking ability seemed to be slightly weaker compared to an average person, he was silent for a moment before he said, “If his sister has already been resurrected as you’ve said, and if she has also shown signs of being active a few years ago, this can only prove that she has already condensed her consciousness and thought to form a soul. Unfortunately, she could not find an adaptable body. Therefore, there was no way for her to get reborn!”

“An adaptable body?” Gerald asked, a little puzzled.

“That’s right. A resurrected soul will need to find a suitable adaptable body. If there is no suitable adaptable body, the soul will simply move along with the coffin. However, as soon as there is a suitable adaptable body for her, you can use it to lead her out, and she will be able to get reborn, then! Mr. Crawford, when that happens, you will not need to work so hard to find her corpse!”

Chapter 1334

“So, that is the case! In the very beginning, when he was at the underground palace in the desert, a mysterious person reminded him to look for the coffin of the lady in white so that he could bury them together. So, it turns out that it was not transporting her corpse, but it was transporting their consciousness and thoughts!” Leo said.

Gerald finally understood.

“Leo, do you know how to find a suitable adaptable body for her, then? Do you know how to draw her out?” Gerald hurriedly asked.

“According to the legends, it is rumored that she is the same as the deity, and she cultivates and practices the Thunder Eruption technique. So, there is thunder essential qi in her body, and her soul has also been transitioned. So, you have to find someone proficient in Thunder Eruption to use the Thunder Godly Pupil to find a suitable adaptable body for her. After finding a suitable adaptable body, the person should also release thunder essential qi. When she senses it, she will come out immediately!”

“However, Mr. Crawford, there are not many people who can use or practice the Thunder Eruption technique. I naturally do not know how to use it!” Leo said as he was filled with self-reproach.

“Thunder Eruption?”

As soon as Gerald heard this, he could not help but feel overjoyed.

Wasn't he practicing and cultivating the Thunder Eruption technique now?

Indeed, there were many techniques such as eye training, physical training, and qi training recorded within it.

It turned out that he would be able to find the lady in white by using the Thunder Eruption technique!

“That's right. However, this kind of secret technique has very high requirements on a person's physique and blood vessels. If they are not talented or skillful enough, they would explode and die while practicing or using this technique!” Leo said, and there was a strong longing look in his eyes.

Was there such a saying about the Thunder Eruption technique? But why was he okay even after practicing it?

Could it be that he was indeed the reincarnation of the deity?

However, Gerald did not have time to think about this for the time being.

Leo told Gerald how to use the thunder essential qi to find a way to look for a suitable adaptable body.

“Leo, thank you for telling and giving me so many clues!”

Gerald patted Leo’s shoulder excitedly before he took out the oxyblood pellet that he had obtained from King Valley over to Leo.

“I do not know if this oxyblood pellet will have any effect on the recovery of your essential qi. However, I brought it here for you anyway. If you consume it, I believe that it will be more or less useful to you!” Gerald said as he handed the oxyblood pellet over.

“Oxyblood pellet? That is good stuff! Although the quality is not very good, it is still very useful. It is indeed very useful to me! Thank you

so much, Mr. Deity! No, I mean, Mr. Crawford!” Leo exclaimed as he held the oxyblood pellet happily with both hands.

Then, he waved his hands and directly swallowed about a dozen of the oxyblood pellets.

Not long after that, Gerald saw that Leo’s originally pale complexion had already recovered, and he was gaining some color on his ruddy complexion.

Leo closed his eyes as he examined his body calmly. “I have already recovered some of the essential qi in my body. I will try and transform my body into its original state now!”

As he spoke, Leo clenched his fists tightly, and there was a loud cracking sound in all of the bones in his body.

Immediately afterward, Gerald saw that his physique was shrinking at an extremely incredible speed that was visible to the naked eye.

It felt as though he was using a shrinking technique.

Leo eventually turned into an ordinary-looking uncle with an average height and chubby body without much trouble at all.

“Hehe! Thank you, Mr. Crawford. I can finally be like you now!” Leo said as he smiled.

“Yes!” Gerald replied as he nodded lightly.

“I just do not have a weapon on hand now. Mr. Crawford, is there a blacksmith shop here? I will go and get a weapon for myself so that we can go and look for them!” Leo suddenly said viciously.

“Look for them? Who are you going to look for?”

“Since the Gunter family actually tried to harm you, I will tear them apart to avenge you!”

Chapter 1335

Gerald truly would not have expected Leo to be so angry and enraged because he wanted to avenge him.

Gerald felt faintly moved.

“Before that, I will use the herbs to save someone! So, we should go back first!” Gerald said as he smiled.

“Okay, Mr. Crawford!” Leo said as he scratched his head.

After they had left the cave, both of them headed directly toward the shanty town.

Sierra’s arm problem cannot be delayed any longer. Otherwise, there would certainly be a sequela.

Moreover, Gerald would have to focus on finding a suitable adaptable body for the lady in white after this. There were so many people in this world. So, where would Gerald necessarily be able to find the perfect and right adaptable body for the lady in white?!

Gerald did not know whether it was a coincidence or not, but as the both of them were walking out of the mountain, Gerald suddenly felt his spiritual sense surging.

“Hm?”

Gerald knew that whenever he felt this way, it simply meant that there was someone with the same aura as him who had appeared not too far away from him.

However, what was really strange was that Gerald would certainly have a very strong feeling if it was a master that was appearing near him, such as how it had been when he had met Hogan before this.

But now, Gerald simply felt a very subtle feeling.

This could only mean that this person was not a master.

That was strange!

As for Leo, he obviously had this kind of intuition too, and he was on guard at this time.

According to what he had heard from Leo, Gerald closed his eyes slightly as he used his magic technique. When he opened his eyes again, there was a strange purple light flashing in his eyes.

The purple rays of light were like two rays that were shooting in four different directions.

“The Thunder Godly Pupil?!”

Leo, who was standing aside, was also shocked.

However, when he saw that Gerald was fully focused, he did not say anything else.

At this time, he only felt as though it was truly strange. ‘Mr. Crawford is clearly the deity. So, why is he simply refusing to admit it, then?’

‘He even knows how to use the Thunder Godly Pupil! That is already even more self-explanatory in itself!’

'It must be because the deity has his own plans and intentions. I should not be talking and asking too much about it. Otherwise, it will not be good if I were to offend and make the deity angry.'

Leo secretly thought to himself, and he felt even more respect for Gerald as he waited at the side.

"Leo, you told me a lot about essential qi just now. One of the points was that I would certainly be very aware of it when there is another strange aura around me. I feel as though I have already found the suitable adaptable body that you wanted me to find. It is very near us!" Gerald could not help but feel a little surprised.

According to Leo, the powerhouse aura would give him a very strong feeling. Besides that, his essential qi would also automatically give him a very cold sort of feeling.

If the energy was soft and gentle, the aura would feel even more feminine.

What the lady in white needed was a woman with a soft and feminine aura in her so that she could become her adaptable body.

Gerald found a suitable adaptable body using the Thunder Godly Pupil.

“That might be possible. Actually, although adaptable bodies are rare, they are also not scarce. It is mostly that kind of woman who is born with a spiritual nature. They could more or less be used as an adaptable body!” Leo said.

“It is just about ten miles away! Let’s head over there!”

As soon as his voice fell, Gerald’s figure quickly moved toward the direction.

This location was already very close to the entrance of the mountain.

There was a small village outside the mountain.

At the entrance at this moment, several young men were surrounding a woman. Moreover, it seemed as though a boy who looked about the age of sixteen or seventeen years old was injured and lying on the ground at this time.

He was struggling to get up so that he could fight with these young men. However, he was quickly kicked down to the ground.

“Let go of my elder sister!”

The young boy grabbed a few pebbles from the ground and threw them directly at the heads of the several men.

As a result, the few men kicked him again, and he flew more than ten meters away.

“Brother!”

The girl looked to be about twenty-three or twenty-four years old, and she was shouting in a very distressed voice at this time.

“Hahaha. So, what now? If you don’t want to see your younger brother getting beaten up, you should just get into the car and accompany us for a little while. It is indeed the first time I’ve ever seen such a beautiful girl!” One of the young men said as he grasped the woman’s chin.

“Get lost!” The girl struggled desperately.

“We are from the Sime family, little beauty. Do you think you can continue living if you were to offend us?” The young man threatened her again.

“You... you... don’t you guys have any regard for the law at all?!”

The several young men were still holding firmly onto the girl’s wrist.

“The law? The Sime family is the law!” One of the young men said as he grinned.

After that, he rushed forward as he tried to force himself on the girl.

At this moment, someone suddenly grabbed his collar from the back.

Then, the young man was subsequently lifted up by a gentle force.

Chapter 1336

“Who is it?!”

The other four men also reacted at this moment.

This was because this person had come forward at such a fast speed, and this group of people could not even see what was going on.

So, they hurriedly took out their daggers, one after the other.

“Mr. Crawford said that you guys deserve to die!”

That’s right. This person was none other than Leo.

Gerald and Leo had been following the aura, and they had followed it all the way here, only to witness the scene that was unfolding before them.

This was when Leo had decided to take action.

“Who the heck is Mr. Crawford?! We are from the Sime family! Are you tired of living?! You’d better let go right now!” The few men said at the same time.

“Mr. Crawford said that the people from the Sime family deserve to die even more!”

After he was done speaking, Leo exerted some slight force. After that, the person in his hand was thrown about twenty meters high up into the sky.

It felt as though Leo was simply throwing a chicken into the sky.

After he had fallen to the ground, he struggled a few times, and then, there were no longer any more movements from him.

“What?!”

When the few men saw this, they were all in shock.

They immediately threw their daggers to the ground, one after the other, before they knelt in front of Leo.

“Master! Please spare our lives, master!”

However, Leo did not care so much.

All he could remember was that Mr. Crawford had said that these men deserved to die.

So, Leo simply snapped and broke the necks of the two remaining men in an instant.

After the pair of siblings were saved, they hugged each other in fear.

The scene just now had absolutely frightened the girl to death.

Right then, she looked at Gerald and the murderous uncle who was slowly walking toward them.

“You don’t have to be afraid. We will not hurt you!” Gerald said as he walked over with a smile on his face.

“Thank you! Thank you for saving us!” The girl said as she nodded slightly.

Gerald looked at the girl as he used the Thunder Godly Pupil to observe her.

The aura came from this girl indeed, but the aura on her body seemed to come and go.

It seemed as though she had an adaptable body, but on the other hand, it seemed as though she did not have one.

Based on the situation, it was very likely that she had come into contact with another person with a suitable adaptable body. Moreover, her encounter with this person had happened not too long ago.

“You don’t need to thank us. Since your brother is holding a bamboo basket, could it be that the both of you were heading up the mountain to gather some medicinal herbs?” Gerald asked.

The girl protected her brother who was already wounded and bruised all over after getting beaten up as she nodded.

She was obviously still afraid of Gerald and Leo.

“The both of you live in this village?” Gerald asked again.

The girl nodded again.

“If there is nothing particularly important or urgent, it would be better for you not to head up into the mountain. It is too dangerous for the both of you. What are you going to do if you run into a wild beast there?”

When Gerald saw that the both of them seemed to be quite fearful of him too, Gerald did not want to continue asking them too much.

“We have to go up the mountain to gather some medicinal herbs so that we can brew some medicine for my grandfather!” The young boy spoke up at this time. “Furthermore, I am not afraid of any wild animals or beasts. I can sense them and know even before they come near us!”

“Hm?”

Gerald glanced faintly at the young boy who had been badly beaten up.

Gerald only smiled wryly and did not say anything else. He simply nodded before he left.

“Mr. Crawford, it seems as though that woman does not have an adaptable body!” Leo, who was beside Gerald, suddenly spoke up.

“That’s right. Although she does not have an adaptable body, she must have been in contact with someone who has an adaptable body. We will go back and give uncle the medicine to treat Sierra first. After that, we will come back and look for them again!”

After Gerald was done speaking, the both of them quickly left and disappeared very soon.

“Sister, the both of them have already gone far away!”

At this time, the sixteen or seventeen-year-old boy suddenly said at the entrance of the village. He had been lying down on the ground, as though he was listening to something.

“How many times have I told you not to let any strangers know about your abilities? We do not even know who they are and what kind of people they are. Brother, are you still hurting?” The girl said.

“No, I am not in any more pain. Let’s go! We can go into the mountain to gather some herbs. I want to gather some Cherish Herbs to treat Rosie’s mother. Rosie has always been very kind to our family! Besides that, that brother and uncle who saved us just now have also been very kind to us and have done us a very huge favor!” The young boy said.

Chapter 1337

At this time, Gerald and Leo had already returned to Gerald’s uncle’s house in the shanty town.

“Gerald, why are you only back now? Did you encounter any trouble along the way?” Monica asked as she hurriedly came forward to greet him when she heard Gerald’s voice.

“Fortunately, it was just some small obstacles!” Gerald said as he nodded slightly.

“Gerald, who is he, then?” Monica could not help but wonder when she saw Leo, who was dressed in rags.

“He is my friend. Monica, help me clean up the guest room later. I will talk to my uncle so that Leo can stay here for the time being! By the way, Monica, where is uncle?” Gerald asked as he looked inside the house.

“Uncle went out to run some errands!” Monica said.

“I have already gotten the medicinal herbs that are needed. I will go and help Sierra change the dressing for her wounds first. After that, I will accompany Leo to buy a shirt! We still have something else that we have to do tomorrow!” Gerald said.

“Ahh?! Why are you so busy? I wanted you to teach me some of your skills!”

Monica looked at Gerald with a pouty expression on her face. However, she listened to Gerald’s instructions and went to clean up the guest room.

Gerald spent two hours helping Sierra change the dressing on her wounds.

This way, after Sierra's arm recovered, there would be no scar, and it would be perfectly reattached.

After they were done eating, Gerald brought Leo to his room. They were preparing to return to that village tomorrow. This time, Gerald would certainly be able to find a suitable adaptable body for the lady in white.

To be honest, it was a little wicked to be seeking an adaptable body.

After all, according to Leo, if a soul lingered on in an adaptable body for more than ten days, it would cause severe damage to the original soul in the body.

For instance, Gerald did not even know whether the original and genuine Queena was dead or alive at this time.

Gerald could not help but feel a little self-reproach when he thought of that extremely kind young girl.

Although he was not the one who had brought this upon her directly, he was indirectly related to this incident no matter what it was.

If he had not made the mistake of entering another realm, he would not have made the mistake of releasing her and letting her out.

So, this time, Gerald was already prepared to search for many adaptable bodies.

Gerald was also willing to compensate them regardless of how much money they would ask for it.

If everything went well, he would be able to successfully save the lady in white.

Gerald would also constantly help her change her adaptable body so that they could avoid harming or taking any innocent lives.

As for that pair of siblings, they were an extremely important and invaluable clue.

Early the next morning, Gerald and Leo went to the village.

What Gerald would not have expected was that the young boy whom he had rescued yesterday would actually be squatting in front of the entrance of the village as soon as he arrived at the entrance of the village.

He was holding a knife in his hand, and he was slashing at the place where the bodies had flown around yesterday!

After killing those men yesterday, Leo had casually thrown their bodies on the grass by the roadside.

When Gerald walked over, he saw that the scene had already been cleaned up.

“Big brother! Uncle! The both of you are already here?”

As soon as the young boy saw the both of them, he hurriedly stood up as he asked in surprise.

When Gerald and this uncle had saved him and his sister, he had realized that this uncle was extremely well-versed in martial arts.

As for this elder brother, the young boy could feel that he was even more mysterious.

So, they had left a very deep impression on the young boy.

“Hm? It looks like you’re waiting for someone. Could it be that you were waiting for us?” Gerald could not help but ask as he smiled wryly.

“Yes, I was waiting for the both of you! I could hear you coming toward the village. So, I knew that you must be here to look for me and my sister. Moreover, you seem to have said that you needed my sister’s help yesterday!” The young boy said.

Gerald and Leo exchanged glances with one another at this time.

It seemed as though this kid was not as simple as he looked.

It was only then that Gerald suddenly thought of what the young boy had said before they had parted ways yesterday.

Chapter 1338

He had said that he could hear and sense danger, and he could escape as soon as he predicted that there was any form of danger.

That was the reason why he was not afraid of any wild animals or beasts in the mountain at all.

“How can you hear it?” Gerald asked.

If it was true, this young kid was indeed a little special, then. Gerald could not even sense anyone or anything all the way to the shanty town which was so far away, but this young kid could actually sense him coming in advance. It was rather mysterious!

“Hehe! My sister said that this is my biggest secret! By the way, big brother, uncle, why are you looking for my elder sister?” The young boy said.

“Why don’t you take us to see your sister first? To tell you the truth, I have something that I need your sister’s help with!” Gerald said frankly.

“Okay!”

After that, Seth led the two men toward his house.

“Brother Gerald, Uncle, can the both of you teach me some fighting moves? I want to be as strong and powerful as both of you so that no one will dare to bully me in the future! I can only run away when I sense and predict danger. However, there is no way for me to fight back at all, just like what happened yesterday when those b*stards caught hold of my sister!”

Seth begged on the way back home.

Seth did not know why, but he felt as though Leo, and especially Gerald, were particularly easy to approach and get close to.

That was the reason why Seth dared to speak his mind in front of them.

“You want to learn some fighting moves from us, but you have not told us how you have such supernatural powers. How did you know that we were going to come and find you today?” Gerald asked as he smiled wryly.

Of course, Gerald would not make Seth reveal his secret to him in vain. If Seth were to tell him his secret, Gerald would certainly help him to get what he wanted, then.

“That is a secret, and it is my biggest secret. But Brother Gerald, you have to keep your promise. If I tell you my secret, you and uncle will have to teach me how to fight, then!” Seth said.

He was truly very interested in martial arts.

Leo smiled before he said, “Even if you did not tell us about your supernatural powers, we could also guess what it is. Young kid, you must be clairaudient, right?”

“Clairaudient?”

Gerald was surprised.

This vocabulary sounded very strange and mysterious to him.

Even Gerald would not have known this.

However, it was obvious that Leo seemed to know even more than Gerald did in certain aspects!

True enough, Seth was extremely surprised, and his eyes widened in shock as he said, “Uncle, how could you tell at a single glance?!”

“Hahaha! Some people have the same skills as you or even stronger skills than you have where I came from!” Leo said in a domineering tone.

“However, it seems as though you have not received any special training at all. So, how is it possible for you to possess this kind of ability, then?” Leo asked as he scratched his head.

“My guess was right indeed. The both of you are truly people with great abilities! Hehe. I am indeed clairaudient. Based on my calculations, I think that I can hear sounds up to about five hundred miles away. That is how I can sense if any dangers are approaching.” Seth said.

“Sigh! I originally thought that I would be able to make a fortune because of this magical ability that I have. However, I realized that being clairaudient does not mean anything at all. I cannot make any money, and I cannot even afford to treat my grandfather’s illness.

That is why I have to go into the mountain to gather some medicinal herbs!" Seth said as he sighed.

"Leo, how do people gain clairaudience? I'm guessing that they must have gained this ability through a certain method, right? I don't think an ordinary person would be able to become clairaudient simply through any cultivation or training!" Gerald asked out of curiosity.

"Well, we will have to ask this young kid, Seth, about it. We should ask him how he became clairaudient. When I transformed in the beginning, the abilities that I gained were infinite strength!" Leo said.

"Moreover, some sort of elixir is needed to achieve that kind of mutation!" Leo said.

Gerald nodded.

'Leo came from Jaellatra, which is a very strange and mysterious place.'

'Many abnormal changes and transformations can occur there. Therefore, it would be understandable if a person went through a

transformation there. However, Seth has been living here all this while. So, how did Seth come to possess a certain special ability just like Leo, then?’

Gerald could not help but wonder.

So, he hurriedly asked Seth about it.

Of course, Seth was not a foolish person, and he was actually very witty and intelligent.

Therefore, Seth only told Gerald the truth after he had made Gerald swear repeatedly that he would teach him martial arts after he had told him everything.

“Brother Gerald, I gained this special ability inside a snake cave in the mountain when I was twelve years old. I ate one of the fruits there, and then I ended up like this. Besides that, there were many weird paintings and murals inside the cave...”

“Where is that snake cave?” Gerald asked as stared intently at Seth.

This world was indeed very amazing. Since Seth could encounter such good luck and fortune with his hearing, there had to be other hidden secrets inside that snake cave.

Gerald speculated that if that were indeed the case, he would have to go and take a look at that particular snake cave.

“It is up on the mountain. I still remember the exact location of the snake cave. Brother Gerald, I can take you there later if you want!” Seth said.

“Okay! I will have to trouble you, then!” Gerald said as he nodded.

Seth’s name was Seth Laird, and his sister’s name was Suri Laird.

Their parents would often be away all year round, and the both of them usually lived with their grandfather.

However, Seth's grandfather was weak and frail, and he needed medicinal herbs to preserve his life.

Seth also mentioned another sister named Rosie Slow as he spoke. Suri was Rosie's personal secretary, and Rosie was the one who was giving them the money that they needed to treat their grandfather's illness.

Therefore, Seth had always regarded Rosie as their savior and benefactor.

If Gerald's guess was right, Rosie had to be the person that he was looking for. This would be the only way that he could explain the source of the adaptable body aura on Suri.

"Sister, look who's here!"

At this time, Seth shouted out loud as he stood in the yard.

Not long after that, Suri walked out of the yard, and the whole yard was instantly filled with a strong medicinal fragrance.

“Where did you run off to again? Dr. Hadskis is checking grandpa’s pulse now. Quiet down a little!” Suri said.

After she was done speaking, she looked at Gerald and Leo who were standing behind Seth.

She was startled for a moment before she said, “It’s you guys...”

It was obvious that Suri still had a strong sense of fear in her eyes.

Although Gerald had saved her life, the way that they had killed those men yesterday would make any ordinary woman feel scared and afraid.

Also, just as Gerald had expected, there was no longer any aura lingering around Suri’s body at this time.

“Miss Laird, we do not have any malicious intentions. However, there is something that I need your help with. I will do you a favor if you can do me a favor. How about that?” Gerald asked as he smiled.

“I... how can I help you?” Suri asked as she pulled her younger brother to her side.

“I heard Seth saying that the only woman that you have been in contact with yesterday is none other than Chairman Rosie Slow. So, I would like to ask for your help to arrange for me to meet up with her!” Gerald said.

“You want to look for Chairman Slow?” Suri asked, a little worried.

Gerald simply nodded before he walked toward the medicine jar where the medicine was being decocted.

“This prescription of yours will only treat your grandfather’s symptoms, but it will not be able to treat the root cause of your grandfather’s illness. If your grandfather takes this medicine for a long time, he will not only grow more and more dependent on the medicine, but his body condition will only deteriorate even more!” Gerald said.

“You... who are you guys?!”

It was obvious that Gerald was right, and the expression on the latter’s face changed in an instant.

“Sister, Brother Gerald and this uncle are good people, and they are also people with great abilities. They are looking for Sister Rosie because they want to ask her for her help so that they can find someone. Also, Brother Gerald has already said that he will help us heal grandpa!” Seth hurriedly said.

“Really?”

“Of course, it’s real!”

“Seth, this is an oxyblood pellet. Split it into twelve portions before brewing it for your grandfather. You can feed it to him once every month for the next twelve months. Your grandfather’s illness will be fully cured after a year!”

As Gerald spoke, he handed an oxyblood pellet over to Seth.

“You don’t even need to check my grandfather’s pulse first?” Suri asked in surprise.

“No. I can already guess what kind of illness your grandfather has simply by looking at the prescription. We have no other ill intentions. We simply want to ask Chairman Slow for her help with something important!” Gerald said sincerely.

Suri struggled for a while, but based on Gerald's pristine appearance, she could tell that he was not lying to her.

So, she nodded as she said, "Okay. I will help to arrange a meeting with her for you. However, Chairman Slow is not available right now as she is currently in a meeting. She will only have some spare time later in the afternoon!"

At this time, Gerald suddenly received a text message on his cell phone.

[Hurry up and come back! Something has happened!]

It was a text message from Monica.

"Hm?!"

Chapter 1340

Gerald felt a little apprehensive as soon as he saw the text message.

What could have happened in the shanty town?

It seemed as though his uncle had not returned yet.

No. He would have to rush back to take a look.

At this time, Gerald raised his head to look at Seth.

“Seth, could you help me listen and see whether something is happening in the shanty town that I came from?” Gerald asked.

Seth hurriedly agreed.

Then, he knelt on the ground as he listened attentively.

“Yes. It seems as though many people have suddenly appeared there. Many people are all gathered together currently. However, I do not know what is going on!” Seth said.

Gerald frowned as he thought about the situation.

This was bad!

It had to be the people from the Gunter family!

Felton was the one who had injured Sierra, and his uncle was the one who had fought back and driven him away.

So, the Gunter family would not let them off just like that. Moreover, they would certainly know of their whereabouts.

A hint of anger flashed through Gerald's eyes at this time.

"Leo, let's go back!"

At the shanty town.

Seth's hearing was indeed accurate.

All of the people in the village had indeed been gathered out on the main street of the shanty town.

Moreover, it was a group of masters from the Gunter family who were watching over them at this time.

Monica could not escape, and they had captured her as they brought her before Felton.

Felton was standing with his hands behind his back at this moment as he squinted slightly.

“Where is Gerald? You’d better tell me right now. Otherwise, my subordinates are going to start killing these people now! This time, that master will not be here to save all of you!” Felton said coldly.

“I do not know who Gerald is! You are that b*stard who cut Sierra’s arm off! You are simply a beast who will not even let a child off!” Monica was extremely furious, and she simply glared at Felton as she cursed angrily at him.

When Felton heard this, he simply shook his head as he smiled bitterly.

“I know that there is a master hiding here in this shanty town. Perhaps you are not afraid at all. However, I think that you should not try and take any more chances. I already have a way to deal with

that person. This time, I am not only looking for Gerald, but I also want to look for that man to take revenge on him! So, beauty, if you don't want to end up like that stinky brat and have your arm cut off, you should just tell me the truth right now!" Felton warned her once again.

As he spoke, he suddenly stretched out his hand as he grabbed hold of Monica's neck.

"I do not know who Gerald is!"

Monica stretched out her hands to hit Felton as she struggled to get out of his grasp.

"Well, alright then. I can tell that you people will not give in unless you see blood! Since that is the case, I will kill a few of you right now to set an example for the others!"

Felton put some strength into his arm, and he was already prepared to break Monica's neck.

At this time, the other masters from the Gunter family were also prepared to kill a few people.

“Young lad, you will pay with your life!”

A loud voice suddenly sounded in his ears.

This voice was very deafening and loud, and it came before anyone appeared with a sudden burst of dust.

After that, a small pebble broke through the rising dust as it flew directly toward Felton’s temple.

Felton subconsciously let go of Monica as he dodged the pebble.

The pebble pierced through a thick tree directly.

Felton took two steps backward as he knitted his brows tightly together.

“A master! This shanty town is indeed not that simple!” Felton said, smirking in anger as he looked at the two figures that were walking toward him at this time...

Chapter 1341

“So you truly are here, Gerald! As I thought, nothing on this planet is too hidden for me! My judgment will always be accurate!” shouted Felton as he flashed a faint smile.

“Gerald! Hurry and beat this villain to death! Not only was he the one who sliced Sierra’s arm off, but if you had arrived a second too late, he would’ve already killed me too!” yelled Monica as she glared at Felton, her initial fear slowly dissolving.

Gently patting Monica’s head, Gerald then looked at Felton with a faint smile before saying, “I really hadn’t expected you to be this confident, Mr. Gunter. Regardless, aside from your ‘judgment’ that I’d be in this village, what else have you managed to predict?”

“Oh? Curious, aren’t we? Well, I predict that all your training and skills will be erased by me today! Following that, I’ll bring you back to the Gunter Manor for my grandmother to deal with you! Or would you rather I destroyed you myself?!”

“You’re overwhelmingly confident, I’ll give you that. A little too confident, I’d say, since you’ve yet to do anything!”

“What can I say? I’ve always been this way!”

Hearing that, Gerald then nodded before saying, “I see, I see... Alas, I’ll have to disappoint you today, Mr. Gunter. Leo, take action! And be careful of the Dead Annie!”

“Affirmative!” roared Leo as he raised his head before taking a step forward...

A split second later, an explosive sound erupted around Leo as dust flew all over the place!

Though he could sense that the ground—and even the mountains—were quivering from the immense power that Leo was releasing, Felton simply displayed a playful smile before scoffing, “So it seems you’ve found yourself a helper! Big deal!”

The second he realized what was truly happening, however, Felton found himself freezing in place as his smile slowly disappeared.

Amidst the dust, Felton could see Leo’s body continuing to grow bigger and bigger. By the time he was done growing, Leo stood at least three meters tall, a complete giant of a man! As if that wasn’t

already intimidating enough, the muscles on his body now seemed to resemble a steel-like texture!

“...H-huh...?” muttered Felton as his eyelids began twitching rapidly.

Before Felton could even recover from his shock, Leo had already begun dashing toward him! As if that wasn't already enough, even though he wasn't all that close to Felton yet, Leo had already used his overwhelming aura to lock Felton firmly in place!

“This... This isn't good...!” muttered Felton under his breath as he immediately tried to use the Gunter family's magic artifact that he had brought along... The Dead Annie!

However, Leo had already been ready for Felton to resort to that tactic. Realizing what Leo was trying to do, the hulking man then let out another ear-piercing roar!

The force of the roar itself caused Felton's eardrums to ring wildly, sending his mind completely blank!

With his body temporarily paralyzed, Leo was easily able to toss Felton up into the air... Before leaping up himself and punching Felton toward the earth, directly in the chest!

Hearing his bones crack, Felton instantly spurt out a mouthful of blood, his entire world now spinning as his body rapidly descended to the ground.

While Leo was preoccupied with Felton, Gerald himself had been busy fighting the Gunter family's masters, though 'fighting' was pretty much an overstatement. After all, he had swiftly dealt with all that family's masters as easily as he was cutting vegetables for dinner, and they were all lying dead in a pile now.

Moving back to Felton, his body collided so hard against the ground that it caused a massive hole to form around him! By the time the dust settled, Leo was already walking toward the paralyzed man, his iron fists clenched as he got ready to punch Felton again. There was no doubt that if this second punch landed, Felton would truly end up being nothing more than minced meat!

Seeing that, Gerald—who was already done with the Gunter family's masters—immediately yelled out, "Leo, wait!"

"With all due respect, Mr. Crawford, not only has this arrogant and domineering kid committed far too many evil crimes, but he's also lied to us straight to our faces! I truly thought that he would turn out to be an incredible master, but as it turns out, he's nothing but a

useless person!” replied Leo who clearly looked like he hadn’t had enough fun yet and wished to continue attacking.

An observation that Gerald had made—after Leo’s transformation—was the fact that Leo ended up being a bit too keen on smashing things.

Regardless, Gerald quickly replied, “Just don’t kill him yet! After all, he’s the eldest young master of the Gunter family! What more, I’ve heard that Lord Gunter really dotes on him a lot!”

“...That’s right! I’m glad you’re still a bit realistic, Gerald! It’s true that my grandma dotes on me most, so if you truly do end up killing me today, then she’ll surely tear you to pieces! With that in mind, hurry and tell this monster to back off so that you can go back with me to see my grandmother! If you do, I’ll consider giving you another chance!”

By the time Gerald had ordered Leo to stop, Felton was already scared half to death. After all, ever since he was a child, he had been extremely powerful and had never truly taken anyone seriously.

The fact that he was completely helpless before this mutated monster was a dumbfounding experience for Felton, and before

Gerald had shouted, Felton had truly thought that he wasn't even going to be able to leave any last words.

Whatever the case was, since Gerald had told that monster to wait, that surely signified that he was now having second thoughts knowing how strong the Gunters were!

Chapter 1342

“Chance? Whatever could you be talking about?” asked Gerald as he looked at Felton—who was still lying on the ground—before clapping his hands.

“Well, if you let me off today, I'll tell my grandmother not to come over and make things difficult for those living in this shantytown! If you don't, well... My grandmother will surely cause a bloodbath to happen here!” replied Felton.

“I'm not sure what delusions you're having, but I only told Leo not to kill you immediately since letting you die like this would surely

minimize your grandmother's suffering! Now that would be a true pity!" sneered Gerald with a smile.

The second he saw Gerald's menacing smile, Felton felt as if his entire body—and possibly even his spirit—froze.

Seconds later, he stammered, "...W-what exactly do you mean by that...?"

"Believe me when I say that I've been wondering how to deal with you throughout my journey here. In the end, I've concluded that you're still slightly useful to me. With that in mind, I can't just allow you to die so easily! Whatever the case is, go clean up the scene first, Leo! You can leave this kid to me!" ordered Gerald as Leo immediately began properly disposing of the many fresh corpses.

Gerald, on the other hand, went ahead and retrieved the Dead Annie from Felton's hand. Unlike the previous instances of the flower, however, this one looked like it was made out of pure gold.

"What exactly is this, Mr. Gunter?" asked Gerald.

“It’s the Dead Annie Mother!” replied Felton while glaring at Gerald. Though he was angry, he no longer exuded the arrogant and domineering attitude that he earlier had.

“Humph! You wanted to kill me earlier, didn’t you, you b*stard? I’ll be killing you instead now!” shouted Monica out of the blue as she walked up to Felton before slapping him hard on his cheek!

Eyes widened in shock, Felton glared daggers at Monica, immense murderous intent in his eyes as he roared, “You... You b*tch! You must truly be tired of living! Don’t you know that I hate being slapped in the face the most?!”

Though his rage was clear as day, since Leo had severed several of Felton’s meridians earlier, Felton couldn’t even gather the strength to get to his feet!

As he continued struggling to get up, Gerald squatted by his side before slapping him on his other cheek!

Turning to glare daggers at Gerald next, he was immediately greeted by many more severe slaps!

By the time Gerald eventually gave him room to breathe, Felton found himself gritting his teeth in seething rage as he said, "...Could you guys truly be unafraid of death? I'll be sure to have my grandmother kill all of you if it's the last thing I do!"

Even when he was young, nobody had ever dared to treat him this way! To think that these people were actually slapping him so much despite knowing which family he belonged to!

"I implore you to wake up, Mr. Gunter. If you haven't already noticed, you're already in my hands now. Do you really think you'll be able to stay alive long enough for you to ever talk to your grandmother again? Speaking of that old woman, I'm not letting her off either!" replied Gerald as he lifted Felton off the ground before tugging him toward the middle-aged man's yard.

Once they were there, he dropped Felton to the ground before kicking Felton a few feet away!

Following that, Gerald began filling three bowls with water before slowly swirling the fresh liquid in each of them.

Confused, Monica—who had been following him closely this entire time—asked, "...What are you doing, Gerald...?"

“Ah, I’m brewing a sort of poison! It’s known as inexorable witchcraft!”

“...And it involves water?”

“Not entirely, but its effects will be doubled with water!”

Hearing that, Felton—who still had a cold gaze in his eyes though traces of fear could also be seen reflected in them now—then asked, “...Inexorable witchcraft? ...What exactly does it do?”

“I’m glad you asked! You see, among all the secret techniques, this is one of the most vicious kinds of witchcraft! Once it starts, your entire body will begin itching. Eventually, the itch will get so bad that you’ll begin scratching yourself, but don’t think it’ll end after that. Oh no, you’ll continue scratching and scratching till all your skin peels off, and eventually, you’ll scratch yourself to death!” explained Gerald.

Widening his eyes even more, Felton then warned, “Y-you b*stard! I dare you...! You won’t do it! ...I-I can tell that you’re bluffing...!”

Ignoring him, Gerald simply continued finishing up the poison. Once he was done, he squatted right next to Felton's limp body before tilting the brew of inexorable witchcraft dangerously close to him...

Realizing that Gerald was dead serious, Felton quickly began begging, "...P-please, I was wrong, Mr. Crawford...! I'm the one at fault here, so please, please don't do it, Mr. Crawford...! Understand that I only came here to capture you under grandma's orders...! Hell, she's not even the puppet master of all this! With that in mind, you shouldn't be bearing your grudges against her! Regardless, again, I emphasize the fact that I was forced to do this! Y-you said I was going to be of great use to you earlier, right? Let me prove my worth to that statement! I won't fail you, I swear!"

"Oh? Is that so? Well, why don't you tell me a bit more about this Dead Annie Mother, then?"

"G-grandma told me that since regular Dead Annies can already be used to suppress and restrain your functional yin energy, the Dead Annie Mother would have allowed me to subdue you with nearly no effort at all! It's also the Gunter family's most prized possession, but anyway, why don't we negotiate this out? If you promise not to use that poison on me, then I'll teach you how to utilize the Dead Annie secret technique, and that includes how to use the Dead Annie Mother! With that in mind, please, please spare my life...! What do you say to that...?" asked Felton as he gulped.

Chapter 1343

"That honestly doesn't sound too bad an idea! Additionally, I'd like to ask you a few other questions... If you answer them honestly, I'll consider not planting the poison inside you!" sneered Gerald.

"Y-you can ask me anything! I swear to answer honestly as long as I know the answer to them! Just please, spare my life...!" pleaded Felton, incapable of thinking about anything else aside from surviving right now.

After all, while he had initially planned to use his grandmother's superiority to scare Gerald off, Gerald appeared completely unfazed by his threats! What more, Felton was truthfully extremely terrified of the witchcraft that Gerald had just brewed up! That b*stard's methods were simply too sinister and vicious!

While Felton truly wished that he could just eat Gerald alive at that moment, he was well aware of who was in power now. As a result, he honestly began teaching Gerald how to use both the Dead Annie and the Dead Annie Mother secret techniques. He also made sure to answer all of Gerald's questions as truthfully as possible.

Once Gerald was done with his questions, Felton looked straight into Gerald's eyes before saying, "...There, I've already answered every question you asked, and I'm sure I've even added some information that you didn't ask for... I've told you everything I know...! With that in mind, you can spare my life now, right...?"

"Spare your life? While it's true that the score between both of us has now been settled, at the end of the day, you're still the person who sliced off Sierra's arm! With that in mind, I still haven't settled that score with you yet, but I have the perfect solution to that issue! I'll just implant the poison into you and with that, I'll consider any bad blood we had before this to be done and over with!" replied Gerald with a smile.

"...You... You...! You b*stard! How dare you make a fool out of me?!" roared the enraged Felton as blue veins instantly began revealing themselves on his forehead.

"So what if I did! Were you truly thinking that I would just let you off, you silly boy?" sneered Gerald before tilting the contents of the bowl onto Felton!

In no time flat, Gerald had successfully implanted the inexorable witchcraft into Felton's body!

“You utter b*stard! I’ll kill you! I’ll... I’ll slice you up into a thousand pieces if you don’t remove the poison right this instant!” cried out Felton almost hysterically as he instantly began desperately struggling on the ground.

Watching as strong emotions of anger and fear appeared on Felton’s face, Gerald simply replied, “Remove...? You have no idea why it’s called inexorable witchcraft, do you?”

“...Is there meaning behind that name?”

“While it’s only considered to be one of the more vicious witchcrafts among the secret techniques, it’s without a doubt, the most powerful, and for good reason too. After all, there truly is no way of removing it! Just so you know, only records of creating this particular witchcraft have been found in the secret techniques book. With that in mind, nobody truly knows how to remove it! Regardless, you don’t have to worry too quickly since I haven’t activated the poison. However, the effects of the inexorable witchcraft will instantly begin taking effect the second you use your inner strength! Consider this a warning and don’t blame me should a time come when you activate your inner strength on your own accord and trigger the poison! Another thing to note is that even if you manage to find a master to attempt to help remove the witchcraft from your body sometime in the future, make sure you

don't accidentally use any essential qi to force it out!" explained Gerald with a laugh.

"...There... There's no way to remove it?! You...!" growled Felton, feeling immensely frustrated. Despite being infuriated, however, he didn't dare say a word to Gerald. The only thing he could do to calm himself down was to grab onto the dirt on the ground.

While he wanted to attempt begging for mercy, he refrained since Gerald had already implanted the witchcraft in his body anyway. With that in mind, as long as Gerald felt dissatisfied, he could easily trigger the poison, causing things to very quickly turn extremely ugly.

At that moment, Leo—who had already transformed back to his original state—walked over and kicked Leo a few times before saying, "Everything's done, Mr. Crawford! Heh! Why's this young lad not dead yet? Is there even a reason to keep him alive?"

"He's still slightly useful to me, though you can destroy his inner strength later before tossing him into the cellar and locking him up there. Also, I'll be entasking you with staying here in the shantytown to protect Monica and the other villagers. While I've already told Felton to send a text message to tell the Gunter family's subordinates to change their target, I'd feel better if you stayed back here, just in case!" replied Gerald.

“Very well, Mr. Crawford. What will you be doing in the meantime?”

Oh, I’ll be locating Rosie Slow! Don’t worry, I can go on my own!”
said Gerald before immediately turning around to leave, intent on
looking for Seth and Suri again.

Chapter 1344

“Come along now, young lad! I’m tossing you into the cellar!” said
Leo with a chuckle before lifting Felton with a single hand.

In his current state, Felton felt like he was nothing but a tiny chick
who didn’t even dare to fight or talk back.

As for Gerald’s side of things, Suri had made sure to contact Rosie
once noon came, telling her that someone wished to meet up with
her.

Due to how much Rosie trusted Suri, she agreed to meet Gerald despite her busy schedule.

With that, Gerald, Suri, and Seth then headed straight for the company—in Qerton City—where Rosie was currently at.

Upon meeting her, Gerald could immediately sense that Rosie had a very strong aura, just as he had expected her to have. In other words, she had a perfect body for the lady in white to adapt to.

Regardless, with the trio now standing before her, the fair-skinned and beautiful woman—who looked like quite a domineering chairman at around the age of twenty-seven—asked, “You’re Mr. Crawford, correct? Suri told me that you were looking for me. How can I help you?”

“A pleasure to meet you, Chairman Slow. I’ll cut straight to the chase and say that I require you to come someplace with me. More specifically, I’d like to borrow you for less than three days. Of course, I’m not asking you to do so for free. From what I’ve heard from Suri, your company appears to currently be experiencing a massive financial crisis, am I correct? I’ll say it now that should you agree to my request, I’m willing to compensate you with over ten times the

amount of what you currently owe!” replied Gerald without beating around the bush.

Upon hearing that, Rosie found herself frowning slightly. With a bitter smile, she then said, “I apologize, Mr. Crawford, but what exactly do you mean by ‘borrow’? I’m afraid what you’re asking for is simply too inconvenient for me to oblige to!”

Though she had immediately turned down his request, Rosie couldn’t help but wonder who this handsome and refined person was. What did he even mean by ‘borrowing’ her? What more, the amount she needed to tide over her company’s financial crisis was at least a hundred million dollars! Going with what he had suggested, wouldn’t ten times of that amount to a billion dollars?

Due to it clearly sounding unbelievable, Rosie quickly found herself concluding that Gerald wasn’t a reliable person. With that in mind, she simply stood up to leave so that she could be done with this queer conversation.

At that moment, a shout could suddenly be heard coming from outside, stating, “Mr. Caffin! You can’t just go in like that! Our chairman’s meeting up with a guest right now!”

“Bah! All she’s meeting is a pimp, isn’t she! Now get out of my way! I’m meeting Rosie!” declared Mr. Caffin as he slammed the office door open.

Following that, everyone watched as a robed old man—who looked to be around the age of sixty—sporting a goatee and a felt hat on his head, entered the room alongside his bodyguard. If the four people inside the office didn’t know any better, they’d surely have assumed that old man was from some band!

Hands in his pocket, Mr. Caffin then said in a carefree manner, “Your subordinate truly is too ignorant, Rosie! Can you imagine her actually trying to stop me from entering your office? How could she not know that you’re already engaged to me!”

“I beg your pardon, Titus! Have you gone mad? Who on earth got engaged to you? Also, do you really think that my office is someplace you can just barge into whenever you feel like it?” retorted Rosie.

From what Gerald could see, Rosie’s disgusted expression was more than enough to tell him that she wasn’t the least interested in Titus at all.

“Regardless, aren’t you interested in finding out why I so anxiously came over to look for you today? Worry not, I’ve got you covered.

See, with your mother currently so ill and in a vegetative state, I went ahead and took the initiative to find a top-notch doctor for you! The doctor in question is Dr. Yivian Zouch, and he's well-known for curing several other patients who were also in vegetative states!" explained Titus as he quickly introduced Yivian to Rosie.

Upon hearing that, Rosie—who had initially been planning to scowl and chase Titus out of her office in anger—found herself holding her tongue as she gulped and turned to look at Dr. Zouch before saying, "...Is he the one?"

"Indeed I am, Miss Slow. Just so you know, Mr. Caffin pleaded to me for the longest time before I finally agreed to come over! He's really been willing to spend a lot of effort on you!" said the doctor as he rested his left arm against his back while stroking his goatee with his right hand, a pose that suggested that he truly was a world-renowned expert.

"Hear that, Rosie? Do you see how much I care about you now? Speaking of which, who is that pimp anyway?" snorted Titus as he looked at Gerald with hostile eyes.

Chapter 1345

“I’m not acquainted with him either. Either way, I have other things to attend to, Mr. Crawford. Also, I’m afraid I won’t be able to help with your request. Now if you’ll excuse me, I need to take care of my mother for now!” said Rosalie.

Quite honestly, if it wasn’t for the fact that Suri had been the one who had brought Gerald over today, Rosie would’ve already issued for someone to chase him off so that she wouldn’t have had to waste so much time on him in the first place!

“I truly implore you to reconsider my proposal, Chairman Slow. After all, I’ve already offered you very generous terms, and you’ll be able to receive a mountain of money without even doing much. To sweeten the deal, I’ll treat your mother’s illness as well as long as you agree to my proposal!” replied Gerald.

“That’s right, Chairman Slow! He’s capable of that!” added Suri.

Truthfully, Suri had been trying her best to recommend Gerald to Rosie since she wanted him to help treat Rosie’s mother. After all, Suri knew for a fact how much of a toll Chairman Slow’s mother’s illness had always been on Rosie.

What more, Suri was certain that Gerald could help since she had already had the honor of witnessing Gerald's magical medical skills when he treated her grandfather. After all, it had only taken about half an hour—after ingesting Gerald's oxyblood pellet—for her grandfather's expression to grow much ruddier than before. In fact, he was even capable of standing again by that point!

With that in mind, Suri knew for a fact that calling Gerald a genius doctor was no exaggeration.

“...You... Can treat illnesses as well?” asked Rosie in utter disbelief.

She had already had the impression that Gerald was a slightly unreliable person. After all, despite having just met her, he had claimed that he was going to help her tide over her company's financial crisis. As if that wasn't already enough, he was now saying that he was capable of curing her ailing mother! There was no way she was going to fall for that!

“Humph! I appreciate the gesture, Mr. Crawford, but I find myself more willing to trust in Dr. Zouch!” replied Rosie as she spoke her mind without the slightest hesitation.

As she ordered her subordinate to chase him away, Gerald simply smiled subtly before saying, “Suit yourself, Chairman Slow! Hopefully you don’t come to regret your decision!”

While Rosie didn’t reply to that, Titus—who had been standing impatiently at the side this entire time—snapped, “D*mn it, brat! Don’t you get what Rosie’s trying to say? You’re just some young lad who’s not even seen much of this world yet! How dare you even claim that you’re capable of curing illnesses! Honestly, I think you just have ulterior motives for trying to get close to my fiancée! Throw this man out immediately, Hiro!”

“With all due respect, Mr. Caffin, I’ve vowed never to attack anyone without a weapon. Had this man attempted to attack you first, I would’ve definitely taught him a lesson by now. However, not only has he not done that, but he’s not holding a weapon at all! He simply looks like a regular Joe and I can’t hurt someone like that!” replied Hiro—who had been standing behind Mr. Caffin this entire time with his arms crossed—as he squinted his eyes slightly before shaking his head.

Though Hiro exuded a rather arrogant and domineering aura, Titus simply retorted, “This is no time to be thinking about your oath! Just teach him a lesson already!”

“And just what exactly are you ordering him to do? Whatever the case is, Mr. Crawford came over to meet me today, so don’t you start doing anything to him now! You can’t just act recklessly as you please just because you have a master by your side!” replied Rosie.

Though she didn’t really like Gerald, in the end, Suri was the one who had brought him here. Since she treated Suri like her sister and best friend, Rosie had stepped in to stop Titus, just to give her some face. Had Suri not been the one who invited Gerald, however, Rosie secretly hoped that Titus would just teach this lad—who didn’t know any better—a good lesson.

“You hear that, brat? Rosie’s already pleading on your behalf, so you better get lost right this instant! Otherwise, I’ll show you how powerful I truly am!” warned Titus.

Hearing that, Gerald simply chuckled with a wry smile as he shook his head.

“...You... You brat! What are you laughing about?!” growled Titus.

“From the looks of it, he seems to be looking at you with disdain, Mr. Caffin!” said Yivian who had been silent this entire time.

“I’m laughing at how overly confident you are! To think that someone like you is still worthy of the title ‘Mr. Caffin,’ ... Aren’t you even aware of your own capabilities?” retorted Gerald as he moved for the door to leave.

However, Hiro suddenly blocked Gerald’s path—his arms still crossed as he squinted his eyes—before saying, “Now that you’ve insulted Mr. Caffin, I can’t allow you to just leave like that! I’m teaching you a lesson right here and now!”

The way he was speaking suggested that everything in the world was nothing but pitiful ants to him. It was the arrogance of a warrior.

“You know, after hearing you keep yapping on and on about teaching me a lesson, I’ve grown curious as to where you get your confidence from! Regardless, I do hope you understand that healing your mother and dealing with your company’s financial crisis is only out of goodwill. Refusing my request is another matter altogether!” warned Gerald after turning to look at Rosie with a wry smile.

“For f*ck’s sake! Are you actually threatening my fiancée right in front of me?! Beat him to death already, Hiro!” ordered Titus.

“It seems that I’ll have to make an exception to deal with this ant today!” replied Hiro as he shook his head, seemingly still reluctant to break his oath as he took a step forward.

Chapter 1346

The second Hiro got close enough to Gerald, however, Gerald simply raised his arm and slapped Hiro’s face with the back of his hand. While Gerald hadn’t really used that much force—simply making use of the inertia from raising his arm to hit Hiro— Hiro ended up spinning twice in the air before finally landing atop a coffee table that, in turn, smashed into pieces!

With his cheek now extremely swollen as he spat out several broken teeth, by the time he realized what had just happened, Hiro was beyond shocked and dumbfounded.

This person had been this strong this entire time?! Hiro couldn’t even resist that sudden and strenuous blow in the least! How was that even possible?!

By this point, Titus was so shocked that he could only gulp in horror as he took a step back.

Even Rosie found her eyelids twitching slightly. Gerald's skill was now apparent, and it well-exceeded her expectations.

"...D-do you have any idea who I am? I'm the boss of the Caffin Group!" yelled Titus as soon as he regained his wits.

"Caffin group this, Caffin group that... I've grown numb of hearing you say that! Are you honestly still trying to use that Caffin Group of yours to threaten me?!" snarled Gerald as he glared at Titus with a frigid expression.

The glare alone made Titus feel as though an electric current had just run through his body. Shuddering in fear, he had no idea where this panic stemmed from, but whatever the case was, he was so frightened that it felt like his life didn't even belong to him anymore!

With that, he immediately nodded in his terror-stricken state as he said, "P-please don't hit me! You're right! Everything you say from now on is true!"

"I don't have a need to hit you just yet!" growled Gerald as he stared disdainfully at Titus.

Following that, he then turned to look at Rosie before saying, “Miss Slow, I’m giving you a minute to reconsider it. Again, note that as long as you agree to my request, I’ll treat your mother as well as give you compensation of over ten times what you need to tide over your financial crisis!”

After slapping Hiro, Gerald’s true aura had flared to life, and in Rosie’s eyes, he no longer looked like he was just some swindler. Rather, he now felt like someone extremely powerful and terrifying!

In other words, she was finally starting to believe in Gerald’s words.

While Rosie truly wished to agree to his request now, she simply couldn’t get used to Gerald’s insufferably arrogant attitude!

“...Humph. You said you’d help me, but I wonder how true that statement really is... After all, my company’s facing a massive financial crisis, and I need at least a hundred million dollars to fully clear the issue! You said you were willing to compensate me ten times that amount, right? Does your statement still stand?” replied Rosie, feeling extremely unconvinced.

“...Oh? It’s only a hundred million dollars?” asked Gerald, feeling genuinely surprised.

Seeing that, Rosie took in a deep breath. Who even was this person...?

“...That’s right! While I only require a hundred million dollars, ten times of that would turn the compensation sum into a billion dollars! Are you willing to just hand that over?” asked Rosie.

“Why not?” replied Gerald with a nod.

“...What? You... Since you’re so willing to fork over a billion dollars, then why don’t you just give me ten billion dollars instead?!” said Rosie, her eyes now completely widened in shock.

Even Titus was shocked speechless at that moment!

However, upon seeing Gerald shaking his head, a hint of contempt was reflected in Rosie’s eyes as she thought, ‘Hah! And here I thought you truly were some wealthy man!’

She instantly ate her words, however, the second she saw Gerald fish out a cheque from his pocket.

“This here is a special cheque that I got from the bank before I came here. There’s no limit to this cheque, you see, and as long as you agree to my request, you can fill up whatever amount you wish to obtain on this cheque! There’s no need to hold back at all! Just write down whatever figure you can imagine!” said Gerald as he handed Rosie the cheque.

“You...!”

By then, everyone in the room was staring at him in utter shock.

Chapter 1347

Nobody would’ve believed Gerald’s statement had they not heard him say it with their very own ears.

Even so, while Rosie had undoubtedly heard his proposal very clearly this time—and was also aware that the special cheque was the real deal—she still had a nagging feeling that Gerald was simply bragging.

While she had no idea how he had even managed to obtain that cheque, Rosie truly wondered if he would really be willing to just

hand the money over if she wrote down five billion dollars on the cheque, an amount that Rosie couldn't possibly even dare to raise any further!

Titus himself was too dumbfounded to even close his mouth now!

"It's been two minutes. Have you already thought everything out? If you have, then go ahead and fill in whatever figures you like on the cheque," added Gerald with a subtle smile.

"...You're the one who's suggesting this, alright? I can truly write whatever amount I wish for on this cheque, correct? No take-backs?" grumbled Rosie in her annoyance.

"As I've said, any amount you wish for!"

"...Fine! You're filthy rich, aren't you? Then I'm writing down five billion dollars on the cheque!" declared Rosie, still thinking that Gerald was simply bragging.

In her mind, she was wondering if he had watched one too many television dramas in his life. To think that he would actually dare to just hand her a cheque so casually before telling her to fill in any amount that she wished for! If she didn't know any better, she'd say

he was simply mimicking the protagonist of some drama series he watched! Hell, even in dramas, the ones receiving the cheques would still write down manageable amounts of money for the protagonists to pay! Nothing exceeding tens of millions of dollars, that's for sure!

However, since Gerald was still bragging this excessively, Rosie wasn't about to give face to him. Did he truly think that he was some protagonist?!

"I'm warning you, once I write that amount down, the cheque will be effective under the law and you'll have to call the bank immediately to hand me the money! It's still not too late to retract your statement, you know!" said Rosie, giving Gerald her final warning.

"Chairman Slow, please don't take him too seriously!" pleaded Suri—who had been too shocked to even say a word this entire time—out of the blue.

"I've already said it multiple times, any amount you wish for! I've also already notified the bank in advance, so as soon as you write however much you want down, you can instantly go to the bank to have the money transferred directly to you!" replied Gerald with a wry smile on his face as he shook his head in resignation. It was just five billion dollars, right? Was there even a need to make such a huge commotion about it?

“You...! Very well! I’m writing it down right this instant!” said Rosie as she bit her lower lip before writing down that exact amount on the cheque.

Following that, she immediately called up the bank using the number written on the special cheque.

After a short while, the call was picked up and a sweet female voice immediately said, “Good day! You must be Miss Rosie Slow, correct? Please tell me the amount you wrote down on the cheque as well as your bank account number! We’ll be transferring the money over to your bank account immediately after!”

Gulping, Rosie then stated the information that the sales personnel had asked for.

Following that, the sweet-sounding lady then immediately began the transferring process while saying, “Thank you! Please wait a moment!”

It was obvious by this point that customers like Gerald didn’t even need to be there in person for such transactions. After all, his words alone were the greatest certification, and soon enough, Rosie received the ‘transfer successful’ notification on her cell phone.

Staring at her phone, Rosie found herself gulping before turning to look at Gerald in her complete disbelief. He truly had just given her five billion dollars!

“...You... How... How could you possibly be this rich...? What if I wrote fifty billion dollars instead of five billion on the cheque just now...?” asked the flabbergasted Rosie.

“So what if you wrote down fifty billion dollars? It’s just an extra zero, right? Big deal,” replied Gerald.

He truly couldn’t imagine why people placed so much importance on money. After all, Gerald himself was constantly wondering how he could just return to living his life as a pauper! Oh, how he missed his relaxing and enjoyable days as a poor person!

“It... It’s just an extra zero...?!” exclaimed Rosie, shocked once again by Gerald’s words.

Could someone just come over and beat this man up already?! He was simply too much...!

“Regardless, since the payment part is already settled, let’s head off!” said Gerald.

“...Head off? Where to...?” asked Rosie curiously.

“Isn’t your mother seriously ill? I’ll be curing her first and following that, I hope you’ll stick to your end of the deal and allow me to borrow you for three days. Once the three days are up, your task will have successfully been completed. If you still feel like the compensation money isn’t enough by then, you’re free to ask me for more. Hell, if you prefer another cheque like the one from earlier, I’m fine with that too,” replied Gerald as he slid a hand into his pocket before walking to the door.

The second he walked past Titus, Titus instantly bowed respectfully toward Gerald while shouting, “Brother!”

He was now regretting judging Gerald solely by his appearance. After all, Gerald was a truly capable and resolute person.

Chapter 1348

What more, for a person to so casually hand a blank cheque to someone and tell them to just write however much they wanted... How wealthy was he even to be able to just say something like that?!

Understanding that he had almost offended this powerful figure earlier, Titus now truly felt like dying.

Regardless, though Gerald simply chose to ignore Titus as his hand grasped the doorknob, he suddenly heard another person—from behind him—calling out, “Brother!”

It was Hiro, and the injured man—who had finally managed to struggle to his feet—flopped onto the sofa before adding, “I... I was using my full strength against you earlier, thinking that you’d never be able to withstand my blow... But you were simply too powerful just now...! Tell me, brother, how much strength did you actually use on me earlier...?”

Turning back to casually look at Hiro, Gerald simply replied, “Strength...? I barely used any at all! Truth be told, it was just a simple wave of my hand!”

“...What?!” exclaimed the stunned Hiro as Gerald simply walked out the door without turning back.

It was at that moment when Rosie was finally willing to believe that this honest-looking man truly was an authentic, outstanding, and mysterious top master. He was so powerful that quite honestly, Rosie felt like she had no other choice but to trust in him.

Still, she couldn't help but wonder why he wanted to borrow her for three days... Was he... planning to do something with her...?

Then again, he had already spent so much money to compensate her, and he was even willing to treat her mother... Why would he do all that just to spend some time with her...? Perhaps...

As several messy thoughts ran through Rosie's mind, she found herself quickly snapping out of it. What the hell was she even thinking about!

Her pretty face now blushing extremely hard, Rosie simply began running after Gerald.

...

Meanwhile, back in the Gunter Manor, Yreth was facing one of her subordinates as she asked, “Well? Have you managed to contact Felton yet? Didn’t he head out to capture Gerald? Why isn’t he back yet?”

“While it’s true that he had gone out to capture Gerald, Mr. Felton sent a message to us earlier stating that Gerald had escaped into the mountains, Lady Gunter! While we immediately attempted to get in touch with him after that, we quickly realized that we couldn’t get to him! From what we can assume, he chased Gerald so far up the mountain that he reached an area that didn’t have any signal!” explained one of the subordinates respectfully.

“From what I know, the current Gerald is simply a Spirit Earth Realm master at best. With that in mind, it shouldn’t be a problem for Felton to defeat him at all! What more, he’s even brought along the Dead Annie Mother—our family’s most treasured possession—just in case! With it, even if he were to run into a top master similar to the one he had previously bumped into, that master wouldn’t be able to combat our magical artifact at all! Which begs the question, what’s taking him so long...? ...I want all of you to immediately head up the mountain as well to assist Felton!” said Yreth with a frown.

“Affirmative, Lady Gunter!” replied the subordinate before running off.

Yreth herself simply turned to look at the screen before her.

“...You can stop hiding now. I already knew you were listening in to our conversation from the very beginning!” said Yreth coldly.

Following that, a young woman slowly walked out from behind the screen... It was Yume.

She didn't know why and when it started, but Yume simply couldn't forget about Gerald, and she found herself constantly thinking about him. She truly hoped that she could see him again, though she didn't even know if that could ever happen. Still, in the end, what she truly wished for was for Gerald not to ever end up getting caught by her grandmother.

“You must be overjoyed that I haven't been able to catch that young lad yet, aren't you?” asked Yreth as she glared at Yume, her voice frigid.

“Why do we even need to capture him, grandma...? He bears no grudges or grievances against us, and he was even planning to pay you a visit before this! With that in mind, why did you have to collude with the Judgment Portal to harm him...? Can't all this be settled just by having a good chat with him...? Once that's done, you can just let him off, right...?” pleaded Yume, her eyes reddened.

“Hah! You truly have fallen head over heels for him! I really can’t imagine what sort of magic that kid has... Ever since you were young, you’ve always despised and rejected any guys who’ve tried to make advances on you. Despite that, to think that you would actually end up getting enchanted by him after getting to know him for just a few days!” retorted Yreth, clearly feeling exasperated since she felt that Yume wasn’t living up to her expectations.

“...L-love...? I’m not...!” replied Yume, blushing hard as she nervously tugged on her own clothes to calm herself.

“Who do you even think you’re kidding? Regardless, I hope you know that aside from achieving the Gunter family’s goal, grandma’s anxious to find him for your own good as well! I’m saying it now that you falling for him is only going to end up in tragedy! It’s simply destined that you won’t ever be able to be together with him! He just isn’t someone within your grasp! Can’t you understand what I’m trying to say here...?” said Yreth, feeling extremely tempted to lose her temper. However, she was an old and experienced person, which was why she switched her initially vicious expression into a resigned one as she looked at her granddaughter.

“...Why... Why do all of you keep saying that I’ll never have a happy ending with him...? How can all of you just say that so confidently?!”

replied Yume in a panic, her heart now filled with immense anger and resentment as she recalled Master Ghost's words back then.

"...Mind you, I shouldn't be telling you about this yet, but if I don't, I truly am afraid that you'll be silly enough to do something stupid in future! So be it! I'll tell you everything today!" declared Yreth as she took in a deep breath.

Her expression now solemn, Yreth then turned to look at Yume before asking, "Tell me... Do you truly know who Gerald is...?"

Chapter 1349

"...Who is he...?" asked Yume, her eyes turning serious.

From the moment she had first met him, Yume could already tell that Gerald was no ordinary person. While it was true that Gerald was the heir of the wealthiest and most influential family on the planet, her grandmother still wouldn't have needed to devise so many tactics and traps just to capture him if he was merely a regular person. Hell, her grandmother even ended up colluding with the Judgment Portal just to deal with Gerald!

All this begged a question. Though it was true that Gerald's current training far exceeded that of his peers, Yreth could most probably deal with him easily. In other words, there really wasn't a need for those from the Judgment Portal—who were even stronger compared to Yume's family—to collude with the Gunters just to deal with Gerald. After all, what need was there to join forces if both parties were clearly capable enough to capture him on their own?

With that in mind, it was no wonder why Yreth's words aroused Yume's curiosity.

Nodding, Yreth then sighed before saying, "...Very well! Come along with me!"

Following that, Yreth led Yume to her exclusive secret room which Yume knew was a forbidden area that only the current head of the Gunter family was allowed to enter. Upon arriving there, Yreth gently touched a mechanism which resulted in the door to the room being slowly opened.

Upon taking a single step into the room, Yreth triggered bright lights to suddenly flare to life, illuminating the initial darkness of what laid beyond the door. As Yume followed closely behind her grandmother, she now realized that the door led to a massive hall that was at least

four hundred square meters. Aside from that, it was also noteworthy that the stone walls surrounding the hall were made out of bluestone.

Regardless, after walking for a while, both of them eventually stood before a large coffin that was placed atop a high platform that lay in the middle of what seemed to be a lobby.

The coffin itself looked slightly strange, to say the least. It resembled a crystal eternal coffin, and the bottom of it was somehow levitating in the air. While the inside of the coffin wasn't all that clear, Yume could still clearly discern that inside it was the corpse of a woman.

After staring curiously at the woman for some time, Yume eventually realized that there was much more to awe in the room.

For one, bookshelves were sticking against every wall in the room, and each of them was filled to the brim with the Gunter family's most precious secret books. Aside from that, there was also an incense stand—which currently held several burning incense sticks—at the northernmost wall, and placed upright near it, was a piece of jade. Taking a step forward, Yume also noticed the presence of a big alchemy cauldron, its current contents exuding all sorts of colorful lights that honestly looked a bit strange and creepy.

Now at peak curiosity, Yume found herself saying, “Grandma...!”

“Since this is the first time you’re stepping into this place, it can’t be helped that you’d be a little curious. Regardless, this here is the secret room where our family keeps our most mysterious and prized possessions. While by right, only the Gunter head is allowed to even step into this room, I’m making an exception for you today!” stated Yreth rather casually.

Hearing that, Yume gulped before asking, “This... coffin.... Could it be holding the ancient corpse of that woman that we were previously searching for at the bottom of the ocean...?”

“That’s her, alright!”

Chapter 1350

“...Is she really that important...? Even Gerald is still looking for her... Honestly, had you not misled him with the Dead Annies back

then, he would've already succeeded in finding her by this point!" said Yume rather curiously.

"Well of course he's still looking for her! After all, this woman in white is one of Gerald's women!" replied Yreth as she squinted her eyes.

"...She's... Gerald's what? But... She's already been in that coffin for at least tens of thousands of years, hasn't she?" asked Yume, shaking her head in disbelief.

"Well, to be more specific, her name is Zyla Lockland, and she was Gerald's woman in his past life! Regardless, stop interrupting me and let me elaborate before you ask any more questions! You'll understand everything once I'm done explaining!" replied Yreth as she rested her arms behind her back before starting to pace back and forth as she slowly told Yume the entire story...

With her ears perked, Yume listened as Yreth said, "While I'm sure you already know that our family is an ancient one, I don't think I've ever told you about a sacred civilization that existed hundreds of thousands of years ago... It was known as the great civilization of antiquity!"

“Back then, ancient training sects were aplenty, so there were many who were able to train themselves to achieve spiritual enlightenment. With that in mind, plenty of great and powerful warriors were born, and they were capable of near-inhuman feats such as breaking mountains apart, working miracles, and even controlling the five elements! They truly were omnipotent beings!”

“However, among all of them, there was one person who trained himself to the point where not only did he achieve spiritual enlightenment, but he was also able to become immortal! From the day he managed to achieve immortality, he gained the ability to live both in heaven and on earth without needing to reincarnate!”

Yume found her eyes widening even more now, finding everything that her grandmother said to be both weird and mysterious...

“Even so, the brilliance of the great civilization of antiquity was just like a meteor. In other words, though it was both bright and dazzling, it was short-lived, and it didn’t go out slowly either. The entire civilization simply disappeared completely without a trace one night!”

Hearing that, Yume couldn’t help but ask, “But... If the great civilization of antiquity truly did exist—and the people back then were as powerful as you described—how could they have just disappeared or died out overnight, grandma?”

“It was due to the holy spirits!”

“...Holy spirits...?”

“Indeed! Mind you, there were plenty of holy spirits on the earth back during the great civilization of antiquity. However, for some unknown reason, the holy spirits suddenly began ceasing to exist! They just started disappearing out of the blue! Without being able to rely on the holy spirits, those who were still training to achieve spiritual enlightenment couldn’t avoid catastrophe, and their souls ended up getting dispelled. With that in mind, without holy spirits for support, the person with the Immortal Body wasn’t able to continue maintaining his ancient power!”

“...If that’s the case, then doesn’t that mean that all his efforts to become the most powerful person back then were wasted? After all, even he wasn’t able to resist the catastrophe!” replied Yume.

“That’s where you’re wrong!” said Yreth with a bitter smile on her face as she shook her head.

“...I’m wrong...? Then, does that mean that he managed to avoid the catastrophe, even though he was unable to maintain his Immortal Body?”

“That’s right. After all, he was the eternal top master during the great civilization of antiquity. Back when the catastrophe happened, all of the great masters were incapable of even fighting back, so they either ended up dying or fleeing if they could! That man, however, opted to undergo a supernatural transformation to deal with the situation. Since he was proficient in several supernatural transformation techniques, he chose to condense his primordial spirit and use an artificial reincarnation method to avoid the catastrophe. To complete that cycle, he needed to reincarnate nine times, and this is currently his ninth. He’ll finally be awakening again in this lifetime!”

Following that, Yreth had to momentarily pause to calm herself for a moment. Once she shook the feeling off, she then added, “The primordial spirit itself is known as the Herculean Primordial Spirit, and the Herculean Supernatural Technique was something that he came up with himself! With that in mind, do you understand now, Yume? Anyone who manages to get their hands on the primordial spirit will be able to train and achieve an Immortal Body! I’m saying it right now that what I’m now telling you is a very big secret! Very few people in the world even know about this!”

As Yume’s breath hastened, she then asked in disbelief, “Grandma... You couldn’t be saying that Gerald is the primordial spirit of that top master back then, right...?!”

Watching as Yume almost fell in her shock, Yreth replied, “It is indeed. I’m also well aware that aside from our family and the Judgment Portal, many others are trying to locate and get close to him as well!”

“Note that Gerald still has a lot of unlocked potential, and there’s plenty of room for him to further his development. With that in mind, both our family and the Judgment Portal are truthfully fearful of Gerald. Not only do we not dare to face him directly, but we’re also worried about hurting him too much. After all, who knows what would happen if we accidentally frustrated him so much that his full potential and abilities ended up being forced out? With that in mind, the only thing we dare to do right now is to capture him first! Once that’s done, we’ll slowly figure out how to deal with him!”

“In a way, this is all a gamble, and the only option is to win. With that, I hope you finally see the bigger picture now. Do you still think that Gerald is someone that you should be falling in love with?” asked Yreth coldly.

Hearing that, Yume could only take a few steps backward as powerlessness swept through her entire body. If what Yreth had said was all true... Then there truly was no way for her to even come close to being qualified to love him!

Chapter 1351

With that in mind, Yume suddenly found herself growing extremely envious of the woman that Gerald had fallen for. Shaking the thought off, she then asked. "...So... You retrieved the woman in white just so Gerald would take the initiative to come look for us...?"

"Indeed. After all, that is by far the safest way to lure Gerald to us! With any luck, we'll eventually be able to capture him! Regardless, I truly hadn't expected that he would actually manage to flee from us so many times! I was already prepared to receive good news from Felton ages ago, but to think that he was successful in escaping again!"

"...Say, grandma... The Herculean Primordial Spirit... Is it hidden within his body...? Does that mean that once you capture him, you'll have to harm or kill Gerald...?" asked Yume.

Shaking her head slightly, Yreth then replied, “As you’ve said, we only require the Herculean Primordial Spirit. Whether we kill him or not depends entirely on him!”

The second she heard that, Yume instantly knelt with a ‘thud’ before saying, “Please, grandma, I beg of you... Please don’t kill Gerald! Not only is he a good person, but since there’s no real reason to kill him, there’s no need for you to take his life then, right...?”

Pondering on Yume’s statement for quite a while, Yreth eventually said, “...I’ll be making the final decision on that. However, I can promise you that I’ll only kill him if he shows any resistance or tries to fight back! If he doesn’t, then I’ll keep him alive!”

Upon hearing that, Yume couldn’t help but feel like a heavy load had just been lifted off her heart. Looking at her overjoyed granddaughter, Yreth could only smile bitterly as she shook her head before saying, “Now hurry up and get to your feet already, silly granddaughter of mine!”

“Of course, grandma! Still, if not many people across the globe know about this secret, how did you find out about it? As a top master, I’m sure he had no shortage of enemies. With that in mind, it wouldn’t make sense for him to allow so many people to find him upon being reincarnated for the ninth time, right...?” asked Yume curiously.

“It seems that I’ve not doted on you in vain. Now wouldn’t it have been wonderful if Felton was half as smart as you were. Regardless, your doubts are indeed, warranted. While it’s true that he’s akin to an ancient and flawless god, nothing in this world is perfect. With that in mind, even though he managed to keep the secret hidden for tens of thousands of years, those determined enough to crack the code eventually managed to get that information, and Gerald himself had only been able to find out about so much due to this. As for our own family, we found out about the secret due to some vile villain sharing the information with us some forty years ago! Of course, he wasn’t doing it for free, and the condition to obtain that information was for our family to hand the Dead Annie Mother over to him!”

“Eventually, we found out that after obtaining the magic artifact, he had planned to annihilate the Gunters! To think that he nearly wiped our entire family through deception alone!”

“...So... Is this the same enemy who was seeking revenge on us forty years ago...? The one whom you sent all the societies to hunt down? So is the reason behind all that!”

“I’m glad that you’re finally understanding everything! Also, if it isn’t already evident enough, several forces have already found out about Gerald’s true identity and have already begun taking action. While we’re on the topic, you should know that Gerald’s rapid training

growth isn't due to him having some sort of special physique. Oh no, it's simply because someone out there is helping him unlock his many potentials. Oddly enough, that person isn't releasing all of it in one go, only in small bits at a time. To make it easier to grasp, you can imagine the person scooping water out from the ocean, one ladle at a time."

"However, knowledge of that only makes Gerald all the more terrifying. After all, Gerald is already this strong despite not even having unlocked his full potential! Should there come a time where he successfully regains all his power, then we'll all be mere ants to him! Just being stepped on by him would kill us! By that point, not only will the Gunters be unable to ever rise again, but we'll also constantly be facing disaster and tragedy! With that in mind, do you now understand why both our family and the Judgment Portal are so fearful of Gerald...?"

"Speaking of which, I'll have you know that I've secretly observed him in the past. Though he used to have a very weak temperament in the past and he was both wimpy and fragile at best, I can't pinpoint when it started, but he eventually grew more and more cold-hearted, careful, and meticulous. To make matters worse, he's growing even more quickly now than he ever has before! It wouldn't be a stretch to say that you'll notice obvious differences in Gerald even after just a few days of not meeting him! Such changes could be so drastic that there's a possibility that you won't even be able to tell who he is at all!"

Chapter 1352

“With that in mind, I hope you now understand what I’ve constantly been worrying about! His rapid progression in strength is a clear warning that action must be taken!” added Yreth, a solemn expression on her face.

Hearing that, Yume—whose mouth had been gaping wide for a while in her dumbfounded state—could only nod her head in agreement.

After being granted all this knowledge, Yume truly felt like the door to a whole new world had just been opened to her. After a brief silence, she then asked, “Then... What are the origins of our family, grandma...? Aside from that, I’m also curious about the great masters that managed to escape the great civilization of antiquity... Where did they end up running off to...?”

“Oh, they escaped all over the place! While some of those great masters remained here on earth, most of them chose to escape to

someplace known as Jaellatra instead. After all, there are enough holy spirits there to relatively sufficiently sustain them!”

“...Jaellatra? Where is it? Could it be someplace not on earth...?” asked Yume curiously.

Shaking her head, Yreth then replied, “While it’s a place on earth, it’s located within a narrow gap on this planet! Very few people are able to make it into that gap, and once inside, it’s even more difficult to leave!”

“As for the start of our family’s great history, it began when one of our ancestors accidentally discovered some miracles that were left behind some tens of thousands of years ago. It was also around then when they inherited something great, and after passing it down throughout the generations, the Gunters eventually ended up becoming one of the most influential families in the world!”

“...I see! I seem to understand everything a little better now!” replied Yume with a nod, feeling that she had now gained a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

“I’m glad to hear that. Now then, since you already see the bigger picture, I believe you won’t continue hindering me from doing anything in the future, right? After all, since things have already

gotten to this point, there really isn't any turning back anymore. Even if we hypothetically choose not to deal with Gerald in the future, he still isn't going to be letting our family off. In case you haven't noticed, the Gunters have already been living through a crisis ever since we boarded ship. With that said, now that you know that the lives of hundreds of innocent Gunter family members are on the line, I hope you're sensible enough not to continue being enchanted by such fruitless and futile love..." said Yreth, slight frustration in her voice.

"...To be completely honest, grandma, from what I've seen, Gerald isn't a cruel or ruthless person at all. Since we haven't fallen out with one another yet, perhaps there is still a way to make peace with him once we share everything that we know!"

"Hah! You're dead wrong there! You barely understand him at all, especially since he's changed so much from the last time you've met! Regardless, there isn't anything else to say about this anymore. After leaving this room, I hope you'll obediently remain inside our manor. Please don't make me have to worry about you any more than I need to!" replied Yreth as she waved her hand, signaling for her granddaughter to leave the room.

Though Yume clearly looked like she still had more to say, seeing how reluctant her grandmother seemed to continue talking, she chose to leave for the meantime instead.

The second the door to the secret chamber closed, an almost ethereal voice suddenly said, “It was wrong of you to tell her about our affairs... This could easily be the eventual cause of your precious granddaughter’s death! You know how foolish women can be after falling in love! There’s a high possibility that she’ll end up messing up our plans due to how much she loves him!”

“I know my granddaughter well, and I’m only trying to help her. She’s never fallen in love before this, which is why I told her everything so that she can finally understand how powerful Gerald truly is! If I had chosen not to tell her, then that ignorant and foolish girl would surely do something stupid for him, ultimately ruining all our plans! Telling her all that was my way of showing how large a gap there was between Gerald and herself. Hopefully that’ll lead to her finally giving up on him!”

“As for you. You’re the one who got us entangled in this situation in the first place. If you don’t fulfill your promise to our family at the end of the day, then I’ll never let you off, not even after I die and turn into a ghost!”

Chapter 1353

“Worry not, as long as you help me capture Gerald, I’ll definitely gain the ability to shuttle back and forth between earth and Jaellatra. With that, I’ll surely be able to turn your family into the most powerful force there without any issues! Besides, you already know about my background, don’t you? Hahaha! To think that Gerald would accidentally release me back then... This is surely god’s reward to me for remaining locked up for thousands of years!”

Turning around, Yreth looked at the piece of jade—that had previously been placed upright near the incense stand—as a black glow emanated from it. Not long after, the black glow began momentarily swirling in the air before finally forming the silhouette of a phantom-like humanoid!

Upon closer inspection, the phantom appeared to be a young man who had a hooked nose, and a pair of upward-slanting brows that laid above eyes that occasionally glinted evilly. Who would’ve imagined that this phantom-like humanoid—who had supposedly already existed for tens of thousands of years—would still retain the appearance of a young man!

“I’m going to be frank and tell you that I’m already regretting agreeing to collaborate with you in the first place, King of Judgment Portal... Then again, it was never a willing decision for me to work

together with your group and get entangled within all this. Truth be told, I have a feeling that that decision is going to end up becoming the eventual cause of our family's destruction! After all, just as I've told Yume, Gerald's getting way too terrifying too quickly based on his rapid progress alone!" said Yreth, a series of complicated emotions currently reflected in her eyes.

"Despite me risking so much, you—of all people—should know that the situation is much different for you, King of Judgment Portal! After all, you currently just exist as the thought of the soul, and that means that you're easily able to use the thought of the soul to control several people at the same time, not unlike your personal puppets! I, myself, am one of your puppets... Regardless, even if everything fails, you can simply continue to exist and eventually find another way to return to Jaellatra to continue being the young lord that you are. However, the Gunters aren't nearly as capable as you are when it comes to retreating! In fact, I have a feeling that even dying with our entire bodies intact will be difficult when the time comes! Do you even grasp how much the Gunters are risking here?" added Yreth.

"Hahaha! You're simply overthinking things! I have a feeling you're only this terrified since I told you a bit too much about Gerald's true identity... Truth be told, Gerald's far from frightening at the moment. After all, in my eyes, he's currently nothing more than an ant! Regardless, I trust you know that there's no turning back for you anymore. Gerald already knows who you are, after all. With that in mind, all we can do now is continue going according to plan!"

“Besides, you were the one who lusted for longevity! Upon finding out about that, I simply promised to bring you and your family over to Jaellatra—where you’d even have your very own place there—in exchange for making a few sacrifices... Think about it, once you’re there, you’ll be able to continue staying alive for at least another thousand years... Isn’t that alone worth any amount of sacrifices...?” added the King of Judgment Portal with a laugh.

“It’s honestly the only reason why I haven’t backed down yet at this point! Worry not, for I’ve already made up my mind that I’ll personally step up and capture him when it is necessary for me to do so!” retorted Yreth, her voice now both cold and gloomy.

“I’m glad to hear it! You know, it was the Herculean Primordial Spirit’s eighth reincarnation back when Jaellatra was still in turmoil. In order to obtain the Herculean Primordial Spirit, I attempted to break through the gap and come all the way to earth. Little did I know that I had severely underestimated the power of the gap. Upon crossing over, I was immediately struck by lightning, and my entire being was reduced to ashes. Not only that, but the thought of my soul was also trapped by others! Ever since that day, I’ve been far away from my family... With that in mind, if anyone should be anxious, it’s me!”

“I’ll have you know that I’ve been waiting thousands of years for an opportunity like this! That said, your assistance is key for me to get anything done! But whatever the case is, you don’t have to worry too much since everything is still under control!” replied the King of Judgment Portal.

“...Very well. I hope that the day we’ll eventually succeed together will arrive as soon as possible!” said Yreth with a nod.

“...Do you really think that you’ll be able to deal with him...? I’ve already told you many times to cherish your life since you have yet to completely disappear, even after all that you’ve done... Please don’t continue provoking him... You simply aren’t his match... Besides, your conspiracy is destined to fail!” said an extremely pleasant-sounding voice—that simultaneously sounded like an oriole—out of the blue.

Not only was it refreshing to listen to, but it also gave anyone who heard it a comforting feeling, as though one was being caressed by a soothing spring breeze.

Following that, Yreth turned to look at the woman in white that had just arisen from the eternal coffin...

As beautiful as a fairy, even the King of Judgment Portal found himself momentarily dazed before eventually shouting, “So you’re finally willing to show yourself!”

“Don’t get too excited. I only came out to warn both of you. From what I can see, the reason why both of you lack any grudges and grievances is because you’re only motivated by greed! This is your conflict and the only way it’ll possibly end is in tragedy!” said the woman in white—with her gorgeous red lips—as she sighed.

“Screw you and your disaster! What makes you so sure that both of us won’t be able to deal with Gerald? He’s only one person! Honestly, don’t you think you’re underestimating me a bit too much? I’m the King of Judgment Portal! I assure you that it won’t be long before this person—who’s gained your eternal admiration—ends up kneeling before me, begging me to spare his life and to let him return to simply being the young master that he is! Hahaha!” growled the King of Judgment Portal, hints of anger and jealousy reflected in his eyes.

Just as the woman in white had always been filled with admiration for the deity, the King of Judgment Portal himself had loved the woman in white just as much this entire time. Despite that, he was well aware that she only had the deity in her heart. The deity was her one and only, and the same went vice versa. It was as though to the woman in white, there was no other man on the planet

comparable to him. Knowing that, the King of Judgment Portal could only continue burning with jealousy.

Gritting his teeth, he then added, “Regardless, once I obtain the Herculean Primordial Spirit, I’ll be the master then! When that time comes, I’ll surely make you feel heartfelt admiration for me, and by that point, you’ll finally be convinced to be my woman! Worry not, for I’ll make you the top woman in the world!”

Chapter 1354

Upon hearing that, the woman in white could only shake her head in resignation.

Watching as her figure slowly faded as she returned into the eternal coffin, the King of Judgment—who was now seething in rage—roared, “...What the hell did you mean by that? Didn’t you hear what I just said?!”

“I think she’s made herself extremely clear, quite honestly,” said Yreth who had been watching the entire scene play out with her arms behind her back.

“...What do you mean by that?”

“You know what I mean. How could a woman who’s already been with an eagle ever fall in love with a mere locust?” replied Yreth without thinking her words through.

“... What did you just say to me...?! You b*stard!” growled the King of Judgment Portal, his face reddened in rage.

It was only at that moment when Yreth realized that she shouldn’t have spoken her mind out to him! Knowing how much she had messed up, the old woman immediately apologized, “I should’ve watched my tongue, King of Judgment Portal! Please forgive me...!”

“...Humph! Just hurry up and get your things done already! Regardless, I’ve already sealed her in with the formation method! I’ll have her witness with her very own eyes that I’ll succeed in achieving everything that I earlier said!” declared the King of Judgment Portal before turning back into a black glow and returning into the jade.

Meanwhile, Gerald currently had Rosie with him, as well as Seth and Suri. After successfully healing Rosie’s mother, Gerald had brought all of them to Seth and Suri’s home. While Suri herself was currently indoors, Gerald, Rosie, and Seth were chatting in the yard.

From what Leo had told Gerald, he needed to wait till at least midnight for him to perform the evocation technique. With how smoothly things were going, Gerald honestly wasn't all that anxious, which was why he still found the time to chat with the two.

Suddenly recalling the snake cave where Seth had gained his supernatural powers, Gerald asked, "Speaking of which, Seth... You told me that the snake cave was somewhere atop a nearby mountain... Do you remember its exact location?"

There seemed to be quite a bit of information that had been recorded within the snake cave, and it just so happened that all that information was relevant to Gerald.

His interactions with the Gunters had made him realize that if he simply continued aimlessly looking around for Mila and his second uncle, it was tantamount to him digging his own grave.

With that, he came to the conclusion that he needed to start finding out more about the world in order to better understand how the world worked. After all, he would eventually have to be a part of this path in the future anyway.

“But of course I remember! I’ve been there a couple of times before, and it honestly hasn’t been too long ago since I last went there! I could lead you there right now if you wanted me to, brother!” replied Seth with a nod.

“...Hold up, a snake cave? What snake cave? Bring me along with you! I want to have a look at it too!” said Rosie—who had been standing by the side this entire time—with a puzzled but curious look on her face.

As they continued talking about it for a while—still in the yard—the sounds of a table being flipped and bowls shattering could suddenly be heard coming from within the house!

Upon hearing Suri’s scream almost immediately after, Seth was instantly taken aback as he said, “...Huh? What’s going on?!”

Chapter 1355

Rushing to the door, the second Seth opened it, he was instantly greeted by the tip of a pistol being pointed at his forehead!

Upon recovering from his shock, he slowly backed off as several guards—dressed in suits—quickly began exiting the house together

with Suri as well as Seth's grandfather, both of them held at gunpoint.

"Nobody moves or I'll shoot!" yelled a middle-aged man—who seemed to be the leader of the group—as over a dozen more armed bodyguards rushed out from the woodshed behind the house.

Currently, everyone—who wasn't a guard—had at least a few guns aimed at them, though Gerald was by far the one being targeted the most.

Following that, the middle-aged man excitedly said, "For you to predict that Gerald would be here, you truly have incredible foresight, eldest young lady! We've truly made a great achievement this time!"

At that moment, a young woman and man—who looked rather handsome—walked out and stood side by side, smiling coldly as they looked at the scene before them.

"The honor of this success actually goes to Fernando here! After all, he was immediately able to guess who was responsible for the deaths of all those Sime family bodyguards! Following that, we came all the way here to set up an ambush for Gerald! To think that everything went according to plan! Hahaha! I'll be reporting this to

the Gunters right this instant! We'll definitely be given a lot of credit for our accomplishment this time!" scoffed the woman.

If it wasn't obvious enough by this point, the woman in question was Matilda from the Sime family. As stated by Matilda, the young man, on the other hand, was none other than Fernando, the captain of the Martial Arts Association—who had attended a banquet together with Aiden and many others—and was publicly defeated by Gerald at said banquet the other night.

From the looks of it, it seemed as though they hadn't given up on looking for Gerald ever since that night.

Thankfully for the duo, it wasn't long before they heard about the tragic deaths of several of the Sime family's subordinates. Being part of the Sime family, it was only natural for Matilda to investigate the matter. As for Fernando—who had been recuperating in the Sime Manor—he simply went alongside Matilda to look into the case.

After realizing that only a top master could have killed this many of their guards so devastatingly, Fernando immediately figured that aside from the Gunters, nobody else but Gerald could possibly possess such power in Qerton City.

While he was initially slightly doubtful about his conclusion, he still continued digging for clues and eventually wound up at Seth's house. All that led to the current situation.

To his delight, his assumption had been correct! Gerald truly was here! From that, Fernando was able to confirm that he truly was the one responsible for killing all those Sime family bodyguards.

"You flatter me, Matilda! If anyone's to be praised, it should be you! After all, upon hearing my proposal, it was your quick thinking that prompted us to set up this ambush in the first place! Without you, we wouldn't have been able to capture Gerald this easily!" replied Fernando, a wry smile on his face.

Following that, he glared at Gerald—who had caused his image to plummet the other night—before saying, "I bet you never expected this, did you? To think that despite your immense power, you'd still end up falling right into our hands! Keep in mind that dozens of armed men are pointing their guns at you now, so you'd best be on your best behavior and obey anything we say! If you don't, you better not blame us for killing you on the spot!"

"Speaking of which, I suggest that you don't report anything to the Gunters for the time being, Matilda. After all, just from how anxious they are to locate Gerald alone, you can tell how important he is to them! With that in mind, should he get picked up by the Gunter

family's subordinates, there's a high possibility that we won't end up getting anything despite all our efforts! Honestly, I believe that it would be wiser for us to directly meet the head of the Gunter family in order to bargain Gerald with them! Should things go smoothly, we could even have the Gunters teach us some of their secret techniques! If that truly happens, then my strength will definitely advance by leaps and bounds by the end of the day! Nobody in the Martial Arts Association will ever come close to rivaling me anymore!" added Fernando, his eyes filled with hope for that possible future.

"You're absolutely right, Fernando! If we're lucky, the Simes could get their hands on some of the Gunter family's assets! Who knows, the Simes could end up becoming the strongest and most influential family because of that! We truly are killing two birds with one stone! What an amazing idea, Fernando! My admiration for you now is boundless!" replied Matilda as she laughed joyously.

"Are both of you done chatting? Though you've said all that, it's not like you've actually captured me or anything, nor have you notified the Gunters about my presence. Also, are you really trying to threaten me with all those toys?" said Gerald as he glanced coldly at all the men aiming at him.

From Gerald's point of view, the guards were simply akin to children pointing toy guns at him.

Chapter 1356

With that in mind, Gerald truly felt like laughing at their attempt at capturing him.

“Humph! Boasting even when you’re about to die? How shameless! I hope you realize that I only lost that day since I was careless! Regardless, from the moment I lost, I knew that I’d never be able to forget how humiliating that moment was for the rest of my life! Knowing that, I swore that I’d kill you sooner or later to reclaim my glory, and now, you’re finally in my grasp!” declared Fernando before coughing slightly. From that, it was a clear sign that his injuries—that Gerald had inflicted upon him back then—hadn’t even properly healed yet.

“He’s right! We need to settle this resentment between us, once and for all! I definitely won’t be letting you off that easily this time!” scoffed Matilda before laughing maliciously.

In response, however, Gerald simply shook his head before saying, “What a pity...”

Narrowing his eyes, Fernando then asked, "...What did you mean by that? And why are you shaking your head? While I'm well aware that to you, I'm just some nobody—who you defeated—whose currently using dirty tactics that further plummets what little respect you had for me in the first place, I can assure you that not only am I talented in martial arts, but I was already a genius by the age of six! Can you imagine that? Even at that age, my intelligence had already surpassed a majority of ordinary people! With that in mind, you'd eventually get defeated by me anyway, even if I hadn't resorted to this tactic! I'll have you know that I have hundreds of ways to kill you!"

"...Oh? You were a genius from the age of six? Color me surprised! And here I was thinking that you were as dumb as a rock!" replied Gerald with a laugh.

Upon hearing that, Fernando instantly began seething with rage, and he was extremely tempted to walk up to Gerald and give him a few tight slaps, just to teach him a lesson!

Before he could do so, however, Gerald then added, "Look, I'll forget about all this and let you live if you release my friends and their family members. After all, I don't really think there's deep resentment between us in the first place. Just so you know, I've sworn to only kill those who hurt my friends. With that in mind, since you haven't done a thing to them, I'm still willing to spare you!"

“Also, just as you’ve said, I can’t deny that you’re talented, and I can assure you that if you train yourself properly in the future, you’ll surely have good prospects in the martial arts field. As for Miss Sime, you’re undoubtedly unruly and immensely annoying. It’d do you good to learn to be a little nicer and more prudent in order to get yourself good in-laws in the future. Regardless, what I’m saying is that not only do you not have to die here, but you also won’t have to die for the Gunters!” added Gerald with a sigh.

The second his sentence ended, several of the bodyguards instantly began cackling wildly.

“Haha! Has this guy gone mad already?”

“I know right? Despite there being so many guns aimed at him now—that could easily blow his brains out—to think that he’s still daring enough to ‘consider letting us go!’”

As the guards continued roaring in laughter while looking at Gerald as though he was some mad person, Fernando himself began laughing before saying, “And here I thought you were a smart man, Gerald! To think that despite your exceptional martial arts skills, you’re merely an idiot! Take a good, long look around you already! You’re already under my control with so many of my subordinates

aiming their guns at you! Have you truly gone mad?! Also... You said that you'd only kill those who dared to harm your friends, right...?"

Following that, Fernando retrieved a dagger from his belt, and with a swift slash, he left a cut mark on Suri's face!

Laughing as he watched Suri—who now had blood slowly dripping down her cheek—scream, Fernando then shook his head before turning to look at Gerald again before saying with a smile on his face, "Hah! Is this considered an injury? Are you dying to kill me now? Or perhaps I should go a little further? Come on, kill me already!"

"How idiotic... I've already given you two chances, you know? Even so, you still wanted to walk down this path so badly... Speaking of which, I was honestly slightly doubtful at the beginning on whether or not both of you actually thought that these guns were enough to deal with me. As it turns out, you've really been thinking that that's the case! Your stupidity truly is endless!" replied Gerald before raising a hand and waving it.

Following that, a clamor was heard as over twenty guns flew into the sky in unison! Too stunned to even register how all this was happening, everyone simply continued staring wide-eyed as the guns began falling to the ground again! As if that wasn't already shocking enough, everyone eventually realized that upon hitting the

ground, the guns had rearranged themselves to form the number four!

“...What?”

After witnessing that scene—that had happened in the blink of an eye—everyone was now paralyzed in shock. Even the smile on Fernando’s face had faded...

Chapter 1357

“...How... is any of this even possible...?” muttered the flabbergasted Fernando under his breath.

“I’ve already told you that those guns were nothing but toys to me. As for your guards, they only have as much presence as rag dolls! You truly shouldn’t have acted that rashly you know? Hurting my friend... You truly are courting death, aren’t you?” replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

“...I... I don’t believe that you’re that almighty! Men! Let’s kill him together!” ordered Fernando while gritting his teeth in resentment.

‘We’re of the same age... How could he be so much more powerful than me...?!’

By that point, all of the guards were already greatly aware of how dangerous their current situation was. What they were currently feeling was akin to them falling into a frigid cave with no way out. With nerve-wracking chills running down their spines, the guards knew that death could greet them at any second. However, they weren’t willing to just go out like this!

Wanting to live to see another day, their immense desire to survive allowed the guards to switch their fear into great murderous intent!

As they swiftly unsheathed their daggers before rushing toward Gerald—intent on stabbing him—Gerald simply waved his hand while shouting, “Utter rubbish!”

Following that, over ten people found themselves vomiting blood as they flew backward! Gerald had hit them with essential qi, and while it swiftly dealt with the guards—who were still flying backward—it also caused the courtyard’s floor to be completely ravaged!

Though about ten other guards remained standing, all of them were now completely paralyzed in terror!

Seconds later, a 'clang' was heard as the middle-aged man from before—who acted as the bodyguards' leader—dropped his dagger before shouting, "B-boss!"

Immediately after, the rest of his men quickly dropped their daggers to the ground as well.

Gerald, however, gave them no response, simply opting to rest his arms behind his back.

Understanding what Gerald meant, the leader of the group instantly gulped before ordering, "Retreat! Everyone, retreat!"

He had already sensed Gerald's murderous intent, and though he had been in several life-or-death situations before, never had he felt the omen of death so vividly before. Though it was obvious that Gerald had yet to show his true capabilities, the leader wasn't about to stick around to find out the extent of his power. After all, their guns were already worthless against him, what more their daggers! True to his words, they really were nothing more than ragdolls to him!"

Hearing their leader's command, the men instantly ran to the side.

Seeing that, Gerald smiled subtly before saying, “It appears you’re more intelligent than these two idiots here. Since you’re wise enough to retreat, you may leave with your lives intact!”

“T-thank you, boss! Men! Fall back!” announced the middle-aged man as he bowed deeply before leading his subordinates away from the scene.

Watching as their men left, Fernando and Matilda were now completely stupefied.

Trembling in fear, Matilda turned to look at Fernando before asking, “...W-what should we do now, Fernando...?”

Quickly recovering his wits, Fernando immediately placed his dagger near Suri’s neck before shouting, “You... You’d better not take another step forward, Gerald...! If you do, I’ll just kill her! You know how capable I am in terms of martial arts! She’s only a slash away from death, you hear!”

“Confident again? And here I was considering one final time whether I’d allow you to escape. Sadly, that chance is no longer available since you’re still stupid enough to threaten me! You’ll be dying an exceptionally horrible death!” replied Gerald as he took a step forward.

“You...!” retorted Fernando, at a loss of words. Had he truly just thrown away his only chance of escaping...?

“...Don’t give advice in hindsight...! Regardless, I know you’re a loyal person... With that in mind, why don’t we settle things this way? I let this woman go, and you’ll let me off! What do you say to that?” suggested Fernando nervously.

“So now you’re begging for me to let you go? I’m afraid you’re all out of chances!” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

In the flash of an eye, he then flicked his finger in Fernando’s direction! A light immediately shot out and—upon hitting Fernando’s palm—instantly mutilated it!

Completely shocked as he watched his hand fall to the ground, the pained Fernando found himself shouting, “Y-you...! How... How are you so strong...?! You... You demon...!”

Now filled with immense regret, Fernando found himself thinking, ‘What if what Gerald had said was right...? That if I hadn’t come over today to cause trouble, I could’ve eventually made good progress in my martial arts and maybe even end up becoming the president of the Martial Arts Association! After all, even he acknowledged my

talent...! However... It's... It's now far too late for regrets...! I truly have offended someone whom I couldn't afford to...!

Though he recognized his utter defeat, Fernando wasn't going to just give his life up without a struggle. With that, he held on to his still-bleeding hand as he rushed over to the wall, hoping to jump over it and escape!

Chapter 1358

Just as Gerald had said, Fernando was now pretty much as good as dead.

The second Gerald pointed his finger at him, Fernando instantly vomited blood before flopping lifelessly to the ground. Matilda herself was already screaming in terror as she tugged at her hair.

Falling to her knees before Gerald, she instantly began begging, "Please spare my life...! I swear none of what I did was on purpose...! Please, please don't kill me...!"

"You've been given enough chances. Now cease!" replied Gerald as he pointed his finger at her as well, sending a hollow knife slashing

across the devastated woman's neck! Falling to the ground, it was only a second later when Matilda breathed her last breath.

After witnessing all that had happened, Rosie found herself shivering as she said, "...How... How frightening... To think that you were able to kill so many people in such a short amount of time...!"

"I only kill those who deserve to die," replied Gerald casually.

At that moment, he suddenly raised his head and took a glance behind him. His eyelids twitching slightly, he then said, "...Seth, Suri, bring the old master and Miss Slow into the house first. I have something to attend to at the moment. Remember, do not come out no matter what sounds you hear!"

Before anyone could even question his intentions, Gerald had already turned around and jumped out the courtyard... Running all the way to the bank of a river in the village, Gerald eventually came across over ten corpses lying all over the ground. They were the bodies of those whom he had earlier allowed to leave.

Taking in a deep breath, Gerald then shouted, "...I've been expecting you... Reveal yourself!"

“While we’ve only been apart for a short period of time, you’ve already made such rapid progress in your strength... That alone only serves to further prove that you really are that man...! You know, from how much you were lying to me in the past, I often found myself wondering if you truly weren’t the person I once loved... However, not only have you mastered Thunder Eruption now, but your behaviors and actions are resembling your past self more, and more! With that in mind, tell me. Are you finally willing to admit who you really are?”

As a breeze blew across his face, Gerald turned to look at the woman who had finally chosen to show herself. Oozing with an aura of mysteriousness, the woman staring at Gerald—as she smiled seductively—was, of course, none other than Queena.

“And here I thought you had gone missing! After all, even after so much had taken place, you never showed up!” replied Gerald while looking at her.

“You still haven’t answered my question. Are you finally ready to admit that you’re him now?” said Queena, an expectant expression on her face as she walked toward him.

Slightly narrowing his eyes, Gerald then replied, “Truth be told, I don’t know yet either. However, what I do know is that the deity will

never fall in love with you, be it in the previous or this present life!
From what I can tell, he only loves the woman in white!”

“...You... What did you just say....?” asked Queena, her expression filled with rage.

“You should very well know what I’m talking about!”

“You...! Don’t get all cocky just because you’ve learned Thunder Eruption! You’re far from being able to defeat me! Just so you know, I came all the way here just to capture and bring you back with me! After all, you’d definitely be in much better hands with me compared to a situation where you got captured by other forces such as the King of Judgment Portal!” scowled Queena who was now so angry that she didn’t even feel like talking to him anymore.

Knowing that talking wasn’t going to get her anywhere, Queena simply stretched her hand out to attack him! In response, Gerald manipulated his Thunder essential qi to make a counterattack!

The second the two forces collided, an explosive sound was heard! Not only did the sheer volume of the sound cause several of the sturdy-looking trees nearby to snap clear in half, but even the ground began cracking, sending dust flying everywhere!

As Gerald found himself taking ten steps back, Queena retreated three steps herself.

“...That was a powerful Thunder Eruption... To think that your essential qi has already reached such a stage...! Had I been a few days later in my attempt to recapture you, I’d surely have lost!” said Queena—with a shocked expression on her face—as she looked at Gerald, wondering how he had made such massive progress in such a short amount of time.

Chapter 1359

‘Back then, Gerald could hardly withstand a single blow from me... It isn’t even a stretch to say that he was nothing more than a puppet to me just a few days ago! Even so, to think that he’s become such an exceptional person in his short absence... I hate to admit it, but at his current strength, he isn’t too far off from what I’m capable of... No wonder he’s been so confident...!’ Queena thought to herself.

‘While it shouldn’t be too difficult for me to defeat him at his current strength, capturing and controlling him will be near-impossible now! After all, from what I can tell, he can easily evade me now, and extremely easily too!’

Watching as Queena continued pondering the situation, Gerald simply glared at her before saying, “While I’m incapable of killing you at the moment, I’ll have you know that capturing me won’t be an easy feat!”

“...You... What did you say...? You wish to kill me...?” replied Queena in disbelief.

‘I’ve loved you for tens of thousands of years...! Tell me, are there any other women as loyal and passionate as I am?! To think that you’d actually think about killing me...!’ Queena thought to herself while gritting her teeth in resentment.

After a short while, she turned to look at Gerald before giving a firm nod and saying, “...Indeed. I’m well aware that I won’t be able to control you as easily as I had in the past. Still, I hope you haven’t forgotten that your friend, Jasmine, is still in my hands! With that in mind, it isn’t impossible for me to continue controlling you as long as I’m still able to manipulate her!”

“I figured you’d say that. Since you’ve finally decided to bring it up, go ahead and state your conditions! She has nothing to do with all this, so tell me, what should I do for you to let her free?”

Gerald hadn't forgotten that Jasmine was still in her hands. It was the reason why he had chosen to meet up with Queena in the first place—instead of avoiding her—upon sensing her presence.

“Oh, my condition is all but simple! Just get married to me and I'll let her go! Besides, it's for your own good too. After all, even though your strength has increased rapidly, the King of Judgment Portal is still much stronger than you could ever imagine! Quite frankly, if he wishes to deal with you directly, you'll surely end up dying!” replied Queena, her voice filled with worry.

‘...From the looks of it, it seems that her worry is genuine.... She doesn't seem to be trying to scare me at all... I have reason to believe her too since I haven't been able to experience the strength of the King of Judgment Portal for myself... Since he's a person that even Queena fears, I can only imagine how frightening he truly is...!’ Gerald thought to himself.

“...So what I'm hearing is that though you first formed an alliance with the Judgment Portal and the Gunters to capture me, you parted ways with them after finding out that the other two forces wanted me dead. Is my deduction correct?” asked Gerald, wanting to find out what the full story was.

Nodding, Queena then replied, “It is. At the very beginning, they had told me that you'd be coming over to Ancient City. Upon hearing

that, I thought that I'd be able to capture you with ease! It truly hadn't occurred to me that the King of Judgment Portal would be that strong! With that said, I was unable to defeat him!"

"...Who exactly is the King of Judgment Portal...? And why haven't I heard about him before? Also, why's he so intent on killing me...?" asked Gerald. These questions had honestly been bothering him for a while.

"Well, all of this is related to you, of course. Tell me, do you still remember that there was another coffin in the king of the ocean's palace back when you first released me?" replied Queena.

"Of course, I do. That coffin was bound by chains, and there seemed to be figures carved all over it. I also remember that when the king of the ocean's palace collapsed, the coffin ended up being opened as well. Following that, a black light shot out of it!"

As he recalled the scene in his mind, he suddenly paused for a moment. Seconds later, a bewildered expression formed on his face as he said, "...You... Couldn't be suggesting that the black light that escaped was actually the King of Judgment Portal, right...?"

“Unfortunately, you’re correct. In life, there are both causes and consequences. I’m sure it never occurred to you back then that not only would you fail to retrieve the woman in white, but you’d also end up releasing both of us!”

Shaking her head with a wry smile, Queena then added, “As for why he planned to capture and kill you, I feel that it’s related to him wanting to obtain a chance to return to Jaellatra. After all, he’s well aware that you’re the reincarnation of Xudon, the god of war. With that in mind, he’s probably thinking that once he’s killed and refined you, he’ll make such rapid growth in his strength that he’ll finally be able to return to Jaellatra!”

“...I see. Speaking of which, I know that both of you came from Jaellatra... With that in mind, I’m assuming that marriage isn’t the only thing on your mind. Tell me, what other use do I have to you...?” asked Gerald casually.

Upon hearing that, Queena’s eyes glinted seductively as she smiled before saying, “...You resemble him more and more now... After all, his calmness, resourcefulness, and wisdom are all visible in you... Regardless, you’re right. I do have another reason for wanting to marry you...”

Chapter 1360

“Go on...”

“Well, I’m seeking union between the both of us. You see, by relying on the pure yang energy in your body, I’ll be able to be just like her and get the chance to practice Thunder Eruption as well. Once I’ve gotten the hang of it, I’ll be able to travel back and forth between earth and Jaellatra! In other words, I’ll be one step closer to achieving my dream of going through true rebirth!”

Upon hearing that, Gerald deepened his voice as he replied, “...I see. From what I now understand, both of you wish to breach into Jaellatra again... If that’s the case, negotiation isn’t completely out of the question!”

“A negotiation? What are your terms?”

“Well, for now, I suggest we form an alliance in order to take down the King of Judgment Portal. I have two reasons to back that up. Firstly, I could die by his hands if I don’t get sufficient help. Secondly, from what I can understand, he’s probably not too keen on allowing you to have your way either, isn’t he?” proposed Gerald.

“As long as we’re together, you’re my husband, and I’d never allow anyone to hurt you! With that in mind, I naturally agree to the

alliance!” replied Queena with a subtle smile as she slowly began walking toward Gerald.

At that moment, both of them suddenly heard a male shouting, “You b*tch! Don’t you dare hurt my brother!”

Following that, both of them turned to look at who had shouted. As it turned out, it was Seth, and he was currently rushing toward them with a cleaver in each hand!

“What did you call me...?!” growled Queena wrathfully as she lifted her hand, fully prepared to teach Seth a lesson.

Being a beautiful woman, Queena was used to being flattered. Now that someone was actually daring enough to call her a b*tch, she felt that it was no different from being called hideous!

However, Queena quickly found her wrist getting grabbed by Gerald as he said, “Don’t hurt him! He’s with me!”

Upon stepping before Gerald, Seth immediately asked, “Are you alright, sir?”

Since Gerald had already saved him and his elder sister on multiple occasions, Seth had long treated him as his elder brother.

“I’m fine! Speaking of which, didn’t I tell you not to leave the manor? Why’d you run out here all by yourself?”

“I was simply worried that you’d be in danger!” replied Seth.

Feeling touched, Gerald then said, “Even if I truly was in danger, it’s not as if you could return in one piece yourself, you know...?”

“...That’s true... But still. Regardless, who is she? Is she coming along with us to the snake cave?” asked Seth as he turned to look at Queena.

“...A snake cave? What kind of snake cave are we talking about here?” asked Queena in return.

“Well, from what I can assume, the contents we’ll find within that cave will possibly illuminate us on some ancient civilization on earth. Speaking of which, I’m also interested in learning more—from you—regarding past incidents that had happened on earth as well as that Jaellatra you keep mentioning. With that in mind, why don’t you come along with us to have a look around?” suggested Gerald.

'While the Gunters and the King of Judgment Portal are both tough enemies I still have to face, at the very least, Queena's now temporarily on my side... After all, both of us share the same enemy... The King of Judgment Portal...!'

As the saying went, the enemy of his enemy truly did end up becoming his friend. Not that Gerald was complaining. The fewer forces he had to deal with, the better.

Now that Queena was a temporary ally, Gerald found himself wondering about the secrets she possessed.... She had, after all, been alive for tens of thousands of years.... Perhaps she would even know a thing or two about the Sun League...

Chapter 1361

"But of course I'll come along! After all, this is the first time you've even suggested for me to stay by your side!" replied Queena with a seductive smile.

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded at her with a faint smile.

Naturally, he wasn't about to tell her that he was going to save the woman in white at midnight. However, he was also well aware that if he wasn't willing to make at least a slight compromise, then he'd surely end up suffering much greater losses should Queena ruin his efforts while he was summoning the woman in white's soul...

It was about an hour later when Gerald asked, "Seth, do you truly remember where the snake cave is...?"

The trio who were currently following Seth—after all four of them entered the mountain—consisted of Rosie—who had been curious about the snake cave—Queena—who had agreed to come along since Gerald invited her to—and Gerald himself.

"Of course I do! However, since this place is rather secluded, I still need to gather my bearings a bit better!" replied Seth as he scratched the back of his head before stepping atop a nearby boulder.

A few seconds later, he then exclaimed, "I found it! It's over there!"

Following that, he then agilely hopped off before taking a few steps forward and pushing some dense bushes aside... With that, a round cave entrance—that was almost as tall as a person—revealed itself to everyone.

A much younger Seth had first bumped into it while he was having fun with his friends. He remembered how his friends had dared him to enter the cave, and of course, he had taken the bet. Seth recalled that upon entering the cave, he had found an extremely large piece of discarded snakeskin. He had also come across a fruit in the cave, and eating it allowed him to gain the superpowers he had today.

Regardless, the snakeskin was the obvious reason why Seth had named this place the snake cave.

Moving back to the present day, all four of them found the need to lower their backs slightly as they proceeded further into the cave. After walking for some time, however, the cave soon opened up. As it turned out, that was a gigantic stone chamber in the cave that was honestly quite spacious.

Located right in the middle of the cave, was that large discarded snakeskin that Seth had told them about. From what Gerald could tell, the snake that had shed such a massive pile of skin could easily be as strong as the monster that Gerald had fought in the underground area back when he was still in the desert.

Whatever the case was, Seth—who now appeared to be so familiar with the place that it almost seemed like he had just returned home—then declared, “Well, this is the place!”

Following that, he then smiled before switching on the searchlight—that he had brought along—and taking a turn in the dark cave.

With the aid of the searchlight, Gerald was finally able to see his surroundings clearly. As was expected, strange paintings adorned every corner of the cave. Upon scanning through the area, he even noticed the presence of an enchanting-looking plant growing from inside one of the cave’s crevices. However, no fruits could be found growing on the plant.

“That’s the plant that I obtained the fruit from back then... However, it seems that it hasn’t borne any fruit again ever since I picked the only one growing back when I was still a child!” deduced Seth.

“How truly odd... This ancient plant is called a Lukra, and it has miraculous properties... Since the plant only bears a single fruit once in its entire lifetime, you truly are lucky to have been the one to eat it. Regardless, I’m pretty sure that their fruits’ aren’t that effective on earth due to its lack of holy spirits,” explained Queena with a smile, making it quite obvious that she knew quite a bit about the plant.

“I agree with the fruit being miraculous... After all, Seth did obtain superpowers upon eating it,” replied Gerald though his focus had been on the paintings on the cave walls this entire time.

From what he could see, the paintings on the walls were extremely old. Ancient, even. After briefly scanning through them, Gerald soon found himself raising a slight brow.

The things he saw on the walls were... weird, to say the least. For one, one of the paintings depicted a winged humanoid figure. As if that wasn't already odd enough, the person even had three eyes!

Chapter 1362

Aside from that, there were also several depictions of massive birds and beasts, and nobody could tell whether they were drawn that way deliberately.

Continuing to scan through, Gerald soon saw a rather familiar image of a massive bat-like creature. Looking at it for a while, Gerald found himself thinking, ‘...I met something similar to that back in the mine where I saved Yume and obtained the water repellent stone, right...? A large bat with the head of a human... While I had first assumed that it was some bat demon that had undergone immense training,

since it's on this mural, it wouldn't be out of the question for it to actually be some kind of ancient creature that survived till today... But... How could that even be possible...? There are simply too many peculiar things at play...'

Turning to look at Queena—who had been utterly fascinated by all the things in the cave for a while now—Gerald asked, "...Say, what kind of world is being depicted on the walls...? Could it actually be earth?"

Hearing Gerald's question, she then replied, "Indeed. More specifically, it seems to be the legendary earth that existed millions of years ago! I learned about its existence from the data I got back when I was still in Jaellatra. Regardless, the paintings seem to depict a prehistoric civilization that once roamed the earth. If I had to name the exact civilization, I have a feeling that the murals are showing us what happened during the short-lived, but extremely glorious Shunzuog Civilization!"

After hearing what Queena had to say, Rosie's jaw instantly dropped. Nobody could blame her. After all, what Queena had just said was naturally preposterous to a normal person. Gerald himself would've had the same reaction as Rosie had he not already experienced so much by this point.

Regardless, Gerald already knew that Earth had already seen plenty of civilizations come and go by this point. From what he had found out, there was once a civilization of peculiar and unique humans that predated the appearance of even the dinosaurs! While dragons existed during that age as well, that civilization was rather short-lived.

“...Could it be that this mural had been here ever since the age of the Shunzuog Civilization...?” muttered Gerald curiously.

“No ordinary mural could have remained intact for that long, that’s for sure. With that in mind, why not try using your Thunder essential qi. I wonder if anything will change...” suggested Queena, her eyes still locked on the paintings.

Knowing that Queena probably knew the most about all this, Gerald simply obeyed. Activating his Thunder essential qi, he slowly skimmed it across the painted walls...

Instantly gasping in surprise, Queena found herself exclaiming, “It... It’s changed! It really has changed! Look, Gerald! There are many more people and a lot more information on the mural now!”

Gerald had seen the changes too, and he assumed that his actions had forced the entire mural to completely reveal itself.

“Since you had to use essential qi to reveal the rest of the mural, it’s safe to say that the artisans who drew this weren’t ordinary people. After all, from the looks of it, they had used the power of thought to hide the rest of the mural from those incapable of manipulating their essential qi, a feat that couldn’t possibly have been achieved by those without great strength. As for how I figured this would work in the first place, certain sects in Jaellatra used this method to store other forms of information as well, prompting me to ask you to try it!”

“Whatever the case is, from what I’ve been able to tell, the large snake was no ordinary creature. After all, I have a feeling that it relied on essential qi to nourish parts of it,” explained Queena.

“...I see. As it turned out, the rumors about the peculiar civilization really were true...” replied Gerald with a nod.

Moving closer to the wall to have a better look at all the new information that had just been revealed, it wasn’t long before Gerald added, “...After looking at it for a bit, everyone—including the beasts—in the mural appears to be performing some sort of... sacrificial activity? From what I can tell, both humans and beasts didn’t seem to live in harmony before. However, it’s seen here that all of them later rushed over—regardless of where they came from—and began worshiping some large stone statue...”

“...I think I get it now. From what I could gather, the murals are apparently depicting the lives of those living within some small area during that era of civilization. For both the beasts and humans to unite, I have a feeling that only someone legendary could’ve possibly gotten them to do so in such a devout manner...” replied Queena solemnly.

“Do you have any idea who it could’ve been?” asked Gerald, glad that he had decided to bring her along. After all, she knew quite a lot of things.

“Well, I’ve read about that legendary person before in an ancient book I found back when I was still in Jaellatra... Since Jaellatra is a place that highly resembles the prehistoric Shunzuog Civilization, it’s no surprise to me that the legend lives on there. However, while Jaellatra is similar to that civilization, it is by far a lot weaker compared to it. Hell, it wouldn’t be a stretch to claim that anyone from the Shunzuog Civilization could dominate Jaellatra with ease! With that said, they’d barely need to lift a finger to take over earth!”

“Regardless, I went off-topic for a bit... Moving back to the legend, the legendary person was apparently the first person from the Shunzuog Civilization who was able to enter the realm of the Immortal Body. Due to that, he was pretty much invincible! With

that in mind, it was no wonder why everyone—regardless of status or age—back then worshiped him to the highest degree!”

“...The realm of the Immortal Body?”

Chapter 1363

Nodding, Queenena then replied, “Indeed. See, the Immortal Body is a realm that used to only exist in legends. It was said that if a person ever entered that realm, then they’d be able to exist alongside heaven and earth. In other words, nothing would be able to truly destroy them. Though it was said that there was one person who was able to attain that legendary realm during that civilization, it’s pretty much just a legend!”

“...Assuming the legend is true, that should suggest that that exceptional person should still be alive, correct? But that couldn’t be, right? He should’ve still died along with his civilization!” said Gerald rather curiously.

“Well, I, at least, believe that he died. My guess is that he never truly entered the realm of the Immortal Body. Even so, he was still an immensely exceptional person who had strength that clearly defied

the natural order. Why else did so many people respect and admire him..." explained Queena.

"I see... Speaking of Jaellatra, how much do you know about the Sun League? That organization should belong to Jaellatra, right?" inquired Gerald, finally deciding to ask what he wanted to know about the most.

"...The Sun League? While they do seem to have a special base in Jaellatra, they're not related to that place at all, nor are they affiliated with any other forces. An extremely mysterious and strong organization, I only know that the power they hold is sufficient to dominate nearly anything they wish to. Quite frankly, it wouldn't be out of the question to assume that their group stemmed from one of the civilizations that disappeared millions of years ago!"

"...I see. However, I wonder if you know anything about this... While I was previously deciphering some murals, I found some paintings depicting corpses on a sacred tree... The sacred tree itself apparently fell from the sky, and its descent was accompanied by many other corpses, including the deity's!" said Gerald.

"Oh? You know a surprising lot! That's right. We died during a disaster that took place between heaven and earth in Jaellatra. I can see where you're coming from. While it's true that we too had doubts whether that disaster back then was triggered by the Sun

League, none of us dared to investigate it. After all, even the past you didn't dare to look into it, even when you were at your peak strength! Regardless, you should note that you died while trying to escape from Jaellatra to Earth. I know this since I had been secretly stalking you the entire time!" replied Queena with a subtle smile.

"...Understandable. Regardless, how's the condition in Jaellatra now, then? And do we not even know what the Sun League truly is...? Is it really that impossible to get to the bottom of it...?" asked Gerald, his disappointment evident in his tone.

"All that's to be known is that it's an organization that cannot be offended under any circumstances. With that in mind, you'd best give up if you're planning on investigating them. Again, you wouldn't be able to take on them, even at your peak strength!" reminded Queena.

Though she had no idea why he was even inquiring about the Sun League, she was still going to at least warn him against doing it.

Understanding that she meant well, Gerald didn't take offense to her statement. However, as he thought about the previous clues he had come across—that still remained unanswered—he recalled something that prompted him to ask, "...I have one final question for the time being. Back when you were first buried in the king of the ocean's palace, do you still remember the old man who was leading

the people responsible for escorting your corpse? If I recall correctly, you were able to break free while they were stopping by an island, resulting in you killing those that were standing guard over you at the time! From what I could tell, it was that old man who brought you down again at the time.”

“I truly hadn’t expected you to have learned so much! Of course I remember Master Warwick! After all, he’s the reason I got sealed for ten thousand years!” replied Queena, a hint of gloominess in her eyes.

“...Master Warwick? From what I can tell, it seems that he’s lived an extremely long life... Either that, or his descendants were the ones who had been responsible for the later incidents. Regardless of which it is, he certainly possesses rather remarkable abilities. After all, from what I know, he was able to accurately predict the future! More specifically, he predicted what would happen in current times around eight hundred years ago!” said Gerald.

Nodding, Queena then replied, “You’re correct there. Master Warwick truly is the most powerful person that I’ve come across up till this point. Speaking of him, he seems to be related to the Sun League... Well, I say related, but quite honestly, I have a feeling that he’s an actual member of that group! After all, he has way too many miraculous powers! Also, it’s impossible for him to have any descendants. With that in mind, I’m guessing he’s still alive today! The problem is, I have no idea where he is!”

“...I’m assuming that both you and the King of Judgment Portal have yet to act too ostentatiously due to the fact that you can’t tell whether he’s truly dead or still alive. Is my guess correct?” asked Gerald.

“You could say that!”

Though Queena had truly shed quite a bit of light on Gerald, the Sun League still seemed as mysterious as ever... No matter how much he tried, he simply couldn’t expose their secrets! Even so, there was one thing that was clear to him now...

‘There’s some sort of secret in me and many people are yearning for it... With that in mind, be it the King of Judgment Portal, the Gunters, or Queena, all of them have their reasons for approaching me... Regardless, while Queena knows quite a bit about the affairs in Jaellatra, as a whole, she doesn’t know as much as Finnley... While I’d love to ask him more about all this, I haven’t seen him ever since we parted ways... Where could he have gone off too...? I still haven’t found out who the person who told me to look for the eternal coffin in the desert is either...’ Gerald thought to himself.

While many more mysteries remained, Gerald felt that his mind was much clearer now. It was because of this clarity that he was able to

remind himself that only people who wanted things from him would seek him out in the first place.

Regardless, the group remained in the cave for about an hour before they finally came out again. By then, Rosie had even snapped several photographs in her curiosity.

Now standing at the cave's entrance, Queena looked at Gerald before saying, "So... Do you wish to go back with me?"

Since Gerald had been the one who suggested for them to form an alliance, it meant that in a way, he had agreed to them being together.

Chapter 1364

Watching as she gazed with gentler eyes than before, Gerald replied, "I still have some things I wish to learn about. I'll meet up with you once I'm done settling those issues!"

"Very well! I'll be waiting then!" said Queena with a smile.

Following that, her body momentarily swayed... And the next thing anyone knew, she had disappeared!

Taking a step forward in surprise, Rosie then turned back to look at Gerald before saying, "Is... Is she human or a ghost...?"

"Half of both, I'd say!" replied Gerald as he turned to look at the direction Queena had dashed off to while heaving a long sigh.

With that, he then brought Rosie back to the shantytown to meet up with Leo and the others. Noticing that the other man was not present, Gerald then asked Monica where he was.

After being told that the man had yet to return, Gerald found himself feeling slightly dissatisfied as he thought, 'Where on earth has he gone to? What's taking him so long...?'

It was a little while later when Queena finally returned to the manor that she was currently living in. The manor itself was tightly guarded by those from the Squad of Divine Grimness.

Upon entering the manor, Queena was immediately greeted by her subordinates as they shouted, "Welcome back, master!"

Seeing that she was in good spirits as Queena continued walking on, several of her puzzled subordinates found themselves thinking, 'Did something good happen? Why's the master so happy?'

Before they could ponder any further, they heard Queena casually ask, "Has anyone attempted to cause any trouble here during my two-day absence?"

"Not at all, master!"

"I see. Anything to report about Miss Fenderson?"

"She's been staying in her room this entire time, Master! With that in mind, I've been ordering servants to take good care of her!" replied one of the subordinates.

"Excellent. Now go bring Miss Fenderson here. I have some things to tell her!" ordered Queena as she walked further into the manor.

Throughout her journey back, Queena had been keen on telling Jasmine that Gerald had finally agreed to be with her. After all, Jasmine had once told her that Gerald would only ever love his current lover. With that in mind, Queena wanted to properly ask Jasmine whether her statement still stood.

Perhaps it was due to Queena being so lonely for over thousands of years, but she found herself seeing Jasmine as a good friend whom she could confide in. While she had to admit that such intimate friendship was a rather new and strange experience for her, at least she finally had a person she could have a heart-to-heart talk with.

As she continued thinking about it, one of her servants suddenly began running—from the end of the hall—toward her as he shouted, “M-master! Something terrible has happened!”

“What’s wrong?” asked Queena with a slight frown.

“M-miss Fenderson...! S-she’s...” muttered the servant who was so scared that he didn’t even dare to finish his sentence.

“What’s wrong with her?” barked the subordinate from before.

“W-well! She was still in her room when I went over to bring her her breakfast earlier... Now, however, she’s... She’s gone missing...! And Hattie—her personal maid—has fallen into a coma as well!” reported the servant as she immediately knelt before Queena, utterly terrified.

Chapter 1365

“...What? She’s gone missing...?!” growled Queena in rage.

“P-please spare me, master...! She truly was still in her room earlier! While I did hear her talking to someone earlier, I didn’t pay much attention to it since I simply assumed that she was talking to Hattie! By the time I went in to check on her again, she was nowhere to be seen and Hattie was already in a coma!”

As the servant had said before, Hattie was the personal maid that Queena had assigned for Jasmine, and true to the servant’s words, the second Queena entered the room for herself, she found that Jasmine really was absent and that Hattie was still lying in a coma!

Following that, Queena closed her eyes slightly to concentrate on her surroundings.

A little while later, she opened them again before coldly saying, “...From what I can tell, she was rescued by others earlier. I believe they haven’t escaped too far, so launch an immediate search party for them around the area!”

Shuddering with fear, everyone immediately obeyed, running off to fulfill Jasmine's orders.

Meanwhile, a slightly fearful Jasmine found herself by a large river as she continued trying to struggle free from the random middle-aged man who had kidnapped her.

The strange-looking person had appeared in her room about half an hour ago, and without saying a word, he had easily knocked Hattie out before bringing her all the way here at incredibly high speeds! In fact, he had been so fast that throughout their journey to the riverside, Jasmine had felt like she was flying!

Aside from Gerald and Queena, Jasmine hadn't seen anyone this capable, and that was honestly what scared Jasmine the most. The fact that he had brought her to some large river that was surrounded by tall trees only served to increase her terror.

"Please, just let me free... Who even are you...?" asked the frightened Jasmine.

"Is there even a need to ask? I'm clearly the one saving you!" replied the middle-aged man with a faint smile.

“...Do you know Gerald? Was he the one who told you to come save me?” asked Jasmine, not knowing who else could be acquainted with such an exceptional person other than Gerald.

“...In a way. Regardless, even if he hadn’t told me to save you, I’d still have done so!” said the slightly hunchbacked man—who had also been carrying an odd, large bag on his back this entire time—as he flashed a slightly bitter smile.

Though his scar-filled face—that also littered with burn marks—would strike fear in just about anyone, the second Jasmine heard what he said, she was instantly filled with joy.

“So you really do know Gerald! Where is he now? Why didn’t he come over to save me himself?” asked Jasmine, hints of anxiousness in her voice.

“He’s been with me for a while, and he’s currently busy dealing with something important. Regardless, since you know Gerald well, I’m sure you’re well aware that he has a soft spot for you. With that in mind, as long as you’re still locked up by that woman, he won’t be able to eat or sleep well!” explained the middle-aged man.

Upon hearing that, Jasmine found herself overflowing with joy. So she was still significant to him! Well, maybe not significant, but at the very least, he was still worried for her!

It was at that moment that Jasmine realized that she didn't yearn for much. After all, all it took for her to be satisfied was for Gerald to show concern about her, just like he currently was.

"...Hold on, you told me that even if Gerald hadn't told you to save me, you'd still have done so. Why is that, sir?" asked Jasmine, feeling slightly bewildered.

For some odd reason, Jasmine now felt that the middle-aged man wasn't as frightening as he had been before. While it probably had something to do with their brief conversation earlier, she felt that it was also because she was finally able to have a proper look at his eyes.

His gaze—whenever he looked at her—seemed particularly gentle, and anyone who saw it would be prompted to behave more friendly toward him.

"You truly do resemble your aunt, Jasmine! Like two peas in a pod! Actually, scratch that. You resemble Queta even more!" replied the man with a slight chuckle.

“...You... You know my name...? Actually, hold on, you even know who my aunt and cousin are? Who... Who exactly are you...?” asked the puzzled Jasmine.

“But of course I know who all of you are! Hell, it wouldn’t be a stretch for me to say that I know more about the Fendersons than you do!” said the man with a bitter smile before revealing a photograph that had been hidden under his sleeve... It was a photograph of Queta.

Being an extremely smart woman, the shocked Jasmine found herself carefully observing the middle-aged man’s eyes. Eventually, it hit her.

No wonder he felt so familiar... Not only did his eyes resemble Gerald’s, but the shape of their faces were similar as well!

Chapter 1366

Adding that to what he had earlier said, Jasmine instantly began trembling all over as she asked, “...Could... Could it be that you’re my aunt’s missing husband...? The uncle me and Gerald share...?”

Chuckling as he smiled, the man then replied, “You truly are as smart as your aunt, Jasmine...”

“...So, it’s really true...?!” exclaimed Jasmine as she covered her mouth in shock.

“...Sir- No, uncle... Haven’t you gone missing for ages...? Why are you only showing yourself now...? Also, how did your appearance turn out this way...?”

Based on what her aunt had once told her, Peter Crawford—her uncle—was quite a handsome and elegant man. With that in mind, his current hideous expression would shock just about anyone!

“Let’s just say that I needed to end up this way in order to escape! Still, this appearance isn’t all that bad since it allows me to hide my true identity. In fact, it’s thanks to how I look that I’ve been able to easily investigate a few incidents!” replied Peter, his eyes returning to their former tranquillity.

“Then... I’m assuming that Gerald still has no idea who you are, right? That you’re the uncle he’s been searching for this entire time...?” asked Jasmine.

“Of course he doesn’t. After all, I haven’t concluded on whether a certain someone is good or wicked yet... Anyway, it’s just better if I don’t reveal who I truly am to Gerald yet. Besides, I can still help him in secret!” said Peter with a smile.

“Who exactly are you trying to find out is good or wicked...?” asked Jasmine.

“Sadly, I can’t elaborate on that. Just know for now that all my efforts will go to waste if that incident is accidentally exposed. Speaking of which, I wasn’t even supposed to reveal my true identity to you today, Jasmine! With that in mind, please promise that you’ll keep my identity a secret in the meantime!” said Peter.

Peter had always been a calm person, and for the sake of his investigation, he had constantly suppressed his desire to meet up with his family this entire time, regardless of how much he missed them.

Unfortunately, the second he found out—from Gerald—that Jasmine had been captured by Queena, he knew that he wasn’t going to be able to continue keeping that desire suppressed.

With that in mind, he had secretly begun his search for Jasmine ever since that day. Upon eventually finding her, he took the chance to go on a rescue mission.

While he had simply planned to rescue her without revealing who he really was at first, Jasmine was simply too similar-looking to her aunt for Peter's mind to not be bombarded with a series of thoughts. In the end, he gave in and ended up revealing his true identity to Jasmine.

"But of course, uncle! Still... Where are we headed to now...?" asked Jasmine.

"What, don't you wish to meet Gerald? I'm guessing that he's returned for some time now, so I'll be bringing you over to reunite with him!" said Peter.

After seeing Jasmine nod, Peter then began leading her back...

However, it was only a few steps later when he stopped dead in his tracks. His once tranquil eyes now slightly widened as he felt a chill run down his back, Peter found himself carefully scanning his surroundings before saying, "...I'm afraid that we'll have to delay our return for about an hour, Jasmine...!"

“...Huh? Why...?”

“Because I don’t want those stalkers to follow me all the way back. Once they know where I live, they’ll surely ruin that place! With that in mind, I’ll be spending some time getting rid of them first!” replied Peter with a brief smile.

“But... There’s nobody here but us, right uncle...?” said Jasmine as she looked around. No matter how hard she scanned the area, there just didn’t seem to be any traces of humans nearby!

“Don’t bother looking for them. They’re about fifty miles away, and they’re divided into four main groups that are headed in the four cardinal directions. There are currently about a dozen of them heading in our direction now!” replied Peter as his eyes momentarily flashed a dark green.

Hearing that, she simultaneously frightened and surprised Jasmine then asked, “...You... You’re able to clearly see up to fifty miles away, uncle...?”

“Haha! Fifty miles is nothing to me! I can see even further away...” replied Peter with a bitter smile.

Chapter 1367

According to Peter, the group of people were moving at extremely high speeds, and true enough, Jasmine was soon able to hear their swiftly approaching footsteps!

It wasn't long after before a dozen or so people bounded out from the jungle, and the second the person—who seemed to be the leader of the group—saw the duo, he immediately excitedly shouted, “We've found them! Surround them immediately!”

He was right to be excited. After all, if all went well, then his group would definitely get the honor of making a great contribution since they were the first to locate Jasmine. Even the eyes of the eleven other men lit up, thinking that their victory prize was standing right before them.

“W-what should we do, uncle?! All of them are extremely powerful!” said Jasmine rather anxiously. Since she had stayed by Queena's side for so long, she already knew how strong her men were.

“Haha! They can’t hurt us if I keep them where they currently are! Now stand back, Jasmine!” replied Peter with a faint smile as he opened the bag—that he had been carrying around this entire time—and retrieved a bow that seemed to be made out of black gold as well as an arrow.

By the time Peter aimed at the twelve men, there was only about a three hundred meter gap between them.

The second Peter released the arrow, however, Jasmine watched wide-eyed as the arrow turned into pure light before homing in on all their assailants! Staring in disbelief as the ray of light pierced through each of them, by the time the dust cloud—that had formed due to the immense force of the light arrow—finally settled, all twelve of the men were already lying unconscious on the ground!

The light itself returned to Peter’s hand before promptly taking the form of an arrow again.

Taking in a deep breath, Jasmine found herself muttering, “...Y-you’re so powerful, uncle...! Are they dead...?”

“No, I only knocked them out. After all, none of them actually did anything bad to you. They won’t be waking up for at least another

three days, though! Regardless, let's go! I'm sure Gerald will be thrilled to meet you again!" replied Peter with a gentle smile.

By the time both of them got to their destination, night had already fallen.

At the time, Gerald himself had been busy preparing for the evocation that night. The second he realized that the man had saved Jasmine, however, Gerald was instantly overjoyed.

"...Sir! ...Jasmine, you...?" muttered the surprised Gerald, unsure where to even begin asking.

The fact that he had been able to escape Queena's grasp while Jasmine remained captured had constantly made him both anxious and worried for her safety. Now that she had finally been rescued, Gerald could finally rest a bit easier.

"Well, seeing that you kept mentioning her, I thought I could help eliminate one of your worries by rescuing her!" replied the man as he looked at Gerald with a smile.

Jasmine herself could no longer hold back as she threw herself into his arms before bursting into tears while shouting, "Gerald...!"

“I’m glad to see that you’re fine now... You know, I’ve recently been making some compromises with Queena in exchange for your freedom... Now that he’s saved you, however, he’s truly helped me greatly by taking away one of my worries!” said Gerald with a smile.

At that moment, Peter suddenly raised a brow before turning to look at Gerald and asking, “...Why are there odd sounds coming from my cellar?”

Upon hearing the man’s question, Gerald then called out, “Leo, bring Felton out of the cellar with you!”

Shortly after, Leo made his appearance while holding onto the seriously ill-looking Felton.

Peter instantly found himself giving Leo a weird look before turning to look at Felton who had been tortured so much that he barely looked human anymore.

The second Felton saw Gerald, he immediately began begging, “Sir... Please... When are you going to let me go...? I’m already this useless, so please just treat me as garbage and release me... Please...?”

“If you didn’t already know, this pitiful b*stard is the young master of the Gunter family, and Yreth adores him greatly. Now that he’s in my hands, I’m going to use him to deal with the Gunters!”

“That sounds excellent, Gerald! You now have an additional bargaining chip in hand!”

“Indeed! As for this big guy here, he’s called Leo, and he’s a friend I got acquainted with while I was at King Valley!”

Hearing that, Peter retracted his odd gaze as he looked at Leo with a smile before saying, “...I see! He appears to be an exceptional man with extraordinary strength! It seems that you truly had a rewarding trip! Speaking of which, what are you planning to do with those?”

Noticing that Peter was asking about the sacrificial altar that had been set up, Gerald then explained that he was planning to summon the woman in white’s soul here.

Extremely pleased to hear all of Gerald’s progress, Peter then said, “Well, since it’s only going to be taking place at midnight, why don’t we have dinner together? After all, it’s still quite early now and it’s pretty difficult for us to get together like this!”

“I agree! It’ll be a reunion dinner!” added Jasmine with a smile.

“A... reunion dinner...?” asked Gerald, slightly puzzled.

Chapter 1368

“...Well, since sir and I have managed to return safely and you’ve even found such a good helper, isn’t it only right for us to host a reunion dinner...? What more, I’ve already been treating this sir like family from the moment he rescued me!” said Jasmine who was well aware that she had almost made a slip of the tongue.

Thankfully, her explanation seemed to work as Gerald laughed before replying, “Well, you’re not wrong there! He saved my life too, you know! Ever since I regained consciousness, I’ve been treating him like family as well! Well said! Let’s have a reunion dinner tonight! Now then, I’ll be cooking if nobody’s against it!”

“I’ll help!” shouted both Monica and Rosie—who had been standing quietly at the side—almost simultaneously. Upon realizing what had just happened, both of them instantly felt slightly awkward.

Monica had been so eager to help since she had been admiring Gerald for a while now. She respected both his strength and his strong character. Of course, his good looks played a part in that equation as well.

As for Rosie, though she had just gotten acquainted with Gerald not too long ago, she was exceedingly curious about him. After all, not only was he a top-tier rich heir, but he was also extremely mysterious. What more, Gerald hadn't made much effort to hide certain things from her—such as the snake cave—which only further served to increase her curiosity. There were simply too many things that were too hard to even explain clearly!

Regardless, whenever a woman grew too curious about a man, it certainly wouldn't take long before an ambiguous relationship started between them.

Watching as the two fumbled about, Peter—who had been looking at their reactions this entire time—then turned to look at the clearly jealous Jasmine.

'Gerald truly is my elder brother's son... At the very least, he has the demeanor my brother had back then!' Peter thought to himself as he smiled slightly bitterly.

With that, preparations for the reunion dinner began. Soon enough, the food was served, and though the atmosphere was harmonious throughout the meal, everyone seemed rather engrossed in their own thoughts.

It wasn't long before midnight finally came, and Gerald found himself looking at Rosie before saying, "I'll be frank and say that this is my first time using this tactic. In other words, I'm not sure whether it'll even work or not. Regardless, while it may be relatively difficult for you in the upcoming two days, I assure you that the process won't hurt one bit, Miss Slow!"

Nodding in response, Rosie then gracefully sat at the side before closing her eyes.

Gerald, on the other hand, sat cross-legged before instantly using Thunder Eruption—with the aid of the dragon blood jade pendant's power—to attempt summoning the thought of the woman in white's soul.

As all that was happening, a faint light began shining atop the crystal eternal coffin that was currently in the Gunter family's secret room.

Following that, the light briefly flashed before the figure of a person slowly began materializing... and eventually, it turned into the woman in white.

Sitting atop the eternal coffin, there was a hint of anticipation in both her eyes.

“So, why did you decide to come out today? Could it be that you’ve grown so lonely that you just need to talk to someone?” asked a voice that was being emitted from a dark orb of light.

Soon after, the King of Judgment Portal materialized as well, and he revealed a cold smile as he stood before the eternal coffin.

“I’m only advising you one final time that you stop doing all these useless things, King of Judgment Portal. Please understand already that there are some people who you’ll never be able to lay a finger on! Fate can only be altered so much!” said the woman in white as she smiled bitterly while looking at him before shaking her head.

“You know, I hate the current expression you’re showing me the most. I’ll have you know that after tonight passes, the thought of my soul will finally be enough to materialize. Once that happens, I won’t have to worry about you running away anymore, even if I don’t have

an active formation to seal you!” replied the King of Judgment Portal gloomily.

“While you were born in a prestigious family back in Jaellatra, allow me to remind you that you’ve only managed to train your ghostly body by sapping the masculine aura of others. You’re now nothing more than a demon in my book, and in the end, all you’re truly doing is digging your own grave!” said the woman in white as she stared pitifully at him.

Just as the King of Judgment Portal was about to retort, his eyes widened as he watched her entire body suddenly begin glowing. As if that wasn’t already shocking enough, a door of light—that was linked to the outside world—simultaneously began shining on one of the room’s stone walls!

Watching as the glowing woman in white quickly began merging with the light from the wall, the flabbergasted King of Judgment Portal instantly muttered, “W-what...? How are you just ignoring my formation...?!”

Turning to look at him, the woman simply replied, “I already told you that this was going to be the final time I advised you. With that said, I hope you’ll remember what I said and refrain from doing any more bad deeds. Again, if you continue going down this path, you’ll only be digging your grave even deeper!”

As soon as her sentence ended, she immediately began emitting even more light!

Though the King of Judgment Portal attempted to stop her from escaping, he quickly realized that he wasn't even able to get close to the light!

“What kind of power even is this...?!” shouted the bewildered man, his expression extremely hideous.

With one final strong flash, the woman in white's body was fully enveloped in light. Completely ignoring the King of Judgment Portal's formations, she quickly disappeared together with the light...

Chapter 1369

Meanwhile, Gerald himself was also glowing, and the strange sight honestly made Peter feel slightly terrified.

The jade pendant that was currently in Gerald's hands truly was extraordinary... Not even Peter had any idea what sort of frightening powers it possessed... Even so, he knew for a fact that the jade pendant was highly compatible with Gerald.

As the others watched on in silence, they soon found themselves staring wide-eyed as the light from the pendant suddenly shot up into the sky under the guidance of Gerald's Thunder Eruption.

Following the appearance of the towering light—that was also producing quite a bit of force—a terrifying atmosphere slowly began building as wild winds blew, sending dust flying all over the place.

“What immense power...!” said Leo, a hint of fear in his voice as he witnessed the eye-opening scene.

A brief moment later, the light slowly began retracting from the sky until it eventually returned to the courtyard. By this point, Gerald had nearly exhausted all of his strength, and he was currently sweating profusely.

Supporting himself as he got off the ground, he then turned to look at Rosie who was still meditating in silence.

Seeing that, Gerald couldn't help but shake his head as he turned to look at everyone else before helplessly saying, "It seems that even with the aid of the jade pendant to empower my Thunder Eruption, I still failed to communicate with her, Leo..."

After all, had things gone smoothly, Rosie would've given off some kind of reaction by now.

While it took him a second, Gerald quickly realized that everyone was currently looking behind him with bewildered eyes, including that man who had previously always retained a calm façade.

Not expecting the shocked expression from Peter, the flabbergasted Gerald found himself asking, "...Is something the matter?"

"M-Mr. Crawford...! You've succeeded! She's right behind you! You've truly managed to summon Angelica!" stuttered the trembling Leo.

Hearing that, Gerald slowly turned around... only to find his eyelids twitching rapidly the second he saw the woman in white hovering right before him!

Though she appeared cold, the woman's beauty alone was enough to cause endless hearts to palpitate.

While Gerald had already seen Queena in the coffin before—and her form back then was nearly identical to the woman in white's—the true woman in white simply had a much more natural and innocent grace to her appearance.

The second Gerald turned to look at her, the woman in white found herself smiling. Her smile alone almost seemed capable of bringing things to life, and it simply gave people a pleasant sensation.

It was a smile that she would only ever show to Gerald and the deity.

Continuing to smile as she floated toward Gerald, she raised her fair and beautiful arms to gently caress his cheeks before saying, "It's been thousands of years since we've last met... To think that we'd finally be able to reunite like this...!"

As a trickle of sweat dripped down Gerald's chin, he found himself gulping slightly before replying, "I-I'm not your husband, woman in white... My name is Gerald and I'm only twenty-five this year...!"

"I understand... However, once you remember your past in the near future, everything will start making sense!" said the woman in white.

After saying that, she tilted forward slightly before whispering, "From what you just referred to me as, I'm assuming that you don't remember my name! Fret not, you can just call me Zyla. Zyla Lockland!"

Upon hearing that, he immediately nodded.

Behind the duo, Peter himself was staring wide-eyed at Zyla, feeling utterly shocked. However, he was also brimming with respect since he had no idea how Gerald had managed to gain the favor of that fairy-like woman.

After all, both she and Liemis—the God of Battle—were a legendary couple who enjoyed an extremely high status in Jaellatra.

As for Jasmine, she found herself facing an inexplicable grief as she stared at Zyla. After all, it was impossible for her not to be jealous of Zyla from how beautiful she was.

Clearing his mind, Gerald then replied, "...Very well, then. Regardless, since you're only existing through the thought of your soul at the moment, I can tell that you're currently quite weak. Worry not, for I've prepared a suitable body for you that you can momentarily possess!"

"I appreciate it. However, I'll only be using her body for a single night in order to restore my primordial spirit. After that, I'll be temporarily living in the dragon blood jade pendant."

