

Chapter 2101

By that point, though Endo and Izumi had been prepared to die, they couldn't help but breathe vigorously as beads of cold sweat drenched their foreheads when they realized that they were just inches away from death.

Regardless, after Takuya ran toward Gerald, he couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief when he saw that the two were still alive. After panting for a bit, Takuya eventually cleared his throat before saying, "They... can still be of use to us, Mr. Crawford... Let's keep them alive for now..."

Nodding in response, Gerald then closed his eyes for a while... and soon after, his immense murderous intent quickly dissipated. Now that he was calm, Gerald was prompted to ask, "Fair enough. However... how did you even find out about all this...?"

"With how loud you all were, how couldn't I have found out? Either way, the second I found out what was happening, I immediately rushed over to look!" replied Takuya as he patted his chest while shaking his head, a bitter smile on his face...

"... I apologize for that," said Gerald in a sheepish tone as he scratched the back of his head.

"No matter... Either way, since they had the balls to cause such a ruckus at my manor, I swear on my life that I'm getting information out of them! We won't let you die that easily!" growled Takuya as he pointed at the duo who were still on the ground.

"I've already tried interrogating them, but they're tough nuts to crack," replied Gerald as he shook his head.

"Oh, don't you worry. I've met my fair share of stubborn people, so I know how to make them talk. I can guarantee you that with my tactics, they'll be giving us honest answers before dawn!" declared Takuya as he gestured for his men who had earlier followed him over to carry Endo and Izumi up.

"Now that's what I like to hear," replied Gerald with a smile.

Nodding in response, Takuya couldn't help but frown when he saw all the blood on the ground. Shaking his head, he then turned to look at his men before ordering, "Bring them to the manor's clinic and keep them alive!"

With that, Endo and Izumi were promptly brought away. However, since Endo was still bleeding rather badly, his blood ended up dripping all the way to the clinic...

Now that that was dealt with, Takuya turned to face Gerald before saying, "... There's something I'd like to talk to you about..."

"What a coincidence. I have something to discuss as well," replied Gerald with a nod.

Realizing that Fujiko was still standing frozen in place, Gerald couldn't help but add, "Miss Futaba? The danger's over..."

"... H-huh? O-oh! Yeah, it is... T-thank you..." muttered Fujiko after snapping out of it. As Gerald and her father walked off, however, she couldn't help but give Gerald a curious gaze...

Regardless, after entering the main hall with Gerald and Fujiko, Takuya made sure to properly lock the doors up before brewing a pot of tea... Following that, Takuya handed Gerald a cigarette and even lit it for him. After all, he knew that it was thanks to Gerald's efforts and Vigilance today that he and Fujiko were able to live another day...

With that in mind, Takuya eventually bowed toward Gerald before saying, "I truly appreciate your help today, Mr. Crawford... With so many consecutive incidents happening, I really don't know how to thank you for every time you've helped!"

"There's no need to be so cordial, patriarch... Honestly, I have a feeling that these two came for me today," replied Gerald as he immediately helped Takuya up.

“... Come again? Did you offend some bigshot here?” asked Takuya, understandably stunned.

“I can’t say for sure either... My guess is that those men are either from the Kanagawa family, or they’re Hanyus. While my money is on the Hanyus, I can’t exactly rule out that there may be other people who want me dead...” replied Gerald as he puffed on his cigarette...

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After hearing Gerald’s reply, Takuya was momentarily at a loss for words. After all, he hadn’t considered the fact that Gerald was the real target here. As he pondered about it, Takuya couldn’t help but mutter, “They came for you, you said...”

“It’s only a guess, to be quite honest,” replied Gerald as he shook his head. After all, since he rarely ever came to Japan, he had almost no disputes with the forces and families here. He was only assuming that the duo were after him since he was their first target upon making themselves known.

“... Well, even if they were after your head, there’s no need to worry any longer since those two scoundrels are already locked up. Rest assured, I’ll definitely obtain more information from them by dawn! Also, in case you’re worried about affecting my family since you’re being targeted, don’t be. The Futabas owe you and we’ll always be by your side! While it’s true that my family isn’t as great as it used to be, know that nobody can freely take advantage of people I swear to protect!” declared Takuya as he clenched his fists.

Hearing that, Gerald couldn’t help but smile as he cupped his hands together to pay Takuya respect before saying, “I really appreciate that, patriarch... As for the interrogation tonight, I’ll be thanking you in advance!”

It was around then that Gerald realized that after helping the Futabas so much, he had completely earned that family’s trust. With that in mind, he felt that once the special forces competition began or possibly when it ended, depending on how things went it was high time he asked about Yearning Island. Hopefully, Takuya would no longer see any reason to hide anything from him...

Whatever the case was, after finishing his cup of tea, Takuya got to his feet before saying, "Alright, then... You and Fujiko should go get some rest first. I'll be heading over to pay our two 'guests' a visit..."

With that, Takuya left the room, leaving Gerald who promptly put his cigarette out and Fujiko inside...

Though Gerald stayed there for the following half hour to enjoy his tea, Fujiko, on the other hand, remained in the room to stare admiringly at Gerald, her hands cupping her cheeks the entire time...

Due to her ever growing feelings for Gerald, Fujiko couldn't help but say, "... I could sense how strong those two were... To think you'd be able to take them out so easily..."

"Strength is all I have. I don't really have any other capabilities. Besides, I'm not that strong," replied Gerald with a smile.

Honestly, he hadn't expected to expose that much of his strength earlier since Fujiko was there. However, had he not done so, he wouldn't have been able to take those two men out in such a short amount of time. That, to Gerald, would've been more worrying since trouble could've easily brewed in the manor had he not taken them out quickly. After all, who's to say that there weren't any other Kanagawas or Hanyu assassins waiting for a chance to strike the manor while Gerald was preoccupied with Endo and Izumi? If that had been the case, then things would've become exceedingly difficult for Gerald to resolve. All this explained why he used so much of his strength in the first place...

Regardless, upon hearing that, Fujiko couldn't help but raise a slight brow as she asked, "... Really now?"

"Do I have a reason to lie? Besides, if you're thinking I could secretly be rich, a good look at my attire is enough to debunk that!" replied Gerald as he got to his feet and slowly twirled around, just to prove his point.

Fujiko, for one, knew her famous brands since she was a rich young lady from a prestigious family, so she had to agree with that.

“... While it’s true that you certainly don’t look like one, you can definitely live a much better life with how strong you are... Honestly, if you apply to become a personal bodyguard, you could earn over a million dollars per year...” muttered Fujiko as she brushed some dust off his clothes.

“Life as a personal bodyguard is way too restrictive for me. It’s also a tad too dangerous for my taste. Honestly, the way I’m living now is good enough,” replied Gerald with a smile.

“... I-I know, right...?” muttered Fujiko as she blushed slightly, thinking that Gerald was hinting that he enjoyed spending his time with her.

Realizing that, Gerald who didn’t want to speak any further for fear that it would create more misunderstandings then cleared his throat before saying, “... Anyway, it’s getting quite late, so you should go get some rest. Hopefully, your father will have obtained some valuable information from those two men by morning...”

Chapter 2103

Still blushing slightly, Fujiko then nodded as she replied, “... R- right, right... You head to bed early too then...”

Though the night had been a dangerous one, she couldn’t help but feel pleased after hearing what Gerald had said. Regardless, she was then promptly accompanied back to her room’s entrance before she finally parted ways with Gerald...

Gerald himself removed his coat and poured himself a glass of cold water the second he returned to his room. Once he was seated on a chair, he began thinking about the two assassins.

Since his trip to Japan had been highly confidential, he doubted that they had been sent by his old enemies. However, those two were able to address him by name. With that in mind, whoever it was who had sent them, they had definitely done their homework before setting the assassination plan into motion...

'But who could it be...?' Gerald thought to himself as he puffed on his cigarette.

After thinking about it for a while, Gerald managed to come up with a few individuals who lived in Japan who possibly had old grudges against him. Even so, no matter how much he stretched it, all of them didn't really seem to have the balls to confront him. Besides, it's not like they would even know that he had come to Japan.

With that in mind, the assassins must've been sent by individuals whom he had offended in his most recent trip here... From what he could gather, that included the special forces soldiers from Yanam, the Kanagawas, and the Hanyus...

Though he included the soldiers from Yanam into the equation, they were the most improbable of the bunch. After all, none of them had managed to find any evidence that he was the one responsible for Adler's disappearance. Besides, he was pretty sure that the Yanam military had already been scared out of their wits by him.

Gerald, for one, believed that Carter who had acted so cowardly before him back then wouldn't dare to send assassins after him, unless, of course, that man didn't wish to be the acting leader of the military anymore...

Regardless, that boiled down the list to the Kanagawas and the Hanyus. Though Gerald's money was on the Kanagawas...

Shaking his head, Gerald decided not to think about it for the moment. After all, he believed in Takuya's interrogation skills, so all he needed to do now was to wait till morning to finally find out who had sent those two assassins. With his mind made up, he then took a cold bath before hitting the hay...

When he got up at dawn, Gerald quickly prepared himself for the day before heading out to see how Takuya's interrogation had gone. Upon opening the door, however, Gerald was startled to see two Futaba guards standing guard right outside his room.

“... What exactly is the meaning of this...?” asked Gerald as he scratched his cheek.

“Ah, good morning, Mr. Crawford... Well, since those two men attempted to assassinate you yesterday, the patriarch ordered us to guard over your room. With that in mind, you don’t have to worry about any sneak attacks!” replied one of the men.

From how tired they both looked, it was obvious that they had been standing there for the longest time. With that in mind, Gerald simply waved his hand before saying, “There’s no need to guard over me. Now hurry off and get some rest.”

Though he didn’t say it, Gerald had a feeling that if he relied on these two to protect him, he could’ve easily been killed over ten times before they noticed a thing!

Either way, upon hearing that, the other man yawned as he replied, “Unfortunately, we can’t just disobey the patriarch’s orders!”

Understanding that they could’ve gotten a good night’s rest had it not been for Takuya’s orders, Gerald simply shook his head while saying, “Look, just go. If the patriarch gets angry about you leaving, just tell him that I was the one who told you to leave.”

Since Gerald believed that these two wouldn’t be able to protect him anyway, the fact that they were wasting all their energy here made him feel slightly bad for them.

Regardless, upon hearing that, the duo immediately bowed while declaring, “T-thank you, Mr. Crawford!”

Following that, they swiftly left for their bedrooms...

Watching as the duo walked off, Gerald then stretched before taking in a deep breath of fresh air...

A short while later, Gerald began making his way to Takuya's room. On his way there, however, he bumped into one of Takuya's most trusted subordinates. Seeing that, he figured that he may as well ask if Takuya was in his room before actually getting there. Upon being told that Takuya was still interrogating the duo from the night before, Gerald asked for the interrogation room's location before promptly walking off...

Making his way to the back of the manor, Gerald eventually came across a stone entrance that led to an area that was clearly constructed differently from the rest of the main building.

While the front part of the manor including the villas there as well as the Futaba's magnificent garden looked absolutely lavish, anything past the stone entrance honestly looked desolate. With some of the weeds here growing as tall as humans and a few easily missed single story houses further back, it felt like nobody had lived in or even taken care of the area for over a decade...

Regardless, while walking along a beaten path, Gerald soon came across three of the Futaba family's subordinates who immediately greeted, "Mr. Crawford!"

Peeking past them, Gerald was prompted to ask, "Is the patriarch in one of those houses?"

"Indeed! He's been interrogating the two assassins throughout the night... Regardless, have you eaten, Mr. Crawford? We were just about to get some breakfast for the patriarch!" said one of the guards.

"I see. Get some for me, then," replied Gerald with a nod before walking past them...

After walking among the tall grass for a while, Gerald soon heard muffled screams coming from one of the houses. Easily figuring out where the noises were coming from, Gerald then entered the house before saying, "Patriarch?"

“Hmm? What are you doing here, Mr. Crawford?” asked Takuya who had been sitting before a table with a cigarette in hand as he immediately got to his feet.

“I just wanted to see how the interrogation was progressing,” replied Gerald who had noticed a cup of tea on Takuya’s table as he took a seat before looking around...

Though Takuya had said that he was doing an interrogation, the entire place honestly looked more like an execution room... The fact that there were instruments of torture everywhere and the two bloodied assassins had been tied to a cross only served to further contribute to that statement...

Frowning slightly, Gerald couldn’t help but ask, “... Aren’t you afraid that you’ll end up killing them...?”

“Oh, I’ve taken precautionary measures. After curing them at my clinic last night, my family’s doctor has been checking their vital signs every half an hour. I’ve been intensifying and reducing the torture according to what the doctor reported to me throughout the night.

Don’t worry, I’m not letting them die until they tell us the crucial details,” replied Takuya with a faint smile while gesturing at a middle aged man who was wearing a white coat.

Figuring that that was the doctor, Gerald chose to not say anything else. A brief silence later, Takuya slid a piece of paper before Gerald...

Raising a slight brow, Gerald began reading through it and quickly realized that it contained a log of all that the assassins had said that night. However, as it turned out, they had only revealed how they had managed to sneak into the manor as well as how long they had waited before striking. In other words, none of the extracted information was useful.

With that in mind, Gerald couldn’t help but frown as he asked, “... Is this all?”

“Unfortunately, these two are more stubborn than I had initially anticipated. Since they’ve been unwilling to provide any useful information up till this point, I’ll be using more dire tactics from now on. Even if they do end up dying, I’ll make sure they die extremely slowly!” growled Takuya as he gritted his teeth.

Under normal circumstances, anyone he interrogated would break down in just a few hours. These two, however, had kept their lips sealed tight, even though he had interrogated them throughout the night and had exhausted most of his torture devices! He simply couldn’t believe it! Still, Takuya wasn’t discouraged.

After all, he hadn’t used his cruelest tactics yet. Once he used those, he was sure that they would finally talk.

Turning to look at the duo, Gerald simply scoffed, “Just tell us the details already or you’ll surely die extremely painfully!”

“Dream on! You’ll never get anything from us so just kill us already!” snapped Endo as he gritted his teeth. While it was true that his wounds had been all stitched up, it had been done crudely with the intent of only allowing him to remain barely alive. After an entire night of getting tortured, the stitches had long been torn open again, causing Endo’s skin to inflame and be exposed to infection...

“There’s no use pitying them, Mr. Crawford. Either way, I believe that I’m close to cracking both of them. After all, nobody on this planet is truly unafraid of death. With that in mind, I just have to resort to more brutal psychological tactics to make them speak!” scowled Takuya as he slammed his fist onto the table.

“Hah! We’ll see about that!” scoffed Endo as he spat his blood at Takuya.

“... Give them the harshest treatment you can think of. I refuse to believe that we can’t get them to speak by the end of the day!” ordered Takuya as he walked up to Endo before glaring at him.

“Worry not, patriarch! We’ll use everything we’ve got to make them speak!” replied Takuya’s men as

they nodded.

“Well said. Now then, let’s leave for now, Mr. Crawford I’m a little tired after interrogating them the entire night. Speaking of which, I’ve ordered my subordinates to prepare breakfast for us, so let’s get to that first,” said Takuya as he turned to look at Gerald before starting to leave the interrogation room...

Naturally, Gerald followed him, and soon enough, they found themselves walking into the front part of the manor again. As they walked on, Takuya lit a cigarette and began smoking on it.

After a while, he was prompted to say, “You know, I never expected those two to be so stubborn. To think that I’d fail to get any relevant information from them after torturing them for an entire night! Still, I have a pretty good hunch that they’re both Hanyus. After all, that’s the only family who even dares to go against the Futabas in the entirety of Japan! Besides, you already stated that they were a bit too strong to be ordinary assassins. Still, I can’t help but wonder why they went after you instead of my daughter...?”

‘Indeed... Had the Hanyus come for Fujiko, they could’ve just attacked her straight off the bat. What more, aside from the fact that they clearly went after me, they even called out my name, which seals the deal that I was their target the entire time,’ replied Gerald as he continued pondering the topic.

“So it would seem. But why on earth would they suddenly wish to go after you...? Could it be that they’ve learned that you were the one who had saved Fujiko that day? Even so, as much as I hate to say it, knowing that shouldn’t have caused them to target you instead of my daughter...” muttered Takuya with a frown.

“... Could it be that they’re not actually Hanyus...?” asked Gerald.

“With how strong those two are? They’re most probably Hanyus. After all, there aren’t any other families or forces in Japan who would train such competent assassins. And again, nobody would dare to mess with the Futabas other than them. Then again, it may just be a biased assumption. Perhaps all this goes deeper...” replied Takuya with a shrug, still slightly bummed out that he hadn’t managed to crack the code after an entire night of interrogating...

Chapter 2106

Shortly after, they arrived at the dining room. By that point, Tanaka's men had already returned with breakfast, so after the two sat at opposite ends of the dining table, both of them began having their meals. Naturally, they continued discussing the matter in between bites...

While things had calmed down a little at the Futaba manor, the Hanyus were in complete disarray. Ryugu, for one, had been seated on his wooden chair in his room the entire night, constantly staring at his cell phone with his fist clenched.

The final message he had received from Endo was from last night, stating that he and Izumi had successfully managed to sneak into the manor and locate Gerald. Though Ryugu had expected them to update him on their situation right before they made their move, the message never came.

Now that ten hours had passed since their last message, Ryugu was understandably getting more and more worried. Even so, he refused to believe that the two capable team leaders had failed. After all, he of all people, knew how strong they were, especially when they paired up. If they were able to secretly assassinate the leader of a terrorist organization, finishing off

Gerald should naturally be a piece of cake for them! Hell, just sending one of them should've sufficed! However, Ryugu wanted everything to be perfect, so he had sent both of them together.

Still, now that so much time had passed without any news from them, Ryugu couldn't help but fear the worst. At this moment, he would've very much preferred receiving a message from them, stating that they had failed, rather than continue going through this agonizing wait...

At that moment, his door suddenly burst open, prompting Ryugu to leap from his seat and yell, "Any news from them?!"

"... U-unfortunately not, team leader..." replied Kanagawa Takeshi, one of the other team leaders.

Frowning slightly, Ryugu then gripped his phone tightly while muttering, "... It's impossible... Isn't there any way to find out what's happened to them?"

"Trust me when I say we've been doing our best, team leader... Regardless, according to our men keeping an eye on the manor, nobody's entered the Futaba residence ever since Endo and Izumi went in. As for the only person who had left throughout the past ten hours, he had apparently only gone out to get breakfast, and returned shortly after... If you're wondering why we haven't done any internal investigations, we're simply worried that we may unnecessarily increase our chances of being found out by the Futabas..." replied Takeshi in a resigned tone.

Though Takeshi really wanted to enter and find out what had happened to Endo and Izumi as well, his better judgment made him refrain from doing so. After all, if the duo had gotten into trouble, then there was a high chance that he'd get caught as well. Should that happen, then everything would surely begin to crumble.

...

Understanding where Takeshi was coming from, Ryugu then asked in resignation, "... Well, then did any of the men hear any peculiar sounds after Endo and Izumi got in...?"

"Not at all. After all, you told us to keep an eye out on the entrance. Since Izumi and Endo entered from the side, we weren't even aware when they had made their move. With that in mind, it was pretty much improbable for us to have heard anything..." replied Takeshi as he shook his head.

"God f*cking d*mn it...! How the hell did two of our family's best assassins just vanish into thin air after attempting to assassinate Gerald?! Even if they got found out or had to deal with the fighters of the Futaba family, they should've reported back by now!" roared Ryugu who was now so infuriated that his entire body was trembling. Unable to hold back his rage, he then tossed his phone to the floor with so much force that the phone smashed into a million pieces...!

Seeing that, the shocked Takeshi immediately took a few steps back before lowering his head, not daring to say a word...

After breathing heavily for a short while, the enraged Ryugu couldn't help but laugh coldly before sneering, "How... How absolutely weird... How the hell had such mighty assassins just disappeared upon entering the Futaba manor...?!"

Chapter 2107

Once Ryugu calmed down a bit, Takeshi gulped before replying, "... Do... you think the Futabas have other powerful men...?"

"... Negative. Even if there were powerful people within their family, our two assassins should've still been able to report back. Besides, we've already done a thorough background check on their family before we attempted to assassinate Fujiko. With that in mind, we know that there are only a few trained fighters in their family, though none of them should be able to handle Endo and Izumi," said Ryugu as he shook his head.

Though he said that, he knew that there was a high possibility that the two were already dead. However, that posed a question. Where the hell had the Futabas suddenly found such powerful men? No matter how much Ryugu racked his brain, he simply couldn't figure it out.

"Indeed... How truly odd... With how strong Endo and Izumi are, this mission should've been a cinch for them. I wonder if there are any underlying issues involved..." muttered Takeshi.

"I can't say for sure, but whatever the case is, we can't slack off for even a second! I can't just allow two of our family's top assassins to disappear off the grid like this! With that said, we're forced to head to their manor to investigate! Even if Endo and Izumi are truly dead, I have to see their corpses to believe it!" declared Ryugu after taking in a deep breath.

The now trembling Ryugu had honestly been keeping Endo and Izumi's lack of response a secret from most of the other Hanyus. After all, Endo and Izumi were two of the biggest powerhouses within the family, and if the patriarch found out that something had possibly happened to them, there would surely be hell to pay. It certainly didn't help that it would be extremely difficult to train more of their men to get to the duo's level...

Whatever the case was, Takeshi then asked, "So... Should we still keep an eye on their entrance...?"

"... In the meantime, yes. I'll be sending over another small team to take over that task in a bit. Once they arrive, try your best to locate Endo and Izumi. If you manage to rescue them, I'll allow you to be the assistant team leader of the main assassination team!" replied Ryugu after a brief pause.

"G-got it!" exclaimed Takeshi as he immediately smiled.

"Good. Now leave. I wish to be left alone...!" grumbled Ryugu as he sat on his chair again while looking blankly at the ceiling...

Moving back to Gerald, after having his breakfast, he went looking for Fujiko. Once he entered her room and they greeted each other good morning, Fujiko took the chance to say, "You know, the military just notified me that the special forces competition is a week away. With that in mind, they wish for me to head there."

"I agree with them there. Seven days isn't all that long," replied Gerald with a nod.

"Indeed... Still, I can't help but worry that if we leave the mansion, more assassins will try coming after your head... I really don't wish to burden you any more than I should... Call it a gut feeling, but I believe that the Kanagawas and the Hanyus will come after you at the same time..." muttered Fujiko as she grabbed onto the hem of her clothes.

"Don't worry about me. Regardless, I'll be sure to protect you," replied Gerald in a casual tone.

Understanding that Gerald was trying to avoid talking about her burdening him, Fujiko then said, "I know you will, but I-"

“So, when are we heading over?” interrupted Gerald.

“... According to the military notice, we’ll have to be there by this afternoon to register ourselves... Once we’ve done that, they’ll tell us more about the event as well as when the competition will be held... Also, we won’t be allowed to leave till the competition ends, so keep that in mind,” replied Fujiko with a serious tone.

“Then what are we waiting for? Let’s get packing and hit the road!” said Gerald without the slightest hesitation.

Simply nodding in response, Fujiko knew that Gerald was right. She needed to focus on the competition. After all, not only was she the youngest daughter of the Futaba family, but she also had to live up to her title of the ‘Queen of Soldiers’. With that in mind, she definitely had to score high in the competition...!

Chapter 2108

After having their lunch, Gerald and Fujiko left the mansion together in an SUV.

Earlier before they set off, Takuya had advised both of them, especially Gerald, to pay attention to their surroundings no matter where they went. After all, there was a high possibility that both the Kanagawas and Hanyus were actually working together. With that in mind, Takuya knew that his daughter was now in much more danger than she had ever been in. Gerald, of course, agreed with this, and he swore to protect Fujiko as best as he could.

Regardless, as the duo sped off to the location that the Japanese military had designated for them to get registered, the Hanyus who were keeping watch over the manor’s entrance whom Ryugu had stationed there immediately reported what they saw to their team leader...

“What? Gerald and Fujiko left at the same time?!” yelled the wide eyed Ryugu as he leaped off his chair, dropping his cigarette in the process.

“Apparently so. My subordinates informed me that they were driving southeast,” replied Takeshi

instantaneously, not daring to sound slack.

“Well, then what are you waiting for? Get your men to tail them! I’m warning you, if you lose them, you’ll have hell to pay!” roared Ryugu as he slammed his fist onto the table.

“D-don’t worry about that, team leader! My subordinates have already been doing that! We’d never let our targets escape!” declared Takeshi as he patted his chest.

Seconds later, however, Takeshi then added, “... However... Are we simply stalking them...? Should we take action or something...?”

“Did the obvious really need to be stated? Get your men’s coordinates right this instant! We’re joining them immediately! That Gerald Crawford... I don’t care how, but we’re definitely getting our hands on him, and once we do, we’ll eventually learn about what happened to Endo and Izumi! There’s just no way we could lose two of our family’s top assassins that easily...!” growled Ryugu as he stomped out of his room, Takeshi swiftly following after him...

Moving back to the SUV, Gerald could be seen steering with one hand and holding a cigarette in his other. With his cigarette hand leaned against the open car window, both of them were swiftly approaching the competition venue...

On their way, however, Fujiko who wasn’t called the Queen of Soldiers for nothing couldn’t help but say, “... Is it just me, or are the two cars behind the SUV tailing us...?”

Fujiko, for one, had noticed the cars from the moment they entered the highway. It was pretty hard to miss them since no matter how fast or slow the SUV went, the two cars simply maintained a constant distance from them...

Regardless, upon hearing that, Gerald couldn’t help but smile as he peeked at the rear-view mirror while replying, “What, did you just notice them?”

"I do know they've been tailing us for about ten minutes I just wanted to check with you," said Fujiko as she shook her head.

"Well, the truth is, those two cars have been following us ever since we left the manor," replied Gerald as he tossed the cigarette out the window... before stepping on the gas!

With that, the SUV lurched forward, prompting the two cars behind them to speed up as well!

"... What? Are you telling me that the people in those cars have been keeping watch over our manor this entire time?!" exclaimed Fujiko, stunned. After all, the idea of them being tailed from the moment they left the manor was something she had never even considered!

"I'm assuming so. After all, before we headed off earlier, I could already sense the presence of at least ten people lurking in the shadows. However, they weren't very strong, so I just remained silent about it. If it helps to know, they're weak enough that your father's men could easily take care of them."

Chapter 2109

Though the SUV was already speeding at a hundred and sixty, Gerald looked as cool as a cucumber as he casually drummed his fingers on the steering wheel...

Fujiko, on the other hand, couldn't help but stare wide eyed at Gerald before eventually asking, "... Who the hell are you...?"

"I'm just an ordinary man. I've told you that many times before, haven't I?" replied Gerald with a smile.

"No ordinary man would be able to say they 'sensed the presence of at least ten weak men lurking in the shadows'... How do you even gauge a person's strength without seeing them first?" muttered Fujiko.

"... It was just a gut feeling," replied Gerald, now realizing that he may have said a bit too much.

Naturally, there was no way he could tell her that he had sensed those men and how strong they were through the use of his Herculean Primordial Spirit. With the Herculean Primordial Spirit inside him, there was simply no hiding from Gerald, regardless of how stealthy one was or how good they were at acting...

Whatever the case was, Fujiko naturally didn't buy it, prompting her to say, "... The truth, please."

"... Again, it was just a gut feeling... Regardless, I feel we should focus on getting rid of those people first... After all, you wouldn't want to lead them all the way to the competition venue, right?" replied Gerald, clearly trying to change the topic.

"...Of course, I wouldn't. Those people will surely cause chaos if we lead them there! Should that happen, not only will I get punished, but the Japanese military will be humiliated as well!" declared Fujiko in a determined tone as she shook her head. She, for one, didn't want to bring her family's troubles to the military...

"Well said. Next question, do you want to lose them or just kill them?" asked Gerald as he placed his hand on the gear shift.

"End them!" exclaimed Fujiko without the slightest hesitation. After all, if they failed to lose them, then they'd surely make it to the competition venue, causing her reputation to plummet. Killing them right off the bat was the only way to prevent that!

"Kill them it is," replied Gerald with a slight nod.

"If it helps, there's a deserted, extinct volcano nearby that used to be active. In case you're worried, extinct volcanoes aren't expected to ever erupt again. Regardless, why don't we do the deed there?" asked Fujiko as she fished out a map of Japan from the storage area in the SUV before eventually pointing at a spot to Gerald.

After glancing at the map and looking at the mountain that was quite a distance away, Gerald couldn't

help but ask, "Is that it?"

Following Gerald's line of vision, Fujiko then nodded as she replied, "Yep, that's the one."

"Seems like the perfect place to murder someone," muttered Gerald as he slowed down the car... before swerving it off the highway and into a path that led to a village! Once he was on the path, he immediately sped up again, causing the SUV to disappear amongst the single story houses that were all over the place...

Meanwhile, the assassins that had been tailing the duo instantly noticed Gerald's sudden route change, prompting them to immediately change course as well. Naturally, they also reported this to Takeshi who was currently in Ryugu's car. However, since each of the Hanyu family's cars had a tracking system installed, Ryugu already knew where the assassins that were

Tailing Gerald were, even before they reported back.

What Ryugu found shocking, however, was the fact that Gerald was actually going off course. Immediately clicking on the car's central control panel twice prompting a map of the area to appear, Ryugu then grumbled, "This isn't right. Where the hell are they going?"

Chapter 2110

Watching as the two assassin groups continued pursuing Gerald and Fujiko on-screen, Ryugu couldn't help but wonder why the duo had suddenly chosen to deviate off the highway.

Due to all the research the Hanyus had done while planning their initial assassination of Fujiko, Ryugu knew for a fact that Fujiko was supposed to be heading to the location where the special forces competition was going to be held. After all, where else could they be going? With that in mind, why were they suddenly going off path...?

Sitting at the back, Takeshi realized that he wasn't the only one who found this odd since shortly after, one of the subordinates who was on loudspeaker asked, "Could we have made a wrong guess as to

where they were headed to...?”

After a brief pause, Ryugu simply laughed coldly before replying, “I don’t even care anymore! Just follow them till the end of hell!”

Who cared if they were heading to the special forces competition, some outing, or even someplace to pay respect to their ancestors? The location wasn’t what mattered. No, what mattered was that Ryugu killed Gerald while he could!

Ryugu knew that it was going to be much more difficult to pull off the assassination once the duo returned to the Futaba manor, so this was the prime opportunity to get the job done...! This could very well be his only chance of rescuing Endo and Izumi as well...!

Whatever the case was, upon hearing Ryugu’s order, Takeshi cleared his throat before yelling, “Didn’t you hear what the team leader said? Keep your eyes peeled and don’t you dare lose sight of that SUV! If you fail to do something simple like that, don’t return to the family!”

“U-understood!” replied the subordinates who were still hot on Gerald’s heels...

Moving back to Gerald, once he was about six miles from the dead volcano, he made sure to slow down a little. After all, he couldn’t kill them if they lost him.

As Gerald drove on, he couldn’t help but ask, “So... What kind of disputes did the Futabas have with the Hanyus in recent years?”

“I’m... not too sure about that, actually... After all, I’ve mostly spent my time in the military in the past few years... It certainly didn’t help that during the rare occasions I returned home, dad refused to tell me a single thing regarding our family’s affairs. However, I do remember him saying that our family had barely contacted the Hanyus ever since he became the patriarch... I, for one, see no reason why he would lie,” replied Fujiko as she shook her head, realizing just how out of touch she was with her family’s affairs. It seemed that she had been too focused on surviving and fighting for honor in the

military this entire time...

"I see... Do you think he refrained from saying anything due to some concerns of his?" asked Gerald who had witnessed other families doing the same things in the past. In the other family's situation, the party involved didn't detail the entire situation to him, which resulted in them facing even more trouble than necessary...

Regardless, Fujiko then shook her head while saying, "I don't think so..."

Fujiko, for one, knew her father's personality well. Takuya simply wasn't the kind of person who held grudges against other families. Even if a dispute came up, he would simply tolerate it for the sake of protecting everyone's interest...

"I wonder about that..." muttered Gerald to himself.

While Gerald was well aware of the family feud between the Futabas and the Hanyus, he didn't believe that the Hanyus would just send assassins over to kill Fujiko without good reason. The problem was, he couldn't tell what their motive was. Still, he was sure the Hanyus had their reasons. After all, why else would they be so persistent in causing trouble for both him and Fujiko?

"... Though you say that, I don't really see my dad having any reason to be in conflict with the Hanyus..." replied Fujiko who had heard Gerald's mutter.

"While that may be true, you haven't put the rest of the Futabas into consideration. Who knows whether any of them have any conflicts or exchanges of interests with the Hanyus?" said Gerald with a wry smile.

Upon hearing that, Fujiko instantly frowned as she asked, "... Could you perhaps be referring to Grandpa Masura and Suke...?"

Though Fujiko hadn't been home for the longest, she was still aware enough about things like these. The fact that Masura had told her father to step down from his post right in front of her that night certainly made him a prime suspect..

Chapter 2111

"Just to make it clear, I didn't say any names," replied Gerald as he shook his head. He, for one, knew better than to just casually point fingers at any of the Futabas. However, from his previous experiences, there was a pretty high probability that Fujiko's guess was right.

"... Whatever the case is, I really don't even dare to imagine such incidents taking place within my family..." muttered Fujiko as her expression darkened.

Even from when she was a child, Fujiko had been well taken care of by all the members of her family. With that in mind, it made it all the more difficult for her to imagine any of her kind family members standing against her father and doing harmful things to their family...

Gerald himself remained silent after hearing that, and simply concentrated on driving, making sure to keep a close eye on the two cars through his rear view mirror behind them at the same time...

In less than twenty minutes, the duo found themselves getting increasingly close to their destination. By this point, there were hardly any villages down the path. Hell, there weren't even any wild dogs around, and to a country with such little land like Japan, this was nothing short of unnatural...

Regardless, upon realizing that Gerald kept looking around, Fujiko was prompted to ask, "Do you know why this area is so sparsely populated...?"

Shrugging in response, Gerald simply replied, "Beats me."

"Well... This is the territory of the Yamashita family. With that in mind, apart from their family members, nobody else dares to live here..." explained Fujiko.

“... Hmm? What kind of people are the Yamashitas?” asked Gerald, his interest slightly piqued. Though he didn’t know much about Japan, he was informed when it came to the more influential and powerful families. With that said, he found it odd that he hadn’t heard of the Yamashitas before. After all, in order to obtain such a large piece of land, the Yamashita had to undoubtedly be powerful...

Seeing how curious Gerald looked, Fujiko quickly explained, “Well, they’re quite an obscure family in Japan... Their abilities simply aren’t good enough to obtain a ranking in Japan.”

“Then how did they buy such a massive piece of land?”

“Well... though the commoners see them as a regular family, to the insiders, we know that they have a rather ‘unique’ profession... They’re secretly a family of ninjas,” replied Fujiko in a lowered voice.

Similar to cultivators, ninjas weren’t individuals whom people from the secular world could learn about all willy-nilly. After all, exposing that such a profession actually existed could easily stir up a never ending storm!

“... Ninjas, you say?” said Gerald with a slight frown.

“Indeed. I’m sure you’ve heard of them before...” replied Fujiko with a nod.

“The way the media depicts them? Yes, though I had honestly no idea they really existed... After all, I’ve never encountered one before!” said Gerald as he shook his head.

“Well, they’re very real, and it’s an unspoken rule for those who know that ninjas are real that their existence should be kept a secret. I believe it’s similar to how Westoners keep the existence of cultivators a secret,” replied Fujiko while nodding.

“... Oh? You know about cultivators?” asked Gerald as he turned to look at her.

"Of course I do! I'm the young mistress of the Futaba family, after all. Besides, our family is—"

Chapter 2112

Though Fujiko's initial tone had been gleeful, halfway through her sentence, she seemed to realize that she had said something she shouldn't have, prompting her to shut up.

While Gerald found that suspicious, he maintained a calm façade as he asked, "What about your family?"

"I... Well, of course my family would know such things. The Futabas are quite powerful, after all," replied Fujiko before covering her mouth slightly.

"Makes sense," said Gerald as he went along with her. Still, after all this time they had spent together, Gerald had a feeling that Fujiko had accidentally just confirmed that her family was part of the Seadom tribe.

Feeling thankful that Gerald wasn't pressuring her to continue, after breathing a sigh of relief, Fujiko then added, "...Regardless, though I know there are ninjas in that family, I've never personally met any. After all, the other powerful families, ours included, don't really have a reason to contact them. With that in mind, they've just been living here, left mostly secluded from regular citizens."

After thinking about it for a while, Gerald further slowed the SUV down to ensure that the other two cars would be able to catch up before looking out the windows while asking, "... Speaking of which, now that we've entered their territory, do you think they'll come looking for trouble with us?"

"There's a low chance of that... After all, as far as I know, the Yamashitas don't really have any conflicts with other families. With that in mind, as long as we don't disturb or accidentally threaten them, we should be able to pass through their territory just fine," replied Fujiko.

“That’s good to know. Regardless, Endo and Izumi are probably with them. Since we’ve caught those two, once we take care of those people who’ve been tailing us, we may finally find out whether it’s the Kanagawas or Hanyus who are behind the assassination attempts,” sneered Gerald with a wry smile.

“Regardless of which family they belong to, we can’t let them off easily after all that they’ve done!” growled Fujiko who now cared about her family’s safety more than anything else.

Nodding in response, Gerald finally hit the brakes once they got to a flat, barren area...

Following that, he was prompted to ask, “Do you still remember what I told you?”

Confused, Fujiko replied, “... Um... Perhaps be a bit more specific...?”

Lighting a cigarette, Gerald then glanced at the rear view mirror and watched as the cars behind them got closer and closer... Pushing the car door open, he then stretched before saying, “I promised to protect you and your family... And I always keep my promises.”

Upon hearing that, Fujiko paused for a moment before asking, “... Why are you doing all this for us...?”

She really couldn’t imagine why Gerald was helping her and her family so much. Even if there was something from her family that he wanted which she had no idea what it could possibly be, with how strong he was, he could’ve easily gotten what he desired through brute force.

By this point, Fujiko was pretty sure that he wasn’t doing all this for her either. After all, back when they were still pretending to be a couple, Gerald had actively made it clear that it was just pretend. He wasn’t interested in her at all!

As she thought about it, she couldn’t help but smile. After all, to others, she and Gerald were still a couple. Though they were faking their relationship now, who was to say that it wouldn’t end up turning into a real one? The thought of it alone greatly improved Fujiko’s mood.

Either way, after Gerald stepped out of the SUV, the other two cars came to a halt not too far off. Even so, nobody stepped out. Instead, the men opted to update Ryugu about their current situation...

“... What? They’ve entered the Yamashita family’s territory?!” yelled Ryugu as he slammed the steering wheel before hitting the brakes, causing the car to come to a screeching halt by the roadside...

Chapter 2113

“Get the physical map out!” ordered Ryugu the second he hung up.

Immediately doing as Ryugu ordered, Takeshi then retrieved the map and unrolled it before him...

Alternating his gaze between the car navigation screen and the physical map, Ryugu traced the route that Gerald had taken... before his finger finally stopped atop the barren mountain. According to the GPS, the two cars truly had entered the Yamashita family’s territory!

“D*mn it! What the hell is Gerald doing in the Yamashita family’s territory?! What kind of relationship does he have with them?!” grumbled Ryugu as he slammed his fist into his seat.

“... Leader... Do you think... that the man who thwarted Saburo’s assassination plan could be a ninja from the Yamashita family...?” speculated Takeshi.

“... A possibility certainly exists... However, I’ve never really met any of the ninjas from that family... Hell, I’ve never even heard of any connections between the Futabas and the Yamashitas!” replied Ryugu as he scratched the back of his head, wondering how things had suddenly gotten so complicated...

Pretty much every powerful family in Japan knew about the Yamashita’s ninjas. However, since nobody had ever seen any of their ninjas, there were rumors that the ninjas were only the stuff of legends and weren’t actually real...

Regardless, after a brief pause, Takeshi then added, "So should we continue with our mission...? Or should I order our men to retreat...?"

"... We've already cornered them well. We shouldn't let an opportunity like this go to waste! Besides, it's not like we're targeting the Yamashitas. If we bump into them, we'll just make sure to explain things properly. With the Hanyu family's status in mind, the Yamashitas should be willing to give us face..." retorted Ryugu as he glared at Takeshi.

With that said, Ryugu then continued driving to where Gerald was. While he would've surely postponed the mission for fear of offending the Yamashitas in the past, the current Ryugu was in a desperate situation. After all, two of the Hanyu family's top assassins had gone missing while attempting to assassinate Gerald! With that in mind, he had to interrogate Gerald as soon as possible to learn about Endo and Izumi's situation. Otherwise, he'd be unable to explain himself to the patriarch...

Ryugu, for one, knew that if he failed to get any information out of Gerald, losing his position as leader was a small price to pay... After all, there was a much higher chance that he would have to pay with his life instead...!

Moving back to Fujiko, she could be seen obediently waiting in the car as Gerald who was standing right next to the SUV stared at the two cars that still hadn't budged.

After puffing most of the cigarette away, Gerald tossed the butt away before saying in a cold voice, "You know, with how long you've been tailing us, don't you find it to be a bit impolite to not even get out of your cars to talk?"

The second Gerald said that, eight men each wielding either a dagger or a steel pipe got out of the cars. However, they didn't rush forward. Instead, they simply glared at Gerald from afar...

Though they hadn't fought him before, they had all heard rumors that Gerald had defeated Endo and Izumi. With that in mind, they all knew there was a high possibility that they would die if they simply charged forward!

Adding that to the fact that Ryugu had only ordered them to tail Gerald rather than assassinate him, none of the eight men planned to make a move.

Seeing that they weren't budging from their spots, Gerald then added, "Since we're all already here, why don't you tell me which family you come from already!"

Chapter 2114

Despite hearing Gerald's question, none of them replied.

Realizing that they weren't keen on saying anything or even moving from their spots, Gerald who was already losing his patience got ready to make a move as she said, "Since you're so unwilling to talk, I'll make sure you never talk again!"

This wasn't Gerald's first time dealing with individuals like this. With that in mind, he knew that brute force was the only way to get them to talk! After all, most people were usually willing to talk when they were inches away from death. With that said, Gerald then bolted toward them!

Before any of Ryugu's men knew it, Gerald had already bolted past them and karate chopped their necks! In less than a few seconds, only one of them remained alive and standing...!

Quivering when he saw that all his allies had died from broken necks, the last man standing then heard Gerald growl, "Again, who do you work for?"

"W-who the hell are you...?!" stuttered the frightened Hanyu who still couldn't believe what he had witnessed just seconds earlier. What level of strength did Gerald even have...?!

"Didn't you send two of your men over to assassinate me? What more, all of you had been stationed right outside the Futaba manor to keep an eye on me, no? Shouldn't you know who I am by now?" replied Gerald with a laugh.

“P-please...! I don’ t know anything...!” pleaded the fearful man Whose mind had gone completely blank

Now.

“Either way, I’m asking one final time. Which family do you belong to?” asked Gerald as he puffed on another cigarette while shaking his head.

Naturally, the man was hesitant to reply. After all, while he was terrified that Gerald would kill him if he remained silent, he knew that he would still end up dead once Ryugu found out that he had told Gerald that he was a Hanyu.

As the terrified man continued pondering his options, another car suddenly came to a screeching halt not too far off. Upon noticing the vehicle, Gerald immediately walked past the quivering man. It was obvious that the people who had just arrived had higher statuses.

Shortly after, Ryugu stepped out and pointed at Gerald before yelling, “Gerald Crawford...!”

Upon seeing Ryugu, Fujiko quickly got out of the SUV and whispered, “Gerald...! Get back here... !”

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded and walked over to stand by Fujiko’s side.

Leaning closer to him, Fujiko then whispered, “That man who just got out... he’s the leader of the Hanyu family’s assassination department...! He’s also one of the Hanyu’s top assassins...! Regardless, since he’s here, the two men we detained last night are most probably Hanyus as well!”

Though Fujiko didn’t recognize the other small fries, she definitely knew who Ryugu was. After all, he was quite famous in Japan.

“Oh? The Hanyus you say...?” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes at Ryugu...

Chapter 2115

Just by looking at the man, Gerald could already tell that Ryugu was slightly stronger than the duo from last night...

Whatever the case was, Fujiko then replied, “Indeed. It’s just as you had predicted... At the start, I wasn’t too sure if the Hanyus were really the ones responsible for all this. Now that I think about it, however, with how strong Endo and Izumi were, I should’ve known better. Either way, since the two were clearly stronger than the men you just killed, I’m assuming that they’re team leaders for some of the more minor assassination teams.”

“I see... If that’s the case, then I guess there’s no need for further interrogation. I’ll just finish these people off and be done for the day. After losing two team leaders and a department leader, I’m sure the Hanyus will lay low for a while,” replied Gerald as his hand reached out to get another cigarette... only to realize that the box was empty.

Watching as Gerald tossed the empty box of cigarettes to the ground, Fujiko who hardly ever saw Gerald without a cigarette in his mouth couldn’t help but frown as she said, “...You know, smoking this much is going to affect your health one day...”

Fujiko, for one, didn’t really mind the smell of cigarette smoke. After all, many of the men in the army smoked just as much as Gerald did. She was simply genuinely worried about Gerald’s health.

“...I’ll keep that in mind,” replied Gerald who was momentarily startled to hear that. After all, aside from Mila, Fujiko had been the only other person who cared about his smoking addiction.

The truth was, Gerald had only started smoking again after Mila went missing. It was the only way he could keep himself sedated enough to not think about her all the time.

Shaking his head, Gerald then slid his hands into his pockets before stepping forward and asking, “ So...

Ryugu, was it? You're not the first assassin I've come across from your family. Regardless, do you have anything you wish to talk to me about? I'm assuming so since you had your men tail us all the way here."

Upon hearing that, Ryugu immediately stomped forward, consistently pointing at Gerald as he yelled, "Where the hell are Endo and Izumi, Gerald...!"

"No idea who they are," replied Gerald as he casually shrugged.

"Don't you dare play dumb with me! What have you done to them?! I'm warning you, you'd best hand them back to us or I'll end you right here and now!" roared Ryugu.

Just as he was wondering how those two had lost to Gerald, he suddenly came to the realization that several of his men were sprawled on the ground...

After a short pause, Ryugu growled, "... What the hell is going on here...?!"

Though Ryugu's expression instantly went ugly, Takeshi's was uglier as he scowled, "They... They must have been murdered by Gerald...!"

Since all of them were his men, Takeshi was well aware that his team's overall capabilities had now been greatly reduced. Without them, he would simply be a general without an army!

"Naturally, I can't hand them to you. However, if you tell me why you made a move on the Futabas in the first place, I may consider sharing the duo's current situation with you. Hell, if I'm feeling generous, I may even return their bodies!" retorted Gerald with a cold laugh.

"You... You're courting death, Gerald...!" roared Ryugu, whose anger had peaked. Had Gerald not had the information he needed, he would've strangled that boy by now...!

Seeing how angered Ryugu was, Gerald then pointed at the corpses on the ground while saying, "I wouldn't rush forward if I were you. Come too close and you'll be dead, just like them!"

Unable to hold himself back anymore, Ryugu was just about to bolt toward Gerald when he suddenly felt Takeshi grabbing onto his arm.

"Leader, that man is obviously extremely powerful...! Remember, not only did he defeat Endo and Izumi, but he also took out most of my men in no time flat! With that in mind, we can't act impulsively...!" whispered Takeshi.

Chapter 2116

Upon hearing that, Ryugu paused for a moment before considerably calming down and saying, "... You're right."

Just as Takeshi had said, Gerald had easily murdered so many Hanyus in such a short amount of time. That was a feat so difficult to pull off that even Ryugu was unsure whether he'd be able to do the same. What more, Gerald didn't even have a single scratch on him. In other words, the battle had been extremely one-sided. The newfound realization of how powerful Gerald truly was immediately sent cold sweat running down Ryugu's forehead...

Though Ryugu had previously refused to believe that Endo and Izumi could get taken down by anyone from the Futaba manor, he now knew how wrong he was.

Seeing how silent the impulsive Ryugu had gotten all of a sudden, Gerald couldn't help but smile sinisterly as he asked, "Hmm? What happened to all that vigor?"

Upon hearing that, Ryugu took in a few deep breaths while wondering how to proceed. Eventually, he figured that it would be best not to further provoke Gerald, at least for the time being.

With that, Ryugu was prompted to say, "... Since you're a guest of the Futaba family, I'm willing to just let everything slide as long as you hand Endo and Izumi back to us!"

“Don’t even dream about getting them back. Regardless, listen closely. If you tell me the full details of why you made a move on the Futabas whether it’s due to the family feud or someone told you to go after them, I may consider sparing you,” replied Gerald in an indifferent tone while crossing his arms.

Though Gerald now knew that Ryugu was the leader of the Hanyu family’s Assassination department, he couldn’t help but look at the man with disdain. After all, Gerald knew that he could probably take Ryugu out without even using the Herculean Primordial Spirit’s powers.

Regardless, upon hearing what Gerald had to say, Ryugu’s anger immediately skyrocketed again. Glaring daggers at Gerald, Ryugu then clenched his fists as he roared, “How arrogant..! Since you’re unwilling to cooperate, have it your way! I’ll show you the true strength of the Hanyu family’s assassins...!”

“W-wait! Leader...! Calm down...!” cried out Takeshi as he immediately attempted to calm Ryugu down again.

Though Takeshi knew that Ryugu was capable of taking on hundreds of special forces soldiers at a time without breaking a sweat, he also knew that Ryugu wasn’t a match for Gerald. After all, Gerald had managed to subdue both Endo and Izumi...! While he didn’t dare tell Ryugu that he could very well end up like his dead men on the ground, Takeshi knew that the probability of that happening was exceedingly high!

Either way, Ryugu simply responded to that by slapping Takeshi!

“Out of my way!” roared Ryugu as he continued marching toward Gerald.

Takeshi himself simply covered his bruised cheek as he stepped to the side where the only surviving assassin from earlier was also standing, not daring to say another word. Knowing that neither of them would be able to stop their leader now, they wondered if he really stood a chance against Gerald...

As for Fujiko, she found herself tugging Gerald’s sleeve while whispering, “... Be careful... He’s a strong one...”

Smiling faintly as he got into a fighting stance, Gerald then replied, "Don't worry. I'm strong enough to deal with him."

Gerald, for one, knew that if he successfully solved the Futaba family's issue with the Hanyus, he would be able to fully gain Takuya's trust. In other words, he'd get closer than ever to solving the secrets of the Seadom tribe. With any luck, he'd be able to head to Yearning Island in the near future...

Whatever the case was, upon seeing how confident Gerald was, Fujiko took a few steps back to avoid getting in the way before saying, "... Alright. Good luck...!"

Chapter 2117

The second her sentence ended, the enraged Ryugu began charging toward Gerald!

As Ryugu was stomping forward earlier, he couldn't help but think about Endo and Izumi's fates. Just thinking about how they could already be dead angered him so much that to Ryugu, Gerald was already a dead man. Whatever the case was, he was the leader of the Hanyu family's assassins! If he couldn't even take Gerald out, what kind of failure was he?!

With that in mind, within a split second, he was already inches away from Gerald! Revealing a dagger that he had kept hidden up his sleeve this entire time, Ryugu's eyes glinted evilly as he yelled, "You should've died ages ago, Gerald...! Enjoy your stay in hell...!"

The dagger itself was emitting a dark glow, and upon seeing that, Gerald couldn't help but furrow his brows as he dodged the attack. From what Gerald could tell, the dagger was probably drenched in poison. With that said, a mere scratch from that thing could possibly be fatal...

Seeing that Gerald was actually dodging his attacks instead of countering, Ryugu immediately summarized that Gerald didn't dare to fight him head on. With that in mind, Ryugu smiled even brazenly than before as he quickly balanced himself again before launching another stab in Gerald's direction!

With how quickly Ryugu was swinging his dagger, he was able to slash over a dozen times in less than two seconds, with each attack aimed at fatal areas like Gerald's throat, chest, and abdomen!

To Ryugu's annoyance, however, Gerald managed to dodge each of his attacks!

'D*mn it...! Stand still already...!' Ryugu thought to himself, wondering why he still hadn't been able to hurt Gerald even after using all his strength. Though he didn't want to admit it, the fact that he kept missing Gerald by a hair strand clearly showed how much stronger Gerald was.

Gerald himself simply smiled, keeping his hands against his back as he said, "There's still quite a gap between us, kiddo."

"Kid?! How dare you call me that...?!" roared the already infuriated Ryugu. As the leader of the Hanyu family's assassination department, not only did he have a high status within the family, but also all over Japan! Wherever he went, people would address him as a leader for heaven's sake! With that in mind, how dare a petty b*stard like Gerald call him a 'kiddo'!

"Oh? Was what I said wrong?" asked Gerald while smiling cheekily.

"You're really asking for it, you know...?!" roared Ryugu who was now so angry that he almost looked maniacal as he clenched his fists!

Following that, Ryugu immediately launched another series of attacks! Now that he was more enraged than ever, his attacking speed and strength were instantly heightened, resulting in the assassin moving so quickly that only his afterimages could be seen!

Noticing how much faster and stronger Ryugu now was, Gerald was just about to release the power of his Herculean Primordial Spirit when suddenly, he couldn't help but frown.

As Ryugu attempted to stab Gerald again, Fujiko who had been watching the entire scene play out

couldn't help but drop her jaw when she saw Gerald suddenly choose to stand still before closing his eyes! Had he gone mad?!

A split second before the dagger landed on Gerald's chest, a loud 'clang' of colliding metal could suddenly be heard as something rapidly flew past...!

Chapter 2118

Caught completely by surprise, Ryugu almost toppled right next to Gerald, though he managed to balance himself in time. At that moment, the dagger that had been in his hand just seconds ago could be seen flipping in the air... and soon after, it lodged itself into the dirt...

Eyes widened, Ryugu immediately began looking for what had intercepted his attack... and soon enough, he saw what it was. It was a shuriken, of all things!

Annoyed that he had missed his chance to kill Gerald because of it, Ryugu immediately roared, "Who the hell did that!"

The second Ryugu said that, a hoarse voice could be heard saying, "A bit hold of you to be fighting in the Yamashita family's territory, don't you think?"

Following that, a hunchbacked old man seemed to appear out of thin air, instantly startling everyone! How had he concealed his presence so perfectly...?

Quickly snapping out of it, Fujiko then leaned closer to Gerald while whispering, "That's most probably an elder of the Yamashita family..."

Though she didn't know much about the Yamashitas, from how the person acted and dressed, it was pretty evident that the old man was the real deal.

Nodding in response, Gerald couldn't help but feel slightly wary of the old man. After all, under normal circumstances, his Herculean Primordial Spirit would warn him whenever cultivators or strong men were around. However, he had only sensed the old man's presence from the moment the shuriken was thrown...

Gerald, for one, knew that the old man must have been watching for a while before he took action. With that in mind, Gerald was rightly vigilant around the elder. To make him feel so worried... How strong was this old man really...?

Still, Gerald couldn't help but shake his head with a smile as he muttered, "So this is a real ninja... Now that's a first..."

Moving back to Ryugu, the second he realized that it was a Yamashita that had stepped in, he immediately calmed himself. After all, he was well aware that he was already in trouble for trespassing. If he offended them any further, then he'd truly be in hot water...

With that, Ryugu quickly retrieved and kept his dagger before heading over to face the old man. Momentarily ignoring Gerald, he then bowed while placing his fist against his palm before declaring, "Good day, senior. I go by Hanyu Ryugu, and I'm the leader of the Hanyu family's assassination department! What should I call you?"

"I've heard about you before..." replied the old man who didn't seem interested in introducing himself.

"... Regardless, I'm only here because I was on my way to settle some grudges with that person. I never thought he'd enter your territory! Either way, I'd like to make it clear that I'm not here to cause you any trouble! With that said, once I take care of him, I'll leave immediately!" declared Ryugu as he glared at Gerald.

Waving his hand rather nonchalantly, the old man then replied, "Before any of that... Since you've entered my family's territory, do come over to my place as guests. We'll peacefully talk about your grudges, and by the end of it all, we can hopefully settle this dispute without any bloodshed... How does that sound?"

Naturally, Ryugu was startled to hear that. After hesitating slightly, he eventually shook his head before saying, "... I'm fine with that! Besides, I've been meaning to visit your family for quite some time now, so this is the perfect opportunity for me to do so!"

Though the Yamashitas were known for their ninjas, Ryugu wasn't all that afraid of them. After all, despite how mysterious ninjas were, Ryugu was pretty sure that the Hanyu's assassins weren't any weaker in comparison...

Chapter 2119

With that in mind, Ryugu then turned to look at Gerald again. Quite honestly, he was feeling immensely anxious to the point of finding it hard to breathe since he still had no idea where Endo and Izumi were. Whatever the case was, Ryugu knew that the only cure for his anxiety was by saving his two men and murdering Gerald...

Regardless, Ryugu had accepted the old man's invitation for a reason. While they were driving over earlier, Ryugu had been thinking about Saburo's failure to assassinate Fujiko. Were the Yamashitas truly the ones who had intercepted Saburo's assassination attempt the other day? Why else would Gerald and Fujiko suddenly decide to head here?

Either way, if the Yamashitas really were the masterminds behind all this, then it would definitely explain why he hadn't been able to locate Saburo's assailant even after sending out so many men to investigate...

Since the old man had initiated the invitation, this was a n optimal opportunity for him to dig deeper into this! He wasn't the leader of the Hanyu's assassination team for nothing!

Whatever the case was, since Ryugu agreed to it, the old man then smiled as he turned to face Gerald while asking, "And how about you, young brother?"

"I'd be glad to. I've heard about the Yamashita ninjas for a while now, and it's an honor to finally be able

to meet one,” replied Gerald as he smiled back.

Chuckling in response, the old man then said in his hoarse voice, “My boy, ninjas aren’t real! We’re just a small family on the verge of collapse! There aren’t any ninjas to be found here!”

Before Gerald could reply, however, the old man slowly extended his hand... and with a slight gesture, the shuriken that had earlier been tossed flew right back into his hand! It was almost as though it was being pulled back by an invisible thread of sorts...

With the shuriken now in his hand, the old man then slipped it into his pocket before turning around and walking further down the barren mountain, his arms against his back... Though one would’ve expected him to move slowly, the old man was quite fast.

Seeing that, Ryugu then glared at Gerald, and was just about to follow suit when Takeshi suddenly walked up to him before asking, “Um... What about us, leader...?”

Pausing for a moment, Ryugu then turned to look at all his possibly dead men. Gritting his teeth, Ryugu simply replied, “... You two wait here. Also, try to see if the others can be saved.”

Following that, Gerald, Fujiko, and Ryugu quickly caught up with the old man.

The Yamashitas lived at the foot of the barren mountain. Though the village itself seemed rather ancient, there were still a number of modern looking villas and manors around...

Eventually stopping before a small manor, the old man then pushed the wooden door open while saying, “Please, come in.”

Nodding in response, all three of them then entered and began looking around. Honestly, the entire area felt rather.... Weston like, at least in a traditional sense. Before them, was a wooden-paved path, with ponds and plants on both sides. At the end of the courtyard, the trio were greeted by the sight of a

row of houses that each looked to be at least a few decades old.

As they were walking on, the old man placed his wrinkled hands together while asking, "... Correct me if I'm wrong, but you're the young mistress of the Futaba family, right?"

Nodding in response, she simply replied, "I am. I go by Futaba Fujiko!"

Chuckling in response, the old man then cheerfully said, "So it really is you! You know, when your father last brought you here, you were just this tall... You really have grown to be a beauty!"

Watching as the old man gestured to the height of a child, the surprised Fujiko who had never heard of her father contacting the Yamashitas before couldn't help but ask, "You've... met my father before...?"

"Of course, I have! Though that was quite a long time ago..." replied the old man as he nodded while smiling, clearly reminiscing about the past...

Chapter 2120

Though Ryugu who had heard the entire conversation didn't say anything, he was now surer than ever that the one who had saved Fujiko the other day was a Yamashita ninja...

Regardless, it wasn't long after before all four of them were seated around a table.

As the old man began serving them some tea, Ryugu who was sitting opposite of Gerald and Fujiko couldn't help but glare at the oddly relaxed duo. After all, with how close Gerald now was to him, he could've easily killed him by now! However, since there was a Yamashita involved, Ryugu knew better than to act recklessly...

Either way, once all of them were served, the old man sat cross-legged and sipped some tea before asking, "Now then... What grudges do both your families have that resulted in you coming here to settle

things...?”

The second he heard that, Ryugu immediately said, “Two of my family’s small team leaders have gone missing and are most probably being locked up in the Futaba manor! With that in mind, I chased them all the way here to demand an explanation!”

“Before that, why don’t you tell us why your assassins sneaked into the manor with the intent of killing me?” replied Gerald with a smile.

“You have no proof that they were trying to assassinate you! I’m warning you, Endo and Izumi are highly reputable figures in my family! With that said, if you dare lay a finger on them, you’ll be facing the full wrath of the Hanyus! Not even the Futabas will be able to protect you then! Now hand them back to me if you don’t wish for a calamity to befall you!” growled Ryugu.

“Speaking of the Futabas, why exactly did your family attempt to assassinate Miss Fujiko back then? While I’m aware of the feud between your families that’s lasted for a few centuries by now, I also know that the Hanyus and Futabas haven’t contacted each other for quite a while. With that said, don’t you think all this stemmed from the fact that you tried assassinating Miss Fujiko in the first place?” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes.

“Gentlemen, are you turning my home into a courtroom now?” said the old man out of the blue as he chuckled heartily.

“... Is that not why you called us over? To settle this dispute for us...?” asked the puzzled Ryugu who would’ve killed Gerald by now had the old man not intervened.

“I never said that. Look, if the Futabas and Hanyus fight within my territory, then there’ll definitely be casualties that I’ll be unable to explain to both your families!” replied the old man as he shook his head with a smile.

Momentarily left speechless, Ryugu quickly snapped out of it before asking, “... That’s it? Then... Why did

you tell us to elaborate on our conflicts in the first place?”

“I was just curious. I never expected all this to stem from such trivial things!” replied the old man as he waved his hand.

“There’s nothing trivial about all this, old man! Two assassins from my family have gone off the radar because of him! With that said, I demand that he hand them back to me, unharmed!” yelled Ryugu as he pointed at Gerald.

Gerald himself remained calm, quietly staring at Ryugu as he pondered the old man’s words.

Had the old man really not wanted there to be any casualties, then he should’ve stepped in before Gerald killed those other assassins earlier. With that in mind, why had he only stepped in once Ryugu began attacking?

Chapter 2121

Though Gerald felt that the old man’s reasoning clearly had holes in it, he chose not to say a word first. After all, even if things did go south, he knew he would still be able to protect Fujiko.

“Look, I’m just an outsider in all this, so I can’t settle your issues. With that said, if you still wish to fight, do it outside the Yamashita family’s territory. While I won’t meddle once you’re no longer here, as long as you remain, I forbid you from continuing to brawl. Do I have myself clear?” replied the old man rather threateningly before alternating his gaze between Gerald and Ryugu...

“... Got it,” muttered Ryugu who knew that he didn’t really have a choice but to agree.

“Good. Now that that’s out of the way, why don’t all of you accompany this old man for a few cups of

tea? Since we rarely leave this place and we hardly ever get any visitors, I'd like to know what's been happening in the outside world... Of course, if you'd like to leave first, I have no issue with that either," replied the old man as he refilled their cups.

Upon hearing that, Gerald turned to look at Fujiko before asking, "Are you in any hurry?"

"Not at all... After all that's happened, I'd like to rest here for a bit..." replied Fujiko who had a feeling that Gerald had something in mind, as she played along.

Nodding in satisfaction, the old man then turned to face Ryugu and added, "And what about you?"

"I... I'm... in no hurry either..." growled Ryugu as he desperately tried to maintain a calm façade.

Naturally, he understood that if he left now, Gerald could easily escape later on! What more, since Gerald already knew that he was being targeted, cornering him again would surely be difficult... Waiting at the fringes of the Yamashita's territory wasn't a viable option either since who knows how long those two would stall for time in here...

With that in mind, all he could do was wait here till Gerald finally decided to leave... Once that b*stard left, he would simply follow after and immediately make his move once they were beyond the Yamashita family's territory...

Laughing heartily, the old man then said, "Well, then! How pleasing to hear! It truly has been too long since we've last had visitors from the outside!"

While he was annoyed to hear that, Ryugu made sure to force a smile...

Following that, time passed rather slowly... By the time they were done with their fifth pot of tea, the sky was already darkening outside...

To Ryugu's annoyance, however, Gerald didn't seem like he was keen on leaving at all! With that in mind, he knew he had no choice but to call Takeshi and update him on the situation...

The second Ryugu excused himself and left the room, the old man immediately gestured for Gerald to come over to him.

Seeing that, Gerald inched a bit closer before asking with a smile, "Is there anything I can help you with?"

"Indeed... Both of you can leave through the back door now... Shortly after, you should bump into someone who'll then lead you to a car that I've prepared in advance..." whispered the old man in a somewhat rustic Weston dialect.

Slightly widening his eyes, Gerald couldn't help but say, "You're... from Weston...?"

Patting Gerald on the shoulder, the old man simply replied, "This isn't the time to be talking about this. Regardless, once you're done with your business, return to this place and I'll give you a further explanation. Now leave..."

Nodding in response, Gerald then said, "...Noted. Thank you, elder..."

Though Gerald wasn't particularly afraid of Ryugu, Fujiko still had a competition to attend...

Chapter 2122

Still, to think that the old man was actually a Westoner! While Gerald had no idea what was going on in the old man's mind, he had a feeling that the elder didn't have any bad intentions toward them...

With that, Gerald and Fujiko then left through the back and true enough, someone was there waiting for

them.

After a quick bow, the man then began walking along the barren mountain, prompting Gerald and Fujiko to follow after. Not too long later, the trio came across a car, just as the old man had said.

Handing Gerald the car keys, the man then respectfully said, "Do take this car, Mr. Crawford. After driving forward for a bit, you'll see the main road again."

"Thank you," replied Gerald without saying anything else. After all, it was already nearing dusk and they needed at least four hours to get to the competition venue. If they were unlucky, Fujiko's tardiness could very well affect her final results...

With that in mind, upon entering the car, Gerald immediately stepped on the gas...

After driving for a bit, Fujiko could no longer hold her curiosity back. Looking at Gerald, she was prompted to ask, "So... What exactly is your relationship with the Yamashitas...?"

Chuckling in response, Gerald who had no idea who the old man from Weston was or why he decided to help them simply shook his head as he replied, "Truth be told, this is the first time I've met him."

"... Come again? You don't know each other?" muttered the confused Fujiko.

"Not at all. With that in mind, I'm coming back here once the competition is over, just to get a few things sorted out," replied Gerald as he habitually attempted to get a cigarette. However, remembering Fujiko's advice, he managed to refrain from doing so.

"... I see... Still, I didn't think that there'd be a Westoner within the Yamashita family... What more, he's apparently met my father before... Though he sounded like he was quite familiar with dad, I was never told anything about this before..." muttered Fujiko as the questions continued piling up.

“Then let’s find out more about all this together once the competition is over,” replied Gerald who was just as curious as to why the old man had decided to help them.

...

Moving back to Ryugu, after ending the call that took approximately ten minutes, he reentered the house only to momentarily freeze when he realized that Gerald and Fujiko were no longer there!

Upon hearing that, the old man took a long sip of tea... And once the cup was empty, he turned to face Ryugu before replying, “Hmm? They just left.”

“They... What...?!” growled Ryugu who’s expression instantly turned ugly. Had it not been for the fact that he didn’t wish to offend the Yamashitas, he would’ve already beaten up this old man...!

“Indeed. Is there a problem with that? After all, they aren’t exactly bound to my family. I can’t stop them from leaving,” replied the old man rather nonchalantly.

“... That...” muttered Ryugu as his voice trailed off. After all, the old man’s words made sense. In the end, he was the one to blame for making that phone call earlier. Because of that, Gerald and Fujiko found their chance to flee...

Now understanding that this was his own doing, Ryugu took a few deep breaths before calmly asking, “... Then tell me, how exactly did they leave and where are they headed to?”

When Ryugu had been making his call in the courtyard, he hadn’t seen anyone walk out the front door. The house wasn’t exactly large either, so the two of them hiding inside till he left was out of the question...

Chapter 2123

“They left through the back door, though they didn’t tell me where they were headed to,” replied the old man as he shook his head.

Now understanding that he wouldn’t find out where they had gone to no matter how much he asked, Ryugu immediately said, “Pardon me, but I’ll be taking my leave now!”

As he left the house, he figured that in the end, Gerald and Fujiko would still end up participating in the special forces competition. With that in mind, he knew that his best bet was to put them aside for now... After all, though he was the leader of the Hanyu’s assassination department, he wasn’t too keen on disrupting the activities of the war department. What more, since the competition was international, special forces from all over the globe would be present. Because of that, if he created a mess there, it’d surely cause his family a great deal of trouble...

Still, though he failed to capture Gerald this time, the trip wasn’t a complete disappointment. After all, he now knew that Endo and Izumi really were in the Futaba manor.

What more, since the old man had allowed Gerald and Fujiko to leave, he was now pretty sure that the Yamashitas had a special relationship with the Futabas. The fact that Takuya and a much younger Fujiko had met the old man before certainly solidified that theory.

Putting all this into consideration, Ryugu now believed that the one who had intercepted Saburo’s assassination attempt must have been one of the Yamashita’s ninjas...

With that in mind, Ryugu found himself feeling much better. After all, if all this was true, then he was sure that Gerald and the others wouldn’t dare to kill Endo and Izumi. Their deaths would be equivalent to declaring war on the Hanyus, after all, and Ryugu was pretty sure that the current Futabas wouldn’t dare to do something that drastic.

Whatever the case was, he soon found himself returning to the spot where he had first fought Gerald. Upon seeing Gerald’s SUV and all his dead men who were still lying on the ground, Ryugu couldn’t help but sigh.

Realizing that Ryugu had returned, Takeshi then ran toward him before asking, “Huh? Weren’t you planning to wait there, leader? Why have you left so soon after? Could it be that you’ve already killed Gerald?”

“...They’ve escaped,” replied Ryugu as he shook his head. Though he had initially planned on taking his anger out on Takeshi, he changed his mind at the last second.

Regardless, Takeshi’s eyes immediately widened as he said, “... H-huh...?”

“...Let’s not talk about this first. Either way, did none of them survive...?” replied Ryugu as he waved his hand. He already had a plan to deal with all this, so he really didn’t want to bring down his mood again by talking about all this.

“Unfortunately, none of them survived... Well, except for the one who was still standing when we came over earlier. You! Explain all that happened to the leader!” called out Takeshi as he looked at the assassin who survived.

“Leader! My name is Kenshiro, and as for Gerald... he’s monstrously strong...! In barely a few seconds, he had killed all of these man...! All of them died in a single strike, and it all happened so quickly that none of us could even fight back! Had both of you arrived a few seconds later, there’s a high chance that I would’ve been killed too...!” reported the shivering man after walking up to Ryugu.

“... What? In just a few seconds? And none of you were even able to fight back...?” muttered the flabbergasted Ryugu. Though he knew that Gerald had probably killed them quickly, a few seconds was simply too much...!

Still, this man wouldn’t lie to him, and Ryugu knew that for a fact With that in mind, Gerald’s capabilities were more terrifying than he could ever imagine... Hell, now that he knew all this, Ryugu wondered if he was even a match for Gerald anymore...

Chapter 2124

“... That’s... How on earth could he be that fast...?” muttered Takeshi who was also in disbelief.

“I wouldn’t lie about such things to you, captain...! I swear on my life that Gerald really is that strong...!” vowed the frightened Kenshiro as he patted his chest reassuringly.

“... I believe you,” replied Ryugu, who knew that Kenshiro had no reason to lie. Besides, after battling Gerald earlier, Kenshiro’s words didn’t feel all that far fetched anymore...

“... Still, to think that there’d be someone so monstrously strong...” muttered Takeshi as he took a deep breath. Gerald’s capabilities were simply too world shattering...

Though Ryugu was thinking the same thing, he didn’t show it. After all, as leader, he had to remain calm before his men. With that, he was prompted to say, “... Regardless, let’s put all this aside first and head back.”

Nodding in agreement, the other two then got into the cars and began returning to the Hanyu manor, leaving the corpses behind...

It was about three hours later when Gerald finally stopped the car in front of the competition venue. The second they got out of the car, Master Ghost and Aiden immediately ran over to greet them.

Upon seeing Fujiko, Aiden smiled brightly as he said, “A pleasure to meet you, sister-in-law!”

“Don’t just call her that! ” grumbled Gerald as he smacked the back of Aiden’s head.

Fujiko herself immediately blushed as she said, “I-I’m not in such a relationship with Gerald!”

While she was actually flattered to hear that, she was well aware that Gerald didn't like that, so she simply went along with Gerald.

Shaking his head, Gerald then looked around for a few seconds before saying, "... You go ahead and get some rest first. I have some things to talk to them about Speaking of which, keep in mind that we're living quite close to you, so if anything happens, I'll be there in a jiffy. Then again, I don't really think they'll come looking for trouble here."

Nodding in response, Fujiko then replied, "Alright... You guys go on ahead too, then."

With that out of the way, Gerald placed his hands around Master Ghost and Aiden's shoulders while saying, "Let's head to our place, then!"

Unlike last time, the training grounds this time were much better and more formal. Within the massive open space, was a field that took up a third of the area and several other designated areas. Right in front of the open space, on the other hand, were rows of six story buildings. Since most of the rooms were lit up, it was evident that the majority of the participants had arrived Whatever the case was, now that they were finally together again, Gerald took the chance to ask, "So... what's the situation like?"

Though he had called them frequently, he knew better than to talk about such sensitive details over the phone.

"Well, things have pretty much remained the same... The people who kept trying to investigate the case eventually stopped trying and ever since Adler died, none of the other Yanam participants dared to come looking for trouble," whispered Aiden.

"Indeed... Speaking of which, have you found out which family the assassins come from? I tried snooping around but got nothing in the end," asked Master Ghost.

"There's no need to further investigate. We now know that the assassins belong to the Hanyu family," replied Gerald.

Nodding in response, Master Ghost then said, "I see... Also, have you confirmed whether they're descendants of the Seadom tribe?"

Chapter 2125

"I'm pretty sure they are, though I haven't been able to bring it up with them since their family has been plagued with troubles lately. Still, once I settle all their problems, I have a feeling they won't attempt to hide it anymore when I ask," replied Gerald with a sigh, wondering when he would be able to solve all the Futaba family's issues. Still, for the sake of his parents who were still stuck on Yearning Island, Gerald knew better than to complain.

"Well, I'm honestly just pleased that it's confirmed. After all, this means that our trip to Japan has been worth it," said Master Ghost as he sighed with relief.

Soon enough, they arrived at their building and began walking upstairs. Naturally, Aiden had made sure to apply for a room that had three rooms from the war department, and once they entered, he immediately closed the door behind them.

Since there were so many special forces in the training ground, the trio knew that they had to be extremely careful with their words to avoid getting themselves into trouble. With that in mind, it was no wonder why they immediately found themselves more relaxed now that they had entered a private area.

Regardless, after pouring himself a glass of water to quench his thirst, Gerald was prompted to say, "You know, once the competition is over, I plan to let you two stay in the Futaba manor."

"Are... you saying it could be dangerous to live elsewhere...?" asked Aiden who as a special forces agent saw where Gerald was coming from.

"Pretty much. Now that the Futabas have offended both the Kanagawas and Hanyus, I'm sure trouble will be imminent. I'm particularly worried about that assassin family making a move on both of you once they find out about our relationship. I really don't want what happened back in Yanam to repeat again,

so it's best that you just stay with me in the Futaba manor. By doing so, even if the enemies attempt to attack, I'll at least be close enough to protect you in time," replied Gerald with a nod.

Hearing that, Master Ghost immediately replied, "We'll go. Don't worry, Gerald, we won't hold you back more than we need to!"

Master Ghost, for one, knew how important it was for everything to go perfectly in order for Gerald's parents to eventually be saved...

Chuckling as he shook his head, Gerald who didn't want the atmosphere to become solemn right off the bat then said, "It's not that serious... But yes, I'd really appreciate it if you stay at the Futaba manor for the time being."

"Got it!" replied Aiden as he nodded repeatedly.

With that out of the way, Gerald decided not to share anything else at the moment. After all, he didn't really want to add more pressure onto them if he knew that he was going to be able to solve the issues alone. Besides, he had already told them what the main issues were. Now that they knew what to expect, hopefully they wouldn't panic too much if things went awry...

Shortly after, Aiden headed to the canteen to get some food for them. In no time flat, the trio found themselves having their dinner in the living room.

While eating, Gerald felt that it was as good a time as any to start detailing what had happened while he was staying at the Futaba manor. He also told them what he was planning to do after all this...

Moving back to Ryugu, he, Takeshi, and Kenshiro soon arrived at the Hanyu manor. Upon arriving, they immediately headed to the patriarch's room...

Suijin himself was having his dinner when Ryugu suddenly burst into his room. Raising a slight brow, he

then watched as Ryugu walked closer to him before lowering his head and whispering, "Something huge has happened, patriarch...!"

"Go on..." replied Suijin as he frowned.

After listening to Ryugu's report of the current situation, Suijin's face ended up getting so gloomy that in the end, he couldn't help but toss his chopsticks to the floor while yelling, "God d*mn it...! You're telling me we lost a dozen assassins?!"

Gritting his teeth, Suijin knew that there would be losses, though he never imagined there to be this many. Each assassin in his family had been cultivated with great effort. Now that he had lost so many of them so quickly, even Suijin as the family patriarch was unable to bear it...Invisible Rich Man

Chapter 2126-2130

Chapter 2126

"It's my fault...! I'm so sorry, patriarch!" declared Ryugu as he lowered his head.

Shaking his head, Suijin simply replied, "It's not your fault. We've just underestimated Gerald's capabilities. Still, that man really has monstrous capabilities... How on earth did the Futabas get to know such a strong individual...? And who exactly is he? All we know is that he's a Westoner. However, that doesn't explain why he's so willing to help the Futabas..."

"While we still aren't clear about his identity, I have a feeling that Gerald's only doing all this because he has a special relationship with Futaba... Other than that, I really can't think of anything else..." replied Ryugu who was honestly feeling relieved that Suijin wasn't placing the blame on him.

"... That doesn't seem right. Didn't Futaba sign a marriage contract with Kai?" replied Suijin with a frown. The complicated relationships among these people were giving him a headache.

"... Could Kai have found out about Gerald and Fujiko's relationship? It does explain why he ordered us

to assassinate Gerald..." muttered Ryugu who knew that such incidents happened all the time among the larger families.

"Then that has nothing to do with us. Moving back to Gerald, aside from the fact that he's capable enough to kill dozens of our assassins, have you found anything else that's wrong with him?" asked Suijin, seemingly only interested in Gerald.

"... Now that you mention it, there is one thing that comes to mind!" replied Ryugu.

"Good. But before that, get some seats for heaven's sake! The three of you just standing there are giving me a headache!" grumbled Suijin as he gestured for his servants to clear his table before pointing at a few chairs that had been placed near the wall.

Hearing that, Kenshiro immediately nodded as he said, "Thank you, patriarch!"

Following that, he brought three chairs over and only dared to sit once Ryugu and Takeshi had done so...

Regardless, now that they were seated, Ryugu cleared his throat before saying, "... You see, I have a feeling that Gerald... Well, he and all the Futabas are secretly related to the Yamashitas."

"... Are you talking about the ones living near the extinct volcano?" replied Suijin who was frowning once more.

"Indeed. You see, after tailing Gerald and Futaba into the Yamashita territory, the old man that I previously mentioned invited us to his home to have some tea. After Gerald stalled for quite some time, I eventually had to call Takeshi to update him on the situation. However, by the time I returned, the two had already left! Since they left using the back door, I have a feeling

That the old man was secretly helping them while I was preoccupied!" grumbled Ryugu as he slammed his fist on the table, knowing that his carelessness had resulted in Gerald escaping his grasp again...

“What on earth is even happening anymore... Why do they even have connections with the Yamashitas? And who exactly is this old man you keep talking about?” muttered the confused Suijin.

“Well, we don’t know much about him, though he does appear to be a Yamashita in his eighties... Regardless, as far as I know, he had apparently been watching me and Gerald fight for quite a while. Had he not disarmed me with his shuriken back then, I could’ve surely ended Gerald right there and them...!” growled Ryugu, angry with himself that he hadn’t attacked Gerald again immediately after.

Rubbing his forehead, Yamashita couldn’t help but say, “How truly odd... As far as I know, the Yamashitas have never had any connections with other families...”

“... Speaking of which, there is one thing that he said that I find interesting... Back when we first entered his home, the old man told Futaba that he had once met her when she was still a child,” replied Ryugu as he recalled that scene...

Chapter 2127

“...You’re saying the Futabas have been in contact with the Yamashitas for that long...?” replied Suijin who was rightfully surprised. After all, though the two families hadn’t had any conflict in decades, all the patriarchs of the Hanyu family Suijin included had made sure to secretly and consistently keep tabs on the Futaba. With that in mind, how had all the previous patriarchs failed to find out about this?

“... With that said, should we still make a move on the Futabas...? After all, now that we know that they have a good relationship with the Yamashitas, we can’t just cause the Futabas all willy-nilly anymore...” muttered Ryugu who was honestly getting a little worried.

After all, the Yamashitas were exceedingly strong. Truth be told, he wondered whether he would even be a match for that shuriken throwing old man if they got into a serious battle...

Either way, after thinking about it for a while, Suijin eventually said, “... For the time being, let’s not make any further moves on the Futabas.”

“Very well! However, about Gerald... Kai’s been pushing me to kill him, stating that he’ll personally call you if Gerald isn’t dead within a week. Four days have passed since then...” replied Ryugu.

“Don’t bother about him. A second generation kid like him could never threaten us,” sneered Suijin who had never really highly regarded the Kanagawas despite their immense status in Japan.

“Understood!” replied Ryugu, feeling much more relaxed now. With what Suijin had just said, Ryugu knew that he could finally handle Kai the next time that brat called him again.

“Now that all that is out of the way, let’s put everything aside for the time being. I’m a bit tired... Before you leave, I emphasize that until we learn more about the Futaba and Yamashita’s relationship, nobody is allowed to make a move on that family! This includes making a move against Gerald!” said Suijin as he looked at all three of them.

Hearing that, the trio immediately nodded without saying another word...

Fast forward to the next morning, Gerald and Master Ghost could be seen accompanying Aiden to the training ground after having their breakfast for one last practice session before the competition.

Not too far from them, was Japan’s own special forces team, which meant that Fujiko was there.

Looking at the uniform Fujiko was wearing, though it made her look less enchanting compared to the other outfits he had seen her in, the girl now appeared extremely smart and valiant, which was quite a good look on her.

Realizing that Gerald was staring at Fujiko, Aiden couldn’t help but smile smugly as he asked, “Say... who are you looking at so intently, brother Gerald?”

Smacking the back of Aiden's head, Gerald simply replied, "Stop playing around and go train already..."

Chuckling in response Aiden then rubbed the back of his head as he said, "While I haven't interacted much with Miss Fujiko, she clearly likes you, brother Gerald. Since she's a member of the Seadom tribe, you'll surely get to learn about the secrets of Yearning Island in no time!"

"Spout any more nonsense and Master Ghost and I are leaving," grumbled Gerald with a slight frown...

Chapter 2128

Chuckling as he scratched the back of his head, Aiden quickly replied, "Alright, alright, I'll stop..."

Shaking his head, Gerald then looked at Master Ghost before saying, "That kid really likes to make fun of me"

Gerald, for one, had known Aiden for the longest time, so he didn't mind joking around with him. Even when smacking the back of Aiden's head, Gerald made sure not to use any force.

"You're telling me! He's been making fun of me the entire time in your absence, you know?" replied Master Ghost with a laugh. True enough, throughout the past ten days, he had gotten to know Aiden so well that they could now pretty much freely talk about anything.

As they continued talking, a few individuals wearing the Japanese army's uniform quickly began walking over to Gerald. Noticing them, Gerald saw that one of them was holding onto a document folder and the others were carrying video recording equipment.

Once they were close enough, one of the men immediately said, "Pardon me, but are you Gerald Crawford? I'm Noda Ichiro, and I'm an investigator for the Japanese army. With that said, I'm here to investigate the disappearance of Adler Light body that took place about eight days ago. I hope you'll cooperate with us in this investigation!"

“Sure,” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes slightly while nodding.

“Again...? What’s wrong with you people? I’ve told you time and again that Adler’s disappearance has nothing to do with us! Do you think we Westoners are pushovers or something?” grumbled Aiden as he angrily marched over.

“Not at all, sir! Still, everyone keeps saying that Adler had an argument with you before he went missing! We’re simply investigating the best we can in hopes of finding him! With that said, if we eventually find out that none of you were involved, not only will we cease to bother you, but we’ll also issue a formal apology!” replied the investigators who knew for a fact that these Westoners weren’t easy to mess with.

However, since a foreign special forces agent had gone missing on their land, the army couldn’t just pretend as if nothing had happened. Even if they couldn’t find anything, they knew they were pretty much forced to continue investigating in order to finally be able to give a proper explanation to Yanam...

“Now, now, Aiden, they’re just asking us to cooperate with their investigation. Regardless, since we didn’t do anything, I believe that these brothers of the Japanese army won’t just slander me, right?” said Gerald as he patted Aiden on the shoulder.

Though this kid was slightly impulsive and didn’t always think before he spoke, he could tell that Aiden was sincerely worried for him. He was a rare, good friend...

Hearing that, Ichiro quickly nodded before adding, “He’s right! We’re just investigating in accordance with our procedures. Vifith that said, please have a cigarette as we head to the interrogation room for a while, Mr. Crawford.”

“Lead the way,” replied Gerald as he accepted the cigarette before lighting it.

After watching Gerald leave with the investigators, Aiden leaned closer to Master Ghost before asking, “... Do you think anything bad is going to happen to brother Gerald...?”

“Please, you’re severely underestimating him! Forget these investigators, even if the entire Japanese army comes at him, he won’t be afraid in the slightest! Now spend less time worrying about him and start focusing on getting a better rank for Weston!” replied Master Ghost in a cheerful tone.

Chapter 2129

After all, he knew for a fact that Gerald could easily handle those people.

“Even if you say that... All the countries have sent their best men over to participate, despite the fact that this isn’t even an overly formal competition. With that in mind, I’m not really sure how well I’ll do... Getting an above average rank is good enough for me...” muttered Aiden who was well aware that among his teammates, he wasn’t really all that strong.

Though he bore the title of ‘King of Soldiers’, he had earned it from the many battles he had been in. However, now that he had to abide by the event’s rules and regulations, he wasn’t quite sure how well he’d fare.

...

Moving back to Gerald, he was currently seated in the interrogation room, his legs crossed and a cigarette in his hand. With even a cup of tea placed before him, anyone who didn’t know that this was an interrogation room would’ve surely thought that Gerald was here as a guest...

Regardless, after clearing his throat, Ichiro turned to look at Gerald before asking, “Now then... Could you elaborate a little about your conflict with Mr. Adler, Mr. Crawford?”

“It’s nothing serious, really... Back when I was in Yanam some time ago, I got into ‘a bit of trouble’. I’m assuming that Adler came looking for me to get revenge,” replied Gerald as he puffed on his cigarette.

“I see... Did you meet him before he disappeared...?” asked Ichiro as he jotted everything down. As for what Gerald had done in Yanam, his actions were so impactful that even Ichiro could more or less guess what Gerald had done there.

“Of course I did. After all, he came looking for trouble with us with so many other special forces agents,” replied Gerald in a casual tone.

“I’m talking about the night he went missing,” specified Ichiro.

“Ah, well that’s a no. While he did yell profanities at us from outside our door, we paid him no notice. I, for one, was sleeping at the time, though I heard from Aiden that he eventually kicked out door before leaving. It was the next morning when I actually learned that he had disappeared,” explained Gerald while shaking his head.

“You really didn’t go outside...?” asked Ichiro as he stared intently at Gerald.

As an investigator, he was an expert at studying body language and facial expressions. With that in mind, he was pretty much a living lie detector. However, up till this point, Gerald had been acting so normally that he really couldn’t find anything wrong with the individual.

“I didn’t. After all, I knew that if I went out, I’d surely get into a fight with him. The last thing I wanted was to cause an unnecessary ruckus, you see. Honestly, while I’m curious about his disappearance, I won’t lie that I’m grateful for that. After all, he won’t be troubling me again anytime soon,” replied Gerald as he shrugged.

“You say that, but we still need to carefully investigate this! After all, he’s a foreign participant and we’ll have to take responsibility for his disappearance! How else are we going to explain all this to the Yanam army? It doesn’t help that Yanam’s already elected Carter Lucab to be their army’s new leader! Though they usually say a new broom sweeps clean, I’m afraid that this incident isn’t going to end that easily!” said Ichiro in dismay as he placed his hands together.

Throughout his many years investigating missing people cases, there would always be clues left behind to solve the mysteries. Unfortunately, Adler truly seemed to have vanished into thin air... Hell, had it not been reported that Adler had gone missing, nobody would’ve even known that the man existed in the first place!

Regardless, the fact that they still hadn't been able to find a single clue after all this time irritated Ichiro to the point where he wasn't able to eat or sleep properly in the past few days...

Chapter 2130

Though he initially had hope that Gerald could provide him with some useful information, as it turned out, this session had simply been a complete waste of time...

Sighing as he stood up, Ichiro then said, "...Well, since it's come to this, could you leave your contact number with us, Mr. Crawford? We may still need to talk to you some other time, though rest assured, we won't make things difficult for you!"

"No problem," replied Gerald as he flicked his cigarette with a smile.

Once that was done, Gerald got up to leave the interrogation room... However, the second he stepped out, he momentarily paused. There was a familiar scent nearby...

Gerald, for one, knew that the individual was a cultivator, though he couldn't really tell who the scent belonged to specifically... Still, he knew he knew that this was the scent of a familiar person... But who?

Shaking his head, Gerald eventually chose not to bother too much about it. After all, even if the person was a cultivator, they weren't exactly a threat to him.

Besides, after meeting so many cultivators, Gerald knew for a fact that not all cultivators would be hostile toward him. Perhaps this cultivator was just here by coincidence.

Whatever the case was, upon realizing that Gerald was still standing there, Ichiro was prompted to ask, "Is something wrong, Mr. Crawford?"

Waving his hand, Gerald then replied, "...It's nothing. Just a dizzy spell."

"I see... Would you like me to get some medicine?" asked Ichiro.

"There's no need for that. A rest should fix this. Either way, you can go ahead with your work," replied Gerald while shaking his head.

By this point, the scent was already gone, so Gerald simply ignored it for now...

Once he reunited with Aiden, however, Gerald attempted to detect the scent of the cultivator again using his basic senses. He refrained from using his Herculean Primordial Spirit since he didn't want to expose his cultivation level before finding out who the other person was. Doing so could very well bring more unnecessary trouble to him. Besides, he still had no idea whether the stranger was simply passing by or was here for his head...

Still, since a cultivator suddenly appeared out of nowhere in Japan, no less, Gerald knew he had to be a bit more cautious, even though he wasn't really afraid of them.

Either way, after a short while, Master Ghost walked over to him before whispering, "Gerald, follow me for a bit. There's something I need to tell you..."

Knowing that Master Ghost wouldn't use that tone unless things were absolutely serious, the now vigilant Gerald was prompted to ask, "What is it?"

Seeing that there were quite a few special forces agents around, Master Ghost gently grabbed onto Gerald's wrist before saying, "Let's talk about this someplace else."

Nodding in response, Gerald then followed Master Ghost to a secluded corner. Once they were there, Gerald couldn't help but frown as he waited for Master Ghost to share what he had to say...

Chapter 2131

“I just received a warning from my compass that someone is close to you. I was worried that there might be some danger, so I did a fortune telling for you. If I’m not mistaken, it should be someone from Yearning Island, which means a member of the Crawford family has come.” Even though there was no one around, Master Ghost still lowered his voice and spoke using a voice that only the two of them could hear.

“You knew about this as well?” Gerald raised his head.

“What do you mean?” Master Ghost asked in surprise.

“To be honest, when I walked out of the interrogation room, I could clearly feel that a cultivator has appeared near me. However, it was just a brief moment, and I didn’t use the power of my Herculean Primordial Spirit to sense his presence.” Gerald sighed deeply.

He had previously thought that it was just a coincidence and maybe the cultivator had come here just by chance without having anything to do with him.

But now, with Master Ghost’s words, he was totally alerted.

It was a member of the Crawfords from Yearning Island!

Gerald trusted Master Ghost’s skills in fortune telling. Since the day Gerald had come to know him, he had never made a mistake, not even a slight deviation. If he said that the man was a Crawford, then a Crawford he was.

“So, you have sensed him as well.” Master Ghost nodded. “I have been predicting your future for you all this time, fearing that you might encounter any danger. But I didn’t expect that the Crawford family would be so fast in catching up with you. I really don’t know what kind of method they used to find out

about you coming to Japan and even pinpointing your exact location.”

“A cultivation family has many chances to investigate my whereabouts. It’s just that we don’t know the reason that person came here, whether he just wants to find out my whereabouts and report to the family, or he is like Will’s men, wanting to kill me.”

Recalling Will’s action on Gong Island, Gerald couldn’t help but laugh and shake his head. He had never been interested in or wanted to get the position as the patriarch of the Crawford family whatsoever.

He didn’t expect that Will would take it so seriously to the extent that he had defied Daryl’s order and sent his men to kill him. This was out of Gerald’s expectation.

“Anyway, we should be careful. They didn’t manage to harm you after sending men out twice when we were on Gong Island. This time, they might send a very strong cultivator in the family. Although your ability is very strong, you still have to be careful, otherwise, you might be hit. If anything happens to you, it will be difficult to save your parents. Besides, the Futaba family has gotten into so much trouble lately, and they need your help.”

Master Ghost let out a long sigh. He could feel that Gerald was in a very difficult situation. It could really be said that he was in hot water.

“Don’t worry. I have a plan in mind.” Gerald nodded his head gently.

Although he had said so to Master Ghost, he was still a bit worried. After all, the Crawford family was not a common family. If Will were to find out about his situation, he might send out the strongest cultivator of the family, or even come here in person.

Although it was not fatal, it would cause him a lot of trouble.

Meanwhile, on the path outside the training ground, a seemingly ordinary looking person was walking

along the path, wearing a hat with a long brim. If he wasn't standing in front of you, you couldn't see his face clearly.

He was the one who had come from Yearning Island.

Amare Crawford, the third-strongest cultivator in the Crawford family. He was stout, and his height was nearly two meters. Even with his clothes on, the outline of his muscles was still visible.

He had originally been ordered by Daryl to go outside on an errand. Will had seized this opportunity and asked him to take a detour to Japan to finish off Gerald, and in order to please the future patriarch, he did not refuse.

To him, it was the same to kill anyone.

Chapter 2132

With his strength, he didn't even have to delay anything. Once he found the man, he would just kill him with one blow.

However, the information he received from Will only showed that Gerald was in Japan. He had found this place because he knew that Gerald had come here with another Westoner special forces agent to participate in the special forces competition. However, he didn't dare to use his essential qi to sense Gerald's location, fearing that once he was exposed, he would fail in the mission Will had given him.

So, he could only search around this place bit by bit. Daryl had given him half a month for the errand, so he could only stay in Japan for about a week.

After one week, regardless of whether he could kill Gerald or not, he would have to return to Yearning Island. If Daryl found out that he had used the time he was given for his mission to settle the matter for Will, he would surely be punished most severely by the family.

This was not just a rumor, but it was a proven fact.

Anyone who disobeyed the order of the patriarch would be thrown into the Pit of Thousand Snakes.

It was a three meter wide and more than ten meters deep pit that was used to keep hundreds of poisonous snakes. Any ordinary man would be killed once he was bitten.

Those who disobeyed the patriarch would be thrown into the pit and forced to stay there for an entire night. If he survived the next day, it would be considered that he had received his punishment, and his mistake would be forgiven. If he did not, he would become food for the snakes.

Living in the family for so many years, Amare had never seen anyone get out of the pit alive. Usually, when they opened it, there were only poisonous snakes and a pile of white bones left.

Thinking of this, Amare broke out in a cold sweat. At the same time, he decided in his heart that he had to get back to the family in time. Although his strength was immense, he might still not be an opponent of those poisonous snakes.

An afternoon passed quietly.

In the evening, when the sky had turned dark, Gerald and the two returned to their residence.

Fujiko followed them.

“Miss Fujiko, what would you like to eat? I can go outside and buy it for you.” Aiden went to the bathroom to wash his face. After a whole day of training, not only were his clothes soaked with sweat, even his face was dirty.

“Thank you.” Fujiko smiled faintly.

“Aren’t you worried that people might misunderstand you if you come here?” Gerald asked as he served Fujiko a cup of tea. He had planned to smoke a cigarette, but he put it down in the end.

“Of course not.” Fujiko’s eyes were full of smiles when she looked at Gerald. “Don’t forget, we are a couple to the outsiders!”

“When did this happen?” Hearing this, even Master Ghost couldn’t help but start gossiping. He knew that Gerald had a girlfriend, and he knew that Gerald had made great efforts to save her, to the extent that he could give up his life at any time.

How come after only about a week out, he suddenly had a new girlfriend?

“Ahem, don’t misunderstand. Miss Fujiko needs to get married because of the problems within her family, and a little accident happened. So, we temporarily pretended to be a couple to deal with her family. In truth, our relationship is very pure!”

Seeing that Master Ghost seemed to be misunderstanding things, Gerald hurriedly explained. If this was not explained clearly in time, he was worried that he would not be able to in the future.

“So that’s how it is.” Once Gerald had said that, Master Ghost understood.

Chapter 2133

“Gerald is telling the truth. We are only pretending to be a couple in order to solve the troublesome things we’re facing now. So, when I come here to look for you, it’s nothing to be worried about and will make it even more believable.” Although Fujiko was a little hurt, Gerald was speaking the truth, so she could not say much about it and simply went along with it.

“But is there anything you wanted to talk about seeing as you’ve come over at this time?” Gerald glanced at his cigarette. Although he could not smoke right now, he still had the urge to do so.

“It’s nothing. It’s just that I am not very familiar with my team members. Besides, I’m the only woman on the team. I’m afraid of staying alone.” Fujiko said in embarrassment.

“But you cannot stay here as well.” Gerald scratched his head.

“I will go back to my room to sleep. I just wanted to have dinner and chat with you,” Fujiko replied as she picked up her cup and looked at Gerald.

“Wait for a while, then Aiden has gone out to buy some food. We will have dinner soon.” Seeing that Fujiko had said that, Gerald could only let her stay. Luckily he had explained the matter clearly in advance. Besides, it was safer to have Fujiko here with him.

Although the Kanagawa and Hanyu families should not dare to come here to cause trouble, there was a new problem. No one could guarantee what that cultivator from the Crawford family would do.

Shortly after, Aiden returned with a bag of food.

“There really isn’t much good food in Japan. This is what I picked up from a Westoner restaurant far away. I was worried that you might be hungry, so I ran all the way back.” Aiden served the food on the table and said as he panted.

However, once he had said that, he saw Fujiko sitting next to him. Thinking of what he had just said, he slapped a hand over his mouth and added, “I don’t mean any harm, Miss Fujiko. I don’t mean that Japanese food is not delicious. It’s just that we are all Westoners, so we are not very used to eating your food.”

“It’s okay. You don’t have to explain anything. Although I am Japanese, I like Westoner food the best. I also think that Westoner food is better than Japanese food.” Fujiko smiled. No dissatisfaction could be seen from her expression.

“If you have the chance, you must come to Weston and try our authentic Westoner food.” Although Fujiko hadn’t said anything, Aiden still felt very awkward.

“I always go to this restaurant, and I have tried authentic Westoner food. It is really good!” Fujiko was busy serving the food on the plates that Master Ghost had brought out.

Aiden stopped talking. He felt that it would be awkward for him to say anything more, so he figured it would be better to stop talking and just eat his food.

The four sat around the table and started eating.

“By the way, Fujiko, I need to tell you something. When this competition is over, the two of them should stay with your family as well. I’m worried that the situation will become more complicated. If anything happens while we are staying together, we can back each other up.”

After eating for a while, Gerald said to Fujiko.

“Sure. I am very pleased to welcome you two to come and stay in Futaba Mansion. This will make my place merrier. Let’s get to know each other formally, King of Soldier, Aiden Baker.” Fujiko agreed with a smile. Then, she put down her chopsticks and stretched her slender hand out to Aiden.

“You know me?” Hearing Fujiko calling his name, Aiden was a bit surprised.

“Of course I know you. I am the Queen of Soldier in Japan. How can I not know about you, the King of Soldier of Weston. You know, your picture is hung on the wall of our war department and listed as a dangerous person of Weston.”

Fujiko smiled.

“So, I’m famous, apparently! Even the Japanese army put my picture on the wall.” Aiden’s pupils contracted, but he still smiled in response.

Chapter 2134

“We bear no malice toward you. You are a very famous soldier in Weston, so naturally, our army should get to know you fully. However, now that the relationship between Weston and Japan is improving, I think that even when we meet on the battlefield, we will not attack each other but fight side by side instead!”

With a glance, Fujiko could already see that something was wrong with Aiden, so she explained quickly.

“For the sake of Brother Gerald, even though there might be a day when we are in opposition, I will still let you off the hook.” Aiden smiled faintly. He knew that the relationship between the two countries was superficial. In truth, it still depended on whether there was a conflict of interest.

After all, in this modern era, there was no absolute friend, but only eternal interests. It could even be said that if something was not right, Weston and Japan would go to war both overtly and covertly.

“I will not mess with the matters between you two, but based on the current situation alone, we still have to be on the same side,” Gerald interjected.

“I very much welcome you to stay in Futaba Mansion. I think with the King of Soldier of West on with us, it will be a great help to face the Kanagawa and Hanyu families!” Fujiko said in agreement with Gerald.

After dinner, Gerald sent Fujiko back to the hostel of the Japanese special forces and returned to the guest room.

Just as he entered the room, Aiden and Master Ghost were cleaning up.

“Since when did the princess of the Seadom tribe become the Queen of Soldier of Japan?” Once Aiden saw Gerald, Aiden threw the bag with the leftovers into the trash can and asked in confusion.

“The Seadom tribe is already a thousand years old. If they want to survive, they are bound to assimilate into modern society. Becoming the Queen of Soldier is nothing. Even becoming a high ranking official in Japan would not be strange,” Master Ghost explained.

Since the day Master Ghost had come to know Aiden, he felt as if he was becoming an encyclopedia. Other than having to do fortune telling for Gerald, most of his time was spent explaining all sorts of things to Aiden.

“It’s true. A thousand years is too long. Long enough to transform the Seadom tribe into a brand new family. Still, as long as they still know the way to Yearning Island, it’s fine.” Gerald nodded.

He was not interested in the Futaba family at all. Whether it was a large family or just a common family in Japan, he had to investigate it.

Time flew, and five days passed in the blink of an eye. There was only one day left before the special forces competition. All the special forces were ready. Aiden also went to the competition site while Gerald was sitting in his room.

Since that night, Gerald did not feel a cultivator appearing near him anymore. However, this did not mean that he had let his guard down.

Since Master Ghost had told him that it was a Crawford from Yearning Island, it had to be true. However, Gerald did not know whether he was sent by Daryl to test him, or by Will to kill him.

“Something on your mind?” Master Ghost walked to the window. He could see the field below from that position. A dozen special force agents were training for the competition tomorrow. Seeing Gerald leaning on the window and looking at the sky in a daze, he opened his mouth and asked.

"I was thinking about where that cultivating Crawford could be hiding." Gerald didn't hide anything and told Master Ghost what was on his mind.

Chapter 2135

"I think you don't have to worry much about this. Although I have predicted that someone will approach you, I didn't read any sign of danger. This means that the power of this person must be weaker than you. Even if he finds you, he won't be able to hurt you," Master Ghost spoke in a deep voice.

"I know. I'm just worried that he might harm you guys. You don't have any power, and you need my protection. Although Aiden is the King of Soldier of Weston, he might not be an opponent of the cultivator."

"I wonder if he will make a move during the competition tomorrow."

Gerald took a deep breath. He was not afraid that this person would make a move on himself. Not to mention this cultivator, even when Will came here in person, he would not be scared. However, the people around him were different. Although Aiden was strong and good at all sorts of modern weapons and fighting skills, it was still uncertain when he faced a cultivator.

"Can the Futaba family provide us with protection?" Master Ghost knew that he did not have any power. If he was with Gerald, he would become a burden.

"There are bodyguards, but they are not very strong." Gerald shook his head and said, "Anyway, the Futaba family has a certain social status in Japan. No matter who wants to make a move there, they will have to consider."

"Don't worry, I will never hold you back." Master Ghost took a deep breath as he spoke.

"I will protect you." Gerald didn't take what Master Ghost had said seriously. Even though he would be

very careful, once he was caught, he would surely die.

“Okay.” Master Ghost did not insist.

“We’ll see how it goes. I hope that we can settle these matters quickly and go to Yearning Island sooner so that I can save my parents. As for Mila, I’m still clueless.” Gerald laughed bitterly.

He couldn’t even understand why it would become like this. His parents and sister had been caught, and his girlfriend was in the hands of the Sun League. Now, even after so much time had passed, he still didn’t know if they were safe and sound.

Maybe they had been killed long ago, and what they were doing now was useless.

Either way, Gerald wanted to see them whether dead or alive. He had considered every worst possibility. If none of them had survived, Gerald would choose to kill himself after burying them.

When his most loved ones were no longer alive, it would be pointless to be alive alone.

“It will happen soon. As long as we can get to Yearning Island, we will be able to find out the location of Sun League. I don’t think they will do anything to your family, but they just want to draw you over.” Master Ghost could feel the sorrow in Gerald’s heart.

“Let’s hope so.” Gerald nodded, lit a cigarette, and looked outside.

On the training ground, the special forces of each country were gathered there. They were undergoing intensive training for the competition tomorrow. Although it was not a very formal competition, it was still a competition between countries. Every special forces agent wanted to win glory for his country and to earn credit for himself.

However, after training for a while, a man wearing a special uniform came, and everyone looked at him in unison.

“Let me introduce you. He is a special forces agent from Yanam who just arrived in Japan an hour ago.”

Chapter 2136

“From now on, he will be replacing Alder Lightbody and participate in events with all of you here!” The Japanese war department official introduced the man beside him.

“A special forces agent from Yanam?”

Everyone was astonished. They were all clear regarding the news of the disappearance of Alder, one of the Yanam special forces. Now that they were suddenly being introduced to another Yanam special forces agent, they couldn't help but feel shocked.

“I'm replacing Alder Lightbody to participate in the war contest,” The man with a slightly dangerous look scanned across the room with his unfriendly gaze before speaking up.

Although everyone's eyes were attracted to him, no one spoke a word. After all, with what had happened in Yanam, no one wanted to seek trouble for themselves.

Plus, no one could really deduce whether or not this special forces agent was replacing Alder to actually join the competition or to investigate this matter.

One thing that was certain, however, was that there would be big trouble once anybody was misunderstood as having something to do with Alder's disappearance.

“Special forces agent from Yanam.” Gerald, who was leaning against the window, heard the voices from below him. Looking at the man, Gerald couldn't help but shake his head and chuckle.

“As long as you’re doing it right, they won’t be able to find us.” Master Ghost nodded.

“Don’t worry about this kind of matter. The new replacement leader of Yanam, Carter Lucab, is a coward. Last time before we left Yanam, when he made a call to me, he was being all respectful, fearing that I wouldn’t leave and would continue staying in Yanam.”

“I’m guessing that this man only wants that position. As long as he has the position of the leader as well as the power, other issues don’t really matter to him at all.” Gerald lit a cigarette.

Recalling the times in Yanam, Gerald decided that after he had found his way to Yearning Island, he would return to the ancient ruins first.

Last time, it had been a rush, going and leaving there, and all he did was take the sea map with him. Based on the current situation, he himself didn’t know the secret of the sea map at all, and Gerald believed that the ancient ruins weren’t as simple as they seemed.

Maybe he would get to solve the mystery of the sea map as well by going back this time.

“It seems that it’s still not a threat to us.” Gerald’s words made Master Ghost sigh in relief. He was not afraid of matters like this. He was just worried that if they bumped into this situation, he wouldn’t be able to be of much help and might even hold Gerald and Aiden back, which was something he wouldn’t want to risk.

“There won’t be any threat. It’s hard enough to bring any trouble to us.” Hearing that, Gerald laughed and made a joke.

The two continued chatting for a while before going back to the room.

They had nothing to do with the special forces training, and Gerald didn't detect any danger around him. This meant that Aiden and Fujiko were safe here.

With a cigarette between his fingers, Gerald thought about what had happened during his time here as he lay on the bed.

The Crawfords in Yearning Island.

The Sun League.

The Funagawa and Hanyu families that he had come in contact with in Japan.

There was even the mysterious Yamashita family which had ninjas. Till now, Gerald still didn't understand why the elderly man had helped him out back then. He even sounded like a man from Weston, judging from his accent.

Chapter 2137

There was actually a Weston man in a ninja family.

Plus, Gerald didn't even know the reason as to why he had helped Gerald. Maybe there was something he wanted to know from Gerald.

Nevertheless, after the war contest ended, Gerald would head back there to at least find out the secrets of the elderly man. If he could be of help to Gerald, it would be much easier when he faced the Kanagawa and Hanyu families.

Without him realizing it, Gerald felt a wave of tiredness. Due to not detecting any danger, he lay back down on the bed and fell asleep. His cigarette fell to the ground after it had finished burning.

In the morning, Gerald was woken up by a call.

The one who woke Gerald up was none other than Noda Ichiro.

“Mr. Gerald, may I know where you are now?” Gerald opened his sleepy eyes and picked up the call after briefly looking at the caller ID. Noda’s slightly rushed voice was heard over the phone as soon as it was picked up.

“I’m resting in a room in your training ground.” Gerald knitted his brows together slightly. Just as he could finally have a good sleep with no worries, he was woken up by someone, and this obviously made him a bit unhappy.

“Don’t go anywhere and wait for me right there, I’ll be there immediately!” He could hear that Noda’s tone had apparently relaxed. After saying that, he hung up the call right then.

Gerald scratched his head, not understanding what this man wanted, but he nonetheless got up and cleaned himself up. The man was, after all, the Japanese army investigator, and there must be a reason as to why he was coming over. Therefore, Gerald couldn’t refuse to see him.

As soon as he had come out of the bathroom, he heard someone knocking on the door.

Noda entered in a panic after the door was opened for him. He first looked at Gerald up and down, only to find that Gerald looked as though he had just woken up, and his worry then went away.

“Mr. Noda, it’s not the first time we’ve met. You can just tell me anything right away,” Seeing his reaction, Gerald said with a chuckle.

“I’ll be frank, then.” Noda swallowed and continued, “The Yanam special forces agent has bizarrely disappeared, and it’s most likely a murder case based on our investigation.”

“Oh?” Gerald was taken aback, but he still asked casually, “Did you find Alder Lightbody’s body or any information?”

“It’s not him. We haven’t stopped investigating Alder’s disappearance, but we have found nothing about it until now. It’s as if this man just vanished out of thin air, I haven’t seen anything as bizarre as this for so many years!” Noda shook his head and said.

He paused for a while before continuing, “However, I’m not talking about him. It’s the Yanam special forces agent who just arrived last night to replace Alder in the war contest. He too has disappeared, but he might have been murdered based on what we saw on the surveillance camera and the scene.”

“He died too?!”

Hearing his words, Gerald felt that it was unbelievable. It was true that he had killed Alder, but Gerald hadn’t paid any attention to that new special forces agent at all as he had no reason to kill him.

This was somebody else’s work.

Gerald grew a bit curious as to who would do this at this time when they all knew that the war contest was about to start and that there was tight surveillance around the area. It would have been better to do it on his way back to Yanam after the contest was over.

“That’s right! He didn’t attend this morning’s training, so we went to search for him in his room and only got to know about this after tracking him with the surveillance system.” Noda nodded.

He felt like he was still in a dream. Alder’s disappearance still hadn’t been figured out and yet, this had happened as well!

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Now that the second Yanam special forces agent had been killed too, he would lose his position as an investigator if it still wasn't solved.

"Did you see who killed him? I have a feeling that it might be the same person who killed the two of them." Although Gerald was slightly curious as well, this matter had nothing to do with him after all, so he appeared to be very relaxed.

"This can't be certain for now. I feel that the possibility is small. The one who did it before this is much stronger than the current one. For the current matter, we've found his height and body size, and have released a wanted notice for this. The only thing is that we don't know when he will be caught."

"Hopefully after we catch this person, we can find out about the previous killer as well, and this would save a lot of trouble."

Noda sighed and spoke in a deep voice. After receiving this news in the morning, he had been stunned on the bed for half an hour before finally thinking of coming over to see Gerald.

For one, it was to make sure whether it was Gerald's actions or not. Although he hadn't been able to find any clues on Gerald, he had always thought that Gerald held the greatest possibility of committing the crime. Secondly, he didn't know who to release his grudge on.

The conversation in the trial room yesterday had made him feel like Gerald was a good listener.

"Hopefully." Gerald nodded lightly.

"Seeing how you've been sleeping all along last night, I won't disturb you anymore. I'd advise you all to stay safe. If that man was able to attack someone from Yanam, he might target someone else too."

“However, don’t worry. We, the Japanese army, will do our best to protect everyone.”

Noda stood up and stretched a hand toward Gerald.

“No problem.” Gerald smiled and reached out to shake his hand.

After seeing Noda off, Gerald sat down on the sofa and thought about this matter, and about who would have attacked the Yanam special forces agent especially at an important time like this.

“Was it Aiden who came back just now?” Not long after, Master Ghost, who had been woken up by the noise, came out of his room.

“No, it was Noda Ichiko from the Japanese investigation team. He told me that the new special forces agent from Yanam who just came over yesterday was killed,” Gerald shook his head and told him honestly.

“Huh? You killed someone again last night?!” Master Ghost was fully alert now as he rushed to sit beside Gerald on the sofa. He asked anxiously, “How could you do this again at a time like this?! Japan must have been alerted already when you killed Alder last time, plus, there are surveillance cameras everywhere here.”

“I didn’t say I was the one who did it” Gerald laughed out loud.

“If it wasn’t you, who would do this? Isn’t murdering special forces agents of Yanam at the present moment practically finding trouble for oneself?” Master Ghost became relieved, but he was curious as well.

“I’m thinking about this too.” Gerald passed a cigarette over to Master Ghost.

“It’s good that it has nothing to do with you. I thought that you did it again. It’s best to do nothing out of the ordinary now as the Japanese must be closely investigating this matter. Although they won’t be able to find out anything about us, we had some conflict with Alder before after all, so we’re the most suspected ones,” Accepting the cigarette, Master Ghost replied after inhaling the cigarette twice.

Chapter 2139

“I understand this too. Let’s see what happens. I’m curious about who would dare to kill Yanam’s special forces agent at the current moment. It won’t be easy for Japan to explain themselves now seeing how two men were killed. Once the news is out, Carter Lucab has to give the Yanam special forces and citizens a good explanation as to whether or not he wants to handle this matter.”

Gerald rested one leg over the other and spoke.

At the same time, the whole training ground was in a commotion.

Although everyone here was either workers for the army or special forces from around the world, the two consecutive murder cases made them feel unsafe here. The killer could even set his target on the special forces, and it was a murder where the victim was unable to defend himself at all, which meant that this man was stronger than anyone on the scene.

No one could ascertain as to whether or not the killer was targeting only Yanam special forces agents. Maybe killing the two was just the beginning, and the rest would be the next victims.

No one dared to guarantee that none of these things wouldn’t happen again.

Once it did, they would have lost their lives.

“This can’t go on anymore!” In the office of the training ground, a Japanese army colonel couldn’t help but yell as he slammed the table.

“I’m telling you, it’s just Yanam for now, but what if it happens next to men from Weston, Western Union, or the European countries?!”

“We can’t afford to offend them at all! If their special forces agents die on our land, all of you, including me, will have to bear very serious consequences!”

The colonel scanned everyone’s faces, and everyone whom he stared at would lower their heads automatically without a word, not knowing what to say. After the disappearance of Alder Lightbody, a tight investigation had been going on, but it had already been half a month, yet they couldn’t find even a single clue about it, not to mention finding out who the killer was.

“Colonel, we have been investigating it, but Alder’s disappearance is too bizarre, almost as if he just vanished from the planet! Even after we checked all the surveillance cameras from the surroundings and searched through all possible spots around there, we couldn’t seem to find any clues.”

“However, we haven’t given up yet, and we will still carry out the investigation diligently!”

Noda, who stood at the most upfront, reported the situation. He wasn’t the one with the highest post here, but he was responsible for this matter.

“I know about this. I can allow you to search on this slowly, and Yanam’s side also feels that this matter is too abnormal, so they have given us more time to figure this out.”

“But this time, we now actually have another agent of Yanam special forces getting murdered in our training grounds of Japan! We let him die right under our care and hundreds of surveillance cameras!”

The colonel slammed the table hard again, and he was so shaken up that spit came out when he talked.

“We just got the news that the body of the new special forces agent was found. It was in the drain a few hundred meters away from our training ground,” Noda was afraid that the colonel would get even more

enraged, so he quickly reported the latest situation to him. “Also, Mr. Colonel, the height and body size of the killer were all captured by the surveillance cameras, so I believe that we’ll find him very soon!”

“This news is not too bad!” The colonel nodded in satisfaction. This was something he could inform the Yanam forces about if they asked him for updates.

“Colonel, I have another idea. Why don’t we pick a few soldiers from the army to stand guard at the training ground? The killer must be so strong that he could even kill the king of special forces from other countries easily. If he carries on doing that, others might not be able to handle him.”

Chapter 2140

Noda looked more relaxed.

“Does anyone have any opinions on this?” The colonel lifted his head and scanned across the people who were standing behind Noda, staying quiet all this while.

“No.” They all shook their heads, and no one was willing to speak further at a time like this for fear of getting into trouble.

“You have a point I’ll tell the army’s leader right now to have them send over some people to check all the hotels and any suspicious places closely, as well as to increase surveillance around the training grounds. We won’t allow the same thing to happen again!”

The colonel stood up and paced back and forth in the room as he informed the authorities of this contest. He knew better than anyone that if anything similar happened again, Japan’s global status would be greatly impacted.

They might even face criticisms and reprimands from other countries.

He, as the colonel who was responsible for the war contest and the safety of the training ground, would hit rock bottom for sure. Not only would he lose his position, but he would also have to bear the consequences.

This was something he was not willing to see.

“What Colonel says is right!”

“Yeah, I believe that under Colonel’s brilliant guidance, there won’t be any similar problems happening at the training ground!”

“We’ll cooperate with the colonel for sure!”

“Don’t worry, Colonel. I will quickly catch the culprit based on the clues we have. We might get all the answers we need after catching him!”

Seeing how everyone was flattering him non-stop, Noda followed suit and spoke up as well.

“Alright, I don’t want to listen to any nonsense from all of you anymore. I’ve already said how we should tackle the issue. But keep this in mind. If anything like this happens again, every one of us will be punished, and not just me, do you understand?!”

The colonel waved them down and said with a frown. The bitter truth was that these men only knew about flattery and weren’t capable of solving anything at all.

“Understood!” Everyone promised.

Although two murders of special forces agents had happened consecutively, the war contest was conducted on the expected date.

Around six in the morning, when the day was just starting to brighten up, all the kings of soldiers from different countries gathered on the training ground. The contest would be conducted for two days, and there would be events as easy as target shooting and wrestling, as well as tasks such as hostage rescue as an imitation to the actual battlefield.

Gerald, who had followed Aiden along here, stood not far from the authorities of the Japanese army.

It could be clearly seen that the two consecutive murders had led them to increase more soldiers around the training ground. Every one of them was geared up with actual bullets and guns as their eyes constantly scanned around the scene on alert and surrounded the whole training ground.

“Seems like the army is terrified,” Seeing this situation, Gerald chuckled and said to Master Ghost in a low voice.

“This is Japan, which has limited armed forces. If it’s in other countries, the security would be even tighter as no one knows whether the killer will attack again. The man has to be an idiot or is extremely confident with his ability to have killed a Yanam special forces agent before the war contest for special forces began,” Master Ghost replied quietly after checking where the men from the Japanese army were and making sure that they couldn’t be heard.

“It’s most likely the latter.” Gerald nodded. What Master Ghost had said was exactly the same as what he himself thought.

“To be able to kill a member of the special forces in such a short time means he has extraordinary ability. I’ve seen this man from Yanam’s special forces before, and he seems to be quite strong himself.” Taking a deep breath, Gerald continued, “Do you think it could be the cultivator from the Crawford family?”

“You’re saying that a man with this level of strength could be him?” Master Ghost opened his eyes wide. He had never thought in this way before.

“Who knows. I’m just guessing.” Gerald waved his arms.

Chapter 2141

“When you put it that way... I guess it is possible. After all, the culprit was daring enough to deal with such a strong, special forces soldier here, of all places. Normally, only you could pull something like this off, which means that the culprit is probably only slightly weaker than you. With that said, maybe he really is a Crawford cultivator... However, why would that person look for trouble with a special forces soldier from Yanam? Is there some sort of dispute between the Crawfords and the Yanam military...?” muttered Master Ghost as he stroked his goatee.

“There’s no point thinking about it. Good for him that he’s only here to deal with the special forces soldiers from Yanam. Regardless, even if he does come for us, there’s nothing to be scared of with me here,” scoffed Gerald as he crossed his arms while narrowing his eyes.

By the time Gerald’s sentence ended, the competition had already begun and special forces soldiers could be seen lined up in a neat row. Each of them had the latest sniper rifle models in hand, and everyone watched as they aimed for their targets for the shooting competition that stood nine hundred feet away from them.

Multiple shots could soon be heard, and the results were announced shortly after.

Gerald himself had little interest in this kind of competition, so after spectating for a while, he eventually got up and left. Seeing that, Master Ghost made sure to follow him closely as well.

The second the duo left, a car came to a stop at the training ground’s entrance...

Shortly after, a youth in a floral suit stepped out, followed by four of his bodyguards. As the group of five walked into the training grounds, they were just seconds too late to notice Gerald and Master Ghost taking a turn to enter an elevator, disallowing the two parties from meeting...

As expected, the youth was none other than Kai.

Since Ryugu hadn't assassinated Gerald even after a week had passed, Kai decided to take things into his own hands. He knew for a fact that Gerald would attend the competition, which explained his presence here today.

Whatever the case was, whenever he thought about the humiliation he suffered that night, Kai's desire to put Gerald down for good only increased. With that in mind, he wasn't against using his high status to get the military to step forward and subdue Gerald. Regardless, when the colonel saw Kai, he immediately got to his feet before asking, "Oh? Mr. Kanagawa!

Fancy meeting you here, of all places!"

"I'm just here to have a look around," replied Kai as he waved his hand, his eyes darting around the entire time.

"Well, whatever the case is, welcome, Mr. Kanagawa! It's unfortunate, but since we're currently hosting a competition, I'm afraid we won't have much time to attend to you. With that said, I hope you won't affect our event either. Don't worry, once the competition is over, I'll make sure to treat you to a proper drink!" said the colonel, not daring to offend Kai.

"Affect? Why would I do anything like that? I was just bored so I came out for a stroll. In other words, I'm just here through sheer coincidence. Regardless, just continue doing whatever you were doing and don't bother about me. I'll just be having a look around!" replied Kai with a smile.

Following that, Kai made a small gesture, prompting his bodyguards to scatter. The hunt for Gerald was on...!

Hearing that, the colonel opted to believe Kai and simply continued paying attention to the competition. The colonel, for one, knew that this wasn't Kai's first time here anyway, so as long as that youth wasn't here to cause any trouble, he didn't really care where Kai went.

It was half an hour later when Kai's subordinates reunited with him.

The second Kai saw them, he immediately growled in a low voice, "Well? Did any of you manage to find him?"

"Apologies, but we couldn't find him no matter how hard we looked! The only people present are the international special forces soldiers!" replied one of the subordinates as the rest of them shook their heads.

"What? Was that b*stard Ryugu lying to me...?" grumbled Kai, a deep frown on his face...

Chapter 2142

Through this period, Kai had constantly been contacting Ryugu to get updates on Gerald's assassination. However, not only did Ryugu fail to assassinate him, but that b*stard actually dared to tell him this morning that he had to temporarily cancel all his assassination missions!

Though it annoyed Ryugu to no end, it wasn't as though he could do anything about it. Thankfully, Ryugu did mention that Gerald was going to participate in the special forces competition, which was why Kai had rushed over in the first place.

Even so, to think that he'd fail to find Gerald after searching for a good half-hour!

"I'll have to disagree with that. Ryugu wouldn't ever dare to lie to you," replied another bodyguard as he shook his head.

The guards had previously met Ryugu together with Kai, and they knew for a fact that Ryugu respected Kai a lot. Since Ryugu didn't even dare to raise his voice back then, there was no way he would be daring enough to lie to Kai!

"You say that, but did you manage to find Gerald?" grumbled Kai.

“... Unfortunately, no...” replied the guards as they shook their heads once more.

“...Let’s head back for now. I’m meeting Ryugu in the flesh to see what he has to say about this!” scowled Kai as he clenched his fists, clearly assuming that Ryugu was playing tricks on him. After all, thinking back, though Ryugu had told him that Gerald was here to participate in the special forces competition, Gerald wasn’t a special forces soldier. With that in mind, there was no way he would be a participant here!

Besides, Kai had seen Fujiko earlier, and if Gerald truly was here, he should be by her side. With his mind made up, Kai then gestured for his men to leave the training ground...

Noticing that Kai and his men were leaving, the colonel walked up to him before asking, “Oh? Leaving already, Mr. Kanagawa?”

“Indeed. I have some affairs to attend to, so I’ll be heading back first,” replied Kai as he got into his car. Watching as the car swiftly left the scene, the colonel couldn’t help but mutter, “Why on earth did he come here in the first place...?”

Hearing the colonel’s comment, a military officer took the chance to reply, “He may have come here to look for someone. After all, his subordinates were scanning this place high and low earlier. I’m assuming they left since they couldn’t find the person they were looking for.”

“Hmm? As if there’d be anyone he’s looking for here, of all places...” muttered the colonel as he shook his head in disbelief...

Moving back to Kai, while he was in the car, he made sure to call Ryugu to tell him to meet him in the teahouse where they had previously met... and it was about half an hour later when Kai himself arrived at the appointed venue.

Watching as Kai stepped out, Ryugu who looked slightly reluctant to be there forced a smile before

walking up to Kai and saying, “Mr. Kanagawa, I apologize, but I’m extremely busy at the moment. Just skip the formalities and tell me what you need. I have to leave as soon as I can...”

Scoffing in response, Kai then sneered, “Hah! Before anything else, allow me to congratulate you for successfully making a fool out of me!”

Raising a slight brow as he watched Kai walk past him, the puzzled Ryugu was prompted to ask, “... Make a fool out of you? Why would I ever do such a thing...?”

Though he never really liked Kai, he wouldn’t ever dare to make a fool out of Kai. With that in mind, he ran after Kai who had already entered the teahouse before hurriedly adding, “Please elaborate, Mr. Kanagawa. How exactly did I make a fool out of you? You can’t just label me a liar that unfairly!”

Ignoring Ryugu, Kai simply looked at the shop’s owner before ordering, “Two pots of tea.”

Completely confused by this point, Ryugu who didn’t want Kai to be offended any further then said, “Please tell me what the problem is, Mr. Kanagawa...”

Chapter 2143

“Playing dumb? Fine! Since you wish to know so much, I’ll spell it out for you! You told me that Gerald had gone to the military training grounds this morning, remember? Then why the hell wasn’t he there?” growled Kai as he glared at Ryugu.

“You... went over?” replied the surprised Ryugu.

“Did I stutter? Regardless, my subordinates searched for half an hour to no avail! While Fujiko was there, there were no traces of Gerald at all! With that said, are you trying to continue fooling me or something?” sneered Kai.

“... I know for a fact that Gerald participated in the special forces competition together with Fujiko. With that said, he should be there with her. Could he have noticed you before you saw him? That would’ve definitely prompted him to hide till you left!” suggested Ryugu as he scratched the back of his head.

“It’s needless to say that now. Either way, since we’re already here, allow me to ask why you haven’t gotten rid of Gerald even after that week I gave you. Hell, you even told me not to make a move on him for the time being. Are the Hanyu assassins not capable enough to take him on?” scoffed Ryugu, not wanting to hear any of Ryugu’s excuses.

Hearing that, Ryugu could only sigh as he replied, “... It is a bit inconvenient for us to deal with this case...”

After all, not only had he yet to save Endo and Izumi, but he had lost several other Hanyu assassins in the process as well. With how humiliating this defeat was, there was no way Ryugu was going to willingly embarrass himself by telling Kai what had happened.

“Inconvenient? I’ve been cooperating with the Hanyus this entire time, no? Actually, I do wonder if you’re hiding something from me,” growled Kai as he frowned.

For Ryugu to fail to take Gerald out even after being given all this time... What was the issue? He had to get to the bottom of all this today! Otherwise, Gerald would simply be able to continue living free and easy!

Though he was reluctant to talk about it, Ryugu knew that Kai wasn’t going to let him off that easily if he continued keeping his mouth shut. With that in mind, Ryugu then asked, “Do... you really wish to know the entire situation...?”

“Cut the cr*p and just tell me already!” grumbled Kai as he took a sip of tea before slamming the teacup onto the table.

Sighing, Ryugu then replied, “I... think you know Endo and Izumi, right...?”

“Of course. They’re both team leaders of your family’s many assassination teams, no? You know, if you had just sent those two to get rid of Gerald, I’m sure the mission would have been over in a single night! Are you worried that I can’t afford to commission those two or something?” said Kai slightly impatiently.

“... Actually, they were the first I sent out- ”

“Then what’s the issue? Did they go rogue or something?”

Taking a deep breath, Ryugu then said, “... If you could just let me finish, Mr. Kanagawa... The truth is, they’ve gone missing ever since they entered the Futaba manor!”

“... Missing?” replied Kai with a deep frown.

Though he wasn’t a Hanyu, he was well aware of how strong Endo and Izumi were. Killing Gerald should’ve been a cinch for them...

“Indeed... Ever since they entered, I haven’t gotten news about them till this very day...” muttered Ryugu with a heavy sigh, making it clear that this was an extremely worrying incident to him. After all, if Endo and Izumi really were dead, then his family wouldn’t be able to bear the losses...

Chapter 2144

What more, as long as Gerald was in the picture, there was a high chance that the Hanyus wouldn’t ever be able to kidnap Fujiko to threaten Takuya.

“... What? You sent both of them yet neither of them has reported back?” replied Kai in bewilderment.

“I wouldn’t lie about something like this... Regardless, after losing contact with them, I pursued Gerald a few days ago... Unfortunately, he killed several of my men in the process. If you want proof, just head to

the Yamashita family's deserted mountain... I left their corpses there..." explained Ryugu as he shook his head in resignation. This was honestly beyond humiliating for him to admit. After all, this loss was unlike anything the Hanyus had ever faced before...

"... Is Gerald really that strong...?" muttered Kai with a frown. Kai, for one, had only briefly met Gerald. As far as he knew, Gerald was just an average Joe. While he could've hired an ordinary killer to go after Gerald, he had opted to get Ryugu's help since he wanted the murder to be perfect. It truly hadn't occurred to him that the Hanyus would have trouble taking Gerald out!

"We would've taken him out ages ago if he wasn't!" replied Ryugu as he sighed again, wondering how he was going to get more information about Endo and Izumi's situation. Ryugu, for one, figured that the patriarch hadn't learned of the duo's disappearance yet. Once he did, however, the patriarch would surely fly into a rage...

"... How truly odd... How did the Futabas get acquainted with such a strong person..? I heard that Gerald was just a family guest. However, if Takuya's family had such a powerful ally, why did he only ask for Gerald's help after his family got reduced to such a state?" muttered Kai as he poured another cup of tea for himself before taking a sip.

"That's the reason I told you to lay low for the time being. I wish to investigate further into Gerald's background first. Speaking of which, since I've already said this much, you should know about an incident that happened back when we were on that deserted mountain. You see, we bumped into an elder of the Yamashita family. Some things happened, but long story short, that old man gave Gerald and Fujiko a chance to escape while I wasn't paying attention!" explained Ryugu in a slightly reluctant tone.

Though he didn't really want to share this information, he figured that Kai would only continue to misunderstand the situation if he didn't tell him the full story. By telling Kai all this, not only would Ryugu avoid more unnecessary trouble, but he could also potentially get some help from the Kanagawas.

"... What? You're telling me that the Yamashitas have a relationship with the Futabas? That's impossible! I've never heard of this before!" replied Kai.

“...Whatever the case is, I’ll be focusing on investigating Gerald’s strength and background for the time being. I’ll also be looking into the relationship between the Futabas and the Yamashitas. With that said, the Hanyus won’t be making a move till we get sufficient information on the situation. After all, while we can afford to offend the Futabas, offending the Yamashitas will surely spell doom for my family...”

Chapter 2145

Since he had already said this much, Ryugu figured that he may as well just reveal all his thoughts on the situation.

“... I see. Thank god I asked you about this first... Otherwise, I could’ve easily gotten myself killed if I continued pursuing Gerald today!” replied Kai who was already drenched in cold sweat after hearing all that. After all, who could’ve guessed that Gerald was actually this strong? He was strong enough to take on two of the Hanyu family’s strongest assassins for heaven’s sake!

Thinking about it, had Kai bumped into Gerald earlier and caused a scene, he was now worried that the soldiers wouldn’t have been able to protect him at all...

“Indeed... Regardless, what’s your decision on the matter...?” asked Ryugu.

“... I’ll be heading back first to consider all this... However, I still want Gerald dead by the end of all this. No matter how much it takes, I won’t rest easy till he’s six feet under!” growled Kai, gritting his teeth as he clenched his fists tightly.

Nodding in response, Ryugu then rubbed his hands for a while before asking, “...Before that... There’s something I’d like you to clarify, if you don’t mind...”

“Ask away,” replied Kai.

“Well... your family will soon be united with the Futabas, right...? Through marriage? With that in mind, isn’t Gerald a guest of the Futabas? Why are you so hell bent on killing him...? That’s just me being curious, feel free not to answer...” said Ryugu, worried that Kai would overthink his question.

“... That doesn’t concern you. Also, don’t ever ask me about this again!” grumbled Kai as his gaze turned gloomy. He was going to carry this secret to his grave! Had it not been for the fact that Ryugu was the leader of the Hanyu’s assassin team and that Ryugu was still slightly useful to him, Kai would’ve already ordered his subordinates to kill that man for asking such an outrageous question!

“... Understood,” replied Ryugu, not wanting any unnecessary trouble from Kai.

“Either way, let’s just call it a day for now. I’ll start investigating Gerald and the Futabas once I get back. I’ll be sure to inform you if I find anything. As for you, don’t think about slacking off on this mission. Remember, as long as you kill Gerald, I’m willing to pay triple of what I initially promised!” declared Kai as he finished his tea and got to his feet.

Watching as Kai walked out, Ryugu simply replied, “No problem...”

Ryugu, for one, was sure that the Kanagawas would be able to find out more about Gerald without too much trouble.

Regardless, once Kai got into the car, he lit a cigarette before crossing his legs.

With the car doors now closed, one of his men couldn’t help but say, “... He’s lying, right...? There’s no way Gerald would be strong enough to kill so many of the Hanyu family’s assassins. It’s even more unbelievable to think that he’s capable enough to defeat Endo and Izumi! And the Futabas having a good relationship with the Yamashitas? As if that would ever happen!”

Chapter 2146

“... I feel that Ryugu wouldn’t lie about this,” replied Kai as he shook his head. Though he didn’t contact Ryugu much, he understood the man’s character well.

“... But if what he said was true, then Gerald truly has inhuman strength...! He’s definitely not someone

we can deal with! Do you think he's related to those Weston cultivators...?" asked the subordinate who knew about these things since he had been working for Kai for so many years.

"Can it!" retorted Kai as he frowned deeply. Cultivators, in general, couldn't be talked about so casually. Even though Kai and his subordinate weren't cultivators, if word got out about the existence of cultivators -and the cultivators found that they were the source of the information leak-, they would surely be ruined!

Even though Kai was no stranger to using his family's name to commit all sorts of crimes, he knew better than to pick a bone with cultivators. He, for one, understood that even his family would be burdened by all this if such a scenario came to be, so he wasn't counting on them to protect him.

"I-I'm sorry, Mr. Kanagawa! P-putting that aside... Should we start investigating Gerald...?" asked the subordinate as he immediately lowered his head.

"... Leave him be for the moment. There's something else that's much more important at the moment," said Kai with a sigh.

"... Are... you referring to the relationship between the Futabas and the Yamashitas...?" asked the subordinate.

"Indeed. The existence of ninjas has always been a tricky topic to confirm. After all, nobody's ever claimed to see one before. However, now that Ryugu's personally witnessed one, things could get a lot messier if there really is something between those two families," replied Kai as he took a deep breath. Though he desperately wanted Gerald gone, with the

Yamashitas now in the equation, he knew better than to act rashly.

It certainly didn't help that Gerald was capable of defeating Endo and Izumi despite their combined strength. Unless he hired the top international hitmen in the world, Kai was pretty sure he wouldn't ever pose a threat to Gerald...

Thinking about it, Kai raised his hand before saying, "... Stay silent for a moment"

It was about ten minutes later when his frown finally eased a little. In fact, Kai soon revealed a victorious smile as he said, "... Tell me, what's Endo and Izumi's rank in the international assassin list?"

"They should be somewhere near rank twenty," replied the subordinate who as Kai's subordinate needed to know the positions of all the influential people in Japan.

"If that's the case, I just need to hire the top ten assassins to finish Gerald off, right? With their level of expertise, I'm sure they can do the deed without the Futaba and Yamashita family's knowledge!" declared Kai as he held onto his chin.

"That's definitely a viable solution, Mr. Kanagawa! However... if Gerald really is as strong as Ryugu described him to be... What if the assassins fail to take him out...?" asked the subordinate.

"... What? Those from the top ten are capable enough to assassinate presidents from the Western Union! With that said, there's no way they'd have trouble dealing with a small fry like Gerald! At the very least, even if they do fail to kill him, I believe that their professional ethics will protect our identities! Because of that, I have no doubts that this mission will be completed without a hitch once I hire them!"

Chapter 2147

After hearing what Kai had to say, the four subordinates exchanged glances before saying, "... We suppose you're right!"

Just as Kai had said, even if the assassins did fail to kill Gerald, they probably wouldn't expose who had hired them. While this probably meant that more money needed to be spent, what was money to the Kanagawas? Honestly, hiring a hitman was probably cheaper than what Kai was used to spending at bars every night!

“Then that settles it! Hurry and use my name to contact the top ten assassins on the list! The closer they are to us, the sooner that b*stard dies! Also, make sure to tell them that if they fulfill their mission, I’ll increase their payment to up to thirty percent higher than the market price!” declared Kai as he slapped his thigh.

After all that had happened, Kai knew better than to trust the Hanyus with this case. Not only would relying on them be a waste of time, but he was pretty sure that the deposit he paid them was going to end up being a complete waste of money as well.

Regardless, just as Kai’s subordinate fished his phone out, the man suddenly froze before turning to look at Kai and whispering, “...Um... Mr. Kanagawa...?”

“...What? Just say it already!” muttered the impatient Kai.

Gulping, the subordinate then stuttered, “W-well... If the master learns about all this...”

Aside from being Kai’s subordinates, these men were also members of the Kanagawa family. With that in mind, the subordinates knew that if anything happened to Kai, they would have to bear full responsibility. It was the reason why they always notified the Kanagawa patriarch whenever Kai stepped out of line. Doing so prompted the patriarch to step forward and resolve the matter...

Either way, upon hearing that, Kai who hated it when his subordinates used his father’s name to threaten or discipline him then retorted, “He won’t find out as long as all of us keep it a secret, right?”

After working as Kai’s subordinates for so many years, these men were honestly no different than his confidants. While they knew everything about Kai, Kai himself knew that they were only hired by his father to keep a close eye on him.

Though that meant that his father now knew every move he made, Kai couldn’t just banish his men away. After all, not only would doing so lose him his freedom, but he also needed them to do lots of things for him.

Whatever the case was, Kai was well aware that his father usually turned a blind eye as long as he didn't do anything excessive. Even if he did end up creating a mess, as long as it wasn't over the line, his father would surely step in. However, now that he was hiring the top ten assassins, even Kai knew that he was clearly pushing it.

"B-but the master told us to inform him of your every move, Mr. Kanagawa...! If you're really going through with this, it's impossible that we hide it from him!

After all, if those assassins create a mess here, the unprepared master won't be able to resolve it that easily!" cried out one of the subordinates.

All of Kai's men knew that if things went south and they didn't report any of this to the patriarch, none of them would be able to bear the responsibility...!

Hearing that, Kai sighed before taking a cigarette out and lighting it. Puffing onto it for a moment, he eventually said in a low voice, "... How long have you men worked for me?"

"Almost ten years by now, young master!" replied the men in unison.

"Since I've never asked about the specifics of what you reported to my father throughout these years not that I'm blaming you, I only ask in return that you don't inform him about what I'm about to do. Just this once," said Kai with a frown.

Chapter 2148

Kai, for one, understood that this was his best shot at getting rid of Gerald. If Gerald somehow left Japan before he managed to do the deed, then Kai was positive that he would lose track of Gerald for good. If that came to be, then he'd have to keep all this bitterness in his heart forever!

"... T-that..." muttered his men as they looked at each other in dismay, wondering how to even proceed.

Seeing how worried they were, Kai then fished a few bank cards out from the car's compartment and handed one to each of them before saying, "Here. Each of these has a million dollars in them. Feel free to finish the cash up."

After looking at the cards for a while, eventually, all the subordinates could do was accept them. For one, they knew that Kai was really desperate to end Gerald's life and that this was his best chance of doing so. However, they were also well aware that they would have to face his mighty wrath if they declined.

Whatever the case was, as all of Kai's subordinates thought about it, they slowly assured themselves that such high profile assassins were extremely confidential with their information. With that in mind, as long as nobody said anything, the patriarch would never find out.

Regardless, after the last of his subordinates accepted his cards, Kai was prompted to ask, "... I assume we're all in agreement, then?"

"... Only this once, young master... However, know that if the master learns about this, we'll be in boiling hot water..." muttered one of his subordinates. Though the stakes were high, the subordinates couldn't deny that a million dollars was equivalent to six years' worth of salary.

"Cut the cr*p and contact those assassins already! We still need to see who's willing to take the mission! Remember, the sooner we get rid of Gerald, the sooner this affair will be done with!" replied Kai as he gestured for them to get to it in a slightly impatient tone.

"Loud and clear!" declared his subordinates who immediately got to work...

Back at the training grounds, an entire day of competitions had passed, and it was finally time for the results. Though Aiden didn't score too high, his results weren't bad either. At the very least, his results were above average.

Gerald himself had no idea that Kai had come looking for him in the first place. Since he had rested in

the morning, he felt particularly energetic by the time night came. With that in mind, before Aiden returned, Gerald made sure to head to a nearby restaurant to buy him a mountain of food for dinner.

Soon after, Aiden entered the room, looking quite bewildered as he said, "... You're not going to believe this but... Ms. Fujiko got much higher results than me...!"

"How much higher?" asked Gerald as he watched Aiden take his coat off.

"She got fourth place in the competition today, which means that she's ten ranks above me!" replied Aiden with a shrug. Honestly, he had expected her to rank last.

"Fujiko wasn't given the title of 'Queen of Soldiers' for nothing, you know? I have a feeling that if you two duel against each other, she'll probably win. You could invite her for a duel if you'd like to test that statement!" replied Gerald with a smile.

Gerald was confident in Fujiko's martial arts skills. After all, he had witnessed how well she had held her ground back when she was being attacked behind the hotel that night. Had it not been for the fact that her physique held her back, she could have definitely taken her assailant out. If that had happened, then Gerald wouldn't have had to step forward to save her.

"I'd rather not... I'm exhausted enough after competing for an entire day... Now I just want to have dinner and rest for a while before preparing for tomorrow's events..." said Aiden as he shook his head. After a full day of competitions, he felt that he was going to collapse at any moment.

"Then let's eat so you can head to bed early once we're done," replied Gerald as he gestured toward the dining table.

With that said, they then began having their meals, making sure to discuss any other issues that needed resolving in between bites...

Fast forward to the next morning, Aiden and Fujiko left for the training ground again to resume the competition. Gerald and Master Ghost, on the other hand, remained in the living room to discuss the secrets of the sea map...

Shortly after, a fishing ship could be seen docking the coast of Japan...

Chapter 2149

Following that, a man donning black clothes who looked to be around six feet tall got out of the ship. Since his face was covered by a mask, only his sharp eyes were visible...

Though he wasn't holding onto anything, anyone who came across him kept their distance. There was just something off with his aura...

Regardless, the man eventually entered a black car by the coast before being driven off...

Fast forward to half an hour later, Kai could be seen smoking in a villa near the Kanagawa manor. Sitting on his left and right, were two young, naked women, and standing before him, were a few of his subordinates.

Though Kai's hands continuously groped the two beauties, the subordinates looked completely unfazed, almost as though they were already used to witnessing such scenes. Aside from occasionally glimpsing at their bodies, the subordinates mostly kept their eyes to themselves. After all, they knew that they'd eventually get to play with the women as well.

Usually, after Kai had his fun with his women, he would then pass them over to his men as 'rewards'. Due to that, Kai's subordinates had had the pleasure of playing around with not only prostitution models, but also some of the lower ranked celebrities in Japan!

Either way, it wasn't long before Kai's phone began to ring. After picking it up, Kai remained silent for a while before lowering it and saying, "He's here."

“... Huh? Who’s here?” asked one of the subordinates.

“What do you mean who’s here? It’s the assassin! He’s arrived in Japan and is currently on his way over in his car! He should be here within the hour...” grumbled Kai.

“Oh? Should we leave, then?” asked the two women.

“Just stay here. However, I want both of you to immediately forget what you’ve heard later on, got it? Expose us and it won’t be long before the consequences catch up to you. And don’t say anything unnecessary, understand?” replied Kai as he firmly grasped their shoulders. Kai, for one, hadn’t satisfied his lust yet. So what if they were meeting an assassin? It wasn’t as though he was doing anything wrong.

Hearing that and understanding how important this was, the women immediately nodded before saying, “Understood!”

The two girls had already witnessed how terribly things could go wrong if people like them failed to obey their orders. With that in mind, as long as they obeyed Kai’s words, not only would they be granted just about anything, but they’d also avoid a horrible death.

Nodding in response, Kai then looked at one of his subordinates and asked, “So, where’s the assassin from?”

“He’s from the southeast and his code name is Vulture. Ranked eighth on the assassin list, he’s wanted by both the Western Union and a few of the European countries. Though he’s a world-class criminal, nobody’s been able to capture him,” replied his subordinate as he read out the information on his phone.

“As expected, those from the top ten truly are extraordinary... To think that he’s been able to escape the Western Union’s grasp this entire time! With how capable he is, I’m sure it won’t be long till Gerald finally meets his end!” declared Kai as he nodded in satisfaction.

Had he thought about this earlier, he wouldn't even have bothered looking for the Hanyus. With how vicious those on the top ten were, Gerald could've been dead by now! Being professionals, Kai was also sure that Gerald's corpse would be dealt with so efficiently that his murder would never be solved...

Not long after, a knock could be heard on the door, prompting Kai to immediately get to his feet as he exclaimed, "Vulture is here!"

Upon hearing that, the door was opened and in stepped the man in black from before...

The second he entered, everyone could immediately feel how immensely pressuring his aura was. Even the two women from before immediately looked toward the floor, not daring to look the assassin in the face...

Chapter 2150

After glancing around for a bit, Vulture immediately stared straight at Kai before asking in a low and hoarse, "... Kanagawa Kai, I presume?"

"That, I am. Since you came all the way from the southeast, do get some rest first. Speaking of which, I've also prepared these two beauties for you. Feel free to do whatever you want with them," replied Kai as he gestured toward the two women.

"I see. Then I'll be thanking you in advance, then!" declared Vulture who wasn't about to say no to such beautiful women. After all, the women from where he came from were all unsightly, to say the least. They were incomparable to Japanese women!

With that said, Vulture then removed his coat before placing his arms on the two women's shoulders and guiding them into one of the rooms.

Once they were inside, one of Kai's subordinates couldn't help but ask, "... Um... Mr. Kanagawa...? What

if they end up... you know... dead...?"

While it was true that Kai's men were no strangers to crime and they weren't against hurting women, murder was a line none of them dared to cross.

Hearing that, Kai simply waved his hand before replying rather nonchalantly, "What's there to be afraid of? They're just two random university students. As long as he kills Gerald, I'm willing to let him have his way with even famous local stars!"

With that said, Kai then lit a cigarette before smiling, prompting his men to remain silent as they waited for Vulture to be done. From how pleased Kai looked, it was almost as though he could already see Gerald's demise in Vulture's hands...

Whatever the case was, it wasn't long before Vulture exited the room. Slipping his clothes on, he then said, "Apologies for keeping you waiting, Mr. Kanagawa."

Taking a peek into the room, Kai saw that the two women were lying on the bed, motionless. It almost felt like they were dead... Even so, Kai felt more envious than anything. After all, after binging on wine and women throughout the years, his body had been completely ruined to the point where he found it hard to even get erect.

As Kai was resenting that fact, Vulture finished buttoning up his coat and sat on the couch before laughing as he added, "Still, those two were far too weak!"

Feeling more humiliated than ever after hearing that, Kai then nodded before replying, "... Either way, now that you've had your fun, could we get to business, sir?"

Shrugging, Vulture simply said, "Fine with me."

"Alright, so... There's this person called Gerald Crawford, and he's a guest of the Futaba family. I haven't

managed to fully investigate his background, but I do know that he's rather strong. After all, not even the Hanyus were able to hurt him," explained Kai as he gestured for his men to bring over Gerald's details before handing them to Vulture.

"Hah! What kind of crappy family is the Hanyus? Do they even deserve to be called assassins?" scoffed Vulture, not even bothering to read the notes he had been handed. All he did was stare at Gerald's photograph for a while before snorting disdainfully.

Though Kai was left momentarily stunned, he quickly laughed aloud before replying, "You got that right!"

While it was true that Endo and Izumi were ranked quite high on the assassin list, there was undoubtedly a massive gap between them and the top ten assassins... With that in mind, Vulture had every right to look down on the Hanyus...

Chapter 2151

With how confident Vulture sounded, Kai was sure that Gerald would definitely be murdered this time...!

After looking at Gerald's picture for a while and memorizing it, Vulture couldn't help but feel that Gerald looked slightly familiar. While he couldn't tell why that was, he made sure to hide his curiosity by asking, "Regardless, while I can definitely finish him off, about the commission..."

Hearing that, Kai gestured at one of his men before saying, "Bring it over."

Nodding in response, the subordinate then disappeared into another room before quickly returning with a suitcase...

Watching as his subordinate opened it before Vulture, Kai then crossed his legs before adding, "There's two million dollars in there. If you kill Gerald within three days, I'll transfer five million more dollars into your bank account as the rest of your commission. If it extends past three days, however, I'll have to lower it to four million dollars instead. Even so, I believe you'll need a week at most to take him out.

What do you say?"

"Fine by me," replied Vulture. After all, he was being given seven million dollars when the target wasn't even a tycoon or senior government official! As long as he planned right and did everything correctly, this mission was going to be a cinch!

"Very well, then! Your task begins tomorrow morning! Speaking of which, feel free to rest here in the next few days, sir. Those two women will naturally remain here for your pleasure. However, if you don't think they're enough, feel free to ask for more! As long as you're able to kill Gerald within the allocated time, I'll grant you anything!" declared Kai with a smile.

Following that, Vulture watched as Kai and his subordinates left the villa. Once they were gone, he took a sip of water before returning to his room...

As for Kai and his men, after getting into their car, one of his subordinates couldn't help but ask, "Where to now, Mr. Kanagawa...?"

"To the entertainment company. They organized a selection event recently, right? Let's see if there are any beauties around! It's high time we celebrated!" replied Kai delightedly. Since Gerald was now as good as dead to him, Kai was so elated that he honestly wanted to have a car race just to show how overjoyed he was.

"Got it!" replied his subordinate with a nod before driving the car toward the Kanagawa's entertainment company...

As for Gerald, he naturally had no idea about any of this. Regardless, after a good night's rest, the energized youth decided to walk around the training grounds alone while Aiden and Fujiko headed off to participate in more competitions.

Naturally, he wasn't doing this just to have a stroll. The truth was, Gerald wanted to locate the Crawford cultivator from before.

After all, before hitting the hay the night before, he had momentarily sensed that person's presence. From what he could tell, the person was either within the training ground or somewhere near it. Since this was an urban area, there were numerous hotels for that cultivator to hide in.

While Gerald wasn't really afraid of that person, he was worried that trouble could brew if he allowed the cultivator to do as he pleased. Gerald, for one, didn't want those close to him to get affected by that.

As he was walking around, Gerald bumped into Ichiro who was quick to jog over before asking, "Oh? What are you doing here, Mr. Crawford?"

"I'm just taking a stroll," replied Gerald with a faint smile.

Chapter 2152

"If you don't mind, could we talk for a bit, Mr. Crawford?" asked Ichiro as he heaved a sigh. Ichiro, for one, couldn't talk to his colleagues about some things and he didn't have any close friends nearby. With that in mind, he figured that Gerald would be the perfect listener.

"Sure. I don't mind," replied Gerald with a nod, figuring that he could possibly learn more clues about the person who had murdered the Yanam special forces soldier. What more, this was his chance to see if the Japanese military had managed to figure out that he was Adler's murderer.

"I'm glad you agreed! Please, follow me. You know, my family mailed some good tea to me recently, I'll let you try some," said Ichiro with a smile.

Following that, the duo soon found themselves walking into Ichiro's office. Upon entering, Ichiro immediately told his secretary to get some tea ready before gesturing for Gerald to take a seat

"The problems keep stacking up, Mr. Crawford... If I'm to be honest, I don't even know where I should start investigating! But if I don't start getting results, I may not even be able to keep my job!" muttered

Ichiro in resignation.

“You’re telling me. There truly has been quite a bit going on around the Japanese training grounds recently Still, haven’t you managed to obtain other clues about the two murders since the last time we talked?” asked Gerald with a nod.

“Nothing with Adler’s case... To think that we haven’t been able to find anything even after half a month has passed! There just doesn’t seem to be any traces of the man left! I truly think that Adler’s disappearance is an unsolvable case... As for the other person, we’ve found his corpse and sent it back to Yanam. While we’re currently doing a thorough investigation based on the clues the murderer left behind, we don’t know if we’ll be able to sniff him out in the end...” explained Ichiro.

Ichiro was only speaking this casually about all this since he knew that Gerald wasn’t part of the military. He was also pretty sure that Gerald wasn’t involved with either of the cases, which was why he didn’t mind sharing all these details to let off some steam.

“I see... For your sake, I hope you’ll be able to find the culprit soon...” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Thank you... You know, the colonel told me that if I continue failing to uncover these two cases, not only will the colonel be fired, but I’ll be forced to resign as well. You can tell that they’re serious just by how many Japanese military soldiers are standing guard over the training grounds now. After all, a third case would be disastrous... I’ll be frank and say that I’m thankful that the only victims are those from Yanam. It means that we only need to compensate Yanam with gifts or something else. If the cases involved someone from Weston, the Western Union, or any of the European countries, we’d truly be in hot water!” said Ichiro as he shook his head with a sigh, clearly vexed out of his mind.

As Ichiro’s secretary returned with some tea prompting Ichiro to hand a glass over to Gerald, Gerald couldn’t help but ask, “Indeed... Speaking of which, there’s a lot of hotels nearby, right? Since you have the murderer’s height and general body description, maybe you could find him within the hotels in the area. Just a thought...”

Naturally, Gerald was only suggesting this since he was planning to do so himself in the first place. However, Ichiro simply replied, “I’ve already done that to no avail Hell, we did it the day after the

incident, but there simply were no traces of our culprit. I suspect he must have immediately fled after doing the deed...”

Frowning slightly, Gerald was prompted to ask, “... Are you absolutely sure...?”

While he initially had his doubts that the person was a Crawford cultivator, after what Ichiro had just told him, it seemed that the culprit really was a cultivator...

Chapter 2153

However, the fact that the Japanese Military hadn't been able to locate him even though Gerald had clearly sensed that person's presence the night before was puzzling, to say the least.

“Of course, I am! Don't worry, the investigation isn't anything confidential so there's no reason for me to lie,” replied Ichiro as he waved his hand.

“Indeed... Well, I wish you luck with your investigations! Do tell me if you require any help. I don't mind since I feel we get along well,” said Gerald with a subtle smile.

“... Do... Do you really mean that, Mr. Crawford?” asked Ichiro after momentarily freezing.

“What reason would I have to lie?” replied Gerald with a chuckle.

“That... That's wonderful! With how strong you are, the culprit will definitely be caught in no time!” exclaimed Ichiro rather excitedly. Ichiro, for one, knew that Gerald alone had caused quite a mess within the Yanam Military, and only someone exceedingly strong could achieve such a feat.

“You flatter me. Regardless, I'll stick to my word,” replied Gerald as he stuck his hand out for a handshake, knowing full well that he was only doing this in hopes of easing his search for the Crawford cultivator.

What more, with the Japanese military's investigation team involved, the culprit couldn't just reveal his cultivator abilities, thus forcing him to take on Gerald with only his martial arts skills.

Regardless, once Ichiro calmed down a little, he couldn't help but ask, "...Come to think of it, what benefit do you get from all this, Mr. Crawford...? After all, you'll only be wasting time and energy by helping us..."

Chuckling in response, Gerald thought up an excuse on the spot before replying, "As I've said, I just feel that we get along well. Besides, though Aiden's busy with the competition, I don't have anything better to do."

"I see... Well, whatever the case is, please accept my thanks on behalf of the military investigation team! If you manage to capture the culprit, I'll surely ask my military superior to record your merits!" said Ichiro as he returned Gerald's handshake. Since Gerald was willing to lend his aid at his lowest, Ichiro now saw Gerald as a good friend.

Laughing in response, Gerald released their handshake soon after before replying, "Let's work hard and capture the crook as soon as we can, then!"

Since Gerald had agreed to help, Ichiro wasted no time and immediately led Gerald to the colonel's office.

Upon hearing from the colonel's secretary that the case could potentially be solved soon, the colonel prioritized returning to his office instead of continuing to watch the competition.

Once the colonel got there and sat at his desk, Ichiro immediately began reporting all the recent incidents to him while Gerald remained seated on a couch within the room.

A few minutes later, the colonel got to his feet and scanned Gerald from head to toe before asking, "... Gerald Crawford, correct?"

“That, I am,” replied Gerald as he got up before nodding.

“As you already know, I’m the colonel of the Japanese military, and I go by Shin Oda. Ichiro has told me that you’re willing to help us solve the two murders. While I’m happy to hear that, I do wonder if you have any hidden agendas...” said Oda as he returned a nod...

Chapter 2154

“Oh...? What agendas could I probably have?” asked Gerald as he raised a slight brow, clearly not expecting the colonel to ask that.

“Don’t get me wrong, but since I’m the one in charge, I need to remain vigilant at all times. We’re all aware of the giant mess you created back in Yanam, Gerald. With the Yanam military’s leader missing which is why Carter is now in charge I’m simply worried that you may do the same to our military,” replied Oda as he stated at Gerald.

With how dangerous this mission was, Oda knew that if things got out of control, there was a high chance that anyone present would be as good as dead...

Hearing that, Gerald burst out laughing before explaining, “While I can understand where you’re coming from, I’m afraid you still don’t understand how I operate. You see, I only did that to the Yanam military since they kidnapped my friend. They even used his life to threaten me, you see. With that in mind, I assume you’ll see things from my point of View?”

“I have heard about that too,” replied Oda who had previously been told the same thing while he was researching the Yanam incident.

Honestly, Oda would’ve tried his best to save his friend as well if they were kidnapped by the Yanam military. Of course, he wasn’t as strong as Gerald, so he would’ve used other methods to do so.

Whatever the case was, Gerald then said, "Either way, I'm just helping you since I get along well with Noda. I won't deny that I'm just doing this because I'm bored either. However, if you still think I'm too dangerous, feel free to reject my offer. If you do, I won't ask any further about this affair," said Gerald in a low voice.

While there was an instant change in Ichiro's expression upon hearing that, since Oda was present, Ichiro remained silent on the spot...

Shaking his head, the colonel quickly replied, "Just to be clear, this affair is between you and Ichiro. I have nothing to do with any of this, and I'm just making a routine inquiry. With that said, you're free to help, though if anything happens, know that Ichiro's to bear full responsibility."

Oda, for one, knew better than to mess with a strong person like Gerald. Even so, he couldn't deny that Gerald was a very viable solution to capturing the culprit. Regardless, since this conversation had been recorded by the recording system in the office, Oda now knew that if any trouble arose, Ichiro would be the one to blame instead of him.

"Don't worry, sir! Gerald and I will definitely capture all the culprits in no time flat!" declared Ichiro as he patted his chest.

"I await your good news, then. Speaking of which, you're a Westoner, right, Gerald? I'll be giving you a temporary identity in the meantime since I can't think of any other way to justify you working for our military's investigation team. This'll make things much more convenient for you as well," replied Oda as he opened his drawer and took an insignia out before handing it to Gerald.

Looking at the words on the insignia, Gerald then read out, "Investigation team temporary investigator..."

"Indeed. That will be your current identity. Thankfully, you don't hold any governmental positions in Weston or this would be against your country's laws... Regardless, go ahead and start investigating. I'll be heading back to monitor the competition, but if there's anything you two find, inform me immediately, got that?" said Oda as he nodded before leaving the office.

Regardless, now that Oda had agreed, Ichiro instantly felt relieved. With Gerald's help, they were certainly going to crack the case in the nick of time! Now fully motivated, Ichiro turned to face Gerald before declaring, "I'll be counting on you from now on, Gerald!"

"Likewise. And don't worry too much, I'm just using this as an excuse to pass time," replied Gerald as he smiled while shaking his head...

Chapter 2155

"Either way, let's get you to the office first! I'll call over the other investigation team members to introduce you to them. While we're at it, I'll take the chance to explain your temporary role in this investigation!" said Ichiro as he placed his hand on Gerald's shoulder.

"Can we talk while eating?" asked Gerald as he patted his belly.

"Of course! You know where my office is, right? Go wait there for me first as I head out to get some food!" replied Ichiro. Forget eating, even if Gerald had requested to be someplace else, Ichiro would've readily rented someplace within the military grounds.

Fast forward to half an hour later, everyone from the investigation team had arrived. Naturally, upon seeing Gerald there, they were all rightfully curious. After all, to all of them, he was a suspect in Adler's disappearance. While they had no evidence that he had committed the deed, in the end, Gerald still had a motive to commit the crime. With that in mind, since Gerald was just sitting there, many of them thought that Gerald had taken the initiative to surrender himself.

Just as they were deep in thought, Ichiro entered the office with a few bags in hand. As the pleasant scent of roasted chicken filled the room, Ichiro declared, "I've brought over some roasted chicken, so be sure to share among yourselves. I'll detail all of you as you eat."

Following that, he placed a roasted chicken in front of Gerald making sure to hand out the rest to the other team members as well before sitting on the main seat and drinking a glass of water.

After clearing his throat, Ichiro then said, "Now that everyone's here... I'll cut straight to the chase. Gerald and I have just returned from the colonel's office, and we've gotten the green light to make Gerald a temporary investigator. With that said, he'll be helping us investigate the two murders from today onward."

"...What? Why is he suddenly joining our investigation team?"

Ichiro's announcement was like an exploding bombshell, and everyone couldn't help but look at Gerald with incredulous gazes. After all, how on earth had a suspect suddenly become their colleague?

On the contrary, Gerald looked cool as a cucumber as he ate his roasted chicken, barely even caring about their gazes and comments.

"I'm excluding Gerald from our list of suspects. After all, the case is already half a month old and we still have no evidence against him. Due to that, I say that that's enough to prove his innocence! Besides, Gerald's been kind enough to willingly help us with this investigation! With that said, please put your shock aside and start revealing any information you've obtained! It's high time we solved these cases!" explained Ichiro.

"Loud and clear!" declared everyone as they nodded, not daring to disobey Ichiro.

Following that, they all placed their written reports on the table, prompting Ichiro who had just sipped on more water to say, "Alright, take turns explaining what you found in the past two days."

Hearing that, everyone did as Ichiro ordered. While everyone else was dead serious as they read their reports, Gerald who had his legs crossed simply continued eating his roasted chicken...

Chapter 2156

By the time the others were done, Gerald had just finished his roasted chicken.

Watching as Gerald wiped his hands, Ichiro handed two tissues to the youth before asking, "So... Figured anything out?"

"Hardly. To be completely frank, the information was near useless, so I wasn't really paying attention. Though I have to say, the roasted chicken is pretty good, so you guys should eat it while it's hot," replied Gerald as he wiped his mouth.

"You...!" growled the other investigators, clearly annoyed that Gerald was just dissing on all their hard work. What a waste of breath!

"What's wrong?" asked Ichiro.

"Don't worry, it's nothing major. Regardless, you guys should start investigating the hotels around the training ground. I advise you to register every non Japanese staying in the vicinity! Believe me when I say that that's the only information that's going to be useful for now!" replied Gerald as he waved his hand.

"Do you honestly think that we haven't already investigated the surrounding area? Also, all the foreigners? Do you think registering all of them and putting them on file is going to be a cinch or something? You're not even a proper member of the investigation team! What would you know about our work and authority?" retorted several of the other members.

"Just do as he says. Remember, the colonel has given him permission to be on our team, so the colonel and I will be bearing all the consequences. With that said, if you disagree with Gerald, you can either take this to the colonel's office or leave!" growled Ichiro as he slammed his fist onto the table.

Hearing that, everyone became so frightened that they instantly fell silent. While Ichiro was usually an amiable person, everyone in the investigation team knew that Ichiro was the kind of person who didn't make any exceptions to who he grew angry at, not even his family. In fact, he had such a bad temper in his earlier years that he was known for driving several people out!

With that in mind, the rest of the investigation team could only yell, "Loud and clear!"

Knowing that they could only obey Gerald's orders for now, the group of people quickly tidied up their documents before walking out of the office...

Gerald himself simply shook his head before saying, "It's such a pity that they didn't eat their roasted chickens..."

Watching as Gerald took the remaining chicken and began feasting once more, Ichiro waited for his secretary to close the door before looking at Gerald and asking, "Truth be told, I'm finding it hard to see the logic of your order... After all, we've already scanned through all the hotels in the vicinity multiple times. While it's true that there are multiple foreigners, none of them look like the murderer at all..."

"Tell me again what that murderer's physique was like. And did he leave behind any footprints?" asked Gerald as he looked back at Ichiro.

"From what we've gathered, the person is around six feet tall and has a rather sturdy looking figure. Aside from that, his footprints were size twelve... As I've previously said, we found nobody who matched the description, which is why we assume that the culprit has left the area," explained Ichiro.

"Just a thought, but couldn't the culprit have worn platform shoes? Also, it's easy to look sturdy if you have piles of clothes on. As for the shoe size, couldn't the murderer just have worn larger shoes?" asked Gerald in between chews.

"... That..." muttered the stupefied Ichiro as his voice momentarily trailed off...

Chapter 2157

Though he was in the investigation team, Ichiro didn't specialize in solving mysteries. The cases he usually dealt with were dangerous, but straightforward. With that in mind, what Gerald had just said had never crossed his mind.

It was also at that moment when Ichiro realized that the footage from the surveillance camera could be completely useless. While it was true that they had managed to capture the man's face, after hearing what Gerald had to say, Ichiro now wondered if the culprit had been wearing a rubber mask as well...

"I don't blame you for being speechless. Regardless, that's why I said the information your subordinates provided earlier was completely useless. It's also why I told them to quickly identify any foreigners living in nearby hotels. Call it a gut feeling, but I have a hunch that the person is still here," replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

"... Hold on, why only foreigners?" asked the confused Ichiro.

"You're free to investigate the locals if you want, but I feel that the murder is more of an act of revenge. After all, the culprit only killed those from Yanam, which is why I don't think the locals did it. I could be wrong, though," replied Gerald.

Gerald, for one, knew for a fact that he was only 'helping' them in order for him to locate the Crawford cultivator. While he admitted that it was a selfish motive of his, he also believed that the cultivator was the murderer of the Yanam special forces soldier. With that in mind, he had reason to believe that investigating the locals would only be a waste of energy.

"... I see! Either way, don't you worry! I'll order my subordinates to run thorough investigations on all the surrounding hotels!" declared Ichiro who now trusted Gerald more than ever. After all, Gerald had just given them new leads to look into. Now, there truly was a chance for them to crack the case!

Gerald himself who had just finished his second roasted chicken released a large burp before saying, "I'm sure you will. By the way, the roasted chicken really is delectable. You wouldn't mind me taking the rest back, would you?"

As Gerald was thinking about letting Master Ghost have a taste as well, Ichiro simply laughed heartily as he replied, "Feel free! Honestly, if you like them so much, I'm willing to send them to you every day!"

“There’s no need for that. Either way, I’ll be heading back first. I’ll contact you again tonight,” replied Gerald as he carried the remaining roasted chicken away with him...

Watching as Gerald left, Ichiro then stood on the spot for a while, slowly taking the time to process all that Gerald had said. Eventually, he grabbed his coat before dashing off to keep an eye on the investigation efforts...

Gerald himself soon got back with the roasted chicken in hand. Upon entering the room, Master Ghost who was watching television couldn’t help but get to his feet as he asked, “Is that roasted chicken I smell?”

“Bingo. Noda Ichiro, the head of the Japanese military’s investigation team, got them for us. Well, me. I ended up becoming a temporary investigator for them to hopefully ease my search for the Crawford cultivator,” explained Gerald.

“I see. With the investigation team on our side, not only will your odds of finding the cultivator increase, but even if the cultivator discovers you, he probably won’t dare to attack,” replied Master Ghost after thinking about it for a bit.

“Indeed. Either way, eat up. The chicken’s untouched, if you’re worried about that,” said Gerald with a nod as he placed the chicken before Master Ghost.

“Glad to hear. You know, I was just about to head out to get some food earlier, but it seems you returned in the nick of time,” replied Master Ghost as he took a good whiff of the chicken before tearing off a drumstick and stuffing it into his mouth.

“I suppose. Speaking of which, I’m heading out to the hotel tonight to have a look around. With any luck, I’ll find the Crawford cultivator and quickly get rid of him,” said Gerald as he sat before Master Ghost. “Would you like me to join you?” asked Master Ghost with a nod.

“Well, with the investigation team there, you should be safe. With that said, sure, why not?” replied Gerald after thinking about it for a bit.

Chapter 2158

With night swiftly approaching sometime later, Gerald and Master Ghost quickly began making their way to where Ichiro and the others were.

As for the members of the investigation team, after investigating throughout the day while constantly being urged by Ichiro, they managed to scan through at least half of the surrounding hotels and guesthouses. Aside from being registered, any foreigner living in those places were temporarily detained under the Japanese military, and were currently being guarded by Japanese soldiers...

Regardless, as the duo continued making their way to where Ichiro was, Gerald made sure to detail what he had encountered in the past two days to Master Ghost. After listening to all that, Master Ghost couldn't help but say, “It honestly surprises me that the investigation team would obey your orders like this...”

To Master Ghost, Gerald should've been the prime suspect of Adler's disappearance. Even so, he was simultaneously glad that the investigation team hadn't been monitoring Gerald too closely. After all, it allowed Gerald to actually join their team! What more, Ichiro sounded like he really trusted Gerald.

“Truth be told, I wasn't expecting things to go this smoothly either, though I'm not complaining. Regardless, since I'm making my move under the guise of an investigation team member, the Crawford cultivator will surely not anticipate the presence of

Another cultivator. With that in mind, once I gain sufficient knowledge about him, it'll be easy for me to take him out,” replied Gerald with a nod as he continued walking forward.

Shortly after they left the training ground, the two of them were greeted by the sight of several investigation team members and nearly endless Japanese soldiers on both sides of the street, all of them vigilantly guarding the entrances of all hotels and guesthouses in the vicinity.

Though several drivers immediately turned to leave the area upon seeing all this, there were still quite a number of spectators. These people lived around the training ground, and they were well aware that it was a rare occasion for the military to get this riled up. With that in mind, it was only natural for them to start discussing what was happening among themselves.

Either way, upon noticing Gerald's presence, Ichiro immediately dropped whatever he was doing and jogged over to the youth while shouting, "Gerald! Over here!"

Since Gerald had agreed to help him, Ichiro treated him like a friend now, which explained why he dropped the formalities when addressing Gerald.

Smiling in response, Gerald was prompted to ask, "How are things going, Mr. Noda?"

"Things are going well. We've temporarily detained all the foreigners living in the vicinity, and they're currently being guarded by soldiers. Though you told me not to, I also registered all the locals in the area, just in case. Regardless, we've found a few suspicious people throughout our investigation, and I'd like you to have a look at them," replied Ichiro with a grin, clearly expecting the case to be cracked soon.

Ichiro, for one, had a hunch that the culprit was among the people whom he deemed were suspicious. From what he could guess, the person had probably remained here since he still wanted to murder more of Yanam's soldiers.

"That's great to hear. Do lead the way," said Gerald as he turned to look at Master Ghost with a smile.

Following that, the spectators watched as the duo followed Ichiro into one of the hotels...

After walking past the soldiers guarding the hotel's entrance, Gerald was greeted by the sight of several hotel staff members gathered at the lobby. Though there were soldiers in here as well each armed with a gun, Gerald was more interested in the six people seated on the couch.

Watching as Ichiro pointed at them, Ichiro himself then said, "Those are the suspects, Gerald. Though you told me that the culprit was probably an expert at disguising himself, I went ahead and gathered people who looked similar to the individual captured on the surveillance system. I don't plan to let them go till you have a good look at them."

The second Gerald's name was mentioned, one of the men seated on the sofa who was wearing a Windbreaker slowly lifted his head. Upon seeing Gerald, he couldn't help but frown.

The man himself was none other than Amare, the Crawford cultivator...!

Chapter 2159

Based on the time limit the patriarch had given him, this was supposed to be Amare's sixth and final day in Japan. If he was still unable to locate Gerald, he would still have to leave tomorrow, thus failing to complete the mission Will had assigned him...

Just as he was feeling that all hope was lost and that he was going to fail to get on Will's good side, Gerald appeared before him! Amare couldn't have asked for anything better! Still, with so many Japanese soldiers in the vicinity, Amare knew better than to act rashly. With that in mind, he took a brief glance at Gerald just to confirm his identity before quickly averting his gaze.

The second Amare averted his gaze, Gerald immediately noticed that someone had been staring at him. Raising a slight brow, Gerald then turned to look at the individuals seated on the sofa...

While he couldn't pinpoint who had been staring at him earlier, the person in the middle stuck out a bit more from the rest. With that in mind, Gerald took a deep breath before activating a small portion of his Herculean Primordial Spirit... Only to realize that there wasn't even the slightest fluctuation of essential qi. With that, he quickly retracted his primordial spirit.

Though there weren't any essential qi fluctuations, Gerald couldn't help but feel that that person wasn't an ordinary man. Trusting his gut, Gerald made sure to take note of that man...

Seeing that Gerald was staring so intently at those people, Ichiro leaned closer to him to ask, “Do you have any methods to get the truth out from them? Since they’re all foreigners, we can’t just lock them up and interrogate them since that will cause trouble with the embassy.”

“Unfortunately, I’m not the best at interrogating, so I’ll leave that to you guys. Regardless, there are some things that I’d like to think through first,” replied Gerald, his gaze still fixed on the man with the Windbreaker.

Gerald’s intuition was practically screaming that the man in the Windbreaker was the Crawford cultivator. Even so, Gerald wasn’t planning on doing anything till he sensed essential qi from that suspicious individual...

Regardless, upon hearing that, the slightly disappointed Ichiro could only say, “... Alright...”

However, Ichiro’s mood quickly lifted after he reminded himself that Gerald wasn’t a professional investigator. He was just here to help, and it wouldn’t make sense for him to know how to properly interrogate people...

Either way, if they really wanted to get information out of these foreigners, the best course of action would probably be to get the local police officers over. If they set up a temporary interrogation room instead of bringing the foreigners to the police station, it would only become a ‘questioning session’, thus avoiding the embassy’s involvement. Besides, if they did that and the suspects became vindictive, it wouldn’t affect him or his team.

Whatever the case was, after sizing the man up for one final time, Gerald turned to look at Master Ghost before saying, “... Let’s head back for now. We shouldn’t interfere with their jobs.”

Master Ghost had already been with Gerald for such a long time that he could already tell what Gerald’s slightest actions or movements indicated. With that in mind, he simply nodded in response, prompting the duo to leave the hotel...

Ichiro immediately got to work as well, quickly contacting the local police station to get some interrogators over...

Though Gerald remained silent throughout their journey back, upon entering their room and closing the door behind them, Gerald immediately heaved a heavy sigh as he took his coat off. Following that, he lit a cigarette and took two puffs of it...

Chapter 2160

"Sensed anything back there?" asked Master Ghost who had a vague idea of what Gerald had experienced.

"Indeed... Remember that man in the Windbreaker? One of the suspects sitting on the sofa?" replied Gerald with a slight frown.

"I do. I made sure to memorize all their appearances," said Master Ghost with a nod.

"Well, I have a feeling that he's the Crawford cultivator, though I can't be certain just yet...

Regardless, I'm heading out later tonight," replied Gerald as he continued huffing on his cigarette. In no time flat, the cigarette's lifespan had ended...

"Are you planning to secretly get rid of him?" asked Master Ghost.

"Negative. Again, I specify that it was only a gut feeling. Until I'm sure, I won't lay a finger on him. Regardless, since I was able to notice him, I'm sure he noticed me as well. In fact, it was probably when Ichiro first mentioned my name when I realized I was being stared at. Either way, my plan tonight is to slightly expose my cultivation to draw that person out. Once I confirm that he's a Crawford cultivator, I'll get rid of him swiftly," explained Gerald as he placed his burnt out cigarette in an ashtray.

"I see... Speaking of which, were you able to get a grasp of how strong he was? After calculating for a bit, I feel he's weaker than you, though you shouldn't let your guard down till you're absolutely sure," replied Master Ghost in a slightly worried tone.

"Don't worry about it. I don't really treat anyone from the Crawford family seriously aside from Will who wants to compete with me so much just to secure his position as 'heir of the Crawfords'. Quite honestly, I'd like to meet him just to see how well my grandpa's insight is," scoffed Gerald before shaking his head with a smile.

"Well... Since you've said that, I won't ask any further than that... Still, do be careful. After all, in the end, the Crawfords are still a cultivating family. After suffering consecutive losses in your hands, I'm just worried that they sent a stronger cultivator after your head this time..." muttered Master Ghost. While it was true that Gerald was inhumanly strong, the Crawfords still had hundreds of years' worth of experience as cultivators. With that in mind, nobody truly knew how strong that family was...

Hearing that, Gerald simply chuckled before patting Master Ghost's shoulder as he said, "If you're so worried, why don't you do some calculations to see how dangerous this encounter will be."

"That's unnecessary," replied Master Ghost as he waved his hand...

Following that, Gerald took a cold shower. Once he was done, he took the photographs of his parents, elder sister, and Mila out... By the time he finally peeled his gaze from the pictures, the sky was already darkening...

Upon hearing a few messy footsteps walking past his window, he carefully returned the photographs into his pocket before lighting a cigarette and heading toward the window to look downstairs... Only to see Ichiro and the rest of the investigation team walking away.

From how dejected they looked, Gerald figured that they hadn't been able to gather anything. Then again, if the Crawford cultivator truly was the one responsible for that death, then it was pretty much impossible for regular people like them to gain any new hints.

Whatever the case was, once they were out of sight, Gerald tossed his cigarette away before slipping his coat on...

Soon enough, he was walking past the training ground's large entrance... and the second he left the area, Gerald immediately activated his Herculean Primordial Spirit, making sure to expel some essential qi at the same time...

Barely even seconds later, Amare who had just been cleared of his suspicion was alerted to the sudden fluctuation of essential qi.

With that, he opened his room window... and in no time at all, his figure vanished from the spot.

He only had a day left before he had to leave Japan... He needed to act quickly or Daryl would surely punish him for returning late...

Chapter 2161

Just thinking about the hundreds of poisonous snakes in his family's infamous pit sent shivers down his spine.

...

Shaking his head, Amare knew that he had to stay focused. Tonight was his best shot at killing Gerald. If he failed, there was a high chance that he wasn't going to be able to hunt Gerald down in time tomorrow. What more, even if he did miraculously find Gerald again then, he wouldn't be able to do anything in broad daylight unless he wanted to attract unnecessary attention to himself.

Whatever the case was, after silently touching down on the ground after leaping from the sixth floor a cold smile formed on Amare's face as he growled, "To think that you'd actually release your essential qi... Don't you know you're being hunted down?"

With that said, Amare began bolting toward the direction where he had sensed the essential qi. With how fast he was, he was barely even visible, and anyone he passed would've only been able to sense a cold breeze passing by...

Gerald himself was already standing in an open area while puffing a cigarette, the cigarette's smoke looking particularly conspicuous in the darkening sky...

The youth had learned about this place from Ichiro from one of their casual conversations. Apparently, this area had been bought by the war department to build a new training ground. However, due to some issues, the project had been suspended till this very day. Regardless, since this piece of land was owned by the war department, nobody dared to come to this place. Those from the war department didn't have any reason to come all the way out here just to train either, which made this the perfect place to deal with the Crawford cultivator.

Either way, it wasn't long after before Gerald felt someone closing in at rapid speeds, prompting him to mutter, "Well aren't you a fast one..."

Though it was already pretty dark, with the help of the Herculean Primordial Spirit, Gerald could now see clearly in the dark. In fact, being a cultivator, he could even see the blood circulation and essential qi running through people. With that said, Gerald soon saw Amare appear not too far away from him...

"Gerald, right?" asked Amare as he stared at the youth. Since Gerald had already released his essential qi, Amare saw no reason to hide his anymore either.

Watching as Amare released his own essential qi, Gerald simply crossed his arms before calmly replying, "That, I am."

"You're just an abandoned descendant of the Crawford family, you know? If you had just lived in the secular world properly, none of us would've even bothered about you. With that said, to think that you would suddenly appear and attempt to snatch Master Will's rightful position as the heir of our family! Due to your actions, can you really blame us for hunting you down?" scoffed Amare as he tossed his

jacket off, exposing his muscular body...

Not only was he strong in cultivation, but he also had one of the best physiques within his family. With that said, a cultivator of the same level wouldn't be his match at all, and this was proven in the many competitions within his clan that he had won over the years. Hell, it was because of his strength that Daryl had appointed him for this errand.

Regardless, upon hearing what Amare had to say, Gerald was momentarily surprised, though he quickly smiled before replying, "You think I'm competing against Will for that position...? Putting that aside, from what you've said, I'm assuming you're here under Will's orders. After all, I'm pretty sure Daryl didn't allow any of you to harm me. If he finds out, I wonder if you'll be subjected to serious consequences...?"

"That... That has nothing to do with you!" growled Amare as he clenched his fists tightly. Truth be told, he didn't even dare to imagine the consequence once the patriarch found out about all this...

"Well, whatever the case is, come at me. Show me how strong you Crawford cultivators can get. Then again, after beating up two of Will's men back then, I have a feeling that you're going to be a let down as well," scoffed Gerald who barely felt any pressure despite being in the presence of one of the Crawford family's top cultivators...

Chapter 2162

"Shut it!" scowled Amare who was itching to finish Gerald off. Amare wasn't a person who liked small talk, and since Gerald was his target, there was even less reason for him to say anything. With that, Amare suddenly disappeared...!

Immediately sensing a surge of essential qi around him, it quickly became obvious to Gerald that this person was much stronger than the men Will had previously sent after him. As he was thinking about this, Amare reappeared before Gerald, his fist already aimed at his chest!

Feeling a gale of cold wind coming his way as Amare launched his punch toward Gerald, Gerald simply took a few steps back to dodge the attack. Naturally, Gerald wasn't afraid of fighting back. He only

avoided the attack since he wanted to better grasp how strong Amare truly was.

Realizing that Gerald had managed to dodge his attack, Amare's eyes turned even redder than before as he declared, "You're pretty fast!"

Following that, he immediately restabilized himself before lunging toward Gerald again!

Instead of dodging, however, Gerald simply used his arm to deflect Amare's attack, sending Amare stumbling to the side! Unable to balance himself in time, the immense force of Gerald's deflection caused Amare to crash into a pile of rocks...! Howling as his head collided against some rocks, Amare soon felt blood trickling down his now throbbing forehead...

Fumbling to his feet, Amare glared at Gerald as blood flowed down his chin and dripped all over his clothes...

Pain was nothing to him. After all, though the injury would've been terrible for regular people, he could just rapidly patch himself up with his essential qi.

Even so, that didn't save him the humiliation of stumbling so stupidly before Gerald... He just couldn't stand it...! It didn't help that Amare knew that Gerald hadn't even used much force to deal this much damage to him...! This scene would've been much less humiliating if he simply wasn't strong enough or got injured due to his carelessness...!

Amare had never felt this stifled in his many years within the Crawford family...!

As Amare was thinking about all this, Gerald couldn't help but shake his head with a smile before saying, "Seems that you're not that good in martial arts after all. Just so you know, I only used the most basic of techniques in Tai Chi earlier. Is that all it takes to defeat you?"

And here Gerald thought that this person would be an expert. As it turned out, he wasn't really much

stronger than Will's previous men.

"Don't get too cocky...! I was just careless earlier!" growled Amare who was glad that nobody else was around to witness his blunder. After all, if his family found out about this, he would surely lose face...!

Though Gerald wanted to reply, he quickly shut his mouth again. There was... a red dot on Amare's shoulder and seconds later, it disappeared.

Knowing that the red dot had been moving in his direction, Gerald immediately activated his essential qi to bolt to the side...!

Chapter 2163

A split second later, a muffled gunshot could be heard, followed by the sound of something whizzing across the air at lightspeed...! Barely a second later, a bullet flew past the spot Gerald had initially been standing, hitting a rock and causing it to explode into a million pieces...!

Had Gerald not reacted in time earlier, the bullet would've surely pierced through his heart! Even if he had his essential qi to protect him, Gerald knew that in the end, the essential qi would only leak out uncontrollably, causing his body to break down which would disallow him to recover...!

Wiping the blood off his chin with his sleeve, Amare couldn't help but sneer, "Seems that you've offended quite a lot of people! "

With the unknown assailant's help, Amare now knew that he would definitely be able to kill Gerald...!

"Mind your own business," replied Gerald as he took a deep breath... before releasing an immensely murderous aura.

Gerald, for one, knew that if this unknown sniper and the Crawford cultivator worked together, there

was a chance that he wouldn't make it out alive tonight. After all, though his Herculean Primordial Spirit was strong, it didn't make him invincible. What more, he still wasn't able to use the full power of his spirit...!

Regardless, that earlier shot was naturally from Vulture. After Kai had told him that Gerald was in the training ground, Vulture had constantly been keeping an eye on Gerald, patiently waiting for an opportunity to strike.

Though he could've killed Gerald earlier during the day, he didn't want to create a chaotic scene since Gerald was with the investigation team, which explained why he waited till now to act. Though it was much darker now, Amare's constant shouting made it easy for Vulture to tell which figure belonged to Gerald. Still, to think that Gerald could dodge his attack...!

While he had previously scoffed at the idea that Gerald was as strong as Kai had said, Vulture was now starting to believe Kai's words. After all, being able to dodge such a precise attack in such a short amount of time was something no ordinary person could hope to do.

Whatever the case was, Vulture then tossed his sniper rifle away before expertly leaping off the fourth floor! Making sure he didn't fall too quickly by stepping on the sides of the building, Vulture soon landed on the ground and began walking toward the duo...

Raising a slight brow, Gerald was prompted to ask, "... And you are?"

"Just know that I'm here to take your life. No further questions," scoffed Vulture.

Watching as the man donning a trench coat, cap, and even a black mask swiftly approached, Gerald stared right into Vulture's grim eyes before rolling up his sleeves and replying, "I see. Then let's settle this together."

Ever since he got rid of the three large clans in Yanam, he hadn't had a proper battle like this.

Either way, after healing the wound on his forehead, Amare looked at Vulture before shouting, "Let's team up to take him down, brother!"

Vulture, however, didn't reply. Instead, he simply pulled out a shiny bayonet from his back before rushing toward Gerald! While he wasn't as quick as Amare was, he was still pretty fast. After all, he was already fighting against Gerald in the blink of an eye.

Seeing that, Amare wasted no time and immediately mobilized his essential qi before rushing forward as well! Amare, for one, knew that he needed Vulture's help to finish Gerald off, even though he had no idea who Vulture was or what conflicts he had with Gerald...

Chapter 2164

Regardless, Vulture and Amare wasted no time launching an onslaught of attacks on Gerald from both sides!

Though Vulture wasn't as strong as Amare, his outstanding fighting skills made up for that. As for Amare, though he lacked Vulture's arsenal of skills, all his attacks were infused with essential qi. With that in mind, Gerald was well aware of how deadly this duo was. One slip on his side and he would definitely suffer heavy injuries...

Understanding that, Gerald remained on the defensive for three minutes straight... then five... and ten...

Despite being in a two on one battle, Gerald was nowhere close to being at a disadvantage as he evaded their attacks. In fact, he was now capable of sneaking in kicks and punches! Due to those attacks, Gerald eventually managed to force Vulture to start backing away from him.

In the end, unlike Gerald and Amare, Vulture didn't have the support of essential qi. In other words, he had been relying on his own strength throughout this fight, and he was starting to slow down. Vulture was well aware that this continued on, he would eventually find it hard to even handle Gerald's single-handed attacks.

Just as Vulture was thinking about this, Gerald noticed an exposed weak spot when Vulture was retracting his arm. Not wanting to miss the chance to strike, Gerald immediately launched a punch at Vulture's chest!

Eyes instantly widening as his face paled, Vulture quickly took a few steps back, holding onto his chest and panting the entire time. Had Vulture been an ordinary man, that punch could've either knocked him out or even killed him...! However, Vulture's physique was far from ordinary, so he was still able to stand. Even so, that didn't mean that he hadn't suffered substantial damage.

From how painful his chest felt whenever he breathed, Vulture figured that several bones in his ribcage had been broken, resulting in the broken bones piercing his organs...! Knowing how badly injured he was, beads of sweat rolled down Vulture's forehead as he considered his options while watching Amare continue fighting Gerald. In the end, Vulture knew that continuing to move any further would surely result in his death. With that, Vulture gritted his teeth before slowly inching toward a pile of bricks where he then sat...

After gently feeling around his chest, Vulture slammed his fist onto the ground while growling, "...Four."

Every time his face went pale in agony, Vulture had counted that as a broken rib. With his forehead now drenched in sweat, he knew how terrible his current condition was. Vulture's best course of action now was to lie still. Moving any further would only cause his injuries to worsen to the point where death was extremely possible...

"Gerald Crawford..." grumbled Vulture as he glared at the youth while regretting his arrogance. If only he had heeded Kai's warnings and taken Gerald more seriously, Vulture would've surely been more careful with his moves. Thinking back, he should've immediately retreated after his first shot failed to hit its mark. Had he done that, he wouldn't have ended up in such a pitiful state...

Either way, with Vulture now out of combat, the winner of the fight was clear.

Though Gerald's attacks slowly became more frequent, Amare like Vulture lacked Gerald's stamina, and soon began blocking more than he attacked. While Amare could still sneak in a few counterattacks, the longer the battle went on, the more evident it became that this was going to be Gerald's victory.

With that said, soon enough, Gerald managed to strike Amare's left arm hard enough to dislodge it! Seeing that Amare was temporarily handicapped, Gerald took the chance to grab the man by the neck!

With how forceful Gerald was choking him, Amare knew for a fact that it would only require a bit more force for his neck to snap...!

Smiling as he continued squeezing Amare's neck, Gerald then said, "Since we have the same surname, I may consider sparing your life if you share interesting information with me..."

Chapter 2165

"I have nothing to say! I admit defeat! You're stronger than me, what else do you want?!" growled Amare, knowing that his life was now in Gerald's hands.

"How dauntless," retorted Gerald with a laugh before activating the power of his Herculean Primordial Spirit and poking a few spots on Amare's body... Gerald was now temporarily paralyzing Amare, and once he was done, he tossed the defeated man onto the ground...

Though Amare immediately attempted to get to his feet, he quickly realized that he couldn't move an inch...!

Understanding that he wasn't going anywhere anytime soon, Amare could only watch as Gerald walked toward Vulture...

After lighting a cigarette, Gerald squatted in front of the injured man, shaking his box of cigarettes while asking, "Want one?"

Glaring at Gerald, Vulture who was still clutching onto his chest growled, "What do you want?"

Honestly, in his body's current state, even saying that one sentence caused him enough pain for any regular person to pass out...

"I just want to know who hired you, that's all. Not going to lie, you're pretty strong, so I'm sure you're quite a famous assassin. With that said, I can only imagine the Kanagawas hiring you. Am I wrong?" asked Gerald as he narrowed his eyes. Aside from Kai, who else would hire such a high ranking assassin to finish him off?

Gritting his teeth in response, Vulture simply sneered, "I know nothing!"

Being in the top ten in the assassin list meant that he had to fully adhere to the professional ethics of assassins which meant that he couldn't expose any of his employer's information, even if he had to die.

This rule had been rooted in his mind ever since he joined this field of work, and he had never abandoned it.

Upon hearing that, Gerald simply shook his head before laughing as he turned to look at Amare before looking back at Vulture and scoffing, "Another dauntless person..."

The fact that neither of them was cooperating was honestly starting to annoy him... With that, Gerald stopped laughing before stepping on Vulture's chest as he growled, "Are you really sure you don't know anything?"

With the bones now piercing straight into his organs, Vulture's eyes widened as he began coughing mouthfuls of blood... By this point, even breathing was getting difficult..!

"Don't make me repeat the question," said Gerald as he narrowed his eyes.

Knowing full well that he'd die if he said anything, Vulture simply retorted, "Just kill me already! I'll never say it...!"

“Since you suggested it, be my guest,” replied Gerald as his eyes went stern. He already knew that Kai had sent him, so there was no reason for him to keep this man alive. With that, the sickening crack of bones could be heard as Gerald’s foot completely crushed Vulture’s ribcage...!

Drowning in his own blood, Vulture could only manage a gurgle before the life in his eyes vanished... Though his body was now limp and lifeless, Vulture’s eyes retained their furious glare. It almost seemed as though Vulture had still been racking his brains on how to murder Gerald, seconds before his death...

“Now that he’s taken care of, it’s time I returned to you,” said Gerald as he turned to look at Amare, not even bothering to look at Vulture’s corpse. After all, he just needed to use his essential qi to completely evaporate the body, leaving zero traces of Vulture behind...

Chapter 2166

After witnessing Vulture’s horrible death, Amare no longer attempted to hide his utter horror as he yelled, “I... Impossible...! None of this should be possible...!”

He was the top cultivator of the Crawford family...!

How on earth had Gerald defeated him so miserably...?!

Honestly, he wouldn’t be having such a hard time grasping this situation if Gerald had grown up with him in the family! After all, everyone had different talents!

However, Amare knew for a fact that Gerald had been an abandoned descendant who had been living in the secular world this entire time! Even if there were cultivators out here, none of them should’ve been strong enough to be able to teach Gerald such powerful skills! Skills that disallowed Amare, the cream of the crop in his family, to not even land a single hit on the boy...!

“Impossible? What is it?” asked Gerald as he stared at the paralyzed man.

“Y—your inhuman strength...! You shouldn’t be this strong! You can’t be!” retorted Amare as he continued glaring at Gerald.

“It’s a long story that I’d rather not talk about. Regardless, tell me everything you know about the Crawford family and I may just spare you. After all, we still share the same surname. If I let you off alive, however, know that I’ll have to scrap your cultivation as well. Deal?” replied Gerald with a laugh.

“...That...” muttered Amare as he seriously began considering his options...

In the end, killing Gerald wasn’t even a mission from the patriarch. It was just Will’s secret order. With that in mind, while the patriarch would eventually learn about all this thus making punishment unavoidable for Amare, if he shared everything Gerald wished to know, at the very least, he would be spared to live another day. What more, since this was still Will’s order, perhaps the patriarch would sentence Amare to a lighter punishment...

Looking at how seriously Amare was considering all this, Gerald fished his phone out to check the time. It was already one in the morning, and he knew that soldiers would begin patrolling the area in another two hours. Knowing that he had to clear the scene up before they arrived, Gerald was prompted to say, “You have ten minutes to consider your options. Nothing more.”

Ten minutes passed quickly enough, and since Amare hadn’t said a word, Gerald knew what this meant.

Though he couldn’t get any information out of Amare, Gerald already had news about the Seadom tribe. With that in mind, he knew that uncovering the secrets of Yeaning Island was simply a matter of time...

Regardless, Gerald then narrowed his eyes as his hand slowly began moving toward Amare’s neck...

Since Amare was completely paralyzed, all he could do was widen his eyes as Gerald’s hand came dangerously close to his neck...! The fear of death was finally sinking in on him...!

Just moments before Gerald's hand was against his neck, Amare quickly gulped before crying out in a trembling voice, "P-please...! Wait...!"

"Finally willing to talk?" replied Gerald as he slowly withdrew his hand...

Chapter 2167

"J-just ask me anything you wish to know! I'll share anything that I can answer...!" said Amare as he breathed a sigh of relief when he saw Gerald's hand retracting.

Sitting right in front of him, Gerald simply replied in a hushed tone, "First off, was it Will who told you to assassinate me?"

"I-it was... You see, the patriarch sent me off to do some errands for him, but just before I left, Will called me over to his room to give me the assassination order. Since he's the patriarch's successor, I couldn't just refuse..."

Smiling subtly in response, Gerald then said, "I see. Come to think of it, aren't you worried that Daryl will find out about this?"

Gerald, for one, had figured that only Will wanted him dead. As far as he knew, Daryl was only interested in testing his abilities.

"W-well... as long as I return in time, the patriarch shouldn't find out... I was already planning to leave this afternoon, you know? But then you suddenly showed up...! What more, just as I was wondering how to make a move on you earlier, you took the initiative to bait me out here with your essential qi! I couldn't say no to that!" replied Amare with a sigh.

Had he known that things would end this way, he would've never agreed to Will's request...

Nodding in response, Gerald thought for a bit before asking, "... And are you the one who killed that special forces agent from Yanam?"

"... That... was me, yes..." replied Amare as he reluctantly nodded.

"I see... Putting that aside, I have one final question. As long as you give me an honest answer, I'll spare your life and let you leave unharmed. How do I get to Yearning Island?" asked Gerald as he narrowed his eyes at Amare.

Now that all his other questions had been answered, Gerald made sure to save the best for last. While it was true that he had managed to find Fujiko thus potentially allowing him to contact the Seadom tribe, if he managed to get the information straight from Amare, then he'd be able to start making plans much earlier.

"... Trust me when I say... I don't know either..." muttered Amare.

"... What? Aren't you a top cultivator of the Crawford family? How could you not know about this?" replied Gerald with a slight frown. This was the exact same reply he had gotten from Will's previous men!

"I swear! I really don't know! Aside from the patriarch and a few core clansmen, the rest of us are left in the dark about all this...!" explained Amare.

"Then how did you leave the island? And how are you going to return?" asked Gerald as he raised a brow.

"Leaving the island is easy... All we need to do is to take a boat and sail for about ten kilometers before we enter the ocean... However, if we wish to go back, we'll need to inform the family in advance... Following that, either the patriarch or a senior member will guide us back..." explained Amare.

“... I’ll ask one final time. Do you truly not know the way back to the island?” asked Gerald as he lit a cigarette and began puffing it.

“My answer remains the same... While Yearning Island may seem like a regular island, I’ve never been able to see it on my way back from sea... The only way I can get to the island is if I send a message to the family and sail for a little while more... Shortly after, I’ll be able to see the vague outlines of the island, and that’s howl usually get back..” replied Amare as he shook his head.

Truth be told, Amare was just as curious about the island as Gerald was. In fact, he had even tried asking the other family members about this in the past, though he would end up getting harshly reprimanded every time he did so. Due to that, he eventually stopped asking...

Regardless, after a brief silence, Gerald nodded before saying, “... I believe you.”

Though he didn’t believe Will’s men before this, Amare’s case was different. After all, Amare was currently in a life or death situation. Because of that, Gerald knew he wouldn’t lie. Besides, Amare’s answer was way too similar to what Will’s men had said for it to be a mere coincidence.

However, even if Amare and Will’s men had simply been trained to give the exact same answer if they were caught, Gerald didn’t really mind. After all, he knew that he was going to learn the secrets of Yearning Island from the Seadom tribe sooner or later...

Chapter 2168

“Is... there anything else you’d like to know? I’ll answer honestly!” replied Amare who was now feeling that Gerald wasn’t the person he had previously assumed to be.

The truth was, he had initially thought that Gerald was an evil and ruthless person who would do anything to breach into the Crawford family and exploit them once he became the patriarch. After their brief interaction, however, he now felt that Gerald was actually a rather gentle soul, contrary to his initial belief.

While it was true that he still killed the assassin from before, Gerald had every right to do so since he was ambush-attacked by him... Regardless, Gerald had also made it a point that he was going to spare his life just because they shared the same surname. It was honestly making Amare feel slightly touched...

Amare's train of thought was cut short when Gerald calmly replied, "That's all I needed to know."

"I see... Well, as promised, you can scrap my cultivation now and I'll head home immediately..." said Amare in an equally calm tone despite knowing full well what would happen once his cultivation was taken away from him.

Essentially, he'd turn into an ordinary person, and Amare was pretty sure that those he had previously offended would take the chance to treat him harshly...

Even so, having to experience that was worth it as long as he could remain alive. After all, all wasn't lost. He simply had to start from scratch again. If he died now, however, everything would truly end.

Hearing that, Gerald simply poked twice on the chakras on Amare's chest before replying in an indifferent tone, "Just leave."

"... Huh?" asked Amare as he slowly regained control over his body. Hopping to his feet, Amare couldn't help but feel exceedingly confused at the moment. After all, Gerald scraping his cultivation in exchange for his life was already extremely merciful of the youth. So why was he letting him leave just like that? Had Gerald forgotten that he had attempted to assassinate him earlier?

"Unless you're secretly a masochist, I suggest you leave while you can," said Gerald with a chuckle.

"... I... Of course, I'm not..." muttered Amare who couldn't feel any murderous intent from Gerald as he slowly walked toward the youth.

Taking in a deep breath, Amare then asked, "... I just don't get it. That man and I were tasked to

assassinate you, you know? With that said, since you killed him, why aren't you ending my life as well?"

Puffing on his cigarette, Gerald eventually replied, "... It's simple, really. It's because you're a Crawford and he isn't. While I didn't grow up with the rest of the cultivating Crawfords, I'm still Daryl's grandson. As a child, I made quite a few fond memories with him, you know? While I still have no idea why he abducted my family which is the reason why I'm trying so hard to meet him on Yearning Island, you see that doesn't change the fact that you're still a Crawford. Just so you know, given the choice, I'd very much prefer saving people rather than killing them..."

"... I..." muttered Amare as his voice slowly trailed off.

After all, he had never stopped to wonder why Gerald was trying so hard to get to Yearning Island. Now, he was finally aware that the patriarch had captured his family... Still, since the patriarch was Gerald's grandfather, that essentially meant that he had abducted his own son and daughter-in-law!

Whatever the case was, Gerald then handed Amare a cigarette before asking, "Have you seen them?"

"... Only once, but even that was quite a while ago..." replied Amare as he took the cigarette and lit it with Gerald's lighter.

Hearing that, Gerald momentarily trembled as his eyes grew slightly watery. Shaking his head, Gerald then asked, "... How were they doing back then?"

After thinking for a moment, Amare eventually replied, "... Well, they were being treated rather well, honestly. The patriarch emphasized that none of them could be mistreated, so though they're being kept in the backyard, they should still be well fed and clothed... At the very least, they still were back then... Regardless, apart from the patriarch and his cronies, nobody else is allowed to enter..."

"... I see. Is Will allowed to enter?" asked Gerald as his expression turned gloomy...

Chapter 2169

“No, actually... While it’s true that Will is the patriarch’s adopted child and that he has a high status within the family, the patriarch has honestly always been on guard around him... In fact, the patriarch has made sure to disallow Will from entering

Several important places on the island, including the backyard where the patriarch lives. I, for one, have never seen Will enter that place...” muttered Amare with a slight frown.

“... I see. Well, what matters is that they’re still safe... I’m at least relieved to hear that...” said Gerald as he let out a sigh, the weight of his immense worry finally lifted.

A brief moment later, Gerald turned to look at Amare before saying, “... Either way, you can leave now. Also, if you wish to remain alive, remember not to say a thing about what happened here tonight. Understand?”

“Got it. If Will asks me about this, I’ll just tell him that I failed to locate you in Japan,” replied Amare with a nod.

“I trust you, now leave,” said Gerald as he gestured for Amare to go.

Bowing toward Gerald, it was clear that he was feeling thankful toward the youth. At that moment, he made up his mind that if Gerald ever set foot on Yearning Island one day, he would adamantly refuse to fight against him, even though the family would punish him for it.

Regardless, after tossing away his cigarette butt, Amare quickly disappeared into the darkness. Gerald himself simply continued smoking his own cigarette as a cold breeze caressed his cheek...

Shortly after, the cigarette burned out, and Gerald shook his head before starting to walk toward Vulture’s corpse...

Searching the dead man's body, Gerald couldn't help but mutter, "So you Kanagawas still aren't willing to give up, huh? Then there's no need for your family to remain in Japan...!"

Whatever the case was, aside from a pack of cigarettes and a few bullets, Gerald couldn't find any form of identification on Vulture. Since these didn't interest Gerald, the youth simply sighed as he placed a hand on the corpse's body...

Mobilizing his Herculean Primordial Spirit, he then began releasing a blazing heat from his palm... and in just a few seconds, Vulture's body completely evaporated. Since Gerald had used his essential qi to do the deed, not even the corpse's smell remained. Just like Adler, Vulture would simply mysteriously vanish from the face of the planet... Either way, now that that was taken care of, Gerald quickly turned around to leave.

...

Soon after, he arrived at his guest room where Master Ghost and Aiden could be seen waiting patiently on the sofa.

Upon seeing Gerald, Aiden immediately hopped to his feet before checking around Gerald's body while asking, "Brother Gerald! You aren't injured, are you?"

"Of course, not. Shouldn't you be well aware of my strength by now?" replied Gerald with a laugh as he closed the door behind him.

"Has everything been settled?" asked Master Ghost as he stepped forward as well.

"In a way. As it turned out, the Yanam soldier really was murdered by the Crawford cultivator. I fought him earlier, and though he definitely wasn't weak, he wasn't as strong as I had initially anticipated either. With that said, I just let him off the hook," replied Gerald as he took his jacket off before walking to the water dispenser to get himself a drink.

“You... let him go...? Why?” asked Master Ghost and Aiden, feeling rightfully puzzled.

“I just don’t want to kill other Crawfords if I can help it. After all, the one who abducted my parents was Daryl, not them. Besides, since I spared his life, he now owes me a favor,” replied Gerald as he put his paper cup down...

Chapter 2170

“So... You only let him off to get his help once you finally get on the island...?” asked Master Ghost.

“Thinking back, it was still mostly the fact that I didn’t want to kill another Crawford,” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

With how important saving his parents was to him, Gerald wasn’t about to place his trust on any of the cultivating Crawford’s ‘help’.

“...If that’s the case, then didn’t you just free a tiger back into the mountains...?” asked Master Ghost who was starting to get slightly worried.

Though he hadn’t told Gerald about this, Master Ghost had secretly made a fortune telling for Gerald some time back, and he found out that Gerald would encounter something dangerous potentially even life threatening once he arrived at the island...

“Again, his strength was pretty average, so I don’t really see him as a threat. If he even dares to come after me again, I’ll just kill him,” replied Gerald rather nonchalantly as he waved his hand.

Seeing how confident Gerald was, Master Ghost simply said, “...Well, I’ll trust your judgment since you sound so sure about this...”

“I’m glad. Speaking of which, while fighting that cultivator, I came across another assassin who tried to

kill me in the process. With how strong he was, I feel that he could've been a ranked assassin on the assassin list. Call it a hunch, but I have a feeling that only Kai would think of something like this," replied Gerald.

"A high-ranking assassin? Where's his body, brother Gerald? I've investigated over fifty assassins on the assassin list, so I can recognize most of them pretty well!" exclaimed Aiden who suddenly appeared much more excited than before.

Smiling helplessly, Gerald simply replied, "I'm afraid there's no body to speak of..."

"...Huh? Did he manage to escape...?" asked Aiden, feeling slightly disappointed. Still, if they managed to catch that assassin later on, Aiden would surely be able to recognize the assailant. Following that, there was a chance that they'd be able to find out who hired the assassin in the first place!

"Not at all. What I'm saying is that I evaporated his corpse!" explained Gerald.

Aiden had already seen what Gerald was capable of, so he hardly had any trouble accepting this. With that in mind, Aiden simply sighed before replying in a slightly disappointed tone, "I see... What a shame... It would've been nice to leave him alive..."

"Well, there's no point talking about him anymore. How about things on your end? Is the competition over yet?" asked Gerald.

"It is, though it'll still be a few days till we get the results. While I wasn't as good as Miss Fujiko, I don't think I scored too badly. In fact, I have a feeling that I should be close to the top!" explained Aiden as he thought about his performance in the previous days.

"That's good to hear. Well, since there's nothing to be done in the meantime, let's contact Fujiko first to discuss the matter about us staying with her family. I'm saying it now that you two have to be extra careful from now on. After all, we're now simultaneously dealing with an extremely prestigious family and a family of assassins. While I wouldn't normally see the

Kanagawas as a threat, I still believe that Kai was the one who hired that assassin I killed earlier. With that said, please be alert at all times,” said Gerald as he narrowed his eyes.

The Kanagawas had pissed him off enough. Everyone from that family needed to die...!

“Sure thing! The higher ups have already told me that I’ll be given a month’s worth of rest after the competition. With that said, hopefully things can be settled before then,” replied Aiden who really wanted to help Gerald save his parents. Even so, Aiden was still Weston’s ‘King of Soldiers’. In other words, if he suddenly received orders to return, Aiden wasn’t about to disobey his orders...

Regardless, Gerald then replied, “Things should be settled Within the month.”

“Should we start making our move tomorrow, then?” asked Master Ghost.

“Indeed. We’ll meet up with Fujiko then before heading to the Futaba manor together. We’ll start discussing our next moves once we’re there,” said Gerald with a nod.

Nodding as well, Aiden then placed his hand on his stomach before muttering, “Um... Brother Gerald...? Are you hungry? I can head out to get some food for you...”

Chapter 2171

“Go on ahead,” replied Gerald.

Fast forward to half an hour later, Aiden returned with some food he got from the nearby convenience store. Following that, the trio sat around the table and ate together. Honestly, after eating so much Japanese food, they had started seeing the appeal in its taste. Of course, there was still a pretty big gap between the food here and good old Westoner food...

Regardless, once they finished their meals, the trio returned to their rooms to rest...

Once morning came, Gerald and Master Ghost headed to the training ground's entrance to wait while Aiden ran off to look for Fujiko. Shortly after, however, the duo came across Ichiro and his secretary instead.

Realizing that Gerald was all packed up to leave, Ichiro told his secretary to wait at the side as he quickly walked toward Gerald before saying, "Oh? Leaving already, brother Gerald?"

"Indeed. My friend's done with his competition, so I may as well just leave with him," explained Gerald with a nod.

"I see... It's a shame that you have to leave before the case gets solved... Regardless, I should mention that while we were investigating earlier this morning, a person apparently left one of the hotels last night! Our surveillance cameras followed him till the point he entered a barren area that was too far for the final camera to capture... In other words, the suspicious

Individual should be long gone now..." muttered Ichiro in a slightly disappointed tone.

"The final surveillance camera? I'm assuming you don't have any cameras set up in the barren area, then?" asked Gerald despite knowing the answer to his question.

"Well, it wouldn't make sense to place surveillance cameras in a barren area... Either way, that man probably realized this and used it to his advantage to escape... Still, we do have his picture and some footage of him, so if we manage to issue a tracking warrant, we may be able to track him down!" explained Ichiro who didn't mind sharing all this with Gerald. After all, it

Was Gerald's pointers that allowed them to pinpoint the escaping man in the first place.

Nodding in response, Gerald then replied, "I see. All the best in capturing him!"

Honestly, Gerald was finding the situation to be quite funny. After all, with how quick Amare was, Gerald was pretty sure that he could've easily evaded the investigation team and left Japan's borders unnoticed. Even if Amare slipped up and the investigation team found him, they wouldn't have been able to harm him at all...

Whatever the case was, Ichiro then saluted as he declared, "Thank you, brother Gerald!"

Shortly after, Aiden and Fujiko arrived, and the four got into a car before leaving the training ground for good...

Throughout their journey to the Futaba manor, Gerald kept one hand on the steering wheel while his arm rested against the car's window. After a brief silence in the car, Gerald eventually said in a casual tone, "You know, an assassin tried to kill me last night. With how capable he was, I have a feeling that he's from the international assassin list. Due to how pricey it can get to hire such men, I'm assuming he was hired by Kai."

Naturally, that statement was for Fujiko since Aiden and Master Ghost already knew about this. Regardless, upon hearing that, Fujiko immediately tensed up before scanning Gerald from head to toe as she asked, "Are you hurt?!"

"Don't worry, I'm fine. In fact, I got rid of the assassin as well," replied Gerald as he shook his head.

Though she was relieved to hear that, Fujiko soon smacked the dashboard before angrily yelling, "The Kanagawas truly have gone too far this time...! First they hired the Hanyus... Now international assassins?!"

"Indeed... How do you plan on settling this?" asked Gerald. In the end, this had to do with the Futabas as well, so it was best to make things as clear as possible...

“... We should discuss this with my father. With how big the issue’s gotten to the point where Kai’s started hiring international assassins, I’d rather not make the final call on my own...” muttered Fujiko as she shook her head, prompting Gerald to remain silent...

It was around noon when the four of them arrived at the Futaba manor. Thankfully, Gerald didn’t sense any hiding individuals nearby anymore.

Either way, upon stepping out of the car, the group was greeted by the sight of Takuya’s secretary who had been waiting outside for them this entire time. Upon seeing them, the secretary quickly held onto the things Fujiko was carrying before saying, “Miss Fujiko! Mr. Crawford! Do come in! The master’s been waiting for you!”

Simply nodding in response, the group then entered the manor... and soon enough, they came across Takuya who had been waiting for them in the parlor.

Getting to his feet the moment he saw them, Takuya took a brief glance at Aiden and Master Ghost before turning to look at Gerald and exclaiming, “You’re back! I’ve already told my servants to prepare a grand meals so hurry on in! As for the two brothers at the back, just make yourselves at home and join us!”

Nodding in response, the group of five then entered the dining room and sat around the table. Once seated, Fujiko was prompted to say, “Um... There’s something I need to tell you, father...”

“Oh? What is it?” asked Takuya as he turned to look at his daughter.

Before Fujiko could say anything else, Gerald quickly interrupted, “It’s nothing major. It can certainly wait till lunch is over!”

Gerald, for one, knew that if Fujiko told Takuya all this before lunch, Takuya would probably lose his appetite. Telling him a bit later wouldn’t make much of a difference anyway.

Suddenly seeing things from Gerald's perspective, Fujiko quickly added, "... Yeah, it can definitely wait!"

"... I see! Well, then after lunch it is! Speaking of which, I hired a new chef two days ago, and he's a Westoner! With that said, do tell me whether the food is to your liking later!" replied Takuya who was much too glad to see Gerald home to be bothered by his daughter's hesitance.

"Definitely!" declared Gerald with a hearty laugh. With that, the group of five chatted happily among themselves for the next half hour till food began being served.

Seeing that they were going to eat soon, Takuya quickly cleared his throat before saying, "Just to make things clear, Gerald's friends are my friends, so you two won't have many rules restricting you within the manor. With that said, while I'd love to let you two stay here for a few days and potentially even get someone to guide you around for a tour, the manor's not exactly the safest place for you to stay in now..."

Takuya, for one, was well aware that he couldn't afford to bear the responsibility of those two's injuries if he allowed them to stay here and something happened to them...

Clearing his own throat, Gerald then replied, "...Well, you see, I was planning on letting them stay here for the time being. I'll have to trouble you to prepare two guest rooms for them that are close to where I'm currently staying..."

"But... You, of all people, should know my family's current conditions, brother Gerald... If they stay here, there's a good chance that they'll..." muttered Takuya, looking rightfully embarrassed.

"Trust me when I say that it'll be more dangerous for them if they don't stay here. Don't worry, I'll make sure they remain safe. Even if something does happen to them, I'll be the one responsible. None of it will have anything to do with the Futabas!" declared Gerald with a smile.

"... Since you put it that way... Fine. I'll agree to it! You there, go arrange for two guest rooms close to Mr. Crawford's room!" ordered Takuya after momentarily hesitating as he looked at his secretary.

Chapter 2173

“Understood!” replied the secretary with a nod before quickly leaving the parlor...

Soon enough, all the dishes were served, and before everyone laid at least a dozen Weston dishes. Aside from the chicken and fish, the rest honestly looked like ordinary home cooked dishes. Even so, just the foods' smell alone and the way they were presented made everyone aware that this was the work of a top notch chef...

Since all the food had arrived, the smiling Takuya quickly began distributing chopsticks as he said, “Come on, enjoy the food while it's hot, and tell me if it's to your liking! Honestly, ever since brother Gerald came, I've been growing fonder and fonder of Weston food! Truth be told, I wasn't even sure if I'd ever get used to Weston food back when Fujiko implored me to try some!”

“See? I told you so!” replied the pleased Fujiko.

Following that, everyone enjoyed their meals without saying much in between bites. Once all the dishes were finished, Takuya ordered his servants to clear the table and serve them some tea.

After the tea arrived, Takuya turned to look at everyone else at the table before asking, “So... I remember you saying that there was something you wanted to tell me earlier... Now that we've had our meals, care to share?”

Sipping on the tea that Takuya had just handed him, Gerald then calmly replied, “Well, I was attacked by an assassin from the international assassin list. I'm assuming he was hired by the Kanagawas.”

Upon hearing that, Takuya was so surprised that he almost dropped the teapot! His hands now trembling, Takuya quickly asked in a hushed tone, “... What?”

“Again, I'm only assuming that it was the Kanagawas, so there's no need to get too worked up,” replied

Gerald with a slight frown.

“How couldn’t I get worked up? In case you’ve forgotten, the two assassins from before are still in this manor!” muttered Takuya after taking in a few deep breaths.

“Speaking of those two, they’re apparently known as Endo and Izumi. They’re both Hanyus sent by Hanyu Ryugu of the Hanyu assassination department. As with the previous case, I have a feeling that the Kanagawas are behind this, though I can’t say for sure,” replied Gerald.

“They’re... Hanyus...?” muttered Takuya as his face turned slightly pale.

Their families had been living peacefully for over a hundred years now... How could all that change in less than a month? Not only had the Hanyus sent people to assassinate his daughter, but they also attempted to assassinate his guest! Had Gerald not been present in those two events, his daughter could’ve been dead by now...!

“Indeed... Either way, the Kanagawas are my prime suspect in all this... After all, the Hanyus are an assassin family. Why on earth would they hire an international assassin to do their dirty work instead? And since Endo and Izumi went after me instead of Fujiko, it only gives me more reason to believe that Kai’s the one behind all this. With that said, how are you planning to solve all this, patriarch Takuya?” asked Gerald as he sipped on more tea.

“... I’ll need time to think about this... After all, one wrong decision may bring harm to us all...” muttered the now frowning Takuya as he leaned against his chair, wondering how to go about all this...

Honestly, he was tempted to just pick a fight with both families and attempt to brute force his way to Victory.

However, Takuya knew better than to do that. After all, while Gerald would certainly be able to guarantee his daughter’s safety, the rest of his family would quickly crumble against the other two families. But if they just remained on the defensive, they’d surely be attacked over and over again till

they eventually lost...

Feeling helpless, Takuya was prompted to ask, "... What about you, Gerald...? What do you think?"

"Well... I can get rid of the Kanagawas first. Though I could choose to finish off the Hanyus first, they're still an entire family of assassins. With that said, I'll need more time to prepare if I wish to take the Hanyus out," replied Gerald who had honestly been waiting for Takuya to ask...

Chapter 2174

Upon hearing that, Takuya immediately shook his head with a chuckle before saying, "... You're joking, right...?"

While it was true that Gerald was inhumanly strong, there was no way he was going to be able to take on such a large and powerful family alone, right...?

"Oh, I meant every word I said, patriarch Takuya. Do you not believe me?" asked Gerald in a serious tone, signifying that he wouldn't joke about something like this. After all, getting the Futabas out of this crisis was his one way ticket to learning the secrets of the Seadom tribe.

Thinking about all the times Gerald had protected his daughter and putting Gerald's serious tone into consideration, Takuya eventually replied, "... I believe you!"

"Good. With that said, just give me some time to exterminate the Kanagawas. As for Endo and Izumi, I propose that we end them as soon as possible," replied Gerald with a smile.

"Well, had they not had the information we needed, I would've killed them ages ago. Now that we know their identities, however, there's no reason to continue letting them live!" declared Takuya as he nodded in agreement.

“That’s good to hear. Well, if you’ll excuse me, I’ll be heading out first. I’ll be back before night,” replied Gerald as he got to his feet.

“Oh? Where to?” asked Takuya.

“I’m just going to where the Yamashitas are. I still have some questions that need answering,” replied Gerald, remembering the promise that old man had made with him back then. Gerald still found it hard to believe that that old man had helped them slip past Ryugu...

Hearing that, Takuya was momentarily taken aback as he exclaimed, “You... Know the Yamashitas?”

“Actually, before that, have you contacted them before, father?” asked Fujiko who just recalled what that old man had said to her back then.

“... Huh? Why would I have contacted them? If I had, our family wouldn’t be in such a poor state today! After all, there are infamous rumors that the Yamashitas have ninjas in their family!” replied Takuya as he shook his head.

“... But... that old man said...” muttered Fujiko, clearly at a loss. After all, if her father hadn’t contacted that old man before, why would that old man have said that he had met her before as a child?

Knowing that her father wouldn’t lie to her, a sudden thought came to Fujiko, prompting her to look at Gerald. From what she could now guess, the old man had probably only stepped in because of Gerald. In other words, he must have only said that to deceive Ryugu.

“... Old man? What old man? Actually, hold on, why’s the Yamashita family suddenly involved?” asked the confused Takuya.

“Just know that it isn’t a bad thing, patriarch Takuya. Regardless, I’ll be off now. If anything happens, I’ll be sure to tell you when I return,” replied Gerald.

Hearing that, Takuya breathed a sigh of relief before saying, "... Alright, then. Take care!"

Watching as Gerald headed outside, Fujiko quickly got up as well as she shouted, "Wait! I'm coming with you!"

As the two left the scene, Takuya could only scratch the back of his head as he turned to look at Aideen and

Master Ghost who were still drinking tea there.

"Just so you know, all this happened without us being there. With that said, there's no point in asking about the situation from us, patriarch Takuya," explained Master Ghost.

Chapter 2175

"... I see. Well, you two go ahead and rest first, then. If there's anything you need, just tell me," replied Takuya, who knew that he could only await Gerald's return if he wanted any answers.

Moving back to Gerald and Fujiko, the duo quickly got into one of the Futaba cars and began driving to where the Yamashitas lived...

On their way there, Fujiko couldn't help but look at Gerald as she asked, "You... really don't know anything about that old man...?"

To Futaba, Gerald was like a rubik's cube. Despite the fact that he had been living in her manor and she had known him for about a month now, she still felt that she knew very little about him...

"Fujiko, you and your family are locals and you hardly know anything about them. What makes you think I'd know anything about the Yamashitas? To be quite frank, I'm heading there to learn more about that

old man myself,” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

“I see... Still, if we had the Yamashitas supporting us, things would definitely go much smoother...” muttered Fujiko with a sigh. Even though she was the ‘Queen of Soldiers’, she was still much weaker than them...

“Though things may be difficult, I’m willing to fight through it all,” replied Gerald with a nod.

Soon enough, the sky started turning dark. It was then when the duo finally saw the barren mountain again...

Once they were at the foot of the mountain, Gerald parked the car there. They were now in Yamashita territory, and he knew that the area where he had fought the Hanyu assassins was not far ahead.

However, upon walking further into the territory, both of them realized that the corpses had been cleared away. Though the tang of blood no longer remained, upon paying closer attention, dry bloodstains still remained on the ground. Unless the Yamashitas turned the soil over or added a layer of soil on top, the bloodstains would probably remain for a month or two.

With how few people actually came here, there was little chance for the stains to be trodden on as well, thus leaving the stains visible for much longer...

Shortly after, eight men each wielding a longsword donning traditional Japanese garments came running over to the two. Once they stood before the duo, one of the men asked, “Who are you two?”

“Greetings. I am Futaba Fujiko from the Futaba family. I’m here to pay your family a visit,” replied Fujiko in a polite tone.

“You should know that the Yamashitas don’t accept guests, so please leave at once. If the elders realize that you’re here, we’ll surely be punished!” replied the same man.

“Before that, allow me to explain a bit further. You see, we came here a few days ago and ended up fighting with the Hanyus at this very spot. Back then, an old gentleman stepped in to help us settle things, and he told me to return someday. With that said, I’m here now, so please report our arrival to him, brother,” explained Gerald who couldn’t help but feel that he was

Conversing with a cultivating family back in Weston.

After all, based on how they dressed and what they said, it seemed that they were still upholding traditions that had been passed down for thousands of years...

“...Hmm? So you’re the Westoner who killed all those Hanyu assassins?” replied the man, feeling slightly startled as he scanned Gerald from head to toe.

“The one and only,” said Gerald with a smile.

“...I see. Please wait here as I report this, then. Actually, before that... If you wish to fight next time, please don’t do it here... We spent an entire day clearing this place up, you know? It gets pretty tiring,” muttered the man as she nodded.

“I apologize for all the trouble,” replied Gerald with a sheepish grin.

“You’d better be... Just look at those bloodstains! They’re nearly impossible to remove...” said the man as he pointed at the stains while shaking his head.

Following that, the eight men left together.

Chapter 2176

A short while later, the man returned alone before saying, “Elder has invited you in!”

“Thank you for sending him the message,” replied Gerald as he placed his palm and fist together before entering the area with Fujiko...

After walking for about ten minutes, the duo finally arrived at the old man’s home. Since the man hadn’t guided them there, the duo had made their way here solely from memory.

Regardless, as Gerald pushed the house’s door open, he made sure to whisper, “Speaking of which, once we meet the old man, don’t say a thing. I’d like to test him first...”

“Got it,” replied Fujiko with a nod.

With that, the duo walked toward the parlor where the old man could be seen sitting on the tatami floor.

Before him, was a bottle kettle, and despite noticing Gerald and Fujiko’s presence, he didn’t move an inch. Knowing that the old man could speak in the Weston language and since there wasn’t anyone else around, Gerald didn’t bother speaking in his awkward Japanese and simply said, “I’ve come to visit you, old man.”

“So you have. Is the competition over?” asked the old man as he turned to look at Gerald.

“It just ended,” replied Gerald as he sat in front of the old man.

“I see... Are you here to ask about why I helped you back then?” asked the old man as he served some tea to both Gerald and Fujiko.

“Pretty much,” replied Gerald who saw no reason to lie.

“Truth be told, I just didn’t want you to have another conflict with that man. After all, you had already killed several of his men by that point, and I didn’t want to have to clean up more bodies. So there you have it, the reason I allowed you to sneak off,” explained the old man with a smile as he stroked his beard.

“... Is that truly all?” asked Gerald in slight disbelief.

“What other reasons could there be? After all, we had never met before at that point in time. Either way, since you’re already here, why don’t you have some tea with me?” asked the old man as he gestured at the teacup before Gerald.

Getting the old man’s hint, Gerald turned to look at Fujiko before saying, “... Could you look around outside for the moment, Fujiko? There’s something I’d like to discuss with him in private...”

“Pardon me, then,” replied Fujiko as she got to her feet and left the room...

Gerald made sure to follow her to the door before closing it behind her. With the door now shut, Gerald turned to look at the old man before calmly saying, “Now that we’re alone, you can say anything you want... I assure you that anything you say won’t leave this room.”

“Oh? You surprisingly know quite a lot, kid!” replied the old man with a chuckle.

“Well, you did help us escape Ryugu that day. What’s more, you even revealed that you were a Westoner before we left. How couldn’t I figure that there was more to why you did all that?” said Gerald.

“I see... Before that, I’d like to clarify that I had been keeping an eye out on you ever since you entered our territory... With that said, with your abilities, taking Ryugu down would’ve been a cinch for you, no?” asked the old man as he continued stroking his beard.

“You’re not wrong,” replied Gerald.

“Hmm... Well, at the very least, the part where I didn’t want you two to get into too much trouble is true,” said the old man.

“But why even bother? After all, we had just met for the first time and as far as I know, the Yamashitas hardly have any contact with the outside world,” replied Gerald in a curious tone.

“You truly do know quite a lot...”

Chapter 2177

“As you’ve said, the Yamashitas don’t contact other families a lot, but putting that aside... You have the Herculean Primordial Spirit within you, correct?” asked the old man after staring at Gerald for a while.

Upon hearing that, Gerald could only chuckle awkwardly. Though the old man had seen through him, he didn’t really want to admit it. After all, Gerald was well aware that talented and capable people were targeted a lot. In fact, it was exactly because of his power that resulted in his trouble with the military department as well as the three large families of Yanam!

“So it is true... Well, I’m just glad that you know how to conceal your treasure well,” added the old man with a grin.

Nodding slowly, Gerald then looked at the old man for a while before finally asking, “Who... exactly are you, old man...? I’m sure you’re not just the elder of the Yamashita family, right...?”

Gerald had a multitude of questions in his head. First off, how was a Westoner the elder of the Yamashita family? How had he gotten involved in this family rumored to have ninjas? And how did he even know about the Herculean Primordial Spirit? Not many cultivators from Weston even knew about it!

Upon hearing Gerald’s question, the old man’s tone suddenly became serious as he replied, “... Do you

really wish to know?”

Watching as Gerald nodded in response, the old man then sighed as his cloudy eyes momentarily hinted that he was reminiscing... And shortly after, the old man said, “Well... For one, I knew your grandfather pretty well back then... We used to travel together in Weston many years ago, you know? Unfortunately, we ended up parting ways due to our differing opinions... Truth be told, when I first saw you, I almost thought you were him. You’re his spitting image, from your physique,

Appearance, right down to your personality!”

“... What? You know Daryl?” replied Gerald as he instantly frowned. With how tightly he was holding onto the now quivering teacup, the old man felt that if Gerald gripped any harder, the cup would surely shatter.

...

“I did... Well, the old him, at least Also, he’s your grandfather, no? Why are you calling him by his name?” asked the old man as he raised a slight brow.

“I’d very much prefer not to have a grandfather like him,” replied Gerald with a snort.

While it was true that the grandfather he remembered as a child was a kind old man before he disappeared from his life, the revelation that Daryl was his parents’ and sister’s abductor was simply too much for Gerald to willingly overlook.

Regardless, upon hearing that, the shocked old man was prompted to ask, “Is... there some sort of misunderstanding between the two of you...?”

“I’d rather not talk about him, old man... Either way, I’m just wondering if you helped us back then due to the fact that I’m Daryl’s grandson?” replied Gerald as he raised his hand to stop the old man from

asking any further.

“... No, of course not. I merely felt like talking about him since you’re his descendant. Regardless, the main reason I helped you is because you’re currently hosting the Herculean Primordial Spirit,” explained the old man as he shook his head with a smile.

Suddenly feeling much more vigilant, Gerald then asked, “...Could you elaborate?”

If this old man truly was after his Herculean Primordial Spirit, then he would have to figure out how to quickly leave this place with Fujiko. Naturally, that meant that he would have to offend yet another powerful family...

Looking at how vigilant Gerald had suddenly become, the old man couldn’t help but laugh before saying, “It’s a long story. If you’re interested in hearing the full thing, do stay for a few more days. In return, I just want you to update me on Daryl’s situation. After all, it’s been ages since I’ve last met him.”

“... Deal!” replied Gerald.

Chapter 2178

Gerald was only agreeing since this old man seemed to know Daryl well. With that in mind, Gerald couldn’t deny that he was curious about his grandfather’s past. After all, though he had met him as a child, his memories of Daryl were vague, to say the least. Perhaps with this old man’s help, he would be able to learn why his present grandfather underwent such a drastic change...

“Excellent. Then do have some more tea as we continue chatting. I’ll get a room prepared for you two by tonight. Speaking of which, isn’t it high time you told her to come back inside? After all, there really isn’t anything to hide. Besides, you two are a couple, no?” replied the old man with a smile.

“You knew...?” said Gerald as he scratched the back of his head.

“While we don’t directly contact those from the outside world, it doesn’t mean that we’re left oblivious about what happens out there,” replied the old man with a nod.

Not knowing how to respond to that, Gerald then invited Fujiko in again, making sure to shut the door tight once she was inside. After all, he didn’t want any strangers hearing anything about Daryl’s past.

Once Gerald and Fujiko were seated at the table, the old man who was holding onto a cup of hot tea slowly began rocking back and forth as he said, “Let’s see... It was about fifty years ago when the incident between me and your grandfather occurred... ”

As it turned out, Daryl and this old man were once disciples of Brecken Longman, a famous cultivator in Weston, at least at the time. Learning under Brecken atop a hill, the two were senior and junior for at least a decade before they both graduated. After graduation, Daryl returned to his family, determined to make it prosper. As for the old man, he chose to follow Daryl, wanting to help his senior.

It was when the Crawford family started rising the ranks in the cultivation world when Daryl and the old man started having differing views. For one, Daryl wanted to bring the Crawfords into the secular world. His plan was to use the family’s power in exchange for riches. However, the old man was against this. After all, Weston cultivators hardly ever got involved with the secular world, yet Daryl was proposing to start a business!

Due to their differing views, in the end, the two ended up parting ways. After leaving the Crawford family, the old man traveled the world until eventually, he ended up getting chosen to become the elder of the Yamashita family after helping the family out when they needed it most.

After hearing the old man’s side of the story, Gerald couldn’t help but feel slightly emotional.

As for the old man, he then sighed before adding, “So... Yes, that’s pretty much the summarized version of what happened... Thinking back, your grandfather’s decision was honestly the right one. After all, he genuinely was considering the future of the family...”

While it was true that the old man had considered moving back to Weston before this, he had simply grown too used to staying here by that point.

Whatever the case was, Gerald who hadn't heard about all this from his father before simply nodded in response...

Now that he was done sharing his part of the story, the old man looked expectantly at Gerald before asking, "So... Now that I'm done, how are things with your grandfather? Is he still living with you?"

"Not really," replied Gerald as he shook his head.

Momentarily stunned to hear that, the old man's hands started shaking to the point where tea was starting to spill before he eventually asked, "Has... he passed away...?"

"He's alive and well, though he's no longer in the Crawford family... Or should I say, he's no longer in the old Crawford family," replied Gerald with a bitter smile. To be completely honest, he secretly still hoped that Daryl was the same grandfather he used to know as a child...

Chapter 2179

"... Hmm? What do you mean by that...?" asked the old man, clearly feeling confused.

"Well, he's left my family to establish a new cultivating Crawford family atop an island beyond the Yanam sea that I've unfortunately yet to locate..." replied Gerald with a sigh.

"He's... established another Crawford family...? But that can't be! The old Daryl valued his family more than his old life! With that said, why would he just abandon you and establish a new family?" exclaimed the old man as his eyes widened in disbelief.

Shrugging, Gerald simply replied, "Beats me..."

Now feeling that he was hearing something more akin to a fairy tale, the old man asked, "...Alright, so... How's the relationship between the two families...?"

"Well, my Crawford family isn't connected with the other one. I should also note that I'm the only one left in my family," explained Gerald.

"... What? What about your parents? While I don't know much about you, I clearly remember my sister-in-law giving birth to a girl before I left. That should be your sister, right? What happened to her and your parents? Don't tell me all three of them met with misfortune...?" replied the old man with a frown.

"Negative. Currently, they've been abducted by Daryl..." muttered Gerald as he shook his head.

"... They were... what? You... you're just making all this up, right...?" asked the old man in his utter shock. After all, all this was simply too bizarre! His old friend couldn't just start a new family of his own before abducting his son and daughter-in-law's family, right...?

"Unfortunately, it's the truth. My parents and sister are currently being locked up somewhere on their island. I should also note that though my girlfriend's been abducted by the Sun League, I have a feeling that my grandfather's involved..." replied Gerald with a sigh.

Unable to handle all this information, the old man leaped to his feet, his face contorted in disbelief as he yelled, "What?!"

"I only speak the truth..." muttered Gerald who honestly wanted all this to just be fake.

"... Unbelievable... I clearly remember how cordially Daryl treated your parents and the rest of your family back then... How did all this come to be...?" said the old man as he slowly sat down again.

Gerald himself remained silent, not knowing what else to say about Daryl...

Back when he was six, he had thought that his grandfather was the kindest man alive... However, one day, he simply left... To think that when Daryl finally returned once Gerald was an adult, his first move was to abduct his parents and sister! This Daryl was nothing like the grandfather Gerald used to love!

Regardless, after pondering for a while, the old man eventually asked, "... You mentioned an island, right? What's the island called?"

"Yearning Island!" replied Gerald without the slightest hesitation. Since the old man was extremely capable and was also the elder of the Yamashitas, Gerald secretly hoped that the old man would know something about that island.

Unfortunately, Gerald was quickly disappointed when the old man stroked his beard for a while before shaking his head and saying, "...I'm afraid I've never heard of that island before..."

"... Don't worry, I just found out about it quite recently as well," replied Gerald as he sighed. Still, he wasn't overly disappointed since he kind of expected this answer as well.

"I see... Don't worry, I'll try my best to locate it for you. I should specify that I still believe that Daryl isn't the kind of person to do all this without a good reason," muttered the old man as he shook his head.

Chapter 2180

Following that, the three avoided talking about Daryl for a while, choosing to drink their tea instead...

Sometime later, the old man turned to look at Fujiko before asking, "... The Futabas have had a long standing feud with the Hanyus, correct?"

Momentarily caught off guard, Fujiko quickly snapped out of it before replying, "... Indeed... Though, I

didn't expect you to know about this..."

"I'll have you know that we Yamashitas are quite knowledgeable about what happens beyond our territory... Regardless, while we did know about your feud, we never expected your families to actually start attacking each other," explained the old man who was now feeling much better after not talking about Daryl for a while.

"To be honest, the feud only began again quite recently. While I still don't know what the Hanyu family's motive is, they suddenly sent assassins after my head some time ago... Had Gerald not stepped in to help me back then, I could've died back there..." muttered Fujiko as she wondered what was going on in the Hanyu family members' minds.

After all, in the past, the most they did was ignore each other's presence when their families crossed paths.

"I see... Further investigation is definitely needed... Putting that aside for now, since your family's currently in trouble, I'm willing to lend a hand," replied the old man.

"You... wish to help the Futabas?" asked Fujiko as she turned to look at Gerald.

"More specifically, I'm doing this for Gerald's sake. Since he's currently living with your family, it's only natural that I make sure he stays safe. While I'm at it, I may as well protect the Futabas," explained the old man.

"Even so, I thank you from the bottom of my heart!" replied Fujiko who wasn't about to say no to this since her family was still in danger. With the Yamashita family's help, they now had a chance to stand against the Kanagawas and the Hanyus...!

Nodding in response, the old man then faced his window before shouting, "Alright, gather some of our men and tell them to head to the Futaba manor! Once you're there, tell Takuya that you're friends of Gerald's and have him arrange some rooms for you to stay in! After all that, make sure to keep your

eyes peeled at all times! If anyone tries to look for trouble with the Futabas, get rid of them immediately!”

Almost immediately after, dozens of footsteps could suddenly be heard running off into the distance.

Raising a slight brow, Gerald curiously asked, “Say... Are there really ninjas in this family...?”

“Indeed.”

“Could you show one to me...?” asked Gerald, who had always wanted to see a real ninja.

Upon hearing that, the old man exposed his palm and all of a sudden, a flame appeared out of thin air! From what Gerald could tell, the old man wasn’t hiding anything that could’ve produced the flame. It was almost magical...

As for Fujiko, she was so shocked that her mouth was already gaping by this point. Scenes like these only happened in movies... How was any of this real...?

“The power to control elements is a ninja’s true power,” explained the old man as the flame slowly died out. Even so, the warmth of the fire remained.

“Ninjas really do exist...!” muttered Gerald, feeling slightly excited now.

Chapter 2181

“Do you want to learn this?” Seeing Gerald’s expression, the old man asked with a smile.

“I’m a cultivator. How am I supposed to learn ninjutsu?” Gerald’s smile faded, and he asked in confusion.

“Of course you can. Cultivation and ninjutsu are of the same origin. They both draw on the natural power between heaven and earth. There are just some slight differences. You are a cultivator yourself, and you have the power of the Herculean Primordial Spirit. Learning ninjutsu on such a basis is very easy, so I guess you can get started in a few days,” said the old man as he looked at Gerald.

“That’s good news.” Gerald didn’t refuse. If he could learn this ability and enhance his power, his chances of saving his parents and then his sister, who was in the Sun League, would increase greatly.

“Do you want to learn now?” The old man couldn’t wait to start.

“It’s better to settle the matter at hand first. I’m a little uneasy as the Kanagawa family and the Hanyu family issues are not settled yet.” Gerald shook his head. He wanted to learn, but it was not the time yet.

Or rather, he should say that he had no time to learn at all.

He couldn’t just let go of the Futaba family’s affairs and focus on studying here. That would go against his original intention of coming to Japan.

“Okay, then. I shall wait until you have settled this mess.” The old man did not insist and asked Fujiko, “Do you want to stay here for the night or go back home?”

“I think we’d better go back. The Kanagawa family hired an assassin in the international assassin list to kill me last night. Judging from his skills, he should be in the top twenty. I need to settle this matter. Besides, the Kanagawa family cannot continue to exist.”

Gerald took a deep breath. Thinking of what had happened yesterday, his face turned dark all of a sudden.

“Go ahead, then. If it’s like what you’ve said, they should be removed.” The old man nodded.

“Well then, we shall go back first. We will come to visit again when we have the time.” Gerald stood up and gave him a fist and palm salute.

“That’s not necessary. You can leave your phone number and just call me directly if there is anything.”

The old man fished out a pen and paper from under the table, wrote a phone number on it, and handed it to Gerald.

“I had forgotten about this.” Gerald smiled in embarrassment as he took the paper.

From the time he had arrived at the foot of the barren mountain, he had felt that this was a very traditional family. They seemed to do things like how they were done a hundred years ago. After being here for a long time, he had forgotten all about these modern tools. If the old man hadn’t mentioned it, Gerald wouldn’t have remembered that there was such a thing as a telephone.

After exchanging phone numbers, Gerald left with Fujiko.

On the way back, Gerald kept thinking about what the old man had said. Indeed, What was said today was too much for Gerald to digest for the time being. He didn’t expect this old man from the Yamashita family to have such a relationship with Daryl.

Of course, Gerald felt a bit relaxed now. No matter if it was the matter of Yearning Island or the Kanagawa and Hanyu families, with help from the Yamashita family in the investigation, it was clearly better than fighting alone.

However, Gerald didn’t have high hopes for them to find out the location of Yearning Island.

“Are you a cultivator?” Fujiko turned her head.

“Yes.” Gerald did not hide it and answered in a low voice. “About my identity, you must not tell anyone about it, including the power of the Herculean Primordial Spirit in me. If outsiders know about it, I will get into endless trouble.”

“I understand. I will not tell anyone about it.” Fujiko nodded and replied very seriously.

“Hmm...” Gerald knew what Fujiko had in mind. “With the Yamashita family’s help this time, I think the matters of your family should be resolved soon.”

Chapter 2182

Soon, the two arrived at the Futaba Mansion.

Before they arrived, the experts arranged by the old man had already arrived.

“Gerald, who are these people? I asked them just now, but they wouldn’t tell me. They simply told me that they came here on orders. Are they the helpers you found?” At that moment, Takuya was standing at the entrance of the manor. When he saw Gerald, he quickly walked to him and asked, pointing to the people on both sides of the manor.

“I think it’s better to go inside before we talk about this.”

“Thank you for your help. Please tell me if you need anything!”

Gerald wasn’t prepared to explain this in front of these people. Instead, he waved at them and brought Takuya and Fujiko into the house.

In the parlor, once they got inside, Takuya repeated his question.

Now, the situation of this family was very complicated. They did not just have to face the Kanagawa and Hanyu families, but even the people inside the family were coveting his position. One mistake could push him to the end of the world.

“Don’t worry, Patriarch Takuya. The people outside are members of the Yamashita family. They were ordered by the old man to come and protect us.” Gerald sensed Takuya’s anxiety, so he explained quickly as soon as they were seated.

“Why would the Yamashita family help us?” Takuya opened his eyes wide, his face full of disbelief.

“About this, you should just rest assured. That old man was an old friend of my grandfather, so, he was willing to help us,” said Gerald with a smile.

“I see...” Hearing Gerald’s words, Takuya felt relieved.

“By the way, Gerald, we will have another family meeting the day after tomorrow. They insist that you must be present.” Takuya was relieved, but then, he turned to Gerald and continued.

“Was it the white haired old man’s idea?” Gerald narrowed his eyes and said with a smile.

The last time when he had first come to the Futaba family, Gerald had attended the so called family meeting once. During the meeting, the people who rarely came had actually wanted to force Takuya to abdicate his position. Gerald remembered this very clearly.

“I can’t say that it’s him. Now that our family is no longer as prosperous as before, it’s logical that they would want to appoint a new patriarch. However, I can’t let them drain the family of its last sustenance.

You are our honored guest and now Fujiko's boyfriend, though superficially, so no matter what, you have to attend the meeting."

Takuya couldn't help but sigh when it came to his family matter.

"No problem, I can attend." Gerald nodded in agreement. He would never make it difficult for Takuya.

"Then, I am very grateful for this. For what has happened to the family recently, if it was not for your help, I'm afraid we wouldn't be sitting here safely at all." Seeing Gerald agree to it, Takuya immediately showed a relaxed smile, and the look he gave Gerald became more and more benevolent.

"This is what I should do." Gerald waved his hand. He had never gotten used to accepting people's thanks, and it would make him feel very awkward.

"Still, there's one thing I cannot understand." After laughing, Takuya was clearly relaxed.

"What is it?" asked Gerald, "If I know about it, I will surely tell you."

Chapter 2183

"It's still the same question. You've helped us so much and even put yourself in danger. Besides, you even offended the Kanagawa and Hanyu families. Although you are very strong, you don't have to get yourself into so much trouble at all. I just want to know why you're doing this. What is your purpose? Or is it for Fujiko's sake?"

Takuya rubbed his hands and asked in embarrassment.

This question had been lingering in his mind. He had thought about it countless times, but still, he could not find an answer. So, he could no longer hold it in and asked outright.

Fujiko looked at Gerald.

“There is indeed a purpose.” Gerald looked at them and hesitated for a while, but then, he still told them the truth.

“That’s not a problem. As long as you say it, we will definitely meet your request.” Hearing what Gerald had said, only then did Takuya feel that this was a bit more normal. For someone so strong, he didn’t have to offend other people for the sake of a small family like his at all.

“We will talk about this after settling the matter at hand.” After contemplating, Gerald did not say anything else about Yearning Island.

“Okay. Since you don’t want to talk about it now, I won’t ask you anymore. But again, for the reason that you’ve helped us so much during this time, I will try my best to fulfill your wish. Even if you want the position of the patriarch of this family, I will give it to you.” Takuya banged on the table and said in a deep voice.

“This is really not necessary.” Gerald waved his hand and laughed. He had never wanted to become a patriarch or anything. Not only would he not get any benefits, but he would also bring himself a lot of trouble.

“You have just come back from the Yamashita family, it is better to go and rest first. I will tell the members of the family to come here tonight, and we will discuss everything clearly. If they want to take advantage of the fall of the family to get something, I will put them off the idea!” With Gerald here, Takuya spoke with great confidence.

“Yes.” Gerald nodded.

Gerald parted with Fujiko at the door of the parlor and returned to his room.

The afternoon passed quietly. When the sky was turning dark, only then did Gerald wake up.

He really had to say that although he was facing a lot of trouble at the moment, he could always sleep well in the Futaba Mansion. He could sleep peacefully almost

He really had to say that although he was facing a lot of trouble at the moment, he could always sleep well in the Futaba Mansion. He could sleep peacefully almost every night.

After lying on the bed for a while, Gerald rolled out of the bed and pushed the door open.

“Brother Gerald, you’re awake.” As soon as he opened the door, Aiden immediately ran into the room.

“Why are you here?” Gerald was shocked and took two steps backward. When he saw Aiden, who was standing in front of him, he asked.

“Hehe, I’m still not used to this place. Besides, I have rested for a whole day, and I don’t feel tired anymore. I don’t know where to go, so I just waited for you here. Someone told me that I have to attend a dinner or something tonight.” Aiden scratched his head.

“Where’s Master Ghost?” Gerald glanced at the door twice.

“He has been called for by Patriarch Takuya,” replied Aiden quickly.

“It’s getting late, let’s go.” Gerald looked at the time and said, “Perhaps everyone in the Futaba Mansion will not have a peaceful time today.”

Thinking about the situation last time, Gerald knew what he would encounter this evening.

“There’s a conflict in this family?” Aiden was not a fool. He knew what Gerald meant when he said that.

“If there was no conflict, maybe the Futaba family would not have fallen to their current state.” Gerald shook his head with a smile. He would not bother with the matters of the family. As long as he kept Takuya and Fujiko safe, he would be able to learn the secrets of Yearning Island.

Chapter 2184

As Gerald and Aiden were talking, they walked to the parlor.

It could be seen that after all these people had come, the security of the manor had obviously been enhanced. He could even see security guards in other uniforms. This should be because Takuya was worried that these people might encounter an accident in the manor, so he had hired the security guards from a security company outside.

After all, they were still members of the Futaba family even though they had left the family a long time ago. If they encountered any danger here, he would be in trouble.

“Aren’t you Futaba Suke?” The moment Gerald entered through the door, he saw a young man standing inside.

He was the young man who had threatened him in the garden after the meeting last time. Now that Gerald had seen him, he would not pretend that he didn’t see him, but was ready to talk to him instead.

“You are indeed a lucky one!” Suke knew what had happened to Gerald recently, and he murmured under his breath with gloomy eyes.

If it was not for Gerald blocking the way, he would have achieved his goal a long time ago.

Now, because of Gerald, their chances had been destroyed again and again. He was even considered an untrustworthy villain in the eyes of the other party as he had always given them inaccurate information.

Not only did the other party not get any benefits, but they had even lost many people because of this.

“How did you know that I’ve been in danger recently?”

Other people might not have heard Suke, but Gerald’s hearing was much stronger than an ordinary person’s. He walked straight to Suke and asked as he took out a cigarette and lit it.

“What a joke! How would I know?!” Suke was so shocked that he broke out in a cold sweat.

He lowered his head and kept avoiding eye contact. If he was caught red-handed, he would have to spend the rest of his life in jail.

“It’s best that you don’t know. Sometimes, in this world, the more you know, the more dangerous it is for you. Maybe, at one point, you might even lose your life.” Gerald smoked the cigarette and stretched out his hand. Then, he patted Suke’s shoulder and asked indifferently, “You should know this well, right?”

“I know, I know.” Suke was so scared that he didn’t even dare to breathe.

He knew about the mysterious disappearances of Endo and Izumi. Instead of saying that they had disappeared, it would be more accurate to say that they had obviously been defeated by Gerald. Moreover, they didn’t even have the chance to send out a message. For someone to have the ability to do that, killing him would be as simple as flicking his hand.

“Patriarch Takuya!” After pressuring Suke, Gerald walked two steps forward and saluted to Takuya.

“Well, it seems that I didn’t introduce you clearly to everyone last time. Let’s reintroduce you this time.”

Takuya nodded and pointed at Gerald. He said loudly, “This is Mr. Gerald Crawford from Weston. He is the honored guest of the Futaba family. He’s also Fujiko’s current boyfriend.”

“Patriarch, you cannot say that. Fujiko has a marriage contract with Kanagawa Kai of the Kanagawa family. Our family is already in a difficult situation. If we break the contract at this time, I’m afraid we can’t afford the consequences!”

“Yes, Patriarch. We can accept him as our guest. As for the matter between him and Fujiko, please reconsider it!”

Sure enough, once Takuya had said that, many voices rang out. These people did not respect him as the patriarch at all, and among them, some were already doing great in their businesses by taking advantage of the influence and privileges of the family.

“There is no need to discuss this matter anymore. I am the patriarch of the Futaba family, and I am also Fujiko’s father. I have the absolute say in this. Enough. If anyone mentions this again, don’t blame me for not showing mercy!” Takuya frowned and said in a low voice.

Chapter 2185

He was expecting the opposing voices and had prepared for it, but when they began arguing, he felt very uneasy. After all, he was the patriarch, but even his words were questioned and rejected by his clansmen. There was no difference at all for him to hold the position as the patriarch or not.

“Then, what is it that you want to tell us that you’ve summoned us today?”

“If it’s just about this, we didn’t have to go through all this trouble at all. You could have just called and informed us. You won’t listen to our opinions anyway!”

Seeing Takuya get angry, the other people did not dare to say anything. But when the parlor was silent, Masaru said these words in a hoarse voice. After all, he was Takuya’s uncle, and he could still afford to completely ignore Takuya’s words.

Once Masaru had said that, everyone nodded in agreement.

“It is indeed about this matter. However, I thought that we had not met each other for a long time, so I took this opportunity to gather you here to discuss the future of the family.” Although Takuya hated this, Masaru was still his uncle. With all the clansmen here, he still had to show Masaru some respect.

“You are Gerald Crawford?” Masaru didn’t reply to Takuya and looked at Gerald instead.

“That’s right.” Gerald put his hands behind his back, standing tall and straight modestly.

“Your temperament is not bad. Takuya said that you are a Westoner. I wonder which family you belong to and what kind of status you have in Weston. The Futaba family is a famous family in Japan anyhow. Although it is gradually declining now, not just anyone can come and marry Fujiko!”

Masaru sized Gerald up.

Right after praising him, his tone became sharp. Everyone looked at Gerald immediately. They had been hoping for Fujiko to marry Kai because of the status of the Kanagawa family.

But now, if Gerald had a high status in Weston, they wouldn’t need to consider the Kanagawa family anymore as they could get more benefits from Weston.

“I’m sorry to let you down. I don’t have a glamorous family background nor do I have any power,” replied Gerald with a smile.

“You have no power and no influence, yet you are dreaming of marrying Fujiko. This is simply not going to happen. It would have been nothing when the family was still strong, but now, the Futaba family is on the verge of falling. We must let Fujiko marry Kanagawa Kai and get assistance from the Kanagawa family. Only then will our family be able to get out of this crisis!”

Hearing what Gerald had said, Masaru rejected him at once.

“Uncle, Fujiko is my daughter and your grandniece. We must think about her happiness and not simply treat her as a sacrifice for the sake of the development of the family. Haven’t you heard those things about Kanagawa Kai?” Takuya took a deep breath and tried his best to reign in his anger.

“Of course I know that. Still, this can’t be helped. If Gerald Crawford had a high status in Weston, I would have certainly agreed.” Masaru’s face showed that he did not allow any refusal. He obviously did not see Takuya as the patriarch.

Bang!

“When I say no, I mean no!”

Finally, Takuya couldn’t hold it in anymore and banged his fist on the table.

Chapter 2186

Takuya’s sudden anger made everyone stunned, and they did not dare to speak. Even though they didn’t have any respect for this patriarch at all, this didn’t mean that his power wasn’t still there.

Based on Japanese laws, if someone in a family went against the patriarch's order, not only did they need to bear the consequences of both family law and legal aspects.

The fact that they dared to leave the family and even use the family's name to gain certain benefits was all because they saw Takuya as a down to earth man, and that he wouldn't do anything to them seeing as how they were all part of the Futaba family.

"Takuya, I know that Fujiko is your daughter, and that is why you want the best for her, but as a patriarch, you have to put the whole family first! We need the Kanagawa family's help anyway. If we break the marriage promise, not only will the Kanagawa family not help us, but they might even turn around and attack us. We really can't bear the consequences anymore!"

Seeing Takuya become enraged, Masaru tried to persuade Takuya, trying to make it seem as though he had always wanted the best for the whole family, which was why he had asked whether Gerald had any power or status that could possibly help the family.

"If Gerald could get some help from his family, maybe we won't be in danger anymore. However, with the feud from the Hanyu and Kanagawa families whom he offended, regular families might not be able to help us out."

"If you can get help from the Yamashita family, we wouldn't care about the matter between you and Fujiko anymore!"

Right then, Futaba Suke, who had been quiet the whole time, spoke up suddenly, fixing his eyes upon Gerald as he snickered.

"What are you joking about? The Yamashitas have never had any connections with any of the families in Japan. It would practically be impossible for Gerald, someone from Weston, to even talk with the Yamashita family let alone ask them for help."

"That's right, I think it's better not to waste any time anymore!"

The others all agreed. Putting Gerald aside, none of them would be able to talk with anyone from the Yamashita family either.

“Hahaha!”

Out of the blue, Takuya burst out laughing.

“Did you all see the people standing at the manor’s gate upon entering?” Gerald held his hands behind him as he smiled lightly.

“What does it matter whether we saw them or not? Don’t tell me those people are from the Yamashita family who are here to protect you?” Suke sneered. He was confident that Gerald wouldn’t be able to form a connection with the Yamashita family, which was why he had said all of this to make a fool out of Gerald in front of the other family members.

“You’re quite smart aren’t you.” Gerald raised his eyebrow.

“How shameless can you be, Gerald?! The Yamashita family has never made any connections with any other families at all, and this isn’t a secret in Japan. You’re actually telling us that the tens of men standing at the gate are from the Yamashita family. This is the best joke I’ve ever heard in years.”

Suke glared at Gerald as he tapped his feet against the floor continuously.

“Let them in, Aiden,” Gerald turned around and spoke to Aiden, who was standing behind him. He couldn’t be bothered to explain it any further to Suke.

“Alright.” Although Aiden didn’t understand what was happening, he listened to Gerald’s words and

walked outside.

“What a joke! You’re actually saying that they’re the Yamashita family’s men. I’ll see who they truly are now.” Suke was still sneering. “However, if they’re not the Yamashita family’s men, you have to crawl beneath my crotch and scam out of here, Gerald.”

“Of course.”

Chapter 2187

Gerald shrugged and agreed easily. “However, if they are indeed the Yamashita family’s men...”

“Then I’ll crawl under your crotch and scam my way out of here!” Without waiting for Gerald to finish his words, Suke had already spoken up. He believed that Gerald was just boasting. After all, even he himself had never seen any members of the Yamashita family in his entire life, not to mention having any sort of connections with them.

“No problem!” Gerald instantly replied.

Not long after, a few men followed Aiden into the room with everyone’s eyes on them.

“Brother Gerald.” Aiden nodded toward Gerald and stood at the back.

“My brothers, these men are highly doubtful about the fact that you are from the Yamashita family. Do you have anything to prove your identities?” Gerald asked with his eyes set on them.

“Of course we do.” The man standing at the most upfront row took his identification card out from his pocket.

Japanese identification cards were different from other countries. Due to prioritization on one's family status or financial group, everyone's identification card contained the information as to which family or financial group they belonged to.

"Do you see this?" Gerald took the card from him and waved it before everyone.

They moved their eyes onto Gerald's hand, and as expected, they saw the tiny line below the card stating that this man belonged to the Yamashita family.

"This is impossible! You must have made a fake identification card!" Suke saw it clearly as well, but his face darkened, as he had never expected Gerald to truly be able to find the Yamashita family. It simply seemed like something impossible to him.

"So, could it be possible that I have the ability to predict the unknown to know that you would ask me about having connections with the Yamashita family and to have them make fake identification cards to bring along here?" Hearing this, Gerald couldn't help but snicker as he returned the card to its owner.

"I..." Suke became speechless for a moment.

It was indeed true that he had come up with the idea of making a fool out of Gerald in front of everyone on a whim. Gerald would obviously not know about this before hand to ask them to prepare the fake IDs, but even so, he still couldn't bring himself to believe that Gerald could actually call the Yamashita family's men over here to take care of the Futaba family's safety.

It wasn't just him, but everyone else couldn't believe what's happening either.

The Yamashita family, who never came into contact with any other families nor financial groups at all, was actually standing guard in front of the Futaba family's manor.

“Now do you believe it?” Gerald squinted his eyes at Suke as he looked around and asked.

“Yes, we do,” everyone replied in unison. They had immediately done the calculations silently. The Yamashita family was much stronger than the Kanagawa family, so, they would definitely gain more benefits if the Yamashita family helped them out. “Now, it’s time for you to fulfill your promise. Do you still remember what you said?” Gerald asked with his eyes on Suke.

“Don’t even think of doing this, Gerald!” Suke’s face turned pink. He would lose his dignity and respect entirely for sure if he really were to crawl underneath Gerald’s crotch and scam out of there.

“Suke, as a man, you should do what you’ve promised. If you don’t even dare to do what you said yourself, you shouldn’t even be a part of our Futaba family!” Futaba Masaru’s face turned serious as he reprimanded Suke in a deep voice.

Seeing how Gerald had such a good relationship with the Yamashita family, Masaru could almost see the Futaba family overcoming the great obstacle before them and reach even greater heights with the help from the Yamashita family. He was on Gerald’s side even as he spoke.

Chapter 2188

“Exactly. If anyone knows how you can’t even do what you yourself promised, it would be a total shame on our family!”

“Just get it over with quickly! Don’t have us all waiting for you. You’re not even a man if you’re all bark and no bite!”

The others were now on Gerald’s side as well. It had not even been two minutes’ worth of effort, yet they had all forgotten how they had been just a While ago.

Still, facing these people, Gerald did not express any comments. As long as he could help Takuya and Fujiko, these men had no business with him.

“Alright!”

Under so many people’s pressure, Suke knew that anything he said wouldn’t be of help anymore.

He ground his teeth hard with a red face as he slowly crouched onto the ground and crawled toward Gerald, his body trembling all over. He knew that after crawling beneath Gerald, he wouldn’t be able to lift his head up ever again in the family.

Gerald was being cooperative too. He even lifted his leg and rested it on the table.

Under everyone’s gaze, Suke squeezed himself through Gerald’s crotch area. As he crawled out of it, he was trembling so hard as he glared at Gerald with fury and monstrosity. He had entirely lost every last shred of respect everyone else had for him at this very moment.

“Satisfied?” Suke asked through clenched teeth as he stared hard at Gerald.

“What does that mean? Isn’t this a bet between you and I?” Gerald arched his eyebrow. “But there’s still one more thing left.”

“What’s that?” Suke asked.

“Getting your ass out of here,” Gerald continued, “You’re not going to go against your own words, are you?”

“You’re brutal! Don’t forget this, Gerald Crawford. I will make you pay for what you’ve done today for sure, beware!” Suke threw one last look at Gerald and spouted warnings at him before scrambling out of here.

However, no one was bothered by him at all. Everyone's attention was on Gerald. All that was on their minds was how to make use of Gerald's connection with the Yamashita family and get the most benefits out of them.

"You can go home now. Thanks for the hard work," Gerald made a gesture of appreciation toward the Yamashita family's men and spoke in a low voice.

"This is nothing. Please tell us anytime you need help, Mr. Gerald. We'll do our best for you!" The man returned the same gesture and spoke politely.

Seeing this, everyone started to analyze the situation again. Not only did Gerald know these people from the Yamashita family, but he might even have good relations with them, which could be the only explanation as to why they were being so respectful toward him.

After they had left, Takuya straightened his back and stood even taller.

"Does anyone still disagree in regards to the relationship between Gerald and Fujiko?" Takuya scanned his eyes across the crowd with his head lifted up high. After all this time, this was the first time in five years that he felt like a true patriarch of this family even though it was all because of Gerald's presence.

No one spoke a word.

However, Masaru coughed and spoke up, "Looks like Gerald can truly help our family this time. There's no need for Fujiko to be married to Kanagawa Kai anymore, then. It will do these two good too seeing as how they make a good pair and have feelings for each other."

Chapter 2189

"You're not truly marrying her, are you?"

Aiden inched closer to Gerald's back and asked with a low voice.

"No, this is just a show for them. We will still leave here after solving their family's problem." Gerald shook his head. His heart only belonged to Mila Smith, and Gerald wasn't interested even though Fujiko was indeed very beautiful in addition to being a good person in and out.

"This doesn't really matter, though. I know a lot of countries that support husbands having two wives at the same time. Seeing how Ms. Fujiko is interested in you as well, why don't you just accept it!" Aiden chuckled as he spoke.

"I'll kick you out of here if you say anything more." Gerald frowned.

Aiden stuck his tongue out but kept quiet.

"This is true. It's not a bad thing for Fujiko to get married to Gerald. Still, Gerald, you have to help us out this time! You too know our family's current situation, we will all face great troubles if you don't help!"

After Masaru had spoken up, the others gathered the courage to speak as well.

"No problem." Gerald waved them down. He had promised to help anyway, so he would help Takuya in kicking these people with ulterior motives out of the family and not allow them to drag the Futaba family down.

"Well then, take a seat everyone. I'll tell you about the future plan," Takuya waved them down as well and said.

Seeing how they were going to discuss family matters, Gerald closed his eyes as he sat on a bench at the back, not wanting to listen at all.

...

Meanwhile, after leaving the manor, Suke didn't bother to have a change of clothes, and he drove straight to the Hanyu family's place, specifically requesting to see Hanyu Ryugu.

After a few minutes, Ryugu appeared at the doorsteps and pulled him inside right away.

"Are you crazy for coming here without telling me sooner?! If anyone else knows about this, the worst can happen to our family after you!" Ryugu sneaked a glance outside to make sure no one was there before scolding Suke in a low voice.

"I don't care anymore. I want to kill Gerald Crawford as soon as possible. You can even reduce half the benefits you promised if you really can do this!"

Suke's eyes were bloodshot. He was even considering death after recalling how he had crawled under Gerald's crotch and scrambled out of the family in front of so many people.

"What's this? Didn't you say to stop things temporarily and act only after I told you so? Now that you suddenly want me to do this, I have no idea how to do it as well,"

As Ryugu spoke, he dragged Suke along and went further inside.

"I'm telling you, it'll be too late if you don't act now. Gerald has strong abilities. Two of your top assassins failed their mission because of him, and he even knows the Yamashita family. It even seems that they share a close relationship!" Suke released a heavy sigh.

"What? He has good relations with the Yamashita family?!" Hearing this, Ryugu stopped in his tracks right away.

“That’s right. I’ve seen it myself. The Yamashita family arranged for tens of their men to guard the Futaba manor, and those people seemed to have high respect for Gerald!”

Now, Suke wasn’t trying to hide anything at all anymore. His only goal was to kill Gerald as fast as possible to make him pay for what he had done.

“You should go rest in the guest room first. I have something to report to our patriarch.” After thinking while standing in the same spot, Ryugu headed toward where Hanyu Suijin was resting immediately.

“Just half an hour. I’ll come to find you in half an hour!” Suke couldn’t wait for that long, and he shouted at Ryugu’s back.

However, Ryugu couldn’t hear anything at all. He had to report this situation to the patriarch as soon as he could. Originally, he had only suspected that Gerald might have some sort of connection with the Yamashita family. Now, he was as certain as ever.

Chapter 2190

In the room furthest back in the Hanyu family’s place. At that moment, Hanyu Suijin was sitting inside with his young concubine. Although he was old and his body didn’t work as well as before, it was comfortable enough for him to be able to ogle at a young lady with delicate skin lying on his bed.

Slam!

Just as Suijin was about to get into action after he was done ogling the lady, the door was pushed open suddenly.

Following that was the guard’s voice from outside the door, “Team Leader, the patriarch is doing

something inside! You can't just go in!"

Without waiting for him to finish, Ryugu was already dashing into the living room.

"Patriarch, I have something urgent to report to you."

Ryugu's eyes scanned his surroundings only to find Suijin naked on the bed and a pretty, young lady hurriedly wearing her clothes by the bedside.

Ryugu knew this lady. She was the one whom he had brought home today for the patriarch's enjoyment with the only intention of protecting his position as the team leader of the Assassin Team when so many things were happening now.

"What is it about that you can't even wait a while outside instead of barging in like this?!" Suijin was upset that he had been halted by someone just as he was about to do something. It was lucky that it was Ryugu. If it had been anyone else, he or she would have been kicked out of the family for sure.

"This is too important that it can't be delayed." Ryugu didn't bother the lady and entered the room after Suijin had put on his pants.

"Spill it. What's the matter?" The lady hadn't even finished putting on her clothes, exposing her pale white chest in the cold air. Suijin wasn't really bothered either, asking in a low voice as he held her tiny, delicate hand.

"Futaba Suke has just arrived at our place, saying that Gerald Crawford is on good terms with the Yamashita family. The Yamashita family even sent tens of men to guard the Futaba family's manor," Ryugu gulped and reported instantly.

"Which Yamashita family are you talking about?" Suijin didn't even think of that.

In the whole of Japan, there were tens or even hundreds of families named Yamashita, so he didn't know which one Ryugu was referring to at all. Plus, these families posed no threat to him.

He could easily eradicate them if anything happened anyway.

"Of course it's that Yamashita family! If it was any other, I wouldn't have bothered to tell you about it. You know what kind of person I am too, Patriarch." After following Suijin for so many years, Ryugu knew what he was thinking too, so he quickly explained after hearing what Suijin had said.

"You can go out first!"

Hearing that, Suijin immediately became alert.

He released the young lady's wrist and patted her back before calling out to her in a soft voice.

The lady put on a jacket and exited hurriedly, closing the door behind her.

"What's happening!" Suijin's face darkened instantly as she got up and walked in circles. He asked that after lighting up his cigarette and smoking it twice.

"I don't know what exactly this is about either. This is what Suke told me just now. I've asked him to go rest in the guest room." Ryugu shook his head. All he knew were these few sentences of information. "Oh, yeah! I've made sure that there's no one suspicious outside either."

Chapter 2191

Nodding, Suijin then put his cigarette that he had barely even puffed out before saying, "... Tell him to

meet me at the reception room.”

Fast forward to twenty minutes later, Suijin could be seen sitting on a bamboo chair in the reception room when Suke rushed in under Ryugu’s lead. Upon seeing Suijin, Suke immediately yelled, “Patriarch! As long as you help me kill Gerald, I’m willing to let go of half the benefits that we previously agreed upon!”

“Calm yourself and slowly elaborate the situation to me,” muttered Suijin as he held onto his temple, feeling a slight headache coming. Honestly, all these problems stemmed from the moment he had told Saburo to go after Fujiko... Come to think of it, if Gerald wasn’t in the picture, everything would’ve gone smoothly! However, there simply was no getting rid of that youth no matter what tactics they used!

“Well, the Futabas held a family meeting tonight, and Gerald revealed that he got people from the Yamashita family to guard over our manor! While he was showing them to us, those Yamashitas appeared to greatly respect Gerald as well!” explained Suke as his face turned red, remembering how humiliated he had felt earlier. All he wanted now was to have Gerald dead, even if he would be left with nothing at all!

“Are you absolutely sure that they were from that Yamashita family? Could he not have hired actors just to lie to you guys?” replied Suijin as he tried to rationalize the situation despite his bewilderment.

After all, Gerald simply didn’t seem like the kind of person who would have any form of contact with the Yamashitas.

“I was doubtful at the start as well, but after they showed us their IDs, I’m forced to believe that they’re the real deal,” muttered Suke.

“How truly strange... I’ve never heard of anyone contacting the Yamashitas before... Gerald’s a Westoner, no? How did he even manage to build such a close relationship with that family?” said Suijin, puzzled out of his mind. What an improbable situation!

As Suijin continued struggling to accept Suke's unbelievable statement, Suke clenched his fist before replying, "While I don't know how all this is possible, I assure you that everything I said was true. Hell, those Yamashitas are still standing right outside my manor! If you don't believe me, send some of your men over to have a look! Better yet, just contact the others from my family! They all witnessed the same thing!"

"I don't think any of this is staged, patriarch. Remember, that old man from the Yamashita family helped Gerald and Fujiko escape back then. With that said, I truly believe that Gerald has a relationship with the Yamashitas..." whispered Ryugu after leaning closer to Suijin.

Upon hearing that, Suijin pondered about it for a moment before eventually saying, "Regardless, feel free to stay at my place for the next few days. If everything you've said is true, then I guarantee that I'll get rid of Gerald for you! However, about the benefits..."

"Half! I just need half of the benefits that we previously agreed upon!" declared Suke.

"You have my word, then! Now go get some rest as I further investigate this affair!" replied Suijin.

In the beginning, he had planned to cooperate with Suke, presenting Suke some benefits in return, in order to annex the Futabas since their family was currently in decline. However, things took a turn when Gerald stepped in. With that in mind, as long as they managed to get rid of Gerald, they would surely be able to resume their plan without any trouble.

This was what Ryugu had hoped to achieve this entire time...!

Chapter 2192

Regardless, after hearing that, Suke bowed toward Suijin before leaving the area.

Once Suke was gone, Suijin slammed his fist against the table before growling, "Who exactly is Gerald?!"

Why the hell does he have contacts within the Yamashita family?! And where the hell are Endo and Izumi!”

This was supposed to be an easy affair! How had things gotten this complicated? Whatever the case was, until they got rid of Gerald, nothing could proceed!

Upon hearing Endo and Izumi’s names, Ryugu was momentarily stunned. After all, he hadn’t told Suijin about their disappearances yet! Now that he knew that he couldn’t hide it any longer, Ryugu gulped as he stuttered, “T-they...”

Watching as Suijin raised a slight brow clearly confused by his hesitance, Ryugu shook his head before saying, “T-they’ve... Well... They’ve gone missing ever since I previously sent them out to assassinate Gerald...! I have a feeling that they’re currently trapped in the Futaba manor, and I’m still thinking of ways to get them out!”

“What? Both of them got captured despite them working together...?!” yelled Suijin as he abruptly got to his feet before pointing at Ryugu.

“I-indeed...!” replied Ryugu as he gritted his teeth.

“Astonishing...! What absolute misfortune our family is under to have accidentally offended such a powerful individual...! Again, who exactly is Gerald and how is he so inhumanly strong? What’s his status like in Weston? We’re talking about someone who’s able to contact the Yamashitas here!” grumbled Suijin, slowly sitting down again as he pondered the situation.

After thinking about it for a bit, Suijin realized that all this began when Saburo was trying to assassinate Fujiko and Gerald stepped in to save her, which was odd since they weren’t trying to offend him in the first place. While it was true that the Hanyus had previously received Weston assassination missions as well, Suijin was sure that each of those assassinations had been perfect, with zero traces left behind.

Whatever the case was, Suijin ended up with two possible conclusions. Either Gerald had come here

specifically to have his revenge on them, or they simply had terrible luck for accidentally bumping into him at such a critical moment.

“Well... even after thorough investigation, it doesn't seem that Gerald has any familial background in Weston... He just... seems to be an average Joe who's never even been to Japan before! Quite honestly, it's highly improbable that he's ever contacted the Yamashitas before this...!” explained Ryugu.

“Impossible!” yelled Suijin as he slammed his fist onto his table again. Having no discernible background and never coming to Japan before... How the hell had Gerald become this powerful then? Besides, the Yamashitas wouldn't have helped Gerald on a whim! Suijin was pretty sure that the Yamashitas didn't deal with families outside Japan, so there was simply no way they would have helped him without meeting him prior!

“U-unfortunately that's all we got...!” muttered Ryugu who was equally in disbelief, though what else could he think with what little they knew?

“Keep investigating! Gerald can't be as simple as he seems! However, if you still can't get anything about his background, don't lay a finger on him first. Remember, he has the Yamashitas on his side now, and that family is not to be trifled with!” replied Suijin as he began puffing on another cigarette.

Nodding in response, Ryugu paused for a moment lowering his voice as he asked, “Um... Patriarch...? Are there really ninjas in that family...?”

Though he was the leader of the assassin team, Ryugu knew very little about the Yamashitas outside of the rumors he heard.

Chapter 2193

“What? Haven't you already entered their territory?” asked Suijin with a slight frown.

“Well, while it’s true that that old man was extremely strong, I couldn’t tell whether he was a ninja... After all, I’ve never met a ninja before so I can’t really tell them apart from regular people...” muttered Ryugu, who knew better than to assume that the old man was a ninja just because he had immense speed.

“Then investigate further into this. However, only make your move once you’ve completed your investigation! Remember, the stakes are very high this time around! Also, while I won’t be arguing about Endo and Izumi’s case for the moment, you’d best bring them back safely or I’ll replace you from your role as leader of the assassin team with someone more capable!” growled Suijin as he glared at Ryugu.

“C-copy that...!” replied Ryugu who got so frightened that his forehead was drenched in cold sweat in no time.

...

Meanwhile, Kai had just awoken back at his manor. After making himself look a bit more presentable, he entered the living room before sitting on a couch and muttering, “That Vulture claimed that he would take care of Gerald in two days... It’s now the third day yet I haven’t heard a word from him yet...!”

Upon hearing that, his confidant who was standing close by couldn’t help but reply, “Do you think that he could’ve... you know... ended up like Endo and Izumi...?”

“Can it!” growled Kai as he glared at his new confidant. Though his previous confidant never spoke out of turn, due to that little incident, Kai had paid him a few thousand dollars to get lost. Unfortunately, that meant that Kai had to allow this idiot to be his next confidant!

“While you may be mad to hear it, the possibility exists... After all, the Hanyus remained silent the entire time till we eventually inquired with them about Gerald. If you ask me, Vulture’s behavior is strikingly similar to what they did...” muttered the subordinate who was well aware that he was stepping out of line. However, not only was he a straightforward person, but he was also here to guide Kai under the patriarch’s orders. This explained his urge to reveal anything that he thought of the situation.

“I know, I know, there’s no need for you to remind me!” growled Kai. He, for one, was no fool, and he had been worrying about this scenario ever since Vulture set off on his mission. With that in mind, it made sense why he would get annoyed when he was reminded of it.

After his subordinate went silent, Kai gestured for him to leave before fishing his phone out and dialing Vulture’s number.

However, when he couldn’t contact Vulture even after three tries, Kai’s worries began to intensify. While it was true that Kai didn’t have to worry about his identity being exposed even if Vulture was taken down, it still meant that Gerald had managed to take Vulture down...! If someone from the top ten assassin list couldn’t take Gerald down, then what hope did Kai have to get rid of him...?!

While Vulture’s death hadn’t been confirmed, Kai didn’t even dare to think about the implications if that really was the case. However, Kai did start regretting offending Gerald this much...!

Though Kai was in a pickle, Gerald, on the other hand, was as cool as a cucumber at the moment. After all, ever since he revealed his relationship with the Yamashitas, all the Futabas had been fawning over him, clearly trying to get into his good books...

Chapter 2194

The second the meeting ended, all the other Futabas began flocking around Gerald, handing him their business cards as they said, “We’ve truly had some misunderstandings in the past, mister! But putting that aside, we’ll now be counting on you to revive our family’s glory!”

“Yeah, what he said! Speaking of which, here’s my contact number! If you require any help in the future, don’t hesitate to call! I’ll be sure to help as best as I can!”

“Make sure to take my number too!”

Smiling subtly in response at everyone's overenthusiasm, Gerald simply accepted the cards as he replied, "One at a time, I'll be taking all your cards. Don't worry..."

Gerald, for one, didn't really know the other Futabas by name, at least previously. Now that he had their name cards, he would know who to look for should the Futabas require help getting rid of 'problematic individuals' in the future.

Either way, since everyone was surrounding Gerald, Takuya who was still sitting on the main seat ended up getting completely ignored.

It was only after everyone was done handing out their business cards, when they finally turned to look at Takuya again before saying, "Well, we'll be taking our leave first, patriarch. We'd rather not disturb you any longer. By the way, if you ever require any help from us in future, just say the word. In times of trouble, we Futabas should and will stick together!"

Unable to bear how pretentious his family was being, the pained Takuya who could now distinguish the family members who sincerely cared about the family and those who just wanted to use the family to gain more wealth simply yelled, "Just leave already!"

With that said, it took only ten minutes for everyone except for those who were already living in the manor to leave.

Now that everyone was gone, Takuya heaved a heavy sigh.

Seeing how unhappy Takuya was, Gerald smiled as he slipped the name cards into his pocket before saying, "Don't bother about them, patriarch. I'll deal with them later on."

Once all the current troubles were out of the way, Gerald promised himself that he would kick all of those insincere family members out of this family...! Gerald, for one, believed that Takuya would agree with his decision.

Regardless, upon hearing Gerald's statement, Takuya couldn't help but worry. After all, he knew his family's true colors best, and he didn't want Gerald falling for their insincere fawning. With that in mind, Takuya was prompted to reply, "Do be careful around those exploiters. They're definitely just trying to get on your good side to reap benefits from you! Just so you know,

Had you not shown evidence that the Yamashitas were on your side, I'm sure they wouldn't have been this easily satisfied."

Chuckling in response, Gerald casually said, "If they truly manage to take advantage of me, then you can be sure that I'm not the real Gerald!"

Nodding in response, Takuya was then prompted to ask, "I'm glad to hear that... Putting them aside, how are you planning to deal with the Hanyus?"

Despite being the Futaba patriarch, Takuya had gotten used to asking for Gerald's opinion on things, especially when it involved major things like these. Honestly, Gerald now felt like the true backbone of the Futaba family.

Either way, upon hearing that, Gerald asked in return, "Well... any suggestions, patriarch?"

"Let's hear your opinion first," replied Takuya with a smile as he gestured for Gerald to proceed.

"Well, I plan to meet up with the Hanyus and talk to them face to face in hopes of getting some things clear," replied Gerald after thinking about it for a while.

"...Come again? You're attempting to talk things out with the family that's resorted to assassination so many times?" said Takuya as his smile turned into a frown.

“That’s honestly part of the reason why I plan to meet them in person,” replied Gerald with a nod.

Upon hearing that, Takuya figured that Gerald must have devised a solid plan. With that in mind, Takuya eventually said, “Alright, let’s go with that, then. I’ll make sure to send some of my men over to keep you safe. Since the Yamashitas are on your side, it’ll do you good to bring some of them along. Don’t worry about the manor, I’m pretty confident that we’ll remain safe

Till your return.”

“I’ll have to disagree there, patriarch. After all, I only plan to bring two people with me,” replied Gerald as he waved his hand.

Chapter 2195

Rather than helping, Gerald believed that the ‘reinforcements’ would only end up being burdens that he needed to protect once they were there.

“Who will you be bringing along?” asked Takuya.

“Just Fujiko and Aiden. Both of them are plenty enough,” replied Gerald as he turned to look at the duo that he had just mentioned.

Upon hearing that, Aiden who would follow Gerald to the ends of earth, regardless of how dangerous it was immediately declared, “We’re ready when you are!”

“I see... Well, Fujiko has my approval,” said Takuya with a nod, believing that Gerald would keep his daughter safe.

Nodding in response, Fujiko then got to her feet as she asked, “When are we heading off?”

“Well, rather than wait around any longer, I say we meet them now. As the old Weston saying goes, ‘strike while the iron’s hot’. Let’s see how the Hanyus respond to our little visit,” replied Gerald with a faint smile.

Shortly after, the trio left the manor. Though they left Master Ghost behind, Gerald was sure that the Yamashitas were strong enough to keep him safe. Even if another assassin from the assassin list attempted to launch an attack, Gerald had faith that the Yamashitas were capable of holding them back, at least till he returned.

Whatever the case was, it was about three hours later under Fujiko’s guidance when the trio’s car finally arrived at the entrance of the Hanyu manor. Once the car was parked, Gerald who had a cigarette in his mouth got out before heading toward the entrance.

Looking at Gerald, the guard at the entrance was prompted to ask, “Do you have an appointment?”

“Not at all. Either way, just report that Gerald’s come for a visit,” replied Gerald in a commanding, yet immensely charismatic tone.

“C-come again...? You’re Gerald...?” stuttered the guard as he took two steps back. Though he wasn’t anyone noteworthy in the family, even he had heard rumors about Gerald, the immensely strong Westoner!

“Is it that unbelievable?” asked Gerald as he flicked some ash off his cigarette.

“... Please wait a moment as I report this!” replied the guard who didn’t dare to make Gerald wait for a second longer as he bolted into the manor.

At that moment, Suijin was having his dinner in the living room. Before him, stood Ryugu and the leaders of the other assassin teams, all of them patiently waiting for Suijin to finish his meal so that they could start planning Endo and Izumi’s rescue mission.

Just as Suijin was about to take another bite of his dinner, the guard from earlier came busting into the room nearly tripping in the process as he exclaimed, “P-patriarch...! There’s a man outside who claims to be Gerald...!”

“What?!” yelled Suijin as he tossed his rice ball onto the floor!

“It’s probably just someone looking for trouble! As if the real Gerald would ever come here on his own accord! That’d just be courting death! Send that person away immediately!” sneered one of the team leaders in a disdainful tone.

“...Hold it. There’s no way an ordinary person would even know about our grudge against Gerald. Even if they somehow found out about it, why would they willingly put themselves in trouble?” said Ryugu as he quickly grabbed onto the guard before he could run off to do as he was told.

After a brief pause, Suijin slowly sat down again as he ordered, “Regardless of whether he’s the real Gerald or not, I’d like to meet him. Let him in!”

Watching as the guard quickly nodded before rushing off, Suijin then thought for a while before facing Ryugu and adding, “Get all the members of the second team over. If it really is Gerald, then he must be extremely well prepared! With that said, remain vigilant at all times! With any luck, we’ll be able to force him to release Endo and Izumi...!”

Chapter 2196

Nodding in response, Ryugu immediately began heading off to do as he was ordered. However, before leaving the room, he turned to look at the other team leaders before declaring, “While I’m away, make sure to guard the patriarch well. Gerald’s extremely strong, and believe me when I say that even if all of you attack him at the same time, he’ll probably remain unscathed! With that said, if anything happens to the patriarch, I’ll be sure to have your heads!”

“We’ll be vigilant, team leader!” replied a few of the team leaders, prompting Ryugu to resume his task.

Moving back to Gerald and his party, they soon saw the guard returning to let them in. As they were led deeper into the area, none of them bothered to look around.

After all, traditional Japanese manors like this looked pretty much the same as any other. Whatever the case was, from the looks of it, they were headed to the innermost area of the manor.

Though Gerald didn’t show it, he had honestly been vigilant ever since they stepped foot into the manor. After all, he was well aware that this was still the home of an assassin family. Knowing that it was better to be safe than sorry, Gerald had made sure to spread his Herculean Primordial Spirit around to get a better grasp of his surroundings. It was also because of that that Gerald couldn’t help but smirk.

After all, he could already sense the presence of a group of people about thirty feet away from them who were rapidly approaching them. From what he could assume, this was the Hanyu family’s way of preparing to deal with him. Of course, Gerald didn’t tell Aiden or Fujiko about this.

Either way, the trio was soon greeted by the sight of a row of villas...

Briefly glancing around, Gerald soon yelled, “Is anyone there?”

“But of course! Still, what a surprise that you’d pay my family a visit at such an hour!” declared a voice that emanated from one of the villas. Shortly after, Suijin and a few of the team leaders showed themselves.

Though Suijin gave off the impression that he was a courteous person, he had honestly been wary of Gerald this entire time. Still, since Gerald was daring enough to enter his territory, Suijin was definitely going to make it difficult for Gerald to leave. Hell, if things went swimmingly, this could be his chance of getting rid of the boy!

Regardless, after a brief silence, Gerald turned to look at Aiden and Fujiko before saying, "Shall we?"

Upon hearing that, Suijin couldn't help but frown slightly. To think that Gerald would just ignore him! Still, he quickly reverted to his polite façade as he replied, "Yes, please, come in!"

As Gerald sat cross legged in the reception room, Suijin realized that his family's assassins whom he had requested to come over earlier were already closing in. Finding solace in that, Suijin then straightened his back before asking, "Now then... To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"Hmm? I was just passing by so I figured why not pay your family a visit. Besides, I'm pretty sure there's a misunderstanding between us, so why not take this chance to talk things out?" replied Gerald who looked much more relaxed in comparison. For those who didn't know any better, they'd probably assume that it was Suijin that had entered Gerald's territory.

"I agree. For one, I believe that Endo and Izumi are currently being locked up in the Futaba manor, correct?" asked Suijin as he narrowed his eyes, a faint smile on his face...

"That's correct," replied Gerald.

Taking a deep breath, Suijin then said, "Then please release them. The two are extremely important family members."

"I'm afraid I can't do that. In case you weren't aware, they attempted to assassinate me. With that said, after taking them down, I handed them to the Futaba family's patriarch so that he could interrogate them. After all, it's only fair for me to want to know who sent them over. Regardless, though we were initially planning to let them off after they told us who they worked for, neither of them said a word, even after continuously being tortured."

“With that said, both of them are currently on the verge of death. I’m afraid you’ll have to bring stretchers along if you truly wish to rescue them. Otherwise, they’ll probably not make it,” replied Gerald as he stared Suijin directly in the eye.

“... I-is that so...” replied Suijin, his hands already trembling slightly as he desperately attempted to keep his cool.

“Release them, you mother*cker! Otherwise, you won’t be leaving this place alive!” roared Ryugu as he rushed into the room!

Since he was the one who had sent Endo and Izumi out on the mission without Suijin’s knowledge, Ryugu knew that he was going to be held responsible for whatever happened to them. With that said, as long as they were still alive, he would probably just have to endure a punishment or two. However, if they were dead, there was a high chance that he would be too...!

Either way, upon seeing Ryugu rush over, Aiden immediately got to his feet! Within seconds, the two were already exchanging dozens of blows!

Sensing that Aiden was no pushover, Suijin quickly scowled, “Ryugu! Step down!”

Upon hearing that, the now gasping Ryugu immediately took a few steps back. To think that not only had he failed to gain the upper hand against Aiden, but he was almost hit a few times as well!

Secretly pleased to see that Aiden had managed to remain unscathed, Gerald then placed his hands on his knees before looking at Suijin with a smile as he asked, “Now then... Since the interrogation didn’t work, I may as well ask straight from the source. Tell me, why would Endo and Izumi suddenly try to assassinate me? As far as I’m concerned, I’ve never had any beef with them. Hell, the night they attempted that assassination was the first time I met them! Either way, do explain why they came after me.”

“I wasn’t aware of their actions at the time, so I can’t say for sure. Had I known that they were after your

head, I would've definitely tried to stop them!" replied Suijin who knew that playing dumb was his only way out of this.

"I see... Could you also be imaware of the assassination attempt on Miss Futaba then?" asked Gerald.

"With all due respect, that's a matter between the Hanyus and the Futabas, mister. As nothing but a guest, don't you think you lack the right to ask about such things?" replied Suijin who's expression had gotten slightly ugly. He couldn't answer any of Gerald's questions at all...!

"Point taken," replied Gerald with a brief nod.

Shaking his head, Suijin then gestured at one of his subordinates before ordering, "Get us some tea!"

A short while later, Gerald was prompted to ask, "Actually, there's one more thing I'd like to confirm. You see, back when I was at the Japanese military training grounds a few days ago, I was attacked by an assassin from the assassin list who's probably quite high-ranked. With that said, I was wondering if you were the ones who sent him after me."

While Gerald was pretty sure that Kai was the one who had hired that assassin, he wanted to catch the Hanyus off guard.

As expected, upon hearing that, Suijin and Ryugu immediately yelled, "Impossible!"

"Oh? Then why did he tell me that you were the ones who hired him?" fibbed Gerald even though he could already confirm based on their reactions that they weren't involved with that assassin.

"... Mister, we're an assassin family. Hiring another assassin to do our job would be absolutely humiliating!" explained Suijin in resignation.

Chapter 2198

After saying that, however, Suijin couldn't help but look at Ryugu. While he definitely hadn't hired that assassin, it didn't mean that Ryugu couldn't have done the deed. After all, he had already sent Endo and Izumi out on that mission without his knowledge.

"Is that so..." replied Gerald as he turned to look at Ryugu as well.

Realizing that they were both staring at him, Ryugu couldn't help but grit his teeth. Suijin's distrust toward him now was all thanks to Gerald! With that in mind, he then glared at the youth before growling, "I didn't do it..! I'd never do such a humiliating thing! Now cut the cr*p and return Endo and Izumi to us already!"

"Feel free to take them away! After all, keeping them in the Futaba manor is pretty pointless now. Oh, and don't forget the stretchers!" replied Gerald as he casually shrugged.

"You...!" hissed Ryugu in utter resentment. Endo and Izumi were both mighty Hanyu assassins! If they truly ended up dying, then Ryugu would need at least ten more years to raise two similar leaders, and that only applied if the ones he trained were naturally talented assassins...!

Though Suijin was equally as angry since he was the patriarch, he kept his emotions concealed as he asked, "... Allow me to ask again. Why have you come here today, mister?"

"As I've said, I just happened to pass by, so I figured why not pay your family a visit," replied Gerald in a casual tone.

"Nobody would buy that, mister. Look, I get along better with straightforward people. With that said, if you still refuse to say a thing, I implore you to just leave already," sneered Suijin.

Laughing in response, Gerald then replied, "You? Straightforward? Would a straightforward person send

assassins over to kill me and miss Futaba?”

Frowning, Suijin then said, “Are you still trying to get an explanation?”

“I’m glad you’re capable of reading between the lines,” replied Gerald who wanted to resolve the grudges between the Hanyus and Futabas before dealing with the Kanagawas.

“As I’ve previously said, this is a feud between my family and the Futabas. Since you’re merely a guest, it’d do you good not to get involved in this. As for why we attacked you, let’s just say that it was a mistake on our part!” growled Suijin as he continued to suppress his rage, not wanting to accidentally infuriate Gerald.

After all, Suijin knew for a fact that the assassin team outside wouldn’t be able to take Gerald on if the boy really wanted them dead. Following that, his life would be next on the line.

“A mistake, you say... Well, if that truly is the case, then I’ll be able to say this next part much easier. On behalf of the Futaba family, I hereby declare that we won’t provoke the Hanyus from this day onward! In return, I hope that you’ll cease your ulterior motives and stop coveting after the Futabas, patriarch! Deal?” asked Gerald as he raised a slight brow.

“Deal!” declared Suijin without the slightest hesitation, much to Gerald’s surprise.

“... Well, then. Since you’ve agreed to it, we’ll see how things play out. I warn you, however. If any of you even dare lay a finger on the Futabas, I won’t let you off that easily! Hell, even if you send someone to kill one of their chickens, my response will be the same!”

Chapter 2199

Following that, Gerald laughed heartily before getting to his feet and saying, “Alright, let’s head back. We’re already an eyesore to them by this point!”

Nodding in response, Aiden and Fujiko then followed closely behind him. However, before they left, Aiden made sure to roughly brush his shoulder against Ryugu's, causing Ryugu to almost fall!

"You... !" growled Ryugu as he turned to glare at Aiden.

Aiden, however, paid him no notice and simply walked out with Gerald and Fujiko.

Once the trio was no longer in sight, Ryugu who had been actively suppressing his rage this entire time immediately ran toward Suijin before asking, "Patriarch! Why did you just let them leave like that...?"

Snorting in response, Suijin then scoffed, "Why would you want them to stay? Are you planning to treat them to dinner or something?"

Honestly, if it wasn't for the fact that Ryugu was an important family member whom Suijin couldn't easily replace, he would've driven Ryugu away ages ago.

"With all due respect, patriarch, I had a small team lying in wait to ambush them! As long as you ordered it s to attack, my men would've instantly rushed in to subdue them!" exclaimed Ryugu as he clenched his fist, unable to accept that he had missed yet another chance to take Gerald down.

Glaring at Ryugu, Suijin simply scoffed, "Subdue? You couldn't even defeat that special forces soldier! Do you honestly think you can subdue Gerald? Just think about it You, of all people, should know how strong Endo and Izumi can get when they work together. They were able to stealthily take down a terrorist organization, for heaven's sake! Yet what happened when they attempted to assassinate Gerald? Not only did he manage to take both of them down, but he barely has a scratch on him! It's clear as day that his strength is far beyond yours! If he really wanted us dead, we'd all be nothing but a puddle of flesh and blood within minutes!"

Watching as Suijin then sighed before starting to pace back and forth in the reception room, Ryugu who was still unwilling to just accept all this then replied, "But we can't just agree with all this...! If we really

do as he says, then all our plans in the past few years will be for naught!”

Ryugu, for one, had invested a lot in the plan to take over the Futaba family since Suijin had ordered him to do most of the research. With that in mind, it made sense why he was so unwilling to just go with Gerald’s whims.

“Naturally, I only agreed so that he’d leave for now. Regardless, we need to be careful when we make our next move. Things should go fine as long as Gerald doesn’t find out about what we’ve done. Speaking of which, I want all of you to lay low in the next few days. I have zero doubts that Gerald will be keeping a close eye on us for quite a while, and since he even has the Yamashitas on his side, we really can’t afford to offend him,” muttered Suijin.

Understanding how powerless they were, Ryugu was forced to nod as he replied, “... Understood!”

“Good. Also, I’ll need you to find some time to get Endo and Izumi back. Though they probably won’t be capable of participating in any further assassination missions, they can still serve as mentors for our other assassins. At the very least, it’s better than keeping them locked up in the Futaba manor,” said Suijin, who just wanted to get some rest now.

Clenching his fists at the mention of those two, Ryugu then growled, “... Got it!”

Meanwhile, Suke who had been anxiously waiting for Ryugu’s return in his guest room couldn’t help but fear that the Futabas would find out that he was here.

Chapter 2200

Upon hearing knocks on his door, Suke immediately opened it. Seeing that it was Ryugu, Suke then tugged him into his room, closing the door behind him before asking, “You’re finally here! So, what did the patriarch say? Just so you know, we can still discuss the benefits! As long as Gerald dies, I won’t even mind taking a third of the benefits! If that isn’t enough, a fifth will do...!”

Suke was rightfully desperate for Gerald's death. After all, he knew that as long as Gerald remained alive, it would be too shameful for him to ever face the other Futabas again.

To Suke's dismay, however, Ryugu simply responded by lighting a cigarette after taking a seat and saying, "Gerald's just left."

"... Huh? Well, why didn't you stop him, then? And why did he come over in the first place?" replied Suke, clearly panicking as he quickly stuck his head out the window.

Instantly pulling him back in, Ryugu immediately scowled in a hushed tone, "What the hell are you doing? If Gerald and his party see you here, we'll be in hot soup!"

"What am I doing? What are you doing?! Gerald was already in the manor! You could've just sent some of your assassins to finish him off, no...?" grumbled Suke, feeling slightly dispirited that they had missed such a prime opportunity to strike! Who knew when they were going to get a chance like this again!

"What the hell do you even know...?" growled Ryugu who didn't want to bother explaining the situation to such an idiot.

"Regardless, tell me how long it'll take for you to finish Gerald off," muttered Suke who couldn't be bothered about the details or benefits anymore. He just wanted Gerald dead!

"Unfortunately, I can't provide a specific answer to that," replied Ryugu as he shook his head while closing the window.

"What?! As if the Hanyus would have trouble taking Gerald down!" scoffed Suke before laughing coldly.

"Oh really? Just so you know, we've already lost two team leaders in our pursuit of killing Gerald...! The only reason we allowed him to walk off is because we can't get rid of him that easily! We need a better plan first! So just shut up and behave already! Have some patience!" growled Ryugu who was already in

a bad mood before Suke further infuriated him.

“Fine, then! If you won’t get rid of him, I’ll just get someone else to do the deed!” scowled the equally short fused Suke as he turned to leave.

Squinting his eyes as he grabbed Suke by his coat, Ryugu then asked, “And where do you think you’re going?”

“I’m leaving the manor of course!” scoffed Suke as he struggled to break free, eventually opting to just slip his coat off instead.

To his dismay, Ryugu then swiftly blocked Suke’s path before saying in a low voice, “Negative. You already knew my family’s secrets, so you’ll have to remain here. Leaving isn’t an option.”

“What?! Am I being confined here?” replied Suke, his expression quickly changing.

“You’re free to assume that,” said Ryugu as his other hand moved to open the door behind him. Upon seeing the two subordinates who had been positioned right outside Suke’s room, Ryugu added, “Both of you. Keep an eye out on Mr. Futaba. If he dares to even leave this room, you have my permission to break his legs!”

“This is a cooperative relationship, Ryugu! What is the meaning of this...?!” exclaimed Suke who was terrified to hear what Ryugu just had to say. After all, while he had initially assumed that this place was going to be his refuge, as it turned out, it wasn’t any less dangerous!

“It’s exactly as I said. Stay here, and I’ll serve you well with good food and drinks. Leave, however... well, you heard what I said,” sneered Ryugu in response.

Chapter 2201

Watching as the two subordinates then glared viciously at him looking like they were ready to pounce the second he disagreed, Suke could only yell, "H-how absolutely vile...!"

Following that, Suke immediately closed the door, knowing that he would die if he even attempted to leave. Thinking back, his death would probably be more beneficial to them. After all, not only would there be one less insider who knew about the Futaba targeting incident, but they'd also be free to take all the benefits for themselves!

Now that he finally realized all this, Suke was already regretting immediately rushing here after suffering through all that humiliation. Had he thought this through back then, he could've brought along two strong confidants with him! If that had happened, he wouldn't have ended up being cornered this pitifully!

Either way, after thinking about all this for a while, Suke sighed as he placed his hand on the table, hoping to get his phone and call someone to save him. However, when he couldn't feel anything there, Suke raised a slight brow as he turned to look at the table... only to realize that his phone was gone!

Slamming his fist onto the table, Suke guessed that Ryugu must have taken his phone away earlier! Now that he didn't have his phone anymore, Suke could no longer contact others...!

Ryugu, on the other hand, had walked quite a distance away by this point. Fishing out the phone that he had stolen from Suke, Ryugu then looked at it for a while before tossing it to the floor and stomping on it! It was only once the phone had snapped in half when Ryugu finally left, worry free.

As for the trio, they were already making their way back to the Futaba manor when Aiden who had honestly been prepared to go all out today couldn't help but ask, "So... Why didn't we get rid of them today...?"

Smiling subtly in response, Gerald simply replied, "They're an assassin family, Aiden. It won't be easy to truly get rid of them. Besides, I already left them a warning."

"Still... are we not going to get rid of them at some point?" muttered Aiden.

"Let's just see how things go first. If they behave themselves for a while, we can rethink taking them out. Besides, I'm still more interested in eliminating the Kanagawas first. If they don't behave themselves till I'm done with Kai and his family, however, then they'll be next in line!" explained Gerald.

Honestly, though he was earlier prepared to resolve everything once and for all, Gerald couldn't help but change his mind the second he entered the manor. As it turned out, he had underestimated how strong the Hanyus truly were. For one, he hadn't anticipated them to have so many assassins!

While he could definitely take care of them, Gerald was well aware that he'd need to use his Herculean Primordial Spirit. In other words, it would create a mess large enough for the entirety of Japan to realize that he had attacked the Hanyus, and he really didn't want this to end up becoming another Yanam situation.

...

With that in mind, Gerald figured that he would only deal with them once and for all after they made their third assassination attempt. Since they had already tried assassinating both him and Fujiko, they were left with only one last chance before he finally lashed back.

Chapter 2202

Once that third attempt happened, Gerald wouldn't play any more games. He was going to make sure he took out the Hanyu patriarch and Ryugu!

At that moment, Fujiko couldn't help but say, "Honestly, though... My family has truly brought you

endless trouble.”

After all, had Gerald not saved her back then, he wouldn't have gotten involved in all this in the first place.

“No, no, who knows, I could require your help in the future,” replied Gerald with a subtle smile as he waved his hand, fully aware that he was instilling the thought into her.

Nodding in response, Fujiko immediately replied, “No matter what your request is, I'll be sure to help you out!”

Simply laughing heartily in response, Gerald then said, “I'll be taking your word for it, then!”

Shortly after, the trio arrived at the manor. After sending Fujiko back to her room, Gerald told Aiden and Master Ghost to come to his one.

Once the two were seated around the table in Gerald's room, Master Ghost couldn't help but raise a slight brow as he watched Gerald carefully close the door and windows. With how serious Gerald was being, Master Ghost was prompted to ask, “What's the matter?”

“It's nothing too serious, honestly. I just want to talk about our next move. Speaking of which, I've already warned the Hanyu patriarch not to try anything funny anymore. If they behave, I'll properly deal with them after a while. If they don't, however, I'll wipe them off the face of the earth! Regardless, I'm now going to focus on taking someone else out first,” replied Gerald as he joined them around the table.

“Hmm? Who?” asked Aiden and Master Ghost at the same time.

“Kai, of course. I still believe that he's the one who sent that high ranking assassin after me. With that said, if he's only going to continue causing me trouble, I may as well eliminate him before he has the chance to hire another assassin,” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes. If he didn't kill Kai while he

could, Gerald was honestly worried that the next assassin he sent would be even stronger than Vulture.

“Just let me do the deed! Don’t worry, you’ll see his corpse by morning!” volunteered Aiden.

“Don’t kill him straight off the bat. Bring him to the abandoned house at the back of the manor instead. I still want to interrogate him about some things,” replied Gerald with a nod as he took a cigarette out before tossing it to Aiden.

Catching the cigarette, Aiden who was always enthusiastic to do such missions immediately declared, “Hell yeah!”

Following that, Gerald watched as Aiden drove off before he eventually began walking to the back of the Futaba manor. Gerald, for one, trusted Aiden’s strength. The boy was, after all, a special forces soldier from Weston. With that in mind, kidnapping Kai was pretty much a cinch for him.

Either way, as the abandoned houses came into view, Gerald remembered Takuya mentioning that these used to be warehouses. Back during the Futaba family’s heyday, these warehouses were supposedly constantly filled with goods. Every night, there would be dozens of trucks all lined up, waiting to deliver the goods. However, when their family started declining, the warehouses eventually became emptier and emptier.

About four years had passed since then, leaving these warehouses completely abandoned among the tall grass. Some of them were so dilapidated that huge chunks of them had already crumbled.

Shaking his head, Gerald then opened the door of one of the sturdier looking warehouses... only to instantly be greeted by a cloud of dust! Caught off guard, Gerald ended up coughing for quite a while before he eventually activated his Herculean Primordial Spirit. Sending a pulse of energy out of his body, the energy was apparently enough to blow away any remaining dust in the area.

Looking at how dust free the warehouse now was, Gerald couldn't help but chuckle as he said, "Not bad... So it can be used for cleaning up as well!"

Following that, Gerald found a sturdy box to sit on before closing his eyes... As he thought about Yearning Island, two hours quickly came and went. Gerald only snapped out of it when he heard footsteps in the distance, accompanied by someone yelling, "Unhand me! Don't you know who I am?! I'll call it even if you let me free and leave Japan immediately! Otherwise, you'll be dead by morning!"

"Cut the cr*p and just get in already!"

Familiar with both of those voices, Gerald then watched as Aiden tossed Kai into the warehouse. Illuminated by moonlight, the pitiful Kai who was in pain slowly crawled to his feet before pointing at Aiden and yelling, "W-who even are you?! We've never met before! I'm sure you've kidnapped the wrong person!"

"While that's true for him, the same can't be said for us, can it now, Mr. Kanagawa?" replied Gerald from within the darkness.

Recognizing that voice anywhere, Kai immediately turned around, shuddering as he stuttered, "G-Gerald...?! What are you doing here...?"

"Why wouldn't I be? After all, I was the one who sent him out to get you!" replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

Piecing together what was happening and realizing that he wasn't going to get out of this place in one piece, Kai was prompted to ask, "W-what are you planning to do with me?"

"Nothing much, really. I just wanted to ask you a few questions. You see, a few days ago, an assassin attempted to take me out when I was still on the training grounds. You sent him after me, didn't you?" replied Gerald as he shook his head before glaring at Kai, hoping to see his reaction.

As expected, Kai instantly went pale upon hearing that. After hesitating for a moment, he eventually replied, "That has nothing to do with me!"

"Is that so? Because as far as I'm concerned, the assassin admitted that you were the one who hired him."

"Bullsh*t!" retorted Kai who knew for a fact that Vulture was professional enough to never expose his identity, even when he was seconds from death!

"So that's your response? I see... I see..." replied Gerald, his tone as composed as ever.

Forcing on a calm façade, Kai then gulped before asking, "B-besides... Why would I send an assassin after you?"

"Hmm? Don't you want me dead?" replied Gerald.

Chapter 2204

"Of course I-!"

Realizing that he had accidentally declared his true thoughts, Kai quickly bit his tongue before clearing his throat as he said, "... That was a slip of the tongue. While I don't like you, I don't hate you to the point of wanting you dead either! The conflict between us just isn't that serious! Speaking of which, I'm not interested in Fujiko anymore! If you want her so much, you can have her!"

"Cut the cr*p, Mr. Kanagawa. Look, there's only the two of us here. Tell me the truth, and maybe I'll let you off. Mind you, this is only because I'm paying respect to your father," replied Gerald as he gestured for Aiden to leave them be for now.

“B-but I never hired anyone to assassinate you...!” muttered Kai as he averted his gaze. Kai, for one, didn’t believe Gerald at all. After all, he was currently trapped someplace where his screams for help couldn’t be heard! With that in mind, he was sure that once he admitted to hiring Vulture, he was definitely going to die here today...! Besides, he was still pretty sure that Vulture hadn’t betrayed him.

“Is that so...?” replied Gerald as he shook his head before narrowing his eyes at the terrified man.

Watching as Gerald then lit a cigarette before squatting before him, Kai gulped as he stuttered, “L-look, if you don’t have the evidence that I hired the assassin, then you’re essentially just kidnapping me! The law will be after your head!”

“Oh? So you do know a bit about the law. Unfortunately for you, the Japanese law can’t protect you here,” replied Gerald with a smug smile before he got to his feet and stomped on Kai’s hand!

“I-it hurts...!” cried Kai, now more terrified than ever.

After all, nobody had even dared to bully him before as a child! This harsh treatment was unlike anything he had ever experienced before...!

When Gerald intensified the force of his foot and Kai attempted to withdraw his hand, he quickly realized that aside from the excruciating pain he couldn’t even move his fingers anymore! Now lying on the ground almost completely paralyzed from pain,

Kai raised his head, glaring at Gerald as he growled, “W-what the hell are you trying to achieve, Gerald...?! I’m the young master of the Kanagawa family...! If you dare do anything else to me, you’ll surely pay a heavy price!”

Ignoring Kai’s threats, Gerald simply increased the force of his foot, sending even more jolts of pain running down Kai’s arm...!

Unable to bear the pain any longer, Kai who felt that all the bones in his hand would shatter if he didn't act quick cried out, "I... I'll say it! I'll tell you everything I know...!"

"Go on," replied Gerald as he slowly lifted his leg, his eyebrow raised the entire time.

"I-it's true that I hired that assassin... His name is Vulture, and he's ranked seventh in the international assassin list...!" whimpered Kai as he held onto his aching hand.

"Oh? Seventh, you say? You must really want me dead," replied Gerald, feeling slightly surprised. No wonder he sensed that Vulture was a little too strong to be a regular assassin back then.

Chapter 2205

"W-what even is the point of saying all this now... Haven't you already gotten rid of Vulture?" muttered Kai who was pretty sure that Vulture had been defeated since Gerald was sitting here so casually.

"I have. Regardless, do tell me what else you've done," replied Gerald, glad that Kai was finally talking.

"W-well... before Vulture, I also hired Ryugu to handle you, and I think he sent Endo and Izumi over... They're still locked up in here, right...?" said Kai as he looked at Gerald. Now that he had already mentioned Vulture, there was no point hiding the rest of what he had done. With any luck, he wouldn't have to die here at such a young age.

"... Oh? You were the one who sent them?" replied Gerald, feeling slightly surprised. As it turned out, Kai had been working with the Hanyus this entire time without him knowing.

"It was... Either way, after you took Endo and Izumi down, Ryugu told me that he wouldn't go after you for quite a while... That's why I hired Vulture in the end, though I never expected you to kill him too..." muttered Kai as he sighed. If not even a top assassin could take Gerald down, then Kai knew that if he continued targeting Gerald, he was definitely going to be the one dead in the end...!

"I see... anything else?" asked Gerald.

"That's all!" cried out Kai, his hatred for Gerald now more immense than ever. Even so, Kai still valued his life more than his ego.

"Hmm... Very well, then. I'll trust you for the time being," replied Gerald who could tell from Kai's terrified expression that the boy wasn't lying.

"T-then... Can I leave now...?" asked Kai as he slowly got to his feet.

"Not so fast," replied Gerald as he grabbed Kai's arm before smiling as he suddenly intensified his grip! With a sickening 'snap' Kai's arm was broken clean in half, resulting in Kai wailing in agony...!

By the time Gerald finally let go, Kai's arm could only swing limply off his shoulder.

Watching as the trembling Kai who already had veins bulging on his forehead held tightly onto his aching arm, Gerald simply shook his head before looking Kai in the eyes as he said, "Consider this to be a warning. If you ever dare to lay a finger on me or the Futabas again, I'll be taking out every single member of your family. The Kanagawas will simply vanish off the face of the planet... Do I have myself clear?"

"L-loud and clear...!" whimpered Kai as he bolted out of there, afraid that Gerald would change his mind if he hung around any longer...!

Now that Kai was gone, Gerald couldn't help but sigh. Shortly after, Aiden entered and asked, "Are we really letting him off that easily...?"

Chapter 2206

"I've already given him a stern warning, so he shouldn't dare to make another move. Besides, keep in mind that he's still the youngest son of the Kanagawa family. We can't just get rid of someone with such a high status that easily," replied Gerald as he puffed on his cigarette.

"... So Why'd you say you were going to take down those two families this afternoon? In the end, you let both the Hanyus and Kanagawas go!" muttered Aiden with a sigh, making it clear that he had been expecting to fight this entire time.

"Oh, we'll definitely be getting rid of them, but not yet. Don't worry, when the time comes, I'll definitely ask you to come along," replied Gerald, who knew Aiden's personality well.

"... Promise?" said Aiden, his mood instantly improving.

"Have I ever lied to you? Either way, let's head back to get some rest first. We still have other important things to do tomorrow," replied Gerald as he threw his cigarette butt away before patting Aiden on the shoulder.

"... Oh? What things?"

"You'll find out tomorrow," replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

After a good night's rest, a refreshed Gerald was just about to leave his room... Only to realize that upon opening his door over ten people were standing there waiting for him!

Realizing that these were the individuals who had left the Futaba manor a few nights back, Gerald couldn't help but frown as he said, "And what are all of you doing here?"

Gerald, for one, didn't have a good impression of these people. Had it not been for the fact that he

didn't want to cause a mess here, he would've driven them out of this place as soon as he could!

"... Well, we came back to deal with some things, and since we haven't met in a while, we decided to pay you a visit since we were already here," explained one of the men as he forced a laugh."

"I see. Well, now that you've met me, do leave me be," replied Gerald as he attempted to close the door.

Grabbing onto the door to prevent Gerald from closing it, the same man then immediately exclaimed, "P-please wait a moment! The truth is, we're here to discuss something with you...!"

Feeling a slight headache coming, Gerald then asked, "...What's this really about...?"

Clearing his throat, the man replied, "... Well, we're here to explain ourselves... You see, we didn't stay in the manor back then since we didn't want to trouble the patriarch any more than we needed to. With that said, now that things are starting to look up again, we're considering moving back to help the Futaba family return to its former glory. So... if there's anything we can do to help, please tell us now, mister! We'll definitely do our best to fulfill what we can!"

"That's right, mister! We'll do whatever you tell us to!"

"Well said! As Futabas ourselves, we can't just allow our family to crumble!" declared the other Futabas with determined tones. If one didn't know any better, they'd surely be moved to hear how determined they were to better their family. Unfortunately for them, Gerald had already witnessed their true colors.

With that in mind, Gerald who didn't want to waste any more time talking to them simply replied, "Save the speech for the patriarch. I'm just a guest here, and it wouldn't be right for me to meddle in your family affairs."

“That... B-but the patriarch fully trusts you! With that said, I believe that we’re saying all this to the right person!” declared one of the other Futabas. After all, talking about all this to Takuya was just a waste of time and money! They were all just here to fawn on Gerald!

Chapter 2207

“You’re all seriously annoying, you know that? Before Gerald revealed his relationship with the Yamashitas, all of you simply wanted to kick him out so that you could leech off the family without any further delays. Are you seriously buttering him up now after what you’ve all done? Even an idiot could tell what you’re really trying to achieve!” scoffed Aiden as he walked down the hallway. He had come over to meet Gerald, and when he realized what was happening, he couldn’t help but mock those pitiful individuals.

“What was that?! Who the hell even are you?!”

“Must be some new servant or something!” yelled a few of the Futabas, angered by Aiden’s straightforwardness. After all, they of all people knew that every word he said was true!

Getting increasingly annoyed with them after watching them diss on Aiden, Gerald who wanted very badly to kick all of them out took in a deep breath before saying, “Aiden, come over here.”

Upon realizing that Aiden was with Gerald, the other Futabas immediately felt their jaws drop. To think that he was with Gerald! Now that they knew this, they couldn’t help but lower their heads in shame, regretting their previous attitude toward Aiden. Still, if they hadn’t retorted, that would’ve signified that what Aiden had said was true!

Regardless, Aiden was much more straightforward than Gerald. With that in mind, he simply replied, “just kick them out already. These people just want profit and it clearly shows! Besides, the patriarch has already warned us about them. If we aren’t careful, they’ll exploit us till we’re nothing but bare bones!”

“W-with all due respect, mister, we’re sincere in helping the family develop! The way we do things is just different! Remember, we’re Futabas as well! There’s no way we’d even dream of harming our family!”

declared another Futaba who knew better than to scowl back, now that he knew that Aiden was with Gerald.

“That’s quite enough. If all of you are this free, go get your breakfast together or something!” grumbled Gerald as he gestured for them to leave. After bumping into these idiots this early in the morning, Gerald was pretty sure that his mood would be down the entire day.

Just as Gerald was about to close the door again, the panicked Futabas instantly began yelling, “P-please don’t listen to him, Mr. Crawford...! We really are putting the family first! Just so you know, we’ve already done plenty to help the family in secret! If you’re interested, we can elaborate on what we’ve done!”

“Beat it!” growled Gerald as he glared at the annoying crowd, prompting them to take a few steps back in both fear and shock. Seeing his chance, Gerald then pulled Aiden into his room before slamming the door shut...!

After things quieted down, Aiden poured himself a glass of water downing it in one go before asking, “So... What the hell were they doing here?”

“How should I know? They were already waiting there the second I opened the door!” replied Gerald in a helpless tone. He really hadn’t expected them to be this crazy!

“How annoying! The patriarch should really consider disowning them from the family already! Keeping them around will only spell ruin for the Futabas!” scoffed Aiden in response.

“I believe that the patriarch knows how to appropriately deal with this. From what I can tell, he’s already planning on doing that once things calm down a bit. Either way, none of this concerns us. Remember, our goal is only to get the key to Yearning Island, nothing else,” replied Gerald, clearly still concerned about his sister and parents. The sooner he could save them, the better.

Chapter 2208

After a brief sigh, Gerald paused for a moment before turning to look at Aiden while asking, "... Actually, hold on. What are you doing here this early in the first place?"

"Huh? Didn't you say that we were doing something today? I'm here to ask you about it!" replied Aiden as he smacked his forehead. To think that those idiots had nearly caused him to forget why he was here!"

"Ah. Well, it's nothing much. I just wanted you to head someplace with me," explained Gerald as he got to his feet.

Watching as Gerald then put his coat on before opening the door, Aiden who quickly got up as well was prompted to ask, "Where to?"

"The Fareast Consortium. I previously gave them a hand, you see, so their chairman owes me a favor. Since the Futabas require help now, I may as well use this chance to get that favor done with," replied Gerald.

Either way, upon seeing Gerald step out, the Futabas from before who were just about to leave immediately encircled him again, though they made sure to keep their distance.

"Um... Mister- "

"You should be well aware of my relationship with the patriarch. One more word or step forward and I'll remove you from the family, no questions asked," growled Gerald as he glared at them.

Upon hearing that, everyone immediately went silent, knowing full well that Gerald wasn't kidding. Besides, since Takuya had obeyed Gerald's orders throughout that family meeting, it honestly felt like Gerald was the family's actual patriarch.

Whatever the case was, all of them could only follow and stare as Gerald and Aiden got into their car before leaving the manor together. It was at that point when they finally accepted that they weren't going to get anything out of this.

Truth be told, they had already anticipated not getting any immediate benefits with Gerald taking the lead. With that in mind, their sole goal today had been to make a good impression on Gerald. Unfortunately, it seemed that their actions had the complete opposite effect on him.

Moving back to the duo, Aiden found himself getting increasingly bored as Gerald drove on. Eventually, he started looking up the Fareast Consortium on the internet and by the time he was done, he couldn't help but yell in surprise.

Naturally, this shocked Gerald, prompting him to look at Aiden before asking, "What? What happened?!"

"I-I just didn't expect the Fareast Consortium to be this powerful...! It's in the top five groups in Japan...! From what I've managed to gather, the group has a market value of a billion dollars...!" exclaimed Aiden who had initially thought that they were just a small group. Now that he knew all this, Aiden learned to never underestimate Gerald's social connections...!

"I see... and yes, they're worth quite a bit. Either way, though I haven't contacted that group in years, the chairman should still remember the favor he owes me..." muttered Gerald who had to admit that he only remembered this favor in the first place due to the Futaba family's crisis...

"How awesome!" exclaimed Aiden as he gave Gerald the thumbs up.

"Don't go looking too much into this, we're merely heading over to ask him to lead us a hand. While we're at it, we may as well ask him to treat us to a meal as well," replied Gerald who cared little about the chairman's status. After all, it wasn't as though the chairman was going to be able to help him save his parents and sister.

Regardless, since the Futaba manor was quite far away from the Fareast Consortium, the duo only got to the city the group was in at noon.

Being one of the top five consortiums in the country, the Fareast Consortium boasted a whopping forty floors, making it stand out among the other buildings in the city. In fact, due to its importance, the Japanese government even set up streets in front of the building to facilitate entry and potentially further develop the group.

Either way, upon seeing the building's massive signboard, Gerald parked their car in front of the building before saying, "Well, this is it."

Chapter 2209

Before they were even able to step away from the car, they watched as a security guard came running over to them. After briefly sizing Gerald up, the guard then said, "I'm sorry, but you can't park here without permission! This parking area belongs to the consortium! With that said, please leave!"

Upon hearing that, Gerald couldn't help but frown slightly. While he knew that this guard was simply acting according to protocol, it didn't change the fact that the guard's tone was annoying. Whatever the case was, Gerald simply replied, "I'm here to meet Derrick Zima. If he's in, just tell him that Gerald's looking for him."

"Derrick Zima? Are you even aware that he's the chairman of the Fareast Consortium? With that said, who do you think you are? Do you think he'll meet you just because you want him to? Either way, beat it already before I call more guards over to kick you out!" scoffed the guard after laughing out loud.

Upon hearing that name, Aiden couldn't help but whisper in Gerald's ear, "The consortium's boss is a Westoner...?"

"Indeed. He came over to Japan a few decades ago to make a living, and with a bit of luck, he managed to get to where he is today. Well, I say that, but he's quite strong as well, which is probably how he

avoided getting sifted out in the beginning,” explained Gerald with a nod. While he didn’t know much about Derrick, Gerald was certain about Derrick’s strength.

“Cease the whispering and get lost already before I get angry... Just so you two know, literally everyone wants to meet the chairman! Just so you know, even superiors of the military have to make appointments just to get to meet him! That should explain plenty, so beat it and stop wasting my time! Consider this my last warning before I call more guards over!” grumbled the guard when he realized that the two weren’t keen on leaving anytime soon. Had it not been for the fact that there were so many people around, he would’ve surely shoved them away by now!

“Let’s not get too cocky, shall we? Listen here, your chairman is my friend’s old pal, and he owes him a favor! How about you stop wasting our time and tell him about us already!” scowled Aiden who was getting slightly impatient.

“Hah! What a joke! I’ve never heard the chairman owing anyone favors before!” retorted the guard with a roar of laughter.

“I’ll just call him,” replied Gerald who didn’t want to waste any more time here.

Turning around to make his call, it was barely even a second after he dialed Derrick’s number when the call connected and an excited voice asked, “Gerald?”

“It’s been a while. First thing’s first, I’m currently at your consortium’s ground floor to discuss some things with you. However, your guard’s blocking my way,” replied Gerald.

“You’re where?! Give me a few minutes. I’ll be there in no time,” said Derrick before hanging up.

Slipping his phone into his pocket, Gerald then looked at Aiden before saying, “He’s coming down soon.”

“Are you guys for real? You should consider acting as a career, you almost look like the real deal! Regardless, let’s see if the chairman actually comes over!” scoffed the guard as he laughed heartily, thinking that Gerald had lost his marbles.

With how loudly he had been speaking about the chairman, the surrounding people couldn’t help but flock around the trio. By the end of it, there were about ten people whispering among themselves, wondering how this would end.

Chapter 2210

Upon seeing how many people had gathered, the guard couldn’t help but declare, “All of you! Get this, these two claimed to know our consortium’s chairman! Not only that, but after ‘giving him a call’ they said that he’s coming down to meet them soon! Wait along to see if he actually comes! If he doesn’t... Then join me in kicking them out!”

“They what now? Hey, do you two even know how famous our chairman is? How the hell could anyone like you two ever deserve to meet him!”

“I know right? Just kick them out while you can! Who knows where these maniacs are from!” scoffed the surrounding individuals who all worked at the Fareast Consortium.

They were right to be doubtful. After all, despite working here for so long, they themselves hardly ever got the chance to see the chairman, though this was most probably because the chairman was always abroad and making more business deals. Even then, these were the luckier few who even got the chance to catch glimpses of him in the flesh.

Many within the consortium had never even seen the chairman before, save for his photograph in the lobby. At best, they would be able to catch glimpses of his exclusive helicopter touching down atop their building.

Whatever the case was, after hearing their comments, Aiden couldn’t help but blush as he asked, “How long is it going to take for Derrick to come down, Gerald...?”

Honestly, if Gerald wasn't by his side, he would've already started arguing with them. However, he knew better than to behave that way with Gerald here, so he was forced to keep quiet, naturally making him extremely sulky about the situation.

Gerald himself hardly took their comments seriously, so he simply replied, "Just wait for a bit."

Finally, about ten minutes later, the building's doors were opened by a security guard and out jogged a suited middle aged man with a slick back hairstyle. Honestly, he was moving so quickly that he nearly toppled down the stairs!

Regardless, upon seeing him, everyone was quickly stunned. After all, the person was none other than Derrick! Some of them even did double takes since they weren't used to seeing him in person!

Either way, upon seeing Gerald, Derrick straightened his suit before enthusiastically walking up to him while saying, "Gerald! It truly has been ages since we last met!"

Chuckling in response, Gerald simply replied, "Oh, I could've met you ten minutes earlier if your subordinates had just allowed me in!"

Naturally, Derrick immediately caught onto what Gerald was implying. With that, he quickly turned to face his employees before growling, "Listen here! This man goes by Mr. Gerald Crawford, and he's a very important friend of mine! If you dare block him from entering again, you'll instantly be fired! Got that?"

"L-loud and clear...!" whimpered the frightened employees who were frozen in fear. To think that these two ordinary men actually knew their chairman...! Had they not witnessed this with their own eyes, they surely wouldn't have believed any of this!

Upon hearing their response, Derrick then turned his gaze toward Gerald again before saying, "Now that

that's settled... Please come this way, Gerald. Honestly, you arrived just in time! I just returned from the Western Union a few hours ago, you know? Had you arrived before then, I would've surely had to make you wait even longer!"

"I see... Could I be disturbing your test right now?" replied Gerald with a smile.

"Not at all! Truth be told, I've been looking forward to your visit for ages! While I would've paid you a visit myself, I know how busy you can get. What more, you're always moving around, so I figured that it'd be best for me to wait for you instead. It's the reason why I haven't made a move even after all these years. I really hope you don't mind that!"

Chapter 2211

Following that, Derrick whose bodyguards surrounded the group of three led the duo into the building, leaving the previous employees staring at their backs, completely stupefied. Throughout their many years working here, they had never seen their chairman being so close with anyone, not that they had many chances to see him in the first place.

Whatever the case was, the trio soon got into an elevator and headed to the top floor... The entire floor was Derrick's office, and the elevator doors opened, Gerald and Aiden were greeted by the sight of at least a dozen young individuals running here and there. From the way they were dressed, they appeared to be Derrick's secretaries...

"This way, please!" said Derrick as he gestured for Gerald and Aiden to continue following him, ignoring the chaotic scene.

Once they got to his table, Derrick took his coat off before making some tea. Before he sat at the table again, he made sure to get a pack of cigarettes that had been given to him by the Japanese royal family from the cabinet as well.

As Derek placed the cigarettes before the youth, Gerald who had noticed the pile of documents on Derrick's desk couldn't help but rub his temple as he muttered, "You know, I'm fine coming another time if you're busy..."

"I'm not busy at all! If you're talking about those documents, my secretaries can handle those! With that said, you're my priority here, so don't worry about anything else!" replied Derrick as he shook his head with a grin.

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Nodding in response, Derrick then turned to look at Aiden before cordially asking, "Speaking of which, who might this be?"

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"Any friend of Gerald's is a friend of mine! Speaking of which, take my name card. If you ever face any issues in Japan in the future, just give me a ring and I'll see to it!" replied Derrick as he shook Aiden's hand before handing him a card.

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"Indeed. Order the tastiest dishes you can think of and bring a bottle of good wine over too! Be snappy about it!" replied Derrick, prompting his secretary to nod before quickly leaving.

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"They used to be a relatively strong family here, right? In fact, I think I've even cooperated with them before in previous years before their business started plummeting. That's the extent of what I know about them..." muttered Derrick after thinking about it for a while.

Chapter 2212

"Well, I'm here today to talk about that family's issues," replied Gerald as he lit a cigarette.

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Nodding in response, Gerald then patted Aiden on his shoulder before saying, “Contact the patriarch and tell him to come over.”

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Watching as Aiden left, Derrick turned to look at Gerald before saying, “Still, it’s been... what? Five to six years since we last parted ways? I never thought that I’d get to meet you again! I was seriously considering paying you a visit during the year end holidays this year!”

“About that long, yeah,” replied Gerald.

“It truly has been a while... So, how have you been throughout these years?” asked Derrick.

“Things have been good, though there were a few hiccups along the way, one of them being the Futaba family’s plight. If you can help them, then you’re seriously helping me out,” replied Gerald with a smile.

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Sensing how reluctant Gerald was to talk more about it, Derrick then said, “...Well, alright then!”

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Chapter 2213

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Despite that, Gerald wasn't annoyed by Derrick's actions. Instead, he simply continued replying to Derrick's words which were getting increasingly incoherent.

Thankfully, a secretary soon entered. Upon seeing her, Gerald gestured for her to come over before saying, "Go get more people to help your chairman up. He deserves some rest."

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"I just happened to be there back when I saved him, so I don't really take that incident to heart. Still, if he's that thankful about it, I don't really mind. I'm just surprised that he's still this enthusiastic about helping me after all these years. Speaking of which, when's the patriarch going to arrive?" replied Gerald as he crossed his legs.

"Probably in an hour or two. After all, even we drove for an entire morning to get here!" said Aiden as he looked at the time.

"I see... By the way, don't you need to return to the military? The competition's over, isn't it?" asked Gerald.

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Whatever the case was, Aiden got a call from Takuya just as the sky was getting dark. After relaying the information to Gerald, Gerald in turn called for one of the secretaries before saying, "The Futaba patriarch is downstairs. Please lead him up."

With that said, Takuya soon found himself entering the office.

Upon seeing Gerald there, Takuya's eyes instantly widened as he asked, "...Huh? What are you doing here, Gerald?"

Takuya was rightfully surprised. After all, the Futabas were incomparable to the Fareast Consortium! They had only been able to cooperate with them back then out of pure luck!

"Let's just say that I have an old friend here. Since I had nothing better to do today, I figured I may as well pay him a visit," replied Gerald as he handed Takuya a cigarette.

"... B-but isn't this the chairman's office...?" asked Takuya as he looked around the area.

Ignoring his question, Gerald simply gestured for a secretary to come over before saying, "Do pour him a glass of water. Also, if the chairman is still asleep, please don't wake him up."

"... Huh? But... what if he passes out for eight hours...?" asked the secretary. While the secretary would've normally prioritized Derrick's sleep, since he now knew how prestigious Gerald was, he was

rightfully afraid that things would get unnecessarily delayed.

Chapter 2214

“Just let him rest,” replied Gerald with a wave of his hand.

“... Very well. I'll be waiting outside if you need me then,” replied the secretary, feeling relieved that he wouldn't be blamed at the end of the day since Gerald had already told him not to wake Derrick up.

Once the secretary left, Takuya was prompted to ask, “... So... you really are acquainted with Chairman Derrick...?”

“I am, and I'm here to ask for his help,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“... I see. So... why exactly am I here...? Do you need my help with something too...?” asked Takuya who was still having a hard time registering all this.

“Negative. You're here because I told Derrick to give the Futabas a few contracts to sign. Following that, your family should be able to return to its former glory in no time at all. Don't worry, Derrick will definitely give you the best treatment possible,” explained Gerald with a subtle smile.

“...W-what?!” exclaimed Takuya as he instantly got to his feet.

“Calm down, patriarch. He owed me a favor, so I'm simply asking him to give you a hand. It's nothing big, honestly. With that said, once he wakes up, he'll let you have a look at the contracts. If there isn't a problem, then you can sign them at the end of the day,” replied Gerald as he gently pushed Takuya back onto the sofa.

“...I ...All this is simply too shocking...” muttered Takuya as he shook his head slightly. Honestly, he felt like all this was just a dream. After all, to think that he'd be able to cooperate with the Fareast

Consortium again! If things went well, then their family would surely rise the ranks in three to four months! In fact, they could probably surpass their former glory!

“Again, it’s nothing too special,” replied Gerald as he lit another cigarette.

“Still... I... I really don’t know how to thank you...! You truly are my family’s savior...!” exclaimed Takuya as he held tightly onto Gerald’s hands in between sobs.

Takuya, for one, had already accepted that his family would no longer return to its former glory before this. Back then, he had told himself that as long as Fujiko could live her life safely, then nothing else mattered to him. However, now that Gerald had shown himself, Takuya was filled with hope again...!

“It’s alright, patriarch. You can save those words for later,” replied Gerald who knew that he was only doing all this for the sake of learning more about Yearning Island. With that in mind, he honestly wasn’t feeling like their savior at all.

Regardless, upon hearing that, Takuya simply nodded firmly in response...

Fast forward to two hours later, night had already fallen when a cough could be heard inside the room Derrick was in. Following that, the trio watched as a dizzy Derrick slowly made his way out of the room.

Upon seeing the trio waiting for him outside, Derrick immediately smacked his forehead a few times before asking, “H-how long was I out...?”

“About six hours,” replied Aiden after looking at his watch.

“... I see. I’ve truly delayed things for far too long... Apologies, but I guess I’m not much of a drinker, am I... Still, why didn’t any of you ask to wake me up...?” asked Derrick, clearly feeling guilty for making

them wait.

“It’s fine, we had to wait for Mr. Futaba to arrive anyway,” replied Gerald as he waved his hand.

Nodding in response, Derrick then looked at Takuya who was sitting beside Gerald before rubbing his hands and saying, “A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Futaba. I’m Derrick Zima, the chairman of the Fareast Consortium. If I remember correctly, we cooperated once in the past, right?”

Chapter 2215

“That’s right! I didn’t expect all these years to pass by so quickly... Still, shortly after our cooperation ended, my family started to decline...” replied Takuya with a nod. Truth be told, his family’s cooperation with the Fareast Consortium was the peak moment for the Futabas.

“I see... seems that my consortium has brought bad luck to your family!” joked Derrick.

“Please don’t say that! My family only ended up that way because of internal issues. You had nothing to do with my family’s decline...!” exclaimed Takuya, who took Derrick’s joke extremely seriously.

“Don’t worry, it was just a joke... Regardless, has your family not recovered since then?” asked Derrick.

“Unfortunately not... Though truth be told, all this is only happening because ‘certain individuals’ misused their positions, pocketing the profits for themselves until all the family’s wealth was drained... Don’t worry, once the contracts are signed, I’ll be sure to kick all the troublemakers out! I won’t let history repeat itself!” replied Takuya with a sigh.

Being the patriarch of his family, Takuya felt especially ashamed that he had to call his family members out like this. Even so, it was simply the truth. Had they not done all that, then their family wouldn’t have ended up in such a state.

Nodding in response, Derrick then walked up to his office desk and looked around for a moment while saying, "Not to worry. If Gerald trusts you, then so do I. Regardless, I have two contracts that I was planning to give to one of my newly acquired companies. Since Gerald asked for my help, I'm giving them to you instead. Do have a look at the documents first. If everything's alright with you, then just go ahead and sign them."

Following that, Derrick walked back to the table before placing the two contracts before Takuya.

Without even considering reading through them, Takuya shook his head as he flipped to the final pages of each contract and signed his name before saying, "Aside from trusting Gerald, I don't believe that a large consortium like yours would even want to exploit a small family like mine."

"Oh? How straightforward! I'm definitely more comfortable doing business with you now!" replied Derrick with a hearty laugh before signing the two contracts as well.

With that done, Takuya then placed the contracts into his briefcase, knowing that his family's future depended on them.

Nodding at the sight of that, Derrick then called out, "Levon? Come in for a bit!"

"You called, chairman?" asked one of Derrick's secretaries as he entered the room.

"Ah, there you are. Allow me to introduce you to my secretary from Weston, Mr. Futaba. He's extremely competent to the point where he quickly understands whatever job I put him up against! With that said, if you ever face any problems, you can look for him. If even he can't solve your issues, then feel free to contact me!" said Derrick.

"I really appreciate all this," replied Takuya with a nod. Nodding in response, Derrick then turned to look at his watch. Realizing that it was already six, he was prompted to say, "Don't worry about it. Regardless, since I made you wait for an entire afternoon, please allow me to treat-"

“Dinner’s on me!” interrupted Takuya before Gerald or Derrick could say anything else.

Since Takuya said that, the duo chose not to argue, and the four of them left the office together.

As they walked on, Takuya couldn’t help but smile widely. After all, he believed that the contracts would surely solve his family’s problems! At the same time, he had also made up his mind that once he got back, he would start getting rid of the parasites in his family. He wasn’t about to let history repeat itself!

Whatever the case was, the four soon found themselves in a high end restaurant near the building. Since Derrick was a regular there, he had a private room in the restaurant. With that in mind, the second he entered, the waiters and manager instantly came over to greet him before leading them up the elevator.

As they ascended to the top floor, Takuya clenched his briefcase tightly while whispering, “You truly have helped me a lot, Gerald... I really don’t know what to say...”

Chapter 2211

Following that, Derrick whose bodyguards surrounded the group of three led the duo into the building, leaving the previous employees staring at their backs, completely stupefied. Throughout their many years working here, they had never seen their chairman being so close with anyone, not that they had many chances to see him in the first place.

Whatever the case was, the trio soon got into an elevator and headed to the top floor... The entire floor was Derrick’s office, and the elevator doors opened, Gerald and Aiden were greeted by the sight of at least a dozen young individuals running here and there. From the way they were dressed, they appeared to be Derrick’s secretaries...

“This way, please!” said Derrick as he gestured for Gerald and Aiden to continue following him, ignoring the chaotic scene.

Once they got to his table, Derrick took his coat off before making some tea. Before he sat at the table again, he made sure to get a pack of cigarettes that had been given to him by the Japanese royal family from the cabinet as well.

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"Glad to hear that! Either way, I hope you two are hungry since I'm about to order some food! Don't worry, we'll be eating in my office! Also, between you and me, I still prefer Weston dishes even though I've been living here all these years," said Derrick as he pressed a button on his desk.

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Chapter 2212

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Chapter 2213

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Chapter 2214

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"I am, and I'm here to ask for his help," replied Gerald with a nod.

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"Negative. You're here because I told Derrick to give the Futabas a few contracts to sign. Following that, your family should be able to return to its former glory in no time at all. Don't worry, Derrick will definitely give you the best treatment possible," explained Gerald with a subtle smile.

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“... I see. I’ve truly delayed things for far too long... Apologies, but I guess I’m not much of a drinker, am I... Still, why didn’t any of you ask to wake me up...?” asked Derrick, clearly feeling guilty for making them wait.

“It’s fine, we had to wait for Mr. Futaba to arrive anyway,” replied Gerald as he waved his hand.

Nodding in response, Derrick then looked at Takuya who was sitting beside Gerald before rubbing his hands and saying, “A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Futaba. I’m Derrick Zima, the chairman of the Fareast Consortium. If I remember correctly, we cooperated once in the past, right?”

Chapter 2215

“That’s right! I didn’t expect all these years to pass by so quickly... Still, shortly after our cooperation ended, my family started to decline...” replied Takuya with a nod. Truth be told, his family’s cooperation with the Fareast Consortium was the peak moment for the Futabas.

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“Please don’t say that! My family only ended up that way because of internal issues. You had nothing to do with my family’s decline...!” exclaimed Takuya, who took Derrick’s joke extremely seriously.

“Don’t worry, it was just a joke... Regardless, has your family not recovered since then?” asked Derrick.

“Unfortunately not... Though truth be told, all this is only happening because ‘certain individuals’ misused their positions, pocketing the profits for themselves until all the family’s wealth was drained... Don’t worry, once the contracts are signed, I’ll be sure to kick all the troublemakers out! I won’t let history repeat itself!” replied Takuya with a sigh.

Being the patriarch of his family, Takuya felt especially ashamed that he had to call his family members out like this. Even so, it was simply the truth. Had they not done all that, then their family wouldn't have ended up in such a state.

Nodding in response, Derrick then walked up to his office desk and looked around for a moment while saying, "Not to worry. If Gerald trusts you, then so do I. Regardless, I have two contracts that I was planning to give to one of my newly acquired companies. Since Gerald asked for my help, I'm giving them to you instead. Do have a look at the documents first. If everything's alright with you, then just go ahead and sign them."

Following that, Derrick walked back to the table before placing the two contracts before Takuya.

Without even considering reading through them, Takuya shook his head as he flipped to the final pages of each contract and signed his name before saying, "Aside from trusting Gerald, I don't believe that a large consortium like yours would even want to exploit a small family like mine."

"Oh? How straightforward! I'm definitely more comfortable doing business with you now!" replied Derrick with a hearty laugh before signing the two contracts as well.

With that done, Takuya then placed the contracts into his briefcase, knowing that his family's future depended on them.

Nodding at the sight of that, Derrick then called out, "Levon? Come in for a bit!"

"You called, chairman?" asked one of Derrick's secretaries as he entered the room.

"Ah, there you are. Allow me to introduce you to my secretary from Weston, Mr. Futaba. He's extremely competent to the point where he quickly understands whatever job I put him up against! With that said, if you ever face any problems, you can look for him. If even he can't solve your issues, then feel free to contact me!" said Derrick.

“I really appreciate all this,” replied Takuya with a nod. Nodding in response, Derrick then turned to look at his watch. Realizing that it was already six, he was prompted to say, “Don’t worry about it. Regardless, since I made you wait for an entire afternoon, please allow me to treat-”

“Dinner’s on me!” interrupted Takuya before Gerald or Derrick could say anything else.

Since Takuya said that, the duo chose not to argue, and the four of them left the office together.

As they walked on, Takuya couldn’t help but smile widely. After all, he believed that the contracts would surely solve his family’s problems! At the same time, he had also made up his mind that once he got back, he would start getting rid of the parasites in his family. He wasn’t about to let history repeat itself!

Whatever the case was, the four soon found themselves in a high end restaurant near the building. Since Derrick was a regular there, he had a private room in the restaurant. With that in mind, the second he entered, the waiters and manager instantly came over to greet him before leading them up the elevator.

As they ascended to the top floor, Takuya clenched his briefcase tightly while whispering, “You truly have helped me a lot, Gerald... I really don’t know what to say...”

Chapter 2216

“Trust me, patriarch, I’ll be needing your help sooner than you think,” whispered Gerald in response.

“Just say the word and I’ll surely lend a hand! I wouldn’t even mind giving my position as patriarch to you!” declared Takuya as he patted his chest, knowing full well that had it not been for Gerald’s help, his family would’ve eventually crumbled. What more, Fujiko could’ve died ages ago had Gerald not stepped in to save her back then...!

Whatever the case was, the four soon arrived at the private room on the top floor...

Once they were seated, Derrick couldn't help but clear his throat before saying, "Um... Again, I'm truly sorry for making you wait this long today... Once I'm back at the office, I'll definitely give my secretary a good, long, talk for not waking me up!"

"Leave the poor chap be," replied Gerald with a smile.

"Are you sure...?" asked Derrick.

"Truth be told, he did attempt to wake you up, though I told him not to. After all, in the end, you're still a chairman of a massive consortium! It wouldn't do you good if you didn't get enough rest. Besides, a little wait never killed anyone," replied Gerald with a chuckle.

"But... I just feel bad, you know...?" muttered Derrick who was feeling guiltier than ever. Honestly, he wasn't even this humble when facing other rich families in the Western Union!

Not wanting to continue talking about this, Gerald quickly asked, "Speaking of which... What's for dinner?"

Realizing that they hadn't ordered anything yet, Derrick then nodded before facing the waiter beside him and saying, "I want the finest dishes this place can offer! Also, make sure Chef Yamamoto is the one preparing our meals! Even if he's cooking for other guests, tell him to prioritize my meal. I don't like waiting. Ah, and before I forget, get us your best wine as well!"

"Um... About Chef Yamamoto..." muttered the waiter, looking slightly embarrassed.

"Hmm? Is he not in today?" asked Derrick as he raised a slight brow. By this point, Chef Yamamoto was pretty much akin to his private chef here.

"He's in, but... Some higher ups from the military are here for dinner as well, you see... And since Chef Yamamoto's currently preparing their food, there may be a bit of a delay..." replied the waiter in a

slightly awkward tone.

“And? You’re saying it as if I don’t know anyone from the military! I don’t care, tell Chef Yamamoto to prioritize our meal! Just let other chefs deal with those men! I’ll have you know that these three men are highly valuable guests of mine! If you unnecessarily delay my business with them, I’m making sure to pick a bone with this place!” declared Derrick.

While Derrick wouldn’t have argued about this if he was dealing with other guests, this was Gerald he was talking about! What more, he was still feeling guilty for how he had made Gerald wait an entire afternoon! If he couldn’t even provide Gerald with a good meal, his unease was only going to increase.

Whatever the case was, not wanting to cause an unnecessary scene, Gerald simply waved his hand before saying, “We aren’t that particular about food, so any other chef is fine.”

“No, you don’t understand! Chef Yamamoto has a completely different standard compared to other chefs! With that said, you have to taste his food tonight!” declared Derrick before turning to face the waiter again and saying, “Just tell Chef Yamamoto that I said all this! If those from the military try looking for trouble, tell them to come straight to me!”

“... Right away, Mr. Zirna!” replied the waiter who didn’t know how else to respond. After all, he was just a lowly waiter here! If he didn’t do as he was told, he could potentially lose his job!

It was only after the waiter left when Derrick returned to his usual self.

Chapter 2217

Truth be told, part of the reason why he was acting so stubborn was because he hadn’t fully sobered up yet. Whatever the case was, Derrick then patted his chest wanting to show Gerald how reliable he was with his current status before declaring, “Not to worry, brother Gerald! I know quite a few people from the military to the point where some of their leaders show respect to me! With that said, getting Chef Yamamoto to serve us first is nothing!”

“So it seems,” replied Gerald with a nod. He, for one, knew that Japan was a country where wealth was paramount. While it was true that there was a slight divide between the Japanese and those from the Western Union, they both operated the same way. As long as one had money and power, they would surely be able to stand firm in their respective countries.

Either way, the waiter soon returned to notify them that Chef Yamamoto had agreed to prepare their dishes first. He also told them that the chef had estimated the food to be ready in the next ten minutes.

Following that, the waiter began uncorking the finest wine they had, and the second the cork was removed, the room was instantly filled with the rich aroma of good wine.

Unfortunately, it wasn't long before hard knocking could be heard on the door! Before the waiter could even say a word, the door was slammed open by a uniformed individual! Laughing as he stormed toward Derrick's table, the man then growled, “Who the hell do you think you are?! Daring to tell the chef to cater to you first... What bullsfi't! We're from the military, you

Know?!”

“Oh, I'm well acquainted with those from the military. Besides, Chef Yamamoto always prepares my food here. Just get some other chef to serve your meals! I'll even pay the bill for you!” scoffed Derrick without even raising his head.

Before the new person could retort, however, his eyes couldn't help but widen when he noticed another guest at the table.

“... Brother Gerald...?”

“Ichiro? What are you doing here?” asked Gerald who was equally as surprised to see him here. Last he remembered, Ichiro was still trying to hunt down the murderer of those Yanam soldiers.

Instantly calming down now that he knew that Gerald was here, Ichiro then sat beside him before replying, "I well, I'm here with a few others to discuss the assassination cases... While we did manage to find out who the murderer was, he was unfortunately successful in leaving the country..."

"What a pity..." said Gerald as he shook his head, though he was merely acting along. After all, Amare was a Crawford cultivator! If the investigation team truly did manage to capture him, it'd be the joke of the century!

"Indeed... Speaking of which, why are you here?" asked Ichiro as he raised a slight brow.

"Ah, well, I'm friends with this man, and we're just here to have a drink," replied Gerald as he gestured toward Derrick.

"I see... Well, I'll leave Chef Yamamoto to you then. We're already full anyway. Apologies for the outburst earlier, but it's only reasonable to feel annoyed when we were told that our meal was being postponed... Regardless, I hope you don't take my initial bad attitude to heart!" declared Ichiro as he outstretched his hand in Derrick's direction.

"... Well... I wasn't exactly a saint either. Come to think of it, I drank quite a bit this afternoon so this impulsiveness must be a sign that I haven't quite sobered up yet. Either way, since you're friends with brother Gerald, do stay and have a meal with us!"

Replied Derrick as he placed his palm against his forehead. He truly hadn't expected Gerald to know people from the military as well. After all, he had assumed that Gerald didn't know anyone here.

"Maybe some other time. We still have quite a bit to deal with," replied Ichiro with a wave of his hand.

After Ichiro left, Derrick couldn't help but feel immensely embarrassed.

Sensing that, Gerald then cleared his throat before saying, "You know, while it's true that you've made it big here to the point where even the military respects you, it's best that you refrain from behaving this way anymore. If you keep doing this, I assure you that you'll make a plethora of enemies in no time flat."

"... I know... I was just trying to give you better treatment," replied Derrick with a nod, his face burning in embarrassment.

"As I've said, just treat me normally," said Gerald in an indifferent tone.

Shortly after, the waiter returned with their food. As Derrick and Takuya talked about the contracts in further detail, Gerald and Aiden simply remained quiet as they had their meals.

As they went through the contracts, Takuya found it increasingly difficult not to smile. After all, according to what was agreed upon, the Futabas would be able to earn from the Fareast Consortium at least twelve million dollars per year! With this kind of revenue, the Futaba family could definitely overcome their current crisis!

They would also be given a chance to revert to their former glory! Best of all, the family wouldn't fall during his reign! With that in mind, Takuya could confidently meet with his ancestors once he died years later.

Whatever the case was, it was about three hours later when the duo completed their discussion. With that done, Derrick then handed his bank card to the waiter before looking at Gerald as he said, "Alright, we're done for now. Once we're back at my place, I'll be preparing one of my guestrooms for you. Since I've handed all my work to my secretaries, I'll be giving you a good tour around in the next few days!"

"While I appreciate the kind offer, I still have some things to deal with, so I can't stay with you for the time being," replied Gerald, who knew that he had yet to properly deal with the Hanyus and Kanagawas.

He, for one, knew that they wouldn't quiet down just from a few threats. While it would be for the best if that really did do the trick, Gerald doubted that they would stay down. With that in mind, if they made one wrong move, they only had themselves to blame for what he would then do to them.

"... I see... Well, after you've settled your business, do contact me! Also, if you need any more help, don't hesitate to tell me! Nothing's too difficult for 'Brother Zima'! That's what they call me around these parts, you know?" declared Derrick who didn't try to force Gerald to come with him since he was well aware that Gerald was always busy.

Either way, once Gerald, Aiden, and Takuya got into their car, the trio then began departing back to the Futaba manor.

Hugging his two contracts tightly, the previously gloomy Takuya was now beaming with joy. Without Gerald's help, none of this would've been possible...! As he thought about that, Takuya couldn't help but stare at Gerald for a while. For a young man, not only was he extremely powerful, but he also had extremely wide connections. Hell, he even had an extraordinary temperament! Gerald didn't feel like an ordinary man at all!

With all that in mind, Takuya was eventually prompted to ask, "Again... How did you get acquainted with the chairman of the Fareast Consortium...? He seemed to respect you greatly..."

"I just helped him a few years back. He's merely returning the favor to me," replied Gerald with a smile.

"Who are you really...?" asked Takuya, unable to hold his curiosity back any longer. Being the patriarch of his family, he had seen many outstanding youngsters. However, none of them even came close to Gerald's capabilities.

"I'm just an ordinary person who knows a few skills and people. Aside from that, there really isn't anything special about me," replied Gerald with a wave of his hand.

Chapter 2219

Chuckling in response, Takuya then said, "... Well, it's fine if you don't wish to tell me. Either way, I truly am grateful for all your help. With these two contracts, my family will now be able to make a comeback!"

Takuya now realized that no matter who Gerald truly was, it didn't really matter. What mattered was that he had never done Fujiko or his family members any harm, and that was more than enough for him. Thinking back, Gerald was honestly the blessing his family needed when they were at their lowest. Whatever the case was, it was nearing eleven when they finally got back to the manor.

The second they entered, Takuya wasted no time and immediately began sending messages to all the members of his family, telling them to gather for a family meeting. Since half of the family was already waiting for Gerald outside the manor, the second they received their messages, they instantly began laughing with joy. To them, if another family meeting was being held so soon, it must be because Gerald had gotten their family more good things! In other words, they would soon have more things to take advantage of!

Either way, those who had already left quickly found themselves bolting back to the manor.

Fujiko herself had received the message, and upon seeing Gerald, she quickly asked, "What on earth has happened? My father's never held meetings this close to each other!"

"Let's just say it's something big. While it isn't exactly a problem, it's still something quite troublesome," replied Gerald as he slipped his jacket off.

"Huh?" said Fujiko, clearly confused by his words.

"...I'll explain once we get to the parlor. It isn't exactly something that I can boil down into a few sentences," replied Gerald who knew that he needed at least half an hour to explain the whole story. That definitely wouldn't do especially since Takuya was already waiting for them at the parlor. Then again, the patriarch was probably going to mention all this during the meeting anyway, so Fujiko could just find out then.

“Well... alright then...” muttered Fujiko in a slightly nervous tone. After all, she knew that small matters to Gerald were usually big matters to everyone else. What’s more, though it was true that Gerald was helping her family a lot, the more he helped, the more indebted she felt toward him.

Either way, the two then quickly made their way to the parlor... and the second Gerald entered, everyone immediately got to their feet. It was almost as though Gerald was the patriarch now.

Takuya himself who was tapping his finger on the table couldn’t help but say, “... Twenty more minutes. Some family members haven’t arrived yet...”

Honestly, by this point, he didn’t even care about these exploiters anymore. In fact, he was already thinking about what to say to chase them out! Now that he had received this rare opportunity to revive his family, he wasn’t about to let everything crumble again under these money grabbing b*stards!

Regardless, by the twenty minute mark, almost everyone had arrived. Ignoring the fact that the newcomers had greeted Gerald but only nodded toward him, Takuya then made a brief headcount before eventually asking, “Where’s Suke?”

Upon hearing that, the secretary leaned closer to Takuya before whispering, “I’ve already called him a number of times, but he didn’t pick up...”

Chapter 2220

“Then let’s not bother about him. Either way... I’ve gathered all of you here today to share some good news! With brother Gerald’s help, I’ve managed to get two contracts with the Fareast Consortium! If everything goes right, then the Futaba family will obtain at least twelve million dollars in revenue per year!” declared Takuya as he looked at the rest of his family.

“W-what...?!” exclaimed almost everyone as they alternated their gazes between Gerald and Takuya. Everyone knew about the Fareast Consortium! It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that even the richest of

the rich in Japan would benefit from a collaboration with them...! With that in mind, they could surely continue leeching off the family for ages to come...!

“I was in charge of business with others before this, patriarch! With that said, you can leave the contracts to me! With me dealing with the Fareast Consortium, you can expect to get fifteen million a year instead of just twelve million!”

“Bullsh*t! Don’t listen to him, patriarch! He’s caused several of our business contracts to become utterly wasted! Leave it to me instead! Just so you know, I’m great at negotiating! The problem is, nobody’s given me a chance to prove myself!”

“Hold it! Let me take over the contract instead!”

Soon enough, everyone was shouting in hopes that the patriarch would leave the contracts to them. After all, anyone who got the gig would surely be able to obtain an unthinkable amount of money! As Takuya had said, twelve million was simply an estimate. Once the collaboration began, that amount could very well double! If they played their cards right, then they could

Easily pocket a million dollars or two every year...!

Contrary to how excited everyone was getting, Fujiko appeared somewhat calm as she asked, “Is... this what happened?”

“Bingo,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“I see... So you’ve helped us this much again... I really have no idea how we’re ever going to repay you...” muttered Fujiko with a sigh. On one hand, she was glad that her family was finally getting a chance to revive. On the other, she knew that this meant that she was only going to owe Gerald more and more.

“Don’t worry about it. I’ve already told you, haven’t I? I may need your help in the future, so just make

sure you don't refuse when the time comes," replied Gerald with a chuckle as he secretly glanced at the Seadom tribe pendant around her neck.

Now that he had gotten so close to Fujiko and her father, Gerald knew that he had to start emphasizing that he may need their help. That way, they hopefully wouldn't be too surprised when he finally asked them about the Seadom tribe.

Either way, upon hearing that, Fujiko immediately nodded before declaring, "Not to worry! I'll never ball from helping you!"

Fujiko meant it too. After all, her family had taken far too much from him. Even if she had to sacrifice her life, so be it...!

"No need to be that serious, I won't ask for anything unreasonable..." replied Gerald, sensing that Fujiko was looking too much into this.

"Regardless of how easy the task is, I'll still treat it extremely seriously!" said Fujiko as she stared determinedly at the youth. Upon realizing that she was now looking at him, Gerald quickly looked away from her pendant. The last thing he needed was her thinking that he was some kind of pervert!

Chapter 2221

Moving back to Takuya who was starting to get a headache from all the shouting, he couldn't help but raise his hand as he yelled, "Pipe down! This isn't the time to argue!"

Upon hearing that, everyone fell silent. While they would've surely retorted before continuing to discuss among themselves in previous meetings, now that this much was on the line, they knew better than to diss Takuya off. Hell, even Masaru who kept wanting to dethrone Takuya in the past kept his mouth zipped, not daring to say a word.

“Seriously... Either way, that wasn’t the only announcement I had to make! You see, I’ve been thinking long and hard about some things... and now I finally have my conclusion. Ladies and gentlemen, I’ve decided that it’s high time I removed all the pests of the family! Never will they bring our family down again!” declared Takuya.

“W-what...?!” yelled several of the Futabas in unison. Naturally, they could tell what Takuya was hinting at! But if they were driven out, they wouldn’t be able to take advantage of this situation anymore...!

By this point, even Masaru’s initial grin had disappeared. Slamming the tip of his cane against the floor, Masaru then roared, “You can’t just make a decision like this on your own! If you truly wish to kick family members out, then it has to be done through polls!”

“It’s exactly because we kept doing that that our family ended up in such a sorry state. After receiving Gerald’s help, we finally have a chance to restore our family to its former glory! With that said, changes need to be made. From today onward, I’ll be the only one deciding for the family! Anyone who wishes to oppose that can leave!” declared Takuya with a snort. Though he knew that Masaru meant well, his ‘peace making’ was the true reason why their family had continued to decline year after year...!

“You...! Do you still see me as your uncle...?!” growled Masaru, choking in rage.

“Depends on whether you see me as your patriarch,” retorted Takuya as he frowned in response.

“You...!” yelled Masaru, clearly not expecting Takuya to talk back to him!

Watching as Masaru pointed at him with a trembling hand unable to speak due to how angry he was, Takuya simply looked away before pointing at a few other Futabas and saying, “You few can stay. For anyone I didn’t point at, please leave. I’ll give you a week to cut all ties with the family, and if you don’t, I’ll just force you out.”

The ones he had pointed at were the family members who had remained in the manor, even when their family was at its lowest. Takuya knew that these were the ones who sincerely cared about the family

instead of just wanting to profit off it.

“Y-you want this many people to leave?!” yelled several of the Futabas, clearly not expecting Takuya to sever ties with so many of them at a time! This... This was unacceptable!

Regardless of how they responded, Takuya simply nodded before saying, “Indeed. You can leave now.”

“P-patriarch! Aren’t you going over the line, here?! While we may not have any merits, we’ve still worked hard for the family in the past! With that said, you can’t just chase us out without giving us proper reasons!” declared a few of the Futabas, clearly unwilling to just leave now that Gerald had brought them such good fortune!

If they left, not only would they fail to benefit from the family ever again, but they would also be unable to get involved with the Fareast Consortium...!

Chapter 2222

“T-Takuya...! You can’t just make unilateral decisions like this...! And driving so many people out of the family at once...?! Even if you managed to get those contracts, you should realize that you’re just leading the family to ruin!” scowled Masaru after calming down slightly.

“Second uncle, if you insist on letting them stay, I’ll start wondering about your true purpose. Regardless, I’ve made up my mind! This family doesn’t want any black sheep within it!” growled Takuya in a determined tone, making it clear that he was dead serious.

After all, if he didn’t do this now, these bloodsuckers would simply leech off the Fareast Consortium business till the family reverted to its current sorry state! Takuya had learned this the hard way, and there was no way he was going to let history repeat itself!

Regardless, Masaru who clearly hadn’t expected Takuya to defy him this openly found himself growing paler and paler as he muttered, “Takuya...! You ...!”

All of a sudden, Masaru held onto his chest before toppling to the ground...! Naturally, this shocked everyone.

Knowing that Masaru was still his uncle, Takuya was first to react by running over to the collapsed man while yelling, "Second uncle!"

Watching as Takuya kneeled by his side before helping him up, Masaru who had an agonizing expression on his face now desperately gasped for air while saying, "P-pills... My pills...!"

Nodding in response, Takuya searched around his uncle's coat and soon found a tiny white bottle. Slipping a black pill out, Takuya then yelled, "Water! Hurry!"

Upon hearing that, his secretary bolted off to get a glass of water. The second she returned, he slipped the pill into Masaru's mouth before giving him some water while patting his back.

Shortly after, color began returning to Masaru's cheeks, prompting everyone to breathe a sigh of relief. With his uncle now fine, Takuya simply returned to the main seat.

Seeing that, Masaru sighed heavily before pointing at Takuya with a trembling hand while saying, "You... You're really trying to piss me off, aren't you...!"

"Say what you want, but I've already made up my mind. Either way, bring him to one of our guest rooms to rest. Unless I allow it, nobody can disturb him!" ordered Takuya as he looked at his cronies. Though Takuya had said that, it was clear as day that he was actually just placing Masaru under house arrest.

Whatever the case was, the two cronies simply nodded before holding Masaru up and quickly leaving the parlor. Though everyone saw that, nobody dared to say a word.

Either way, with Masaru now out of the picture, Takuya turned to look at his family again before asking in an indifferent tone, "Was my order not clear enough?"

Again, nobody said a word. After all, since Takuya was dead set on driving them out, they figured that if they said anything else, they were only going to leave a worse impression on Takuya.

"Get out of my sight within five minutes. And make sure to cut all ties with the family. I'm only giving you this warning since we're fellow clansmen. I won't be so kind in the future," growled Takuya who no longer lacked confidence due to the partnership with the Fareast Consortium.

Regardless, after looking at each other, the ex-Futaba family members slowly left the parlor.

Chapter 2223

Though they honestly hadn't completely dismissed the idea of continuing to leech off the family, nobody dared to further provoke Takuya at the moment. After all, they were all well aware of what kind of person he was, and they had a feeling that he would retract his statement sooner or later and allow them to return to the family.

If that truly was the case, then it was only a matter of time before they would be able to get their hands on those benefits...!

Regardless, after they left, Takuya simply slumped against his chair before waving his slightly trembling hand while saying, "Close the door..."

Watching as Aiden nodded before doing as Takuya ordered, the patriarch then looked at the few Futabas whom he had allowed to stay whom he knew sincerely cared about the family before asking, "... Do you think I did the right thing...?"

"Absolutely, patriarch! Had you allowed them to stay, they would've surely leech off the business like no tomorrow! Regardless, they're not what you should be focusing on, patriarch! Now that we've struck a deal with the Fareast Consortium, we'll finally be able to bring our family back to its former glory!"

“That’s right! They should’ve been kicked out ages ago! Remember, had it not been for them, our family wouldn’t have gotten to this sorry state in the first place!”

As the remaining Futabas yelled on, it was clear that they had been dissatisfied with those bloodsuckers for the longest time. Though receiving those contracts was a joyous thing to hear, they were honestly even happier about the fact that those leeches had finally been kicked out.

Shaking his head with a subtle smile, Takuya then reverted to his serious façade before pointing at two Futabas standing near him while declaring, “Alright, settle down. I’ll be placing you two in charge of the Fareast Consortium business. Remember to pay keen attention to everything you do with them! We were only able to partake in this collaboration due to

Gerald’s help, so if you screw it up, don’t even think about returning to the family!”

“Worry not, patriarch! We won’t let you or Mr. Crawford down!” declared the two in respectful tones while alternating gazes between Gerald and Takuya.

“Well said. Either way, you may leave now. If anything comes up, I’ll be sure to contact you. Oh, and I’ll also be sending you the number of one of the Fareast Consortium’s secretaries later. Contact him when you need to later on,” replied Takuya as he clapped his hands together. Honestly, he couldn’t deny that kicking so many people out at once was making him feel uneasy

By the time they left, only five people remained in the parlor.

Turning to face Gerald and his daughter, Takuya who had now let his guard down a little was prompted to say, “Well that happened. Regardless, I wonder why Suke didn’t come... After all, he was always the first to rush in whenever family meetings were held. With that in mind, it’s a bit strange that he wasn’t here earlier...”

Recalling his previous encounter with Suke, Gerald paused for a moment before saying, “I wonder if it’s

because of his connection with the Hanyus...”

“... You say that, but do you have proof that he’s really with them...?” muttered Takuya, suddenly sounding slightly vigilant again.

“Not for the time being. Still, it doesn’t change the fact that everything that he’s done and said to me has been immensely suspicious...” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

“Well, I get where you’re coming from. Honestly, I’ve had a feeling that something was off with the family in recent years as well. After all, far too many changes had occurred without warning! In no time at all, the family simply ended up collapsing without almost zero chance of recovery! What more, how had the Hanyus even found out that Fujiko was participating in that competition back when they attempted to assassinate her? Someone from the family must have been a snitch!” muttered Takuya as he analyzed the situation with a frown.

Chapter 2224

“... Come to think of it, I’m pretty sure that the Japanese military kept my identity highly confidential as well. With that in mind, aside from those from our family, nobody else should’ve been able to find out that I was participating in the competition!” muttered Fujiko, getting equally as curious.

“I see... so the chances of all information coming from within our family is rather high... While we can’t be sure that it’s Suke, it’s undeniable that his absence today is slightly odd...” replied Takuya as he stroked his beard.

After thinking about it for a while, Gerald was prompted to ask, “...Do you think he’s at the Hanyu manor? After all, if he truly wishes to have his revenge on me for making him crawl under my crotch, I assume his go to would be the Hanyus. However, since I did just threaten them a bit earlier, I’m sure they won’t dare to make a move on us yet. With that in mind, he’s probably staying with them for the moment.”

Honestly, thinking back, Suke was the most likely person to have done all this.

“... When you put it that way, it does start to make sense. If there’s a snitch in our family, Suke truly is the most likely person to have notified the Hanyus!” replied Takuya who had honestly been suspicious of Suke from the moment their family started falling.

It certainly didn’t help that over the years, Takuya’s suspicion toward Suke had only grown more and more profound. Sadly enough, though his gut pointed at Suke being the snitch, Takuya had never been able to gather any solid evidence.

Whatever the case was, Fujiko who was keen on finding the person who had brought so much harm to her family then impatiently asked, “Well, how do you propose we get more evidence then...?”

“Unfortunately, even I don’t know for now,” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

“Well, either way, let’s not bother about him first. We should be focusing on our collaboration with the Fareast Consortium! Though we’ll naturally fight back if the Hanyus start looking for trouble again, until then, we shouldn’t allow them to impede our progress with the collaboration! After all, the fate of our family depends on it!” muttered Takuya after taking in a deep

Breath. Takuya, for one, wasn’t keen to accept that his family’s glory that had lasted for a few centuries would end up getting ruined in his hands.

Upon hearing that, Gerald simply replied, “Just leave the Hanyus and Kanagawas to me.”

“That... I really don’t know what to say anymore, brother Gerald... Not only have you brought these business contracts to our family, but you’re also helping us deal with our enemies!” muttered Takuya with a long sigh.

“Well... Since we’ve already known each other for quite a while, I think it’s high time I asked for your help in return...” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes slightly. It had been about a month since he had last come to Japan, and he really didn’t want to delay this any further. While he was still going to help solve all the Futaba’s problems before he left, the sooner he

Learned about the secrets of Yearning Island, the sooner he'd be able to start planning how to save his sister and parents.

"...Hmm? Just say the word and I'll help you with it!" declared Takuya as he quickly sat up straight.

Fujiko herself couldn't help but hold her breath. It was finally time for her to find out why Gerald had been helping them so much...!

After turning to look at both Aiden and Master Ghost who both nodded in response, Gerald then pointed at Fujiko's pendant before saying, "This is what I need help with!"

"So... You... need help with getting engaged to Fujiko...? If that's the case, I can set the wedding up in just a few days!" replied Takuya, a broad smile now on his face.

Hearing that, Fujiko who honestly still liked Gerald a lot couldn't help but go red as she exclaimed, "F-father! What are you even saying!"

Coughing awkwardly in response, Gerald who didn't want this misunderstanding to get worse quickly clarified, "What I meant was her pendant..."

Chapter 2225

"The... pendant?" asked Takuya and Fujiko in unison, clearly confused.

"Indeed. The truth is, I came to Japan looking for descendants of the Seadom tribe. After careful consideration, I've come to the conclusion that the Futabas appear to be just that. After all, why else would Miss Fujiko possess that special pendant?" explained Gerald.

Upon hearing that, Fujiko held onto her pendant before asking, "Isn't this just a regular pendant...?"

While she did find it odd that it was always cool to touch, she had never given much thought into it.

“So, you actually know about the tribe...” muttered Takuya who appeared much calmer than his daughter.

Watching as Takuya then placed his hands together, Gerald simply nodded as he said, “Indeed. It’s the reason why I came here in the first place.”

“I see... Either way, let’s talk about this someplace else” said Takuya as he took a cigarette out before leading the group to what appeared to be an ordinary cupboard.

Upon opening the topmost drawer, everyone stared wide eyed as Takuya pressed a secret button inside...!

Following that, one of the walls that had been decorated with paintings and calligraphy suddenly began shifting...!

Staring at the now revealed secret room, the surprised Fujiko couldn’t help but exclaim, “S-since when was this here?!”

She was, of course, rightfully shocked. After all, she had been living here all her life! How had she not known about this place!

Contrary to Fujiko’s reaction, when Gerald, Aiden, and Master Ghost saw the room, they couldn’t help but grin. After all, this meant that they had guessed correctly! The Futabas truly were the descendants of the Seadom tribe!

Either way, upon entering the room, Takuya flipped another switch, prompting a sole lightbulb to turn

on. The light quickly revealed an antique table with four benches around it right in the middle of the room. From how dusty everything was, it was apparent that nobody had come in here for ages.

After blowing the dust off the table, Takuya took a seat before asking, "Now, before anything else... How did you learn about the Seadom tribe in the first place?"

Sighing in response, Gerald then said, "Well, my grandfather's on Yearning Island right now, and he's abducted my parents and sister... Unable to locate the island itself, I eventually learned that the Seadom tribe had access to it, which prompted me to come to Japan in the first place..."

"I see. And how did you make the connection between Yearning Island and the Seadom tribe?" inquired Takuya.

"From this sea map here," replied Gerald as he retrieved the sea map from his jacket before laying it flat in front of Takuya.

Seeing that, Master Ghost then added, "Some time ago, an island suddenly appeared on the map, and we saw an ancient tribe doing some kind of ritual on it. After a bit of digging, we realized that the tribe was known as the Seadom tribe, and that they were located in Japan. While we had assumed that we would be looking for a needle in a haystack, none of us could've guessed that we would accidentally bump into Miss Fujiko..."

Chapter 2226

"While I do know that this map belongs to the Seadom tribe, it's only because of passed down knowledge from my ancestors... Truth be told, this is in y first time seeing this map as well," muttered Takuya with a sigh after briefly looking at the map.

"Then... Do you have any idea how we can get to Yearning Island? Or at the very least, how we can locate it? From what we know, the island seems to float about on sea and is only locatable through a special method of sorts. As Master Ghost said, the island appeared on the map once, but never again ever since..." replied Gerald with a slight frown as he looked at the map.

“Well... As you may have already guessed, the Seadom tribe used to inhabit that island, though that was ages ago. While I can't say that I know how to get there, worry not, brother! Since you've helped my family this much, I'll definitely find a way to get you there!” declared Takuya as he began racking his memories, hoping to remember details about the island and the Seadom tribe.

Shortly after, Takuya walked over to a bookshelf and began flipping through the books there.

Seeing that, Fujiko who was still finding it difficult to process all this couldn't help but mutter, “I've never even heard of the Seadom tribe or Yearning Island up till this point...”

Quite honestly, now that she knew Gerald's true goals, she couldn't help but feel slightly disappointed. After all, she had initially thought that he was doing all this for her! In truth, he had only helped her family so much to obtain information! Though she felt that all this was a little too much, this was simply the reality of the situation.

Whatever the case was, Gerald simply shook his head with a bitter smile as he replied, “Had I not encountered the map, I wouldn't have known about any of this either...”

It was a while later when Takuya returned with a dusty book in hand. Handing it to Gerald, he then said, “Here. This book contains a thorough history of our family, though I'm not sure if what you need is in here.”

“Please let me have a look,” replied Gerald, his eyes glinting with excitement as he quickly began flipping through the pages.

However, the more he flipped, the more his enthusiasm dropped. As it turned out, this truly was just a family history book. Not even the words ‘Yearning Island’ was mentioned in it! What more, from what Gerald had gathered, the book's first records began around five hundred years ago, which was probably when the Seadom tribe had first left the island.

With that in mind, Gerald was prompted to ask, "...Is this the only book?"

"Unfortunately, it's the only relevant one I managed to find. Is there nothing relevant to you in there?" replied Takuya as he shook his head.

Every book in this room had been labeled according to its contents, and though there was a lot to go through, Takuya knew that his ancestors only kept the 'more important' books here. In other words, records of the Seadom tribe and Yearning Island probably wouldn't have been stored here.

"Sadly, no. The book is simply a record of everything that's happened to your family," said Gerald as he shook his head, feeling slightly frustrated.

"I see... Unfortunately, this room already contains everything passed down from my ancestors. While I've been told that I'm a descendant of the Seadom tribe and I do remember my father and grandfather mentioning Yearning Island, I was never really told how to get there..." muttered Takuya, feeling bad for not being able to help Gerald.

"I do wonder whether Miss Fujiko's pendant is the key to all this..." said Master Ghost out of the blue as he looked at her pendant; From the very first time he had seen it, he could already tell that the item was a special one, and Master Ghost knew for a fact that such items were usually the more useful things.

"This...?" muttered Fujiko as she removed her pendant.

"It's just a guess, of course, but it's something," replied Master Ghost as he shook his head.

"Well, whatever the case is, I believe that we'll eventually crack the code," said Takuya as he lit a cigarette.

“Indeed... Either way, now that you know about my situation, please don’t tell this to anyone. Since this concerns the safety of my parents and sister, if any accidents happen, I’m afraid I won’t forgive that easily,” said Gerald as he clenched his fists.

“Got it!” replied both Takuya and his daughter as they nodded.

With that said, after sitting in the secret room for a while longer, the group eventually left together before parting ways.

Upon arriving at his room, Gerald waited for Master Ghost and Aiden to enter as well before closing the door behind him. Once that was done, he couldn’t help but sit on his bed, feeling dejected. After all, all this time, he had simply assumed that once he found the Seadom tribe, the mysteries of Yearning Island would be in the bag. Now that things had taken this turn, he realized just how naïve he was to think that.

After all, now that he thought about it, the Seadom tribe was an ancient one. With that in mind, even if he had managed to find descendants of that tribe, everything from the past should’ve predictably been whisked away by time! Just knowing who their ancestors were was clearly not enough!

Sensing Gerald’s discontent, Master Ghost was quick to ask, “Well... Now that we know that the Futabas can’t help us get there, should we still remain? It’ll pretty much be a waste of time by the looks of things...”

“Let’s just wait a bit...” muttered Gerald with a sigh.

Honestly, he wasn’t sure what was best for their current situation either. Still, to think that their only lead had been a dud this entire time...

“And what if we still can’t find anything after ‘a bit’?” asked Master Ghost.

“We’ll talk about it then. Besides, we still have to help the Futabas with their issues before leaving.

Remember, when helping others, we need to see through it," replied Gerald before lighting a cigarette and taking two deep puffs of it.

Already predicting what Gerald would say, Master Ghost then nodded before saying, "So be it. We'll do whatever you ask us to!"

Hearing that, Aiden who was feeling bad for Gerald then added, "Why don't we just take the Kanagawas and Hanyus out straight off the bat? That way, we'll be able to quickly begin investigating how to get to Yearning Island again!"

"I'll... consider it," replied Gerald with a bitter smile.

Currently, many thoughts were plaguing his mind. For one, he had no idea how his parents or sister were doing on the island. What more, it wasn't easy living undercover all the time while his enemies remained out in the open.

In all honesty, Gerald couldn't deny that he had considered letting Will's men capture him so that he could finally head to Yearning Island. However, if he did so, then the risk of him failing was still pretty high.

After all, who knew how they would lock him up once he got there. If he ended up losing his life, then all would truly be lost.

Either way, Gerald then sent the two away before laying on his bed to think things through.

When morning came, Gerald was awakened by a knock on the door, followed by someone saying, "Mr. Crawford...? The chairman of the Fareast Consortium has come over, and he says that he wishes to meet you."

"Derrick's here...?" muttered Gerald as he rubbed his eyes before rolling off the bed. After slipping his

jacket on and exiting his room, Gerald realized that the person at the door was the individual whom Takuya had selected last night to deal with the Fareast Consortium.

Upon seeing Gerald, the Futaba family member who went by Takushu then quickly replied, "Indeed... After meeting him earlier, he insisted that he follow us back! Not daring to refuse, we simply led him back to the manor... With that said, please meet up with him, Mr. Crawford... We really can't afford to offend him..."

"I will. Lead the way," said Gerald as he recalled just how much Derrick had helped.

Chapter 2228

Derrick himself could be seen nervously pacing at the door. After all, he was well aware of how abrupt his visit was, and he was honestly worried that this might upset Gerald. Even so, he knew he had to come over. After all, he hadn't been able to meet with Gerald in years! With how much Gerald moved around, Derrick was seriously worried that he wouldn't be able to see Gerald again till another few years had passed if he didn't make his move now.

His fears, however, were quick to vanish when he saw Gerald walking toward him. Smiling broadly, Derrick then jogged into the manor while waving his hand as he shouted, "Brother Gerald!"

Watching as Derrick fished a pack of cigarettes out before offering one to him, Gerald accepted one before replying with a smile, "So... What brings you here on this fine day?"

"I... just wanted to see you, honestly. After all, if I missed this chance, who knows how long it'll be before we can meet again!" said Derrick as he lit Gerald's cigarette while grinning sheepishly.

"And here I thought you needed my help with something..." joked Gerald with a chuckle.

"Oh, please, brother Gerald! As if I'd ever ask for your help all willy-nilly! However, feel free to request for more help from me if you ever need it!" replied Derrick with a laugh.

Shaking his head, Gerald then tugged his jacket closer to him since the early autumn morning was slightly chilly before saying, "Regardless, let's talk inside..."

Nodding in response, Derrick then followed Gerald all the way to the Futaba manor's parlor. Though a few maids had been cleaning the parlor before they arrived, the second they saw Gerald leading a guest in, they hurriedly left.

Either way, once Derrick was seated, he cleared his throat before saying, "So... if you're wondering how I got here, it's because I asked the Futabas in charge of the collaboration to lead me here... I hope my arrival isn't disturbing you in any way..."

Understanding that Derrick was simply worried that he had left a bad impression on him, Gerald then shook his head as he replied, "Not at all."

"Oh, thank god! I was so worried that you'd be annoyed! Still, to be able to meet you again after so many years... What luck!" said Derrick with a grin.

"Alright, now you just sound weird," replied Gerald with a slightly raised brow.

Chuckling in response, Derrick then flicked his cigarette before leaning slightly forward as he said, "Well... to be completely honest, I also came here today to tell you something..."

"I'm assuming you really need my help?" asked Gerald as he crossed his legs.

"Far from it. I'm planning on handing thirty percent of the Fareast Consortium's shares to you," replied Derrick while shaking his head.

"... Thirty percent?" said Gerald as he raised an eyebrow.

With how high the Fareast Consortium ranked not only in Japan, but also in the whole of Asia, Gerald knew for a fact that getting even three percent of that company's shares would be enough for a family to be luxuriously set for life for a few generations.

Chapter 2229

Based on a rough estimate, Gerald figured that thirty percent of the shares would probably amount to ten billion dollars.

"Bingo. I've already been planning to tell you this for years, though I was never able to find you... With that said, now that we've finally met again, please accept my offering. I've already bought some of the company's shares, and I'll be transferring them to you later," replied Derrick with a nod, his eyes blazing with passion. From the looks of it, he really wanted Gerald to have the money.

After a slight pause, Gerald simply chuckled before saying, "Aren't you worried that I'll take over your company after you hand me the shares?"

"So what if you do? You saved my life! Had you not given me a chance to live, I wouldn't have been able to start the Fareast Consortium in the first place! Besides, you simply aren't the kind of person to do such a thing!" replied Derrick.

Though his encounter with those bandits had taken place years ago, he still had nightmares about it.

Nightmares where Gerald never came to his rescue, resulting in his head getting chopped off by an ax. With that in mind, every time he woke up drenched in cold sweat, his gratitude toward Gerald only grew stronger and stronger.

Either way, upon hearing that, Gerald poured himself a cup of tea while saying, "Saving you was only a small matter for me, so I really can't accept your shares. However, if you still insist, I'm willing to accept the offer, though in return, we can't meet up ever again. Which is it going to be?"

“That...” muttered Derrick, clearly not expecting Gerald to say that.

“Putting that aside, tell me honestly. Is the current Futaba family capable of meeting your company’s requirements for the collaboration?” asked Gerald as he attempted to change the topic.

Upon hearing that, Derrick’s expression turned slightly serious as he replied, “Unfortunately, they can’t...”

“How large is the gap?” asked Gerald who had expected that answer. After all, while the old Futaba family may have been able to pull it off, those leeches pretty much ruined everything by replacing teamwork with greed for money.

Gerald, for one, knew that Derrick had only offered the Futabas large contracts since Derrick had been keen to please him. While this would allow the Futaba family to revive, Gerald was honestly worried that Derrick’s decision would eventually come back to burden him. In fact, it could possibly affect the Fareast Consortium as a whole, and Gerald really didn’t want Derrick to suffer a loss just because he wanted to help him.

Clearing his throat, Derrick then said, “Well... I’ll be saying things frankly then...”

“Go ahead. There’s only the two of us here now. Say whatever’s on your mind,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Well, as you’ve said, the gap is a bit wide... Since we worked together once a few years back, I vaguely remembered the family being quite capable. However, after discussing with them in the past few days, I’ve unfortunately found that the family’s capabilities have greatly declined...” muttered Derrick with a sigh.

Honestly, had Gerald not asked him to help them, he wouldn’t have given the Futabas a chance at all, at least from the moment he learned that their family was in such poor condition.

“To be honest, you could just hand them simpler contracts, you know? Anything good enough that’ll help them recover. Following that, you can give them the more standard contracts,” replied Gerald as he stroked his untrimmed goatee.

“I had thought about that too, though in the end, I just told my secretary to loosen the requirements. As a precaution, I’ve also selected a group of technical staff and company management personnel who’ll be heading to the Futaba family’s company to lend them a hand in a few days. With that said, this shouldn’t be too much of a problem in the end,” said Derrick.

Chapter 2230

“That’s good to hear,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Indeed. Still, you really don’t have to worry about this. I know what I’m doing, so there shouldn’t be any unexpected problems,” said Derrick as he nodded in response. In the end, he was still the one who had established a massive business empire. With that said, dealing with a small issue like this was no problem to him.

“That’s reassuring to hear,” replied Gerald with a smile before sipping on some tea.

Smiling back, Derrick was then prompted to ask, “So... How long are you planning to stay here, brother Gerald...?”

“Not too sure myself, honestly. I guess I’ll just stay till my problems are solved,” replied Gerald as he shook his head. Though he said that, he knew that if he really needed to leave quickly, then all he needed was a day to completely vanquish the Kanagawas and Hanyus off the face of the planet.

That was, of course, only if he absolutely needed to leave. After all, now that Takuya was aware of his goal, there was a chance that the patriarch could suddenly find or recall things about Yearning Island. Besides, even if Gerald left Japan, he didn’t have any further leads.

However, if Takuya couldn’t find anything in the end, just staying here would be a major waste of time

as well. These were pretty much the thoughts in his head after leaving the secret room the night before.

“Problems? Brother Gerald, tell me what they are and I just may be able to help you!” declared Derrick as he came closer to Gerald.

“I know you’re keen to help, but this isn’t exactly something you’re capable of helping with...” replied Gerald with a slightly bitter smile.

“We won’t know till you tell me, right?” said Derrick, refusing to give in.

Not wanting to talk about the Seadom tribe and Yearning Island, Gerald simply decided to ask, “Then tell me... How much do you know about the Yamashitas?”

Gerald, for one, was pretty sure that Derrick had heard of the Yamashitas before after living here for so long as well as the rumors that there were ninjas in that family. Based on what he now knew about the ninjas, Gerald wondered how much Derrick actually knew about them.

“I... don’t know much about them, sadly... All I know is that the Yamashitas lack any connections with the other families or consortia. What more, there are ever rumors that there are ninjas in that family, though call bullsh*t on that...” muttered Derrick after thinking for a while as he shook his head.

“I know, right?” replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

“Why? Do you have any conflicts with that family?” asked Derrick.

“Not at all. I was just curious about them,” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

“I see... Well, they are a strange family... One of the strangest in Japan, actually,” muttered Derrick as he thought about them.

“Pretty much. Also, since we’re already talking about the families here, what do you know about the Hanyus and Kanagawas?” asked Gerald.

“Well... the Kanagawas are one of the largest families in the country, and they’ve constantly made business dealings with the Fareast Consortium. As for the Hanyus, all I know is that they’re an assassin family... I don’t know much else about them,” replied Derrick with a slight frown.

“How much is ‘not much’...?” asked Gerald who honestly felt that the Hanyus were a bigger problem.

After all, with that many assassins in that family, if he didn’t handle them all at once, then he would eventually cause unnecessary trouble to himself.

“I mean... what aspects are you referring to...?” replied Derrick.

“Everything you know about them. How’s this? Once you get back, write everything you know about the two families before sending me the results,” said Gerald in a serious tone.

Chapter 2231

“What else?” Derrick nodded and replied.

“Just these for the time being. If I need your help, I will let you know in advance,” Gerald said.

“Okay. I will go back first and let my men investigate the two families. I will inform you immediately when there is any news.” Derrick stood up and left with quick steps after saying that.

Watching him leave, Gerald yawned.

As he poured himself another cup of hot tea, he began thinking about how to get rid of the Kanagawa and Hanyu families.

Although he had threatened the two families personally, Gerald knew that families with high status like them would not be afraid of threats. They would only stay quiet for a few days or a few dozen days at most.

After some time, they would resume their move on him. Gerald had experienced this countless times.

“Why are you sitting here?” As Gerald was deep in thought, Takuya pushed the door open. Seeing someone sitting in the middle of the room, he was startled.

“Derrick of Fareast Consortium came here, and I spoke with him for a while just now.” Gerald stood up and nodded to him as a greeting.

“Has he left already?” Takuya looked outside quickly.

“He should have left the manor by now,” Gerald said with a shrug.

“Then, let’s leave him be.” Takuya closed the door of the parlor and walked to the bookshelf. After that, he pressed the switch and revealed the secret room.

“After I went back last night and thought about it, I realized that I had overlooked one thing.” After making sure the door was locked, Takuya spoke as he walked into the room.

“What is it?” Hearing this, Gerald followed after him immediately.

“I had been looking for the family’s records about Yearning Island yesterday, but I forgot that a few hundred years ago, the ancestors had completely preserved everything about the Seadom tribe. The

current Futaba clan is actually considered a new clan.”

Takuya spoke as he flipped through the ancient books, scratching his head.

He had barely had any sleep last night. He kept thinking about how he could help Gerald, and it had kept him up until dawn. Just when he wanted to come over and check the records, he had been unable to resist his sleepiness.

After sleeping for two or three hours, he had opened his eyes and come here.

“Then, where did your ancestors keep all the records? Are they in these books or some other places?” Gerald couldn’t help but ask.

“I’m not sure either. When my father passed away twenty years ago, he mentioned it to me just before he died, but I did not take it seriously, so I did not ask.” Takuya sighed and answered honestly.

“It’s fine. It doesn’t matter if you can’t find it. I can investigate it slowly.” A small hope kindled in Gerald, but it soon turned into disappointment.

“This seems to be the one.” After a while, Takuya’s excited voice was heard.

He pulled out a note from a book at the bottom of the shelf. However, due to its age, the paper had become very fragile, almost as if it would break into pieces with just a squeeze.

Chapter 2232

Takuya brought the paper to the table carefully and unfolded it with great caution, fearing that even the slightest shiver would fragment the paper.

Despite his carefulness, he still damaged a small part of the paper when he opened the paper.

“This should be the paper that records the Seadom tribe. It’s just a small piece of paper. I’m afraid it might not have the answer you want.” Takuya laid the paper flat on the table and sighed again very lightly. He feared that his breath might blow away the paper.

“It’s a bit blurred.” Gerald frowned and propped his hands on the table to read.

There were indeed some records on the paper, but the writing had become blurred and faded due to its old age. Gerald could not read what was written on the paper at all. Moreover, the writing on the paper did not look like the Weston language nor English, which was widely used in the West.

“Can you read this?” After looking at it for a while, Gerald could not figure out what it was and raised his head to ask Takuya.

“This should be the special script of the Seadom tribe. The ancestors did not pass this down, so I don’t know about it.” As Gerald was reading it, Takuya was doing the same. He shook his head and said helplessly.

“That’s a problem.” Gerald rubbed his stubble.

“That friend of yours seems to know many things. He even knows about the Seadom tribe. Call him here to take a look, maybe he can understand this.”

After looking for a moment, Takuya’s eyes suddenly shone.

“Master Ghost?” At the mention of his name, Gerald was reminded of this as well.

Without delay, Gerald turned around and went to get Master Ghost.

Within ten minutes, Gerald had dragged Master Ghost by his arm into the secret room.

“I asked you what you were doing, and instead of telling me, you just dragged me here early in the morning. I’m still very sleepy.” Master Ghost simply let Gerald pull him and said while yawning.

“You can sleep as long as you want after solving this.” Gerald plopped him on the bench in front of the table.

“What is it?” Master Ghost rubbed his eyes. He could sense the importance of the matter from Gerald’s tone.

“Look at this. Can you read the script on this paper?” Gerald pointed at the paper laid flat on the table and asked.

“Let me see.” Master Ghost opened his eyes wide and leaned over the paper.

He looked at the paper for nearly half an hour.

Gerald and Takuya stood still. No one opened his mouth to speak nor did they move around, fearing that it might disturb Master Ghost’s thoughts.

“This is the script of the Seadom tribe, right?” After a long time, Master Ghost asked.

“Yes. This should have been handed down by our ancestors.” Takuya nodded.

“I can read this, but...” Master Ghost showed a look of embarrassment.

“But what? Just say it.” Gerald was relieved and hurriedly urged him since the paper was likely to contain the method to find Yearning Island.

“On this piece of paper, it says that everything recorded about the Seadom tribe is all stored in one place for the Futaba family. This is just some very ordinary family document.” Master Ghost glanced at the paper again and said.

“It doesn’t say where it’s stored?” Gerald frowned at once.

“It’s written on the paper.” Master Ghost nodded.

Chapter 2233

“Are you looking for a fight?” Gerald raised his fist, ready to punch Master Ghost.

“The records about the Seadom tribe are in the ancient ruins in Yanam. If I am not mistaken, it should be in the same place where we found the sea map. So, that means we were only one step away from the secrets of the Seadom tribe, but we missed it.”

Master Ghost helplessly revealed the truth.

“The ancient ruins?” Gerald blinked his eyes.

“Indeed. It was written very clearly on the paper. Well, I am not very knowledgeable about the script of the Seadom tribe, so my translation might not be accurate.” Master Ghost dared not guarantee it. If he was wrong, it would be a waste of time and effort.

“Sigh...” Gerald let out a long breath.

They were indeed very near to the secrets of the Seadom tribe, but when he thought about it, he did not feel very sad. When he had entered the ancient ruins, he had not known about this yet and had thought that he could find Yearning Island and save his parents and sister once he got the sea map.

“So, you guys want to go there now?” Takuya looked at Gerald and asked.

“No.” Gerald shook his head.

“But you can’t get anything from staying in the family. You would only be able to uncover the secrets of Yearning Island when you go to the ancient ruins in Yanam.” Takuya was confused and asked quickly.

“We will go after we have at least helped you settle the current problems.” Gerald knew that once he left, the Kanagawa and Hanyu families would take action against the Futaba family once they got the news.

Even with the business contracts with Fareast Consortium, it was still just a business deal. Still, the Hanyu family was an assassin family, and there was also Kanagawa Kai, who would do anything to achieve his goal in the Kanagawa family.

“This...” Takuya didn’t expect that the reason Gerald did not leave immediately was for his family.

“Patriarch Takuya, this is what Gerald has always thought. The Westoners always say that when we want to help someone, we should help them accomplish the whole thing well. Since we chose to help you, we can’t leave halfway, right?” Master Ghost said.

“Thank you... thank you so much.” Takuya was so overwhelmed that he did not know What to say. Even his hands were trembling.

“Anyway, Patriarch Takuya, we might have to take this paper away. However, after we solve the problem, we will surely return it in its original condition.”

After saying that, Gerald closed his eyes.

With the changes in the power of the Herculean Primordial Spirit in his body, the entire secret room became hot and dry. After a while, Gerald pressed his hand on the paper, releasing his essential qi from his pahn to wrap the paper.

After doing this, Gerald let out a breath and put the paper into his pocket carefully.

With the protection of the power of the Herculean Primordial Spirit, not to mention the daily folding and unfolding, there wouldn't be any problem even if the paper was thrown into the fire for three days and nights.

“No problem. It's not much use to the family. If you need it, you can just take it. I feel glad to be able to help you.” Takuya didn't know what Gerald had done, but still, he said this.

“Then, let's deal with the two families first. After that, we will go back to the ancient ruins in Yanam.” After putting the paper away, Gerald spoke calmly.

“Right. There is one thing I'm not sure if I should ask you about,” Takuya said in a low voice.

“Just ask.” Gerald laughed. Since he was about to learn the secrets of Yearning Island, his heart felt much lighter.

“About Fujiko, do you think you should tell her? Although you are just acting in front of outsiders, as her father, I know that my girl likes you. If you don't tell her, I think she will feel very sad for a long time,” Takuya spoke rather embarrassedly.

Chapter 2234

"I will tell her." Gerald nodded.

After fighting side by side with Fujiko for so long, it would be a lie to say that they did not have any attachment to each other. But now, Gerald only had Mila in his heart, and he would not fall in love with another woman anymore even if Fujiko was an outstanding lady.

"That's great, that's great." With Gerald's words, Takuya was somehow relieved. He sighed and took two steps forward to pat Gerald's shoulder and say, " But if possible, I still hope you can take care of Fujiko."

"I will help wherever I can." Gerald did not refuse.

After leaving the secret room, Takuya closed the wall first. As he watched Gerald and Master Ghost walk out, he couldn't help but clasp his hands together. It was not because of Gerald taking away the item left behind by his ancestors, but because he knew that Gerald was about to leave.

Although he knew that Gerald was not a member of his family and could not stay here for long, this feeling was growing stronger and stronger. He was very reluctant to let Gerald leave. After such a long period, he saw Gerald as part of his family.

"You should keep this." Gerald took out the piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to Master Ghost. "I may have to go and clear up some trouble over the next few days. This is safer with you."

"We should go there as soon as possible. The earlier we can learn the secrets of Yearning Island, the earlier you can save your parents." Master Ghost took it carefully and put it in the innermost pocket.

"I know."

Gerald nodded. Of course, he knew about this clearly. It's just that the Kanagawa and the Hanyu families could not be finished off in just a few days and it might cause a stir in Japan. After all, Japan was not like Yanam. When two large families were wiped out, it would surely cause very serious effects.

"You can go and rest first. I will think about it."

Walking to the door of the guest room, Gerald waved at Master Ghost and pushed the door open.

At the moment, in the Kanagawa family.

Ever since he had seen Gerald that night, Kanagawa Kai's mood had not been very good. He didn't even know why. Gerald was just a guest of the Futaba family, so how could the team leaders of the assassins of the Hanyu family fail? Even the top ten assassins on the assassin's list could die in the hands of Gerald.

These people would have a certain success rate even if they wanted to assassinate the president of Western Union. In his opinion, assassinating Gerald should be a breeze.

"Young Master, you should eat something." The servant stood outside the door with the meal. He knocked at the door and said in a low voice.

At a rough count, Kai hadn't eaten anything for two full days.

"Get lost!" Hearing the voice ringing outside, Kai shouted angrily immediately. He was now immersed in fear and helplessness. Not to mention eating, even drinking water made him feel nauseated.

The servant did not dare to speak, so he could only wait outside with the food.

Kai smoked continuously in his chair. The ashtray in front of him was already full of cigarette butts, and there were even several on the floor. The whole house was reeking of smoke, and if someone who did not know the situation entered the house, he would think that the smoke was caused by a fire.

“Just a petty Gerald Crawford, why can’t he be killed?!”

After taking the last puff, Kai slammed his fist on the table and said angrily.

After the Hanyu family had failed and Vulture, the seventh top assassin, had been killed, he did not know what method he should use to deal with Gerald.

“Young Master, maybe I can go and look for two girls from Fame Academic College. You might feel more relaxed after having some fun.” After a while, the voice of his henchman rang from outside.

“You too, get lost!” Kai felt that the henchman whom he had just promoted had a problem in his head. He didn’t even feel like eating, why would he want to play with girls?!

Chapter 2235

But once he had said that, an idea suddenly popped into his head.

“You! Come in!” Kai’s face relaxed a bit immediately.

“Young Master.” The henchman entered quickly and walked toward Kai carefully. He withdrew his neck, fearing that he would be beaten up.

“What did you say just now? Repeat it to me again.” Kai put his hand on his shoulders and pinned him on the seat next to him.

“I didn’t say anything just now!” The henchman was too scared to speak. After sitting down, his legs were shaking.

“Say it!” Kai glared at him, and his voice got louder.

The henchman was scared again, and he had no choice but to repeat it with a bitter face. “I said that if you were in a bad mood, I could go to Fame Academic College to find two young girls for you to play with and maybe, you would feel better.”

“Haha, that’s right! This is it!” Who knew? As soon as the henchman had said that, Kai laughed loudly.

“Young Master, are you alright?” Looking at Kai’s face, the henchman asked hurriedly, worrying that his words might have turned Kai crazy. He could not bear the consequences.

“What could possibly happen to me?” Kai took a cigarette out of the box and threw it at his henchmen. Then, he lit one and paced around the living room.

“You’re right. I should go out and have a proper meal and then get two girls.” Kai felt much better. His henchman’s unintentional words had kind of given him a very good idea.

“Should I contact them?” asked the henchman.

“Wait, don’t rush.” Kai waved his hand.

“If you don’t want to go out, I can bring them back and send them here,” said the henchman.

“Who said that I wanted them?” Kai turned his head.

“Huh?” The henchman was confused, not knowing what Kai meant by his words.

“This is for Gerald.” Kai showed a sly smile. Since the hard way didn’t work, he would use the soft way. He didn’t believe that Gerald was invincible and that nothing could work.

“Listen. Book a hotel room for tomorrow night. Choose two extremely hot girls from Fame Academic College and bring them to the hotel. I have a use for them.” Kai thought for a moment and said to his henchman.

“No problem, I’ll get right on it.” The henchman nodded and noted it down.

The next evening.

Gerald was sitting on his bed thinking about the ancient ruins, his conversation with the old man, and everything he had seen after entering the stone room.

Still, it was already two to three months ago. Gerald had not taken it seriously at that time, so he couldn’t recall it at all.

“Who is this?” The phone rang. Gerald picked it up and asked.

Chapter 2236

“Are you Gerald?” Kai’s voice could be heard.

“It turns out to be Young Master Kai Kanagawa. What can I do for you?” The moment Gerald heard Kai’s voice, he became amused. So, he crossed his legs and asked.

“How could I be addressed as a young master in front of you?” Kai’s gloomy laughter could be heard.

"If there's anything, just spill it. If not, I'm going to hang up." Gerald had no interest in wasting time with Kai. Besides, he knew that Kai definitely meant only evil since Kai was willing to take the initiative to call him.

"Don't." Kai was instantly anxious. "I know that I've made a lot of mistakes previously. You're forgiving, and you don't take them to heart. So, I would like to treat you to a meal as a form of compensation and apology for you. Then, we can still be friends in the future."

"Sure. No problem. What time?" Gerald endured his laughter and said so.

"Ah?" Kai did not expect that Gerald would agree to it in such a straightforward manner. Hence, he was struck speechless and did not know what he should say.

"Could it be that you were just joking? You don't actually want to treat me?" Gerald continued and asked him.

"Of course not. I sincerely want to treat you to a meal."

Kai immediately denied it. Currently, he wanted Gerald to come out so badly. He certainly would not miss that chance.

"I'll give you a chance given your sincerity." Gerald said with a low voice, "Send the details to my phone."

After he had said that, he hung up his phone.

At the other end of the phone, Kai punched the wall. He was very vexed with Gerald's attitude, but he was slightly delighted because Gerald had agreed to it. He was certain that he could definitely make

Gerald lose his reputation that time around as long as Gerald could come out.

“Gerald, since I can’t do it the harsh way, I’ll try the soft way. I don’t believe that you don’t have any weaknesses.” Kai narrowed his eyes and ground his teeth as he said so. His countenance was full of darkness.

After sending the location of the hotel to Gerald, he immediately asked his confidant to come back to his room.

“What’s wrong, Young Master?” His confidant hurriedly rushed over.

“Did you settle things at the hotel?” Kai pointed at the door. After his subordinate had closed the door, he questioned him.

“Yes. I’ve booked a private room on the top floor.” His confidant nodded.

“Where are the university students?” Kai continued to ask him.

“I found them too. I paid each of them five hundred dollars. They’re very cooperative, and they’re now waiting in the hotel room.” The confidant continued to answer his questions.

“Where’s the medicine?” Kai nodded in satisfaction. He believed that he could definitely ruin Gerald in one go as long as everything was prepared nicely.

“It’s here as well. I especially gave an order and asked them to go to the customs office to get it. It was nearly withheld there.” The confidant fished out a bottle of brown medicine from his pocket and handed it to Kai.

Kai took it and looked at it for a short while. He then put it away randomly before he took out a stack of

hundred dollar bills from his wallet and threw them in front of his confidant. "You did a rather good job this time around."

"Thank you, Young Master. Thank you!" The confidant immediately grabbed all of the money. With that money, not only could he have a grand feast, he could even have some fun with two B-list or C-list celebrities in Japan. If it was a university student, he could even keep her as his mistress for one to two years.

Taking the money, he then left swiftly.

Chapter 2237

During the few days that he had been working for Kai, he had learned that he could not stay by Kai's side for too long. If not, he might say something wrong and make a mistake. It would most probably get him into trouble.

Even if he stood there without moving, he would also become a target for Kai to vent his feelings out.

An afternoon passed very quickly. In the blink of an eye, night had fallen.

Gerald drove the car and reached the hotel based on the location sent by Kai. Gerald only revealed that he was going out to resolve a small issue. Hence, he did not bring anyone with him. After all, Kai was a villain.

There were certainly people lying in wait for him. Gerald did not want others to take the risk with him. Just as he had parked his car in the parking lot of the hotel, a waiter trotted over to him.

"May I know if you are Mr. Gerald Crawford?"

Before Gerald had fully rolled down the window, the waiter bent his body and asked.

“Yes, that’s me.” Gerald nodded.

“Mr. Kanagawa has long been waiting for you upstairs. He told me that I must wait here.” The waiter opened the car door for Gerald and put his hand on the car roof too.

“Lead the way.” Gerald got out of the car and followed him into the hotel.

Kai, who was waiting in the private room, received the news that Gerald had reached the hotel.

“Act naturally later. Gerald is not an ordinary person. If you act suspiciously, he’ll certainly see that something is wrong. Then, we may even die here, let alone do something to him.” Kai put away his phone and said lightly to his confidant.

“Don’t worry, Young Master. I definitely won’t spill the beans.” His subordinate took a deep breath and nodded. The moment they had said that, Gerald opened the door and came in.

Thinking of what had happened that night, Kai subconsciously stood up, his hands trembling slightly.

Still, he took a deep breath and forced himself to stay calm.

“Young Master, this is a rather grand occasion.” Gerald took a glance at the private room before he looked at Kai and said lightly. As for the subordinate beside Kai, he did not take the subordinate seriously at all.

“Of course I need to be generous to serve you. Otherwise, how could it be worthy of your identity?”

Kai gradually eased his tension. Looking at Gerald, he put on a fake smile and said.

“Then, let’s sit down. I haven’t eaten anything today, by the way. It seems like I’m lucky to be able to enjoy great food today.” Gerald did not bother about them, and he directly sat down on the chair, devouring the food.

As for the dishes, Gerald was not worried at all as to whether they were poisoned or not. After all, he had the Herculean Primordial Spirit to protect him. Even if it was the most powerful poison in the world, it would not be effective.

Gerald was eating heartily. Seeing that, Kai was slightly happy. As long as Gerald ate more, it meant that he was much more relaxed. Then, it would be more convenient for Kai to drug Gerald later.

“Gerald, let me propose a toast to you. I’ve offended you a lot in the past. Now that I think about it, I was indeed over the line. I hope that we can be good friends in the future.” Before long, Kai raised his wine glass.

His cup was filled with sake, which was of a very low percentage of alcohol. On the other hand, the wine in Gerald’s cup was more than seventy percent. For a drunkard like Kai, he would definitely be knocked out after he had two glasses of that kind of alcohol.

“No problem. If I have a friend like you with such a status, you’ll help me to resolve all the problems I face in the future, right?” Gerald laughed loudly. He then raised the wine glass and directly gulped it down.

The taste of the strong wine spread around in Gerald’s mouth. Certainly, he had foreseen those tactics.

Chapter 2238

Although it did not produce much of an effect on him, he still pretended as though he was not good at drinking. He ceaselessly drew in cold air.

“Gerald, it seems like you’re not very good at drinking.” Seeing Gerald’s appearance, Kai became much more confident.

“That’s right. I’m very weak at drinking. I basically get drunk after two to three glasses of wine.” Gerald echoed Kai’s words and said so. In truth, that kind of wine did not affect him at all. The more he drank, the more he would just need to go and pee. He could even use his Herculean Primordial Spirit to evaporate the urine in his body.

“We’re the same type of people. Then, let’s eat first!” Kai did not urge Gerald to drink more wine. If not, Gerald might feel that something was amiss.

Besides, Kai became not so anxious anymore after he learned about how much Gerald could drink. After a meal, one at least needed to drink four to five glasses of wine.

“You’re flattering me.” Gerald put down the wine glass and continued eating the food in front of him.

Kai just stared at him. After a short while, he could not help but ask, “By the way, Gerald, what kind of relationship do you have with the Futaba family exactly? How come you help them so much when you’re a Westoner? Could it be that you’ve fallen in love with Fujiko?”

“It’s just coincidental.” Gerald waved his hand and continued eating.

Hearing Gerald’s words that carried no meaning, Kai knew that he had made a vain attempt. Hence, he ceased talking.

Time passed, and Kai watched as Gerald ate endlessly. He then continued to make Gerald drink a few glasses of wine.

Gerald did not disappoint Kai either. After downing two glasses of wine consecutively, Gerald used the essential qi in his body to make his face look redder. He also pretended to be drunk in his actions.

“Young Master, why do you have to deal with the Futaba family? Didn’t your family maintain peace with them for hundreds of years? Or did someone from the Futaba family send the news to you secretly? If not, how did you know where Miss Futaba is?”

Gerald held his chin with one hand, and even the words he said were slightly incoherent. He looked like he was indeed drunk.

“How is it possible that someone could have sent the news to us secretly? But it concerns my family, so I can’t tell you about it.” Kai was stunned for a short while, but he revealed nothing.

“It’s fine if you don’t tell me about it. I understand.” Waving his hand, Gerald replied.

“Let’s continue eating. It’s my treat today. Eat and drink whatever you like. If it’s not enough, I’ll ask the waiter to serve you more!” Kai nodded. He felt that Gerald was terribly drunk.

After having another two mouthfuls of rice, Gerald threw away the spoon and pretended to be drunk. He then directly lay prone on the table. Before long, one could hear his snores.

“Gerald?” Seeing that scene, Kai was slightly helpless. Unexpectedly, he had not even drugged Gerald before the latter had sprawled over the table.

However, on the premise of knowing Gerald’s means, Kai did not lose his vigilance. He called out to Gerald a few times before he walked to him gently and called out to him again.

After Kai saw that Gerald made no response and movement, he stretched his hand out to pat Gerald’s back briefly.

“He’s indeed bad at drinking. At first, I thought that it would be very troublesome, but I didn’t expect

that I would be able to settle him with such great ease!” Seeing that Gerald was indeed drunk, Kai broke into a smile. He had no scruples with his words now.

Gerald was bad at drinking. Kai knew that after four to five glasses of wine, which had an alcohol percentage of seventy percent, Gerald would not wake up even if the roof collapsed, let alone regain his consciousness. At least, he would sleep soundly for more than ten hours.

Chapter 2239

Kai had gained that kind of experience from his addiction to alcohol in the past.

“What should we do now?” His confidant walked to him and asked.

“What else can we do? Ask the waiter to come and carry Gerald to the room downstairs. Is the camera ready?”

Kai wanted so badly to kill Gerald directly in that instant. He knew that he would certainly be able to do so if he truly wanted to.

But he dared not do so. Although his family possessed a powerful status in Japan, the Futaba family was not easy game either. If the Futaba family gained something against him, his entire life would be ruined. Soon the waiter had arrived, and he carried Gerald out of the private room.

The two female university students had long been waiting there, and the cameras had been set up in the room, waiting for Gerald to be sent there and fall into Kai’s trap.

“Be gentler. Don’t wake him up!” Seeing that the waiter was being careless, Kai immediately reprimanded him.

If Gerald fell to the floor or the waiter accidentally knocked him against the door, he might wake up

instantly.

The waiter carried Gerald to the bed carefully. After he had received some tips from Kai, he hurriedly left.

“This is the money for you.”

Kai took out a stack of hundred dollar bills from his bag and threw them on the bed. “Remember. You have to give all you have to serve my friend. As long as he’s comfortable, this is nothing but small money.”

“Thank you, Sir!” When the two university students saw how generous Kai was, their eyes brightened. He was much more generous than the other bosses.

After Kai had left, he did not go and check out the surveillance system. However, he prepared to return to the room and take a rest. Although he did not have seventy degree strong wine, he accompanied Gerald and drank much wine. Besides, his body had long been ruined now, and he could not take that.

“Go and keep an eye on it If anything happens, call me. Do you understand?” Before Kai entered his room, he especially gave an order to his confidant.

On the surface, his confidant agreed to it. However, after Kai closed the door, he immediately walked to the elevator. He used the money Kai had given him that day and made an appointment with a C-list celebrity. He certainly could not waste such a great opportunity to go and stand guard before a computer.

Gerald was still lying on the bed in the room.

He still did not know what Kai wanted to do until that moment.

However, after spreading his senses around with the Herculean Primordial Spirit, he could clearly notice that a few cameras were operating in the room. Gerald focused his attention, and an invisible essential qi was spread out of his body, making all of the surveillance system and hidden cameras unable to function normally.

“He’s drunk.” At that time, the two university students were still discussing how to serve Gerald. When they saw him sleeping soundly while lying on the bed the moment he was carried into the room, they were soon in a slight dilemma.

“Then, what should we do? Mr. Kanagawa gave us a lot of money. If we just sit here and do nothing, I’m afraid that he’s going to retrieve all of the money.”

The other girl patted Gerald’s back. Seeing that he was still not awake, she was slightly helpless.

“Who are you?” Gerald used his essential qi and sensed that Kai and the others had left. Hence, he did not pretend anymore. He turned around and asked lightly.

“You’re awake.” Hearing Gerald’s voice, they revealed a smile.

Chapter 2240

The two of them sat nearer to Gerald. Afterward, they started to take off their clothes.

“Wait. What are you doing?” Gerald frowned deeply.

However, he soon understood it after he saw their actions. It appeared that Kai wanted to get him drunk. Kai had set up a grand feast to scheme against Gerald and wanted to shoot an indecent video of Gerald using the surveillance cameras.

“Of course we want to serve you. Mr. Kanagawa told us very clearly. You’re his prestigious guest, so he told us that we must serve you well. If not, we won’t be able to get any money.” One of the university students replied. As she talked, she took off her coat.

“Don’t take off your clothes first.” Gerald pressed her hand before he released her immediately. “If you take off your clothes now, you won’t be able to get any money.”

Hearing Gerald’s threat, they stopped.

“Who are you?” Gerald sat further away from them.

“We’re students from Fame Academic College. Don’t worry, Sir. Our bodies are very clean. We always go to have a body check up every half month. We definitely won’t let you get infected by any diseases.” The woman even thought that Gerald had some worries. Hence, she gave an explanation.

“Behave yourself well and sit over there.” Gerald was slightly disgusted. These women did not do good deeds. They actually engaged in such affairs by manipulating their bodies to earn money. Although they could earn money fast, they would regret it one day. At that time, they would not be able to wash their bodies clean.

“Okay.” The two women nodded briefly.

Gerald inevitably felt that it was slightly amusing when he saw them behaving themselves. He did not know how Kai had come up with such an idea. Kai actually wanted to use that kind of tactic to deal with him.

Certainly, it was impossible that he would leave just like that. Since Kai wanted to get rid of him, he had to give Kai some form of response.

“Just leave.” Gerald turned around and took a look at the two people in front of him before he said in

slight impatience.

“But if we leave just like this, we won’t be able to get the money.” The two women took a look at each other. They thought that money was much more important than anything else. If not, they would not do such a thing.

“If you don’t leave now, I’ll guarantee that you won’t even be able to get the money you have now.”

Frowning, Gerald looked at the swelling bags beside them. Hence, he could guess that the bags must be full of a lot of cash.

“Let’s go, then.”

The two women knew that the man before them was Kai’s prestigious guest. Hence, they assumed that what he had said was true. They immediately got up from the bed and walked outside. If they had to give up the money they had just received, they would have made a vain attempt by going there.

Watching them leave, Gerald shook his head and heaved a sigh.

He did not want to care about those kinds of people, and he was unable to do so either. Since they had come to such a state, they would only get worse.

Smoking a cigarette, a thought dawned upon him.

If he had not known about the affairs related to the ancient ruins, he might have waited there for a longer period of time and used other methods to get rid of the Kanagawa and Hanyu families. However, now that he knew that there was something related to the Seadom tribe and Yearning Island in the ancient ruins, he could not delay his time there anymore.

If he could get rid of those two families sooner, he could return to the ancient ruins earlier. After learning the secrets of Yearning Island, it would be time to rescue his parents and sister.

Hence, Gerald decided to grab that chance and get rid of the trouble, which was the Kanagawa family, in one go. Although it would be slightly difficult if he wanted to exterminate that family entirely, he could get rid of Kai first.

Thinking of that, Gerald walked straight out of the room. Using the Herculean Primordial Spirit to sense the surroundings, he found Kai's room with great ease. The moment he was about to knock on the door, his hand stopped in midair.

Chapter 2241

If it was fun Kai wanted, then fun he would get. Thinking back, it'd be meaningless if he got rid of Kai that easily anyway. With that in mind, Gerald then returned to his room before lying in bed to get some rest.

...

It was sometime later when Kai who was drenched in cold sweat finally reopened his eyes, followed by a terrorized scream. The boy had dreamt that Gerald had brought him to a deserted mountain before tearing his head off...!

Upon realizing that he was still lying on his hotel bed, Kai quickly grabbed a glass of water that was right beside his bed before downing it in one gulp... Once he calmed down a bit, he wiped the sweat off his forehead before grumbling, "God d*mn it! That scared me half to death...!"

Shaking his head, Kai then took a look at the time. Realizing that almost four hours had passed, Kai figured that Gerald must have fallen into his trap by now.

Since Kai had planned for everything that happened in that room to be recorded by the surveillance system, he couldn't help but smile smugly. After all, he now had something to prevent Gerald from getting in his way! As long as Gerald made one wrong move, Kai could just spread that video around, causing Gerald and Fujiko to instantly suffer a bad reputation!

Unfortunately, this was the best idea he could currently think of to deal with Gerald, but it was better than nothing. With that in mind, Kai began humming as he skipped toward the monitoring room.

Upon entering, however, Kai's glee quickly turned into rage. Trembling from both anger and worry, Kai couldn't help but walk toward the pitch-black screen. Hadn't he told his confidant to keep an eye on things...?!

“God d*mn it...!” growled Kai, wondering if anything had been recorded at all. He should’ve been informed that the screen had turned pitch-black the second it happened! Now fuming with anger, Kai slammed his fist against the table, nearly causing the monitor to fall to the floor!

It didn’t help that Kai knew that he couldn’t just repair or set up more surveillance systems in Gerald’s room. After all, Gerald was most probably awake now and had probably figured out that he was being set up after seeing the two university students he had slept with.

With that in mind, Kai was afraid that the second he stepped in, Gerald would just beat him to death! Actively holding his anger back, Kai then called his subordinate.

The second the subordinate saw who was calling, he gestured for the C-list celebrity not to say a word before picking up, only to hear Kai growl, “Where the hell are you...?!”

“...I-I’m just outside taking a smoke...!”

“Get back in here!” roared Kai, clearly not buying it at all. After all, if his confidant had only gone out to smoke, he should’ve realized by now that the screen had gone dark!

Whatever the case was, it was a few minutes later when the subordinate came running back into the room and the second he saw the darkened screen, he became so anxious that he nearly toppled to the ground...!

Glaring at the subordinate, Kai who felt like killing him now then growled, “Care to explain what the hell is going on...?!”

“I... I... H-how could this have happened...?! Everything was fine before I left...! C-could something be wrong with the computer...?” stuttered the subordinate who didn’t dare reveal that he had never entered the room in the first place!

Seething with rage, Kai almost burst into a maniacal fit of laughter as he roared, "Well, what are you waiting for?! Go turn it on and test it out!"

Kai, for one, had spent a few thousand dollars on the computer. With that in mind, there was no way the computer would malfunction at the most critical of moments...!

Chapter 2242

Knowing that he didn't really have any other choice, the subordinate then switched the computer on and just like that, it was revealed that the surveillance system was functioning normally. However, not a soul was in the room...!

"What was that about something being wrong with the computer...?!" growled Kai as he smacked the back of his confidant's head. Not only had his subordinate disobey his orders, but he even tried to fool him! If this wasn't such a high end place, Kai would've already beaten him to death...!

Holding the back of his aching head, the confidant who was already in tears quickly get to his knees before crying out, "I-I'm sorry, young master...! I have no idea what went wrong...! Everything was going smoothly, last I checked!"

Holding back his anger, Kai who knew that he needed to focus on Gerald then growled, "Where the hell did you go...?!"

While Kai knew that Gerald wasn't going to be fully sober in just four hours, he couldn't help but quiver now that he knew that Gerald was no longer in the room. No matter how drunk Gerald was, there was always a chance that he'd see through his plans! If that came to be, then Kai's life would surely be in danger...!

Regardless, not daring to lie to Kai anymore, the subordinate gulped before saying, "I-I... used the money you gave me to look for a C-list celebrity...!"

“You...! You, good for nothing...! Even if you’re horny, go look for women at less critical moments...!” roared Kai, his face as red as a beet now.

“B-but how was I supposed to know that something like this would happen...? After all, it was clearly fine during the initial inspection... E-either way, since Gerald’s not in the room now... Do you think he’s seen through our plans...?” whimpered the subordinate as he stared at the empty room on screen.

“Don’t try to change the god d*mned topic...!” growled Kai who was more scared than angry at this point. After all, what he had feared most was now a reality...!

Barely a second later, Gerald’s voice could be heard outside their room, saying, “My, my, how you spoil me, Mr. Kanagawa. Not only did you treat me to a lavish meal, but you also got me two beauties to sleep with! Unfortunately, I have to say that I’m not interested in sleeping around.”

Upon hearing that, Kai instantly went pale.

At that moment, he recalled the moment Aiden had kidnapped him from his manor that night. Had Gerald truly wanted him dead, he would’ve surely perished in that Futaba warehouse back then. Now that his plan had failed, he was once again in Gerald’s grasp...!

Watching as his terrified confidant leaped to his feet before clinging against the wall, Kai then forced a smile before replying, “I... just wanted to make sure that you were comfortable...! E-either way, I’m sorry if they weren’t your type! Just tell me what kind of women you want and I’ll get them for you...!”

“Really now...?” asked Gerald as he lit a cigarette before sitting cross legged before Kai.

“... O-of course, buddy...! Buddies need to take good care of each other, r-right...? You can pick any woman you like in the entirety of Japan, and that includes A-list celebrities...!” declared Kai who knew that he could only play along now.

Chapter 2243

Simply shrugging in response, Gerald then replied, "As I've said, I'm not really interested in such things."

"T-then tell me what else you'd like to do...? Worry not, I'll definitely be able to get whatever you ask for!" declared Kai who figured that Gerald hadn't actually figured out what was happening.

For one, Gerald wasn't infuriated yet. With that in mind, Kai realized that Gerald could have just left since he didn't like the women he had chosen for him. If that was the case, then Kai didn't really mind this outcome. After all, though he failed to obtain a way to threaten Gerald, at the very least, he wasn't in trouble yet.

"Hmm... Well, I have a place in mind. Follow me, I'll drive you there!" replied Gerald as he tossed his unfinished cigarette to the floor before stomping on it.

Watching as Gerald then walked out, Kai and his confidant were left utterly puzzled. Shortly after, the subordinate inched toward Kai's side before whispering, "Should... we follow him, young master...?"

"Do you even dare not to?" grumbled Kai before taking a deep breath. Summoning all the courage in him, Kai then began following Gerald to his car, his subordinate staying close to him at all times.

Once the trio got to the car parked right outside the hotel, Gerald got in the driver's seat whereas Kai and his confidant sat at the back. Already sensing that something was wrong, Kai cleared his throat before saying, "...Um... Gerald...? Where exactly are we headed to...? You know, I'm sure my subordinate and I can find an even better alternative!"

"Just trust me on this. I'll be bringing you guys to an extremely nice place," replied Gerald with a subtle smile as he shook his head before stepping on the gas and heading South.

Though Gerald drove at nearly a hundred and fifty miles per hour, Kai and his subordinate who kept their backs glued against the back of their seats throughout the journey remained silent for fear that they would accidentally offend Gerald.

However, after about two hours of driving, Kai was starting to get worried out of his mind. After all, dawn had already come and they still had no idea where Gerald was taking them! It was half an hour later when Kai finally gave in to fear and asked, "...Um... Gerald...? Where are we going...?"

"You'll know once we get there," replied Gerald in an indifferent tone.

It was around ten in the morning when Gerald finally stopped the car atop a barren mountain.

"... The... Yamashita family's territory...?" muttered the stunned Kai.

Thinking back, hadn't Ryugu told him that Gerald had a good relationship with the Yamashitas? The thought of that alone was already starting to worry Kai.

"Get out," ordered Gerald as he opened the door to the back seat.

Doing as he was told, Kai whose legs were now shaky couldn't help but ask, "...Why... are we here, Gerald...?"

Though he knew that following Gerald was bad news, there was simply no escaping him...!

"Hmm? I just brought you over to have a nice chat. Don't worry, there'll be tea," replied Gerald with a subtle smile as he patted Kai on the shoulder. Though Gerald's pats weren't particularly strong, the terrified Kai's legs were already close to giving in.

Just as the two got out and Gerald closed the car door behind them, an unfamiliar voice greeted, "Hmm? If it isn't Mr. Crawford! It's been a while!"

Chapter 2244

As it turned out, the voice belonged to one of the Yamashitas. Since he knew that Gerald had a good relationship with the family elder, he didn't ask what Gerald was doing here.

Whatever the case was, Gerald simply nodded in response before replying, "Indeed. I'm here to have some tea with these two gentlemen. Do lead them in."

Watching as Gerald then began walking deeper into their territory, the Yamashita man turned to face Kai and his subordinate before cordially saying, "Please, come with me, gentlemen!"

Not daring to disobey, Kai and his subordinate simply silently followed after them. Kai, for one, knew that if he didn't follow Gerald's orders now, Gerald could easily turn around and kill him in a single strike!

Either way, after walking for about ten minutes, Gerald finally arrived at the old man's yard.

Hearing footsteps, the old man who was fetching a new kettle of tea turned around and was pleasantly surprised to see Gerald walking in with his hands behind his back. Putting the kettle down, he was then prompted to ask, "Oh? What brings you here today?"

"I came over to deal with some things," replied Gerald with a faint smile.

Before the old man could ask any further, he watched as Kai and his subordinate entered after Gerald. Putting two and two together, the old man then lifted his kettle again before walking into his living room.

Seeing that, Gerald stopped before the living room's door before gesturing toward it as he said, "Please come in, Mr. Kanagawa."

Unwilling to enter, the awkward Kai who was getting increasingly bad vibes about this place was prompted to ask, "Before that... What are we even doing here...? To be a Kanagawa in the Yamashita

family's territory... That... isn't exactly a good thing..."

"I've already told you, haven't I? We're here to have a talk while enjoying some tea. Naturally, your subordinate gets to join in too. Don't worry, I'll send you back once we're done," replied Gerald as he walked into the living room.

Momentarily shuddering, Kai truly hoped that he was simply overthinking things as he slowly entered the living room as well.

Watching as Kai whose hands were clearly trembling sat opposite of him, Gerald took one of the cups of tea that the old man had just poured and placed it before Kai before saying, "Here, have some while it's warm."

Not even bothering about the fact that his subordinate had been ignored, Kai who was now beyond anxious gulped before asking, "P-please, Gerald... What are you really trying to achieve here...?"

Raising a slight brow, Gerald who knew that he no longer needed to pretend to be cordial replied, "First off... You were the one who set up these cameras, correct?"

The sooner he could get rid of Kai, the better. If he did things quickly enough, he could possibly even make it home in time for dinner.

Regardless, upon hearing that, Kai instantly went pale. Feeling his heart skip a beat, he slowly replied, "W-what cameras...?"

"The ones in my room, of course. Wasn't your master plan to get me drunk before slipping those two women into my room and filming everything? Were you planning to then threaten me with the footage?" said Gerald in a calm tone as he sipped his tea before narrowing his eyes at Kai.

"I-I'd never do anything of the sort...! I simply wanted to treat you to a nice meal and let you have some

fun with those women...! A-as I said, I'm fine with inviting you to another entertainment center if that experience wasn't to your liking...! As for the cameras... T-they came with the hotel!" declared Kai, desperately trying to clear Gerald's suspicions.

Chapter 2245

Kai just didn't understand. Even if Gerald had lied about not being a good drinker, that drink contained seventy percent of alcohol...! Gerald had drunk six glasses of that alcohol, and any regular adult would've definitely gotten drunk out of their mind after taking that much! Yet here Gerald was, looking completely sober even though Kai was certain that Gerald had

Properly drunk every glass! How had Gerald digested all that alcohol so quickly?!

"Oh? Is that so?" replied Gerald with a faint smile. Though Kai had said all that, his terrified eyes told Gerald that everything he had guessed was on the mark.

While all this was happening, the old man simply remained silent. The elder, for one, knew that he only needed to provide this space for Gerald to do whatever he needed to. While he wasn't sure why Gerald couldn't have just held this conversation back at the Futaba manor, the old man knew better than to inquire about that at the moment.

Whatever the case was, Kai whose forehead was now drenched in sweat then added, "I... I mean it! You, of all people, should know that I'd never do anything to harm you...!"

"I see... and what do you say?" asked Gerald as turned to look at Kai's subordinate.

"T-the young master speaks the truth! We were simply trying to give you a relaxing time in hopes that you'd forgive us after all we've done in the past! We meant no evil!" declared the quivering subordinate.

"Hmm... Did I wrongly accuse you then...?" asked Gerald with a slightly raised brow.

“Y-you did...! Look, if I really wanted to harm you, wouldn’t it have made sense for me to do it while you were drunk? Why’d I provide you with women if I really wanted to hurt you!” replied Kai with a nod.

“So that’s your answer...? Do you really think I didn’t hear your conversation earlier?” growled Gerald with a frown.

“T-that... H-how do I explain this...” muttered Kai as he instantly averted his gaze.

“Not the slightest bit of sincerity in you... Since that’s the case, I won’t need to keep you two alive,” replied Gerald with a sigh.

Realizing that he had truly f*cked up this time, the nervous Kai instantly yelled, “N-no-!”

However, before Kai could say anything else, Gerald simply flicked a toothpick toward the boy’s throat! The toothpick itself pierced through Kai’s neck before embedding itself onto the wall like a nail! Though Kai could tell that Gerald had done something since there was now a searing pain in his throat, he hadn’t even been able to see Gerald’s attack clearly!

“G-Gerald... You...!” muttered Kai, unable to say anything else due to the immense pain that came whenever he talked. Before long, blood began dripping out from the corners of his mouth.

By this point, even breathing had become difficult for Kai. It felt as though someone was squeezing his neck, and no matter how much Kai tried to breathe, he simply couldn’t take in any air.

“Y-young master...!” cried out Kai’s subordinate as he turned to look at the bloody toothpick that had been embedded into the wall. Easily seeing the connection between the toothpick and Kai’s agony, the subordinate couldn’t help but wonder how all this was even possible! This wasn’t some action movie...!

“First assassins, now this? You really deserve what you’re currently experiencing. Regardless, I brought you here since I won’t be in much trouble for killing you within the Yamashita family’s territory,”

retorted Gerald, glaring at Kai the entire time.

Chapter 2246

Kai, however, was too preoccupied trying to breathe to even reply. He simply couldn't breathe no matter how much he tried!

Hearing no reply, Gerald simply watched in silence as Kai's death swiftly approached.

Throughout the process, the old man seemed completely unfazed about what was taking place before him. Remaining indifferent, the old man simply opted to have more tea as he read through a few books that were laying around. Kai's subordinate, on the other hand, was so terrified that he was paralyzed in place.

By the time Kai finally died, his hands had been grasping so tightly onto his neck this entire time that they remained frozen there, an agonized expression etched on his face. Till the very moment he died, Kai had failed to realize what had killed him, though none of that mattered anymore.

Either way, now that the boy was dead, the old man tossed his book aside before looking at Gerald with a smile as he said, "As expected, you truly are strong..."

"That was nothing compared to what you're capable of," replied Gerald in a slightly embarrassed tone as he scratched the back of his head. After all, he had previously witnessed the old man summon a flame in his palm out of thin air. Now, that was awe worthy.

Before the old man could reply, his nose suddenly twitched as he asked with a frown, "What's that smell..?"

"Smells like... urine...?" muttered Gerald. For people like Gerald and the elder, discerning even the faintest of smells was nothing to them.

"I-I'm sorry...! I couldn't hold it in...!" whimpered the terrified subordinate who was traumatized after watching Kai die so miserably.

Shaking his head, Gerald then waved his hand before saying, "Leave. I won't kill you."

"... R-really...?" asked the subordinate who didn't want to be given false hope.

After watching Gerald nod, the subordinate instantly bolted out of the room! As he ran helter-skelter away from the manor, the subordinate thought about how he needed to leave the country as soon as possible. He needed to find someplace where nobody knew him so that Gerald wouldn't ever be able to track him down...!

Regardless, after the subordinate ran out of his manor, the puzzled old man was prompted to ask, "... Are you really sure you're fine letting him off like this? Aren't you worried that he'll cause you more trouble by revealing what you've done after this?"

Laughing in response, Gerald simply replied, "I only said that I wouldn't be the one to kill him. That doesn't mean he's going to leave this place alive."

Upon hearing that, the old man simply nodded before gesturing at one of the Yamashitas who was standing at the door as he said, "Dispose of him."

Immediately doing as he was told, it was less than ten seconds later when an agonizing scream could be heard. Soon after, the man returned. Getting to his knees, the Yamashita member then declared, "He's been dealt with, sir."

"Good. Now get rid of their corpses," replied the old man with a satisfied smile as he pointed at Kai's corpse.

Once the corpse was dragged out and the door to the living room was closed, the old man took a sip of tea before facing Gerald as he asked, "So... That person you killed was the youngest master of the Kanagawa family, correct?"

"He's the one," replied Gerald with a nod.

"I see. You've done a good job deciding to deal with him here. It'll surely eliminate a lot of potential trouble for you," said the old man in an approving tone.

"Thank you, though I do have to apologize for causing you trouble," replied Gerald in a slightly embarrassed tone.

Chapter 2247

This was pretty much the best place Gerald could think of to safely dispose of Kai. Otherwise, he wouldn't have decided to bring trouble to the old man's doorstep.

"Oh please, this is just a trivial affair. Regardless, if people do come looking for them, I'll just tell them that they left with you shortly after. In other words, I have no idea where those two Kanagawas are," replied the old man with a wink.

"I appreciate it. Speaking of which, though I came here mainly to dispose of Kai, I also have something to discuss," said Gerald with a much more serious tone.

"Go on..." replied the old man with a nod.

"Well... I've found a way to get to Yearning Island," said Gerald after taking a deep breath. Honestly, just talking about it made it difficult to even breathe.

"... Hmm? Then what are you still sitting here for? Hurry and rescue your parents and sister! We can't let

Daryl continue to use them to threaten you anymore!” declared the old man with a stern expression.

“To clarify, at the moment, I’ve only found out where I can get information on how to get to the island. You see, the Seadom tribe has apparently placed everything related to Yearning Island in the ancient ruins in Yanam. Once I get there, I should be able to get the information I need,” replied Gerald with a faint smile. Though he had only met this old man a few times, he couldn’t help but respect him as an elder. It was a feeling Gerald hadn’t experienced in the longest time.

“The ancient ruins in Yanam you say... Can’t say I’ve heard of that place before. Hopefully you’ll find it after searching around for a bit. Also, keep in mind that it probably won’t be easy to enter,” muttered the old man after thinking for a bit.

“I’ve been there before,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Oh? That’s a great start! Was it easy to access?” asked the old man, his expression returning to a relaxed one.

“Well... I did bump into an old man guarding the place, but due to my Herculean Primordial Spirit, he ended up greatly respecting me. In fact, he even said that everything there belonged to me, and that I was free to take whatever I wanted. I had no idea why that was when I first visited that place a few months ago, and quite frankly, I still have no idea why all that happened,” replied Gerald with a shrug.

“Now isn’t the time to be bothered by that. You should head over quickly to learn how to get to Yearning Island already!” grumbled the old man, sounding much hastier than usual. After all, not only did he want to help Gerald, but he was also curious to find out why Daryl had ended up the way he currently was.

“I’ll head off once I’ve settled the Futaba family’s issues. While it’s true that I initially only got in touch with them to get in contact with the Seadom tribe, now that I’ve gotten this involved with them, I can’t just leave,” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

“And how long do you plan to help them exactly?” asked the old man.

“I’ll be off once their current issues are resolved,” replied Gerald who really didn’t want to leave the Futabas to fend for themselves, especially since they had now pointed him in the right direction. While it was true that he could’ve eventually learned that the secrets of the Seadom tribe were in the secret ruins in Yanam, by that point, there was a high possibility that he would’ve been too late to save his parents and sister, and that was a possibility that Gerald didn’t want to even think about.

“... I can get my family to help you,” suggested the old man after thinking for a while.

“I appreciate it. Then let’s go after the Hanyus first. I really can’t rest easy knowing that family is still up and about,” replied Gerald.

“Negative. Focus on saving your family first. You can deal with the Hanyus once you’re done with that,” said the old man after giving it some thought.

Chapter 2248

Upon hearing that, Gerald momentarily fell silent. While it was true that Amare had told him that his parents and sister were being treated humanely, he was still worried that things could change at any moment.

However, simply leaving to save them felt irresponsible toward the Futabas. After all, the second the Kanagawas and Hanyus learned that he had left, they would surely start harassing the Futabas again, and Gerald was pretty sure that the Fareast Consortium could do little to stop them.

Now that the old man was volunteering to help, however, Gerald couldn’t help but feel more assured.

After all, the most mysterious family in Japan was stepping in! Knowing how strong the Yamashitas were, Gerald believed that nobody would be able to touch the Futabas if they were really going to help him.

Seeing how silent Gerald had gotten, the old man was prompted to ask, "So... made your decision?"

Looking at the old man for a while, Gerald then replied, "Are... you really willing to help me...?"

"But of course! In the end, you're still Daryl's grandson, so helping you is only right. Besides, I'm curious to find out why that old man underwent such drastic changes since we last met... Honestly, I still find it hard to believe that he locked your family up!" declared the old man with a smile.

"Well, alright then! I won't be as worried as long as you're involved! While I'm sure you're already going to do this, please do your best to help the Futabas once I'm gone. I'll definitely return to help out once I've rescued my parents and sister!" said Gerald in a determined voice as he slapped his thigh.

"Oh, I won't be involved," replied the old man as he shook his head.

"Come again?" asked Gerald, rightfully puzzled.

Laughing in response, the old man then took a sip of tea before replying, "Allow me to clarify. In return for getting the Yamashitas to guard over the Futabas, I only ask that I be allowed to join you on your quest to save your parents. I believe that my family is more than capable of handling themselves, and you'll get extra help on your journey there too. What's more, though it's been ages since we've last met, I trust that once Daryl meets up with me, he'll be compelled to treat your family better. So? What do you say?"

Frowning slightly, Gerald then said, "But... remember, we still need to head to the ancient ruins in Yanam first in order to locate Yearning Island. What more, I have a feeling that we'll come across quite a few Crawford cultivators along the way..."

"Hmm? Worried that I'll end up burdening you?" asked the old man with a smile.

"Of course not! You're much more powerful than me..." muttered Gerald as he shook his head.

“Then what’s the issue? Listen, I advise you to head back and prepare yourself as soon as possible. I’ll be getting my family ready to protect the Futabas as well. If everything goes smoothly, then we should leave by dawn. How’s that?” asked the old man with a wave of his hand.

“... Fine. Let’s go with that,” replied Gerald in resignation. Though he had agreed with the plan, Gerald was honestly still worried that the old man would suffer some injuries in the end. After all, though the old man was strong, the Crawford cultivators weren’t pushovers either.

Whatever the case was, Gerald then left the Yamashita family’s territory before driving straight back to the Futaba manor.

Gerald, for one, wasn’t worried about Kai’s murder at all. After all, he trusted that the old man would know what to do with the corpses. While it was true that the Kanagawas would surely fly into a rage once they realized that Kai was dead, Gerald was sure that this would also deter them from dealing with the Futabas any time soon.

Either way, by the time he finally arrived at the Futaba manor, the sky was already starting to darken. Come to think of it, Gerald had wasted two entire days just to get rid of Kai.

Chapter 2249

Whatever the case was, upon entering the manor, Gerald quickly told everyone to gather in the living room.

Once Takuya and Fujiko were sitting by his sides, Gerald casually said, “...Alright, so... I’ve killed Kai.”

“You’ve... what?! Gerald, isn’t that a bit too rash?! My family’s just gotten back on track you know? Once the Kanagawas find out about this, the Futabas will surely be in hot water!” exclaimed Takuya as he leaped to his feet.

“Don’t worry, patriarch, I killed him in the Yamashita family’s territory. With that said, the Yamashitas will be settling any subsequent issues that arise from Kai’s murder,” explained Gerald with a wave of his hand.

“I see. Well... that’s good then,” replied Takuya with a sigh of relief. Thank God Gerald and the Yamashitas were on good terms...

“Speaking of which, I’ll also be leaving tomorrow morning to head to the ancient ruins in Yanam. Don’t worry, after notifying the Yamashitas about it, they agreed to send some men to guard all of you. With that in mind, you won’t need to worry about any trouble from the other families,” said Gerald to ensure that Takuya wouldn’t get unnecessarily worried.

Naturally, Takuya ended up frowning slightly. After all, it was best if Gerald stayed with them forever.

However, knowing that it was impossible, Takuya simply replied, “That’s good! The sooner you leave, the less suffering your parents will face on Yearning Island. We wish you luck, Gerald!”

“Thank you. Well, those were the two things I wanted to talk about. Also, once I’ve saved them, I’ll be sure to return to properly help you deal with the two families,” said Gerald with a nod.

“After you’ve dealt with the Hanyus and Kanagawas, will you remain with my family...?” asked Takuya.

“Unfortunately, I simply can’t, ” replied Gerald with a subtle smile. While it was impossible for him to remain in Japan, Gerald promised himself that he would visit them from time to time. After all, he had honestly grown fond of the Futabas.

“Will we be coming along?” asked Master Ghost.

“That’d be nice, but I don’t mind if you guys wish to remain here either,” replied Gerald.

"I'm coming along!" declared Aiden, and though Master Ghost said nothing else, his expression made it evident that he was doing the same.

As all this was happening, Fujiko remained seated silently at the side. While she knew that Gerald would have to leave someday, she hadn't expected it to be this soon. Truth be told, she simply had a feeling that she would never be able to meet him again once he left.

Regardless, after drinking some tea, Gerald, Aiden, and Master Ghost returned to their respective rooms. Once they were gone, Takuya sighed before turning to look at his dazed daughter before asking, "Well you were oddly silent earlier."

"I... I'm just feeling a little tired..." muttered Fujiko as she shook her head.

Before Takuya could say anything else, she simply got to her feet before walking off. Sighing once she left, Takuya couldn't help but say, "This girl..."

Still, as her father, he knew exactly what was going on in her mind. Then again, he was also well aware that Gerald had zero interest in his daughter.

Fast forward to the next morning, Gerald could be seen standing in the living room at the break of dawn.

Chapter 2250

Having only a backpack and a cigarette in hand, it wasn't long before Gerald was joined by Master Ghost and Aiden. Taking one final look at the manor, Gerald then sighed before saying, "Let's go."

After getting into the SUV, the three of them were about to head off when all of a sudden, knocking could be heard at the side of the car. Momentarily surprised to see who it was, Gerald then lowered the car's window pulling the cigarette out of his mouth, before asking with a smile, "Is there anything I can do for you, Miss Futaba?"

"I... I'm coming with you!" declared Fujiko, her tone showing just how determined she was to come along.

Naturally surprised to hear that, Gerald simply replied, "While you may be Japan's Queen of Soldiers, I hope you understand that the journey isn't going to be some cakewalk. With that said, I'll have to refuse."

"Since you already know my title, you should be well aware that I'm perfectly capable of lending you a hand!" said Fujiko as she circled the SUV before knocking the door to the shotgun seat.

Unsure what to do, Aiden who was sitting there then opened the door before saying, "Miss Futaba--"

Not even letting Aiden finish his sentence, Fujiko simply yanked him out before getting onto the car and saying, "You sit at the back."

After placing her bag down, Fujiko then added, "I've already thought this through. You've been continuously helping us this entire time. With that in mind, if you just leave like that, then won't I be considered an ungrateful person?"

As Gerald wondered how to even reply, Aiden sighed before sitting by Master Ghost's side at the back while muttering, "Why do I get the bad treatment..."

Ignoring Aiden, Fujiko simply pointed ahead before saying, "Drive."

"Are you really sure that you want to come with us...?" asked Gerald, finding it difficult to reject her kind intentions.

"But of course! I'd never joke about something this serious!" declared Fujiko as she nodded

determinedly.

“Fine... However, I emphasize that this is going to be a very dangerous mission. In fact, I’m sure there are going to be plenty of opponents that even Aiden can’t take down, ” replied Gerald after taking in a deep breath.

“Worry not! I definitely won’t end up burdening you! If there’s anything you need, just say the word and I’ll definitely help you!” said Fujiko.

“Where have I heard those words before...” muttered Aiden as he stretched his head to look at her.

“You pretty much said the same thing when you asked to come with me back then,” replied Gerald with a faint chuckle.

Upon hearing that and recalling the events in Yanam, Aiden couldn’t help but grin as he said, “Just a heads up, but our opponents will most likely be in a completely different league compared to those we usually face during regular missions. Before such opponents, even I have to admit that I’ll be a burden at best!”

“I’m aware...” muttered Fujiko who only had Gerald’s strength as a referential point. Aside from that, she had no idea just how much stronger their opponents could get.

Seeing that nothing else needed to be said, Gerald then began driving.

It was nearing noon by the time they arrived at the Yamashita family’s territory. Upon nearing the front gates, however, Gerald was surprised to see that aside from the familiar Yamashita who had initially greeted him back when he brought Kai over, the old man was also already waiting there for them.

Quickly stopping the car, Gerald then got out before jogging toward the old man while asking, “Sir? How long have you been waiting here?”

Aside from being Daryl's old acquaintance and bearing the status of an elder, the old man had also helped him on numerous occasions. With that in mind, it only made sense for Gerald to respect the old man.

Chapter 2251

"Not long, actually. I estimated you'd be here around this time, so I simply got out a little earlier," replied the old man in a cheery tone as he slipped his hands into his sleeves.

"Hmm? Are you proficient with fortune telling as well ...?" asked Gerald as he turned to look at Master Ghost.

"Negative. I simply estimated how long it'd take for you to get here if you set off at dawn! Don't worry, I only waited here for a little while just so we could get things done a little faster," replied the old man as he shook his head.

Feeling slightly pleased that the old man was being so eager to leave thus showing just how concerned he was over Gerald's affairs, Gerald was then prompted to ask, "So... are we leaving right away?"

Nodding in response, the old man then turned to look at this family members before saying, "Remember my orders last night. Keep a constant eye on the Futabas and immediately stop anyone who poses a threat to them. If they don't get the message, then just get rid of them. If anything else takes place, I'll deal with it once I return. Understand?"

"Got it! After leading everyone there, I'll make sure that each of the Futabas will remain well guarded till you return!" declared what appeared to be the leader of the group with a nod.

"Well said. Let's get going then," said the old man as he turned to look at Gerald again.

Looking at the four seater SUV that was now going to be cramped because of Fujiko's sudden intrusion,

Gerald who didn't want the old man to be forced to sit behind with Aiden and Master Ghost was prompted to ask, "Um... By chance, do you have a bigger car...?"

Upon hearing that, the old man then yelled, "Get the car!"

Nodding in response, one of the old man's subordinates then bolted off and shortly after, a seven seater MPV came to a halt before everyone.

"This should suffice, right? I just had a feeling that space would be an issue the night before, so I got this car prepared. As for how we're getting to Yanam, my family has a small cargo ship at the dock. With that said, we shouldn't have a problem getting to our destination," said the old man with a smile.

Momentarily stunned, Gerald quickly snapped out of it before placing his hands together and saying, "I... appreciate the thoughtfulness."

"It's really no big deal. I was practically the unofficial head butler of your family back then, you know? With that in mind, even after all these years, considering such things is second nature to me," replied the old man with a chuckle.

Nodding in response, Gerald then opened one of the car's doors before saying, "After you."

Laughing joyously, the old man then got in as he called out, "Come now, get in as well, you four!"

Going on a trip with Daryl's descendant was making the old man reminisce about the good old days, which explained why he was feeling so cheery. Regardless, once everyone was inside, they immediately began driving toward the docks.

Once they were gone, the other Yamashitas couldn't help but whisper among themselves, "I've never seen Third Elder this happy before..."

For as long as they knew him, the elder had rarely ever portrayed any other emotions aside from the solemn expression he was known for. Hell, most of the time, he barely even spoke, simply communicating through gestures. However, from the day the Westoner first came to their family, the elder had said more than he ever had. In fact, it probably wasn't even a stretch to say that the elder had spoken more in these few days compared to the entirety of last year!

"That has nothing to do with us. Let's just focus on what Third Elder told us to do," replied the leader of the group who didn't like them talking behind their elder's back. Hell, they shouldn't even be talking about all this in the first place. After all, the Yamashitas had rules that prohibited them from doing so!

"Roger!" declared everyone else upon hearing that.

Nodding in response, the leader then added, "Alright, once you and your subordinates arrive at the manor, remember to keep your eyes peeled at all times. If anyone tries to look for trouble, take them down the second you can. Remember, prioritize keeping the Futaba family members safe. If we fail to do that, then none of us will be able to answer to the Third Elder once he returns!"

With that agreed upon, over ten cars began driving from the Yamashita territory toward the Futaba manor.

Chapter 2252

Moving back to Gerald and his party, it wasn't long before the five of them arrived at the dock. Under the old man's lead, they soon saw a small cargo ship that had been anchored near the docks bearing the logo of Yamashita family.

Before they even got to the ship, a man came running up to them before saying, "Third Elder! Just as you've requested, we've prepared enough oil in the cargo ship for you to head back and forth from Japan to Yanam up to three times!"

"Good job," replied the old man as he patted him on the shoulder.

Feeling overwhelmed to be praised by the elder, the man immediately bowed before declaring, "I-I only did as I was ordered to!"

Once that person ran off, the old man turned to look at the others before saying with a smile, "Speaking of which, there are quite a few shops on this dock, so if you need anything, go ahead and get them. If nothing's needed, then we can just set off now."

"I mean... From my past experience, Gerald's probably going to stop us from getting anything unnecessary! He says it's a waste of money!" grumbled Aiden who would definitely love to get some snacks.

Unfortunately, Gerald didn't share the same sentiment.

"Hmm? Now who said anything about spending money?" replied the old man as his smile broadened.

Confused, Aiden then scratched the back of his head as he asked, "Um... How else are we going to get things...?"

"My boy, the Yamashita family owns this dock. I've already told them of our arrival yesterday, so feel free to get anything you want from those shops as long as the items can be brought up the ship," replied the old man as he pointed at the shops that were in business.

Upon hearing that, Gerald thought for a moment before saying, "Well, while I assume the ship already has plenty of food and water prepared for us, I believe we'll be needing extra sets of clothes. Remember, this isn't going to be a short trip. With that said, I'd rather not stink to high heaven as we traverse through Yanam and eventually to Yearning Island."

Gerald knew that he had to be clean and neat when he finally reunited with his family. After all, his sister would probably begin lecturing him about the poor way he dressed the second she saw him wearing his current tattered clothes. Thinking back, he remembered playing in a bog a lot as a child, and

every time he returned, his sister would grab him by his ear before dragging him to the shower room and leaving him there. The thought of it alone made Gerald smile a little.

Whatever the case was, aside from saving his family, Gerald was also secretly hoping to learn more about the Sun League.

Regardless, Gerald snapped out from his train of thought when the old man replied, "As Gerald said, there's ample food and water on the ship, so you guys should probably focus on getting clothes. When asked to pay, just say that you're with the Third Elder."

Before anyone could say anything else, they ended up staring wide eyed as the old man leaped off the ground and right onto the approximately sixteen feet high ship's deck! Aiden and Fujiko in particular were momentarily shocked speechless. After all, not even high ranking soldiers like them were able to perform such a feat! Yet the old man had made it seem like a piece of cake!

Already used to seeing such things, Gerald himself simply headed into the nearest clothing shop to get some new apparel. Once he was done, he got aboard the ship, only to see the old man sitting on deck while enjoying a cup of tea. Upon seeing Gerald, the old man quickly got a new cup before pouring more hot tea into it.

Sitting beside the old man, Gerald then placed his new clothes aside before saying, "Well, that's done with. Speaking of which, I still don't know your name, Sir."

"Well, names aren't really important, but if it helps, you can call me Senior Jobson," replied the old man with a wave of his hand. Thinking back, it had been a few decades since he had used his real name. After all, to Jobson, names were simply a referential code that bore little meaning.

"Got it, senior Jobson," replied Gerald with a nod as he noted down the old man's surname.

Nodding in response, the old man then said, "So... what's the plan?"

Chapter 2253

“Well... the only plan is to head to the ancient ruins of Yanam now. Aside from that, there’s not really a Plan B. After all, it’s exactly because we know so little about Yearning Island that we’re heading there in the first place. Hopefully we’ll learn more about the island once we get there, otherwise, we’ll just hit another dead end...” muttered Gerald as he shook his head with a sigh.

“Nothing else?” asked Jobson with a slight frown, clearly expecting Gerald to know more about Daryl.

“Sadly. However, I do have this...” replied Gerald as he slipped his hand into his coat before pulling out the sea map.

“Hmm? Is that the legendary sea map?” asked Jobson as he took the map from Gerald before studying it carefully.

“Oh? You know about it, sir?”

“Of course, I do. Remember, I’m a Weston cultivator as well, so it makes sense that I’ve heard about the map. Regardless, according to legends, this map leads to a secret treasure in the sea, right? The one that if obtained, grants the seeker great wealth?” replied the old man as he pointed at an island in the middle of the map.

“A... secret treasure...?” asked Gerald, his eyes widened in surprise.

“Indeed. Why? Weren’t you going after that? Or does the map serve another purpose?” replied Jobson in a curious tone.

“I used the map to try locating Yearning Island... You see, I once saw the island appear on the sea map, but it only lasted for a little under ten seconds before disappearing again... As for the secret treasure you mentioned, it’s the first I’ve heard of it,” explained Gerald as he shook his head.

“If that’s the case, then I guess that the sea map leads to multiple things. Either way, if we have the chance, we should try seeking out the secret treasure as well. I have a feeling that it’s the real deal,” replied Jobson.

“Oh, I’ve already been there. I just didn’t know that the treasure was there back then. As for Why I headed there in the first place, I initially thought that it was Yearning Island. Unfortunately, the island only houses a sect of the Crawford family,” replied Gerald as he pointed at the same island that Jobson had identified earlier.

“Oh? How interesting... ” muttered Jobson.

“Indeed... Regardless, while I was on the island, Daryl sent his subordinates over to test my strength. Shortly after that, Will sent some of his own men to assassinate me. All in all, I think I got attacked three times on that island...” said Gerald as he recalled those incidents.

“Will?” asked Jobson.

“Ah, he was adopted by Daryl, and he’s about the same age as I am. From what I know, he’s currently the heir of the Crawford family, and he apparently thinks that I’m trying to find the island to snatch his position away! You can tell how desperate he is since he even dared to disobey Daryl’s orders!” explained Gerald with a laugh.

“How interesting... To think that while Daryl merely wishes to test your strength, his heir is trying to kill you. The current Crawford family doesn’t sound peaceful at all,” replied Jobson as he stroked his beard with a smile.

“Indeed... Either way, I really couldn’t care less about that position. I just want to rescue my family already...” muttered Gerald as he shook his head. In fact, even if Daryl really wanted him to be the next patriarch of the Crawford family, he would’ve declined.

“Speaking of your family, how long have they been locked up?” asked Jobson.

"A very long time," replied Gerald with a sigh.

"And Daryl hasn't hurt them?" asked the old man as he poured more tea for Gerald.

"From what an assassin that Will sent over told me, they're apparently treated well, though they've remained locked up in a room at the back of the Crawford manor this entire time..." replied Gerald.

Chapter 2254

"I was also told that only Daryl is allowed into the area they're locked up in, so Will can't mess around with them. At the very least, that's what the assassin told me," added Gerald as he shook his head, unsure of whether to believe that or not.

"Things simply get more and more interesting, huh... So after he captured your parents and sister, he's now forcing you to go save them? At the same time, he doesn't want you dead either. I wonder if you're missing something here..." muttered the old man who knew Daryl's personality well, which was why he still refused to believe that Daryl would harm his family without good reason.

Understanding that Jobson was trying to justify Daryl's actions, Gerald simply clenched his fists before replying, "Even if I am, no grandfather should ever make their grandson learn about something through such despicable means..."

It was clear that his hatred toward Daryl had peaked, and had anyone else said that, then Gerald would've already attacked them without the slightest hesitation.

Sensing Gerald's hostility, the old man simply muttered in a slightly resigned tone, "... Let's talk about this again once we reach the manor. Who knows, he may finally tell you why he did all that once you arrive. Again, before parting ways, I remember him always being extremely kind to his family members, especially your parents. In fact, he's hardly ever scolded them!"

Before Gerald could reply, Fujiko, Master Ghost, and Aiden returned. Seeing them, Gerald chose not to continue the topic. Instead, he slipped the sea map back into his coat before sipping on his tea.

Once they were close enough, Aiden fished around in his bag before taking a beer bottle out. Tossing it toward Gerald, he then said, "Have a drink!"

Easily catching it, Gerald then placed it on the table before getting on his feet and replying, "Appreciated. Either way, I bet you guys are hungry. Let me cook something up for us!"

It was now three in the afternoon, and none of them had eaten anything since last night's dinner. Since even he was feeling a little hungry, he could only imagine how starved ordinary people like Aiden and Fujiko were.

"We're on a cargo ship, you know? Not some private yacht! With that said, we already have chefs on board. We have sailors and a captain as well, so all of you can just relax," replied Jobson as he held onto Gerald's arm.

Upon hearing that, Gerald nodded in response. How convenient.

It was sometime later when Gerald decided to take a walk around the deck. Since Master Ghost and Fujiko were busy distributing the things they had bought, Aiden who didn't have anything else to do and just so happened to see Gerald walking out tossed whatever he was doing aside before running after Gerald.

Once he was on the deck, Gerald stared at the slowly shrinking country of Japan behind them. Holding onto the ship's rails, Gerald sighed as he felt a light and salty sea breeze brush against his face.

Walking to Gerald's side, Aiden remained silent for a while before asking, "Who exactly is that old man...?"

“He’s the Yamashita family’s elder... He’s also a cultivator who, together with my grandfather, studied under the same master...” replied Gerald.

“And... he simply wants to help us...?” asked Aiden.

“It would appear so,” said Gerald after taking a deep breath, not even able to see Japan anymore.

“I see... well, not to be rude but... he’s quite old, isn’t he...? Rather than helping us, don’t you think we’ll have to spend more time taking care of him instead...?” whispered Aiden after taking a peek at the cabins.

Bursting out in laughter, Gerald simply replied, “You know, even I can’t say for sure that I’ll be able to beat him!”

Though he had never witnessed the old man in combat, the fact that Jobson was able to summon a flame out of thin air showed just how strong his cultivation was. However, the fact that Jobson was able to do that meant that Daryl could probably do the same. If that was the case, then Gerald was worried that he’d fail to rescue his family once he got there.

Even so, Gerald had already made up his mind. Even if he got heavily injured or even killed, he was still going to try to save his family.

Chapter 2255

“... Come to think of it, he did leap onto the ship’s deck earlier! How could I have forgotten?!” exclaimed Aiden as he quickly covered his mouth. Was Jobson even human?!

“Indeed. Either way, that just shows how strong he is. The truth is, I’m feeling much more confident with him here,” replied Gerald as he leaned against the railing while lighting a cigarette.

Shortly after, they entered the ship's restaurant, only to realize that the chef was already done with their meals. From the looks of it, the chef was a pro. After all, even though only five of them were eating, the chef had prepared up to eight Weston dishes with even some soup on the side. Seeing that, everyone quickly gathered around the table to begin digging in.

Since everyone was already gathered there, Gerald took the chance to remind them that danger could pop up at any time during their mission to uncover the secrets of the Seadom tribe.

After all, even during the special forces competition, a Yanam soldier had come looking for trouble with them. With that in mind, Gerald had no doubt that the second they docked at Yanam, news about his arrival would get to the Yanam Military in no time. Still, the fact that the military leader was just Carter made Gerald a little more relieved.

Either way, once Gerald was done, Jobson looked at everyone before asking, "Speaking of which, are any of you interested in participating in an auction once we arrive in Yanam?"

"Hmm? What sort of auction?" asked Gerald.

"From the rumors I've heard, it's focusing on traditional medicine, though I could be wrong," replied the old man as he shook his head.

"Then I'm afraid I'm not interested," replied Gerald with a wave of his hand, clearly prioritizing saving his family.

"I see... Well, I just thought to say it out... Just in case anyone would be interested, you know?" said the old man before going quiet.

Meanwhile, a very flustered Will could be seen in his room. Though he had initially assumed that Amare would successfully assassinate Gerald, in the end, Amare never came to him to report how the mission went. With that in mind, Will wasn't even sure whether Gerald was already dead or not! He couldn't just look for Amare to clarify things either. After all, Daryl had already caught him trying to assassinate

Gerald once. If he messed up now and Daryl managed to put two and two together, he would surely end up in boiling water...!

As Will continued wondering how to settle this dilemma, the corner of his eye caught a glimpse of Amare walking past his door. Eye widening, Will immediately called out in a hushed tone, "Amare...! Come over here...!"

Ever since Daryl learned that Will had attempted to assassinate Gerald, Will had noticed that more cultivators from his family had been transferred to his living space. With that in mind, Will knew that Daryl had sent them over to keep an eye on him, which explained why Will was trying so hard to lie low.

Instead of deterring Will from doing the same thing, however, Will was now keener than ever to kill Gerald! He was utterly convinced that this person would snatch his position as the heir!

Chapter 2256

Whatever the case was, upon hearing Will's voice, Amare couldn't help but shudder as he turned around and replied, "Master Will..."

"Get in here...! Hurry...!" grumbled Will as he continuously looked left and right, glad that none of Daryl's cultivators were around at the moment.

Watching as Will then gestured for him to hurry up, Amare knew he had no other choice but to obey. Though Amare had actively been trying to avoid Will since he returned, it appeared that he couldn't run forever.

Once Amare entered, Will quickly got two teacups out before asking, "Care for some tea?"

"I... No, I'm fine. Is... there anything I can do for you, Master Will...?" asked the uneasy Amare with a gulp.

Raising a slight brow, Will then replied, "What do you think? Tell me what happened already...!"

"W-what happened where, Master Will...?" stuttered Amare who was a terrible liar.

"I told you to assassinate Gerald, didn't I? It's already been a week since you've returned, don't you think it's high time you told me whether you succeeded or not?" grumbled Will with a frown, knowing full well that Amare was playing dumb.

"O-oh...! So you were asking about that, Master Will... Well... though I searched far and wide, I simply couldn't locate Gerald in Japan! He's really good at hiding..." replied Amare as he smacked his forehead, hoping to fool Will that he had just recalled the incident.

"Bullsh*t! I already got confirmation that Gerald had been where the special forces competition was being held! With that said, how the hell couldn't you find him if you went there?! You didn't take my order seriously, did you?!" growled Will, actively trying to suppress his anger.

"O-of course I did...! You're our family's future patriarch! There's no way I'd disobey your orders on a whim! Believe me when I say that I would've definitely assassinated him had I managed to locate him back then!" declared the anxious Amare.

"... Then explain why you didn't immediately report back to me the second you returned to the island?" replied Will in a slightly calmer tone. The fact that Amare had called him the future patriarch of the family had clearly pleased him, and Will was now starting to think that Amare was telling the truth.

Clearly getting better at lying now, Amare quickly explained, "Well... I just didn't have the courage to face you after failing the mission... After all, you trusted me to complete it!"

By this point, Will was so overjoyed by the thought of getting to be the future patriarch that he didn't even care anymore. Thinking back, of course a simpleton like Amare would fail to outsmart Gerald! With that in mind, Will then replied, "Well, since Gerald managed to evade even me, I guess it makes sense why he was able to escape your grasp. Fine, you're forgiven!"

Hearing that, Amare who couldn't help but secretly sigh in relief then declared, "If the chance ever arrives, I'll gladly attempt to take him down again!"

"Just go back for now. And remember, don't tell anyone about this...!" replied Will in a slightly resigned tone.

"Very well. If there's anything else you wish to get done, make sure to call for me again!" said Amare before attempting to leave the room.

"Wait," called out Will.

Chapter 2257

Momentarily frozen in fear, the terrified Amare gulped as he slowly turned to face Will again.

Seeing that, Will then cleared his throat pretending to be serious as he said, "Keep in mind that I'm just a regular member of the family. With that said, don't identify me as the future patriarch since Mr. Daryl is still in control."

"Got it," replied Amare as he nodded before swiftly leaving.

After he left, Will quickly closed his room's door before pacing up and down his hands behind his back as he muttered, "How odd... Aside from being able to take Wolf and Luc down, Gerald was even able to evade Amare for so long! What kind of cultivation does Gerald even possess? Could his talents exceed that of ordinary people...?"

Though there were many questions in his mind, Will decided to put everything aside for now.

In the end, he was pretty sure that Daryl was still dissatisfied with him for sending others to assassinate

Gerald before this. With that in mind, he didn't dare make another move so soon or he may really need to give up his position as the heir of the patriarch... It certainly didn't help that there were many others who were more talented than him within the family. What more, though being adopted by Daryl made him special, it also meant that he didn't possess Crawford blood in him.

Fast forward to two days later, the cargo ship from Japan finally arrived in Yanam waters. Aside from eating and sleeping, Gerald had spent much of his time staring out at the ocean in the direction Yanam was. Knowing that he was getting closer to saving his family, Gerald couldn't help but feel slightly anxious.

After all, if he failed to save them now, there was a high chance that such a good opportunity wouldn't present itself again anytime soon.

Whatever the case was, since the cargo ship was now so close to Yanam, it wasn't long before the Yanam Military received news that Gerald was coming.

Upon getting the news, Carter who was in his office instantly got up from his seat before exclaiming in fear, "W-what?! Gerald's back?!"

It had been extremely difficult to send Gerald off in the past. To think that that devil was back when Carter had barely had the time to relax and enjoy his new position as the Yanam Military leader!

"He is! We saw him standing atop a cargo ship through a telescope as we were inspecting the local sea areas!" reported a subordinate who was standing before Carter.

Feeling his palms grow sweaty, Carter was prompted to ask, "A-are you sure you weren't mistaken?"

"A hundred percent! Otherwise, we wouldn't have reported this to you in the first place! Regardless, why do you think that evil man's returned leader...? Not only did he cause a massive mess in our military, but he's also exterminated three major families here! If he's really back for more trouble, then we may not be able to stop him!" replied the subordinate.

“Should we arm our most capable soldiers with our heaviest weapons to kill him before he lands? I’m sure trouble will start brewing the second he disembarks!” suggested the individual in charge of Yanam’s seas. He, for one, didn’t want history to repeat itself.

“Like I haven’t thought about that already! Either way, resume with whatever you were doing! I’ll contact you if I need anything else! Also, keep a close eye on Gerald at all times! Don’t let him sneak past us!” grumbled Carter who could feel a minor headache coming.

Chapter 2258

Carter honestly couldn’t believe that the living nightmare had returned to haunt him again so soon! He had barely even been able to enjoy his new post as military leader!

What more, he was utterly terrified that he would somehow end up just like Godwin. After searching for an entire month, they eventually managed to find him.

However, he looked more like a savage than anything at the time. Hell, had the investigation team not recognized his clothes, he would’ve probably been shot to death the second they bumped into him!

Either way, Carter had made sure to conceal the incident well. After all, he didn’t want unnecessary trouble to brew since that could potentially affect his post as leader. With that said, Carter had hidden Godwin in a remote mountain village, making sure to have a few of his subordinates guard him there at all times.

Regardless, after seeing what happened to Godwin, Carter was determined not to repeat his ex-leader’s mistakes. With that in mind, though the individual in charge of Yanam’s seas had made a tempting proposal to immediately send heavily armed military teams to take Gerald out earlier, Carter knew better than to just agree with that.

After all, Gerald had yet to make a move on them. Due to that, even if they did manage to take him down, Weston as a whole would potentially come after him next for murdering an innocent man!

However, if he allowed Gerald to set foot on Yanam, then dealing with Gerald would become even more difficult. As the saying went, prevention was better than cure.

Thankfully, after thinking for a good, long while,

Carter finally thought of a good idea. Picking the phone on his office desk up, Carter then called the person in charge of Yanam's seas. Once he picked up, Carter immediately told him to come back, stating that he was about to issue an extremely important order to him.

Shortly after, the man from before burst into the room before asking in a hushed tone, "Are we going to make Gerald disappear before he reaches land, leader...?"

As the person in charge of Yanam's seas, he wasn't about to allow Gerald to cause any more trouble if he could help it. Hell, after Gerald left the last time, he had even filed an application to pursue and kill Gerald while he was still out at sea. Unfortunately, Carter had denied his request, so he had to give up on the idea at the time.

Whatever the case was, upon hearing that, Carter couldn't help but narrow his eyes as he asked, "Are you really planning to kill Gerald just like that?"

"Are you proposing that we let him enter Yanam? If he manages to get to land, Gerald will surely cause a chaotic scene like the last time! He was Godwin's murderer, for heaven's sake!" replied the man in a slightly reluctant tone. When Godwin was leader, he never hesitated when it came to dealing with his opponents. Carter was the complete opposite of him. With how hesitant he always was, Carter didn't have the demeanor of a leader at all!

"Remember that he's still a Westoner. If we look for trouble with him out of the blue, I'm sure Weston will try to make an issue out of this. After all, we haven't exactly had a good relationship with the country in recent years," muttered Carter who found out about these things while he was still working under Godwin.

“Then... why did you summon me here...?” asked the man in confusion.

“Right. I want you to keep a close eye on Gerald and report his every move to me. If it truly seems like he’s approaching our docks, immediately report back. I’m meeting him in person this time...” ordered Carter after thinking for a bit.

Chapter 2259

“B-but leader! You should know how cruel Gerald is...! Not only did he kill our former leader, but he’s also taken out our country’s three major families...! With how much chaos he’s caused here, it’s only safe to assume that you’ ll be in serious danger if you face him!” replied the terrified man.

“It’s fine, I’m the leader, after all. If I don’t step up, what right do I have to hold this position?” said Carter as he pointed at his seat in a calm tone.

Truth be told, Carter was extremely terrified. However, he was also well aware that he had yet to offend Gerald. In fact, he had even given Gerald his silent approval to leave Yanam back then, and he was sure that Gerald would remember that.

As for why he wanted to meet Gerald, Carter wanted to inquire why he had come to Yanam this time. Regardless of whatever or whoever Gerald was looking for here, Carter would surely obtain and hand it or them to the youth in exchange for peace. With any luck, Carter would be able to retain his new position for much longer.

“Leader... I...!” said the person in charge of Yanam’s seas before his voice trailed off. While he had no idea what Carter was thinking, he couldn’t help but feel that his previous opinions about Carter were too rash now. As it turned out, the leader had been placing Yanam first this entire time. Hell, he was even willing to risk his life for the country!

“There’s no need to say any more than that. Just do as I ordered,” replied Carter as he gestured for the man to leave.

“...Understood! I’ ll get some men to be with you, just in case! That way, if Gerald tries anything funny, you’ ll at least be able to remain relatively safe!” declared the man before leaving Carter’s office.

The second he left, Carter couldn’t help but slump into his chair. Just thinking about meeting Gerald made his hands tremble uncontrollably. Even so, he’d rather take the initiative to look for Gerald rather than the other way around. Doing so could at least minimize the potential damage done.

Either way, Carter’s orders were quickly spread around, and in no time at all, over ten fleets from Yanam’s maritime forces set off to keep a close eye on Gerald, everyone aboard making sure to detail the location of Gerald’s cargo ship at all times.

It was only when evening fell when Gerald’s ship was finally anchored at Yanam’s docks. By that point, aside from the old man, the other four had changed into new sets of clean clothes.

The second they were about to go through customs, however, they were immediately stopped by ten armed soldiers.

“Quite the warm welcome we’re getting, don’t you think?” said Jobson with a chuckle, seemingly unafraid of all those guns. After all, he had already seen much of the world.

“Let’s just say I had some issues with them before so they’re a little scared of me...” replied Gerald as he scratched the back of his head before sighing.

Shortly after, the person in charge of Yanam’s seas stepped forward before saying, “Mr. Crawford! Our leader would like to meet you!”

“Carter wants to meet me?” replied Gerald with a slight frown, recalling how Carter had merely been an executive before Gerald had gotten rid of Godwin. Thinking back, it was rather funny how that drunken man whom Gerald had captured back then ended up getting elected to be the next military leader of Yanam Whatever the case was, the man then nodded before saying, “Indeed. Please cooperate with us,

Mr. Crawford.”

“Gladly, though could you accommodate my friends for the meantime?” replied Gerald.

“We’ve already considered that. With that said, please come with me, ladies and gentlemen. I’ll be leading you to your guest rooms to rest in the meantime,” said the man as he turned to look at Aiden and the others.

Chapter 2260

Feeling a chill run down his spine, Carter fought the urge to flee before gesturing for the men surrounding Gerald to leave as he said, “Leave us be.”

Hearing that, the soldiers gave a salute before leaving the office.

The second they were gone, Carter quickly closed the door. Gulping as he walked toward Gerald and handed him a cigarette, Carter then said, “Um... So... Why exactly have you returned, Gerald...? I-if there’s anything or anyone you need, just say the word and I’ll help obtain them for you...!”

Lighting the cigarette before sitting on the couch, Gerald then crossed his legs before replying, “I’m not looking for anyone or anything.”

“H-huh...? Then... Why are you here...?” whimpered the terrified Carter.

“I’m just here to sightsee. Or am I not welcome here? Just so you know, I still have the green card issued by your government,” said Gerald, amused by Carter’s hypervigilance. This man was incomparable to Godwin!

“O-of course you are...! I welcome you if you’re just here for that...!” replied Carter as he placed his hands together.

“Good to hear. Anyway, if there’s nothing else, I’ll be taking my leave first,” said Gerald as he placed his unfinished cigarette into an ashtray before getting up to leave.

“P-please wait! ” called out Carter.

“What is it now? Stop wasting my time...” growled Gerald with a deep frown.

“I-I... Please... is that the only reason you’re here in Yanam...? I’m just worried for my country’s sake after all you’ve done here in the past...” whimpered Carter who had no choice but to be honest since he didn’t want to accidentally anger Gerald.

“You’re worried, you say...?” replied Gerald as he looked at the terrified man.

“Y-yes... You should know that I’m telling the truth since I’ve always been honest with you... P-please remember that I was also the one who gave the order for you to safely leave back then... Had I not done that, the person in charge of Yanam’s seas would’ve definitely continued trying to retaliate, you know...?” stuttered Carter as he revealed an awkward smile, clearly trying to butter Gerald up.

“So you’re saying I should state my true objective as thanks?” sneered Gerald in response.

“O-of course, not! I’m just saying that we’ll definitely help you if you need anything! In return, I only ask that you don’t... well... go on another rampage...” muttered Carter.

Chapter 2261

“Fine, I came to Yanam to look for something, but I’m not interested in causing any unnecessary trouble,” replied Gerald before turning to face the door again.

“T-then I’ll-” However, before Carter could even finish his sentence, Gerald had already walked out.

Still, since Gerald had clarified that he wasn't here to cause trouble, Carter couldn't help but feel slightly relieved. As long as he didn't go out on his way to offend him, then Gerald wouldn't be an issue for Yanam. Regardless, Gerald soon made it to the guest rooms that wasn't too far from Carter's office where the others already were. Though the term 'guest room' had been used, the truth was, Carter had booked one of the more luxurious hotels in Yanam for them. Since the place was usually reserved for important people from overseas, if one didn't have the right connections, then they wouldn't be able to stay there, even if they had the money.

Either way, the others were eating at the moment Gerald entered the room.

Seeing him, Aiden immediately put his food down before asking, "Gerald! What did Carter want from you?"

"He's just worried that I'll cause unnecessary chaos here. After all, he just got promoted to being the military leader," replied Gerald as he shook his head with a smile.

Watching as Gerald then sat beside him, Aiden couldn't help but sneer, "Hah! It all depends on whether they pick a bone with us first!"

"Indeed. Either way, all of you should rest up for the night. For tomorrow, I'll have Master Ghost come along with me. Aiden, Fujiko, and Senior Jobson, you three can continue resting here," replied Gerald, not taking Carter who was nowhere near as big a threat as Godwin was seriously at all. As long as Carter made one wrong move, Gerald could easily get rid of him.

"I'll be coming along," said the old man.

"Alright," replied Gerald, knowing how knowledgeable and experienced Jobson was. Hell, though the probability was low, there was always a chance that Jobson would notice something that Gerald missed while they were in the ancient ruins. Either way, once dinner was over, everyone returned to their

respective rooms to rest.

Lying on his bed that was right next to the window, Gerald took a peek outside and saw that several Yanam soldiers were guarding the hotel's entrance. Not even bothering about them, Gerald then turned to face the vast, silent ocean before looking at the cloudy and moonless night sky.

"We're going to have heavy rain tomorrow..." muttered Gerald as he lit a cigarette.

Just seconds after he began puffing on it, a few raindrops fell against the windowpane. Soon enough, torrential rain began crashing down. Despite the heavy rain, the Yanam soldiers seemed completely unfazed as they continued patrolling the area.

Staring at the falling rain, Gerald was reminded of the night his family was kidnapped. Drenched in rain upon returning home, Gerald had no idea what had happened to his family till he eventually rescued Master Ghost and found out.

Putting his hands together, Gerald then closed his eyes while facing the sky before wishing, "May things go smoothly this time... The sooner I get to save them, the better..."

The second his sentence ended, thunder rang in the sky, followed by a bolt of lightning that momentarily lit the dark sky up.

Chapter 2262

Daryl appeared in his dreams that night, and the old man kept on talking about Gerald's childhood till the moment Gerald finally awoke from his nightmare. Even as he panted vigorously upon waking up, Gerald couldn't help but check his surroundings. It had all felt so real. Once he calmed down a little, Gerald saw that it was only four in the morning.

Looking out the window, Gerald realized that it was still raining heavily. Knowing that he wasn't going to get any further rest that night, Gerald then rolled out of bed and stood by the window, silently gazing out.

All of a sudden, knocking could be heard from his door. Raising a slight brow, Gerald then looked through the door's peephole and saw that it was Aiden. Opening the door, Gerald couldn't help but smile as he said, "Well someone's early..."

"Yes, about that... You see, I just received an urgent message from my superior, but before that, do you still remember Miss Lawrence?" asked Aiden in a nervous tone.

"That unruly young lady? Of course, I do. You escorted her back, right?" replied Gerald who needed a moment to even remember her.

"Bingo. While I did send her back, she apparently returned to Yanam alone. Since then, nobody's been able to contact her. With that in mind, my superior has urgently ordered me to locate her. Following that, I'm to safely escort her back." Muttered Aiden as he double checked if anyone was nearby before closing the door behind him.

"Now why on earth would she come here?" asked Gerald with a frown as he recalled the time he and Aiden had escorted her to the Grubb family. Had they not stepped in back then, she would've surely gotten deflowered.

Either way, Gerald also remembered telling Lindsay time and again not to contact that family, and he was pretty sure that she had promised not to back then.

"How should I know? My superior has even asked the Lawrence family regarding this, though they refused to explain why she had returned. Personally, I assume she's here because of that mysterious keepsake that she sent. The Grubbs may have some contact with the Lawrences as well, so the Lawrences probably had no say in Lindsay's return, which ultimately resulted in the current situation," replied Aiden with a helpless shrug.

"Well isn't this interesting..." said Gerald with a chuckle.

"Easy for you to say... What should I do...?" muttered the anxious Aiden.

"You like Lindsay, don't you?" replied Gerald with a slightly raised brow.

"...H-huh? Where did that come from..." muttered Aiden, failing to stop himself from blushing.

"Be honest with me."

"That... I'm... not too sure about that, to be honest..." replied Aiden as he lowered his head. Since he had been in the military for so many years, he had never truly considered starting a love life.

"Alright, listen up. You, of all people, should know that my goal is to uncover the secrets of the Seadom tribe at the ancient ruins so that I'll potentially be able to locate Yearning Island and save my family. I trust you understand how much this matters to me, correct?" asked Gerald after taking a deep breath.

"I do," replied Aiden with a slight nod.

"Good. Now... If you truly like Lindsay, I'll definitely help you save her. After all, what are friends for? However, if you dislike her, then this is a matter between you and your superior. In other words, you'll be saving her on your own. With that said, what's it going to be?" asked Gerald in a solemn tone.

Chapter 2263

"I... Don't know..." muttered Aiden, clearly conflicted about the whole matter. While he wasn't sure if he really liked her, he did feel great unease the second his superior told him that Lindsay had gone missing. After all, his first reaction was to update Gerald about this despite the ungodly hour!

"If that's the case, remind your superiors that you're currently on vacation and tell them to send someone else to save her. If you're not serious about her, then stay with me. I'll need all the help I can

get,” replied Gerald as he looked out the window.

“But... Miss Lawrence could be in danger...” said Aiden.

While he would normally prioritize Gerald, the thought that Lindsay was locked up by the Grubbs was making him hesitate. However, Aiden was also worried that if he rushed over, he could potentially ruin things.

“Hmm? Didn’t you say you disliked her?” replied Gerald with a laugh. Gerald, for one, knew Aiden well enough to know that if he didn’t care about Lindsay, he wouldn’t have come running over to tell him about this in the first place. Hell, if that really was the case, he would’ve probably rejected his superior’s orders the second he got them!

Upon hearing that, Aiden went silent for a moment before eventually saying, “... Alright, I’ve made up my mind. Let’s save her.”

“Well said. We’ll focus on rescuing Miss Lawrence first, then,” replied Gerald with a nod.

While saving his family was important, Gerald knew that Lindsay’s rescue had to be prioritized. After all, he was well aware of what kinds of people were in the Grubb family. With that said, if she truly had been captured by them, then any delays would surely result in her either getting hurt or defiled.

Should that come to be, then Aiden would definitely be brimming with self reproach, and Gerald really didn’t want to see his good friend drowning in such grief.

“Thank you, Gerald...” said Aiden, pleased that Gerald was willing to help.

Shaking his head, Gerald simply replied, “There’s no need for that. Either way, did your superior provide

any hint as to where she could be?”

Though he hadn't said it, Gerald had been keeping tabs with all the times Aiden had remained by his side to help him. With that in mind, now that Aiden needed his help, Gerald was definitely going to lend his aid. Regardless, Aiden then shook his head before saying, “Unfortunately, no. He just told me that Miss Lawrence went missing in Yanam, and that the Lawrences provided no useful information about all this...”

“I see... Well, either she was captured by the Grubbs, or she may not be in Yanam at all,” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes.

“That's what I'm thinking as well,” muttered Aiden with a sigh.

“Then let's start the investigation at the Grubb family's manor,” replied Gerald in a helpless tone. Since he had killed Frey back then, nobody else in the Grubb family should have ulterior motives against Lindsay. Though that was the case, they really didn't have any other leads at the moment, so they may as well inquire the Grubbs about this first.

“And the ancient ruins...?” asked Aiden, feeling slightly embarrassed for causing Gerald's goals to be delayed.

“Let's save Miss Lawrence first,” replied Gerald with a slight wave of his hand.

With their minds made up, the duo then immediately left the hotel. On their way out, Gerald made sure to send a text message to Master Ghost, explaining the gist of where he and Aiden were off to. Aside from telling him to relay the message to Fujiko and Jobson, Gerald also stated that they would return immediately if they managed to save Lindsay.

Chapter 2264

Though it had already been raining for ages, the rain only seemed to get heavier as the duo got into their car. Since Yanam soldiers were still patrolling the area, the second they saw Gerald and Aiden

leaving, one of them immediately reported the situation to their superior.

Meanwhile, Carter was sleeping soundly within the leader's lounge. After learning that Gerald wasn't here to cause chaos, Carter had been so relieved that he had invited several executives to drink with him the night before, which explained why he was in such a comfortable slumber.

However, the snoring man was abruptly awoken when his butler burst through the door, gently shaking Carter's sleeping body as he exclaimed, "B-bad news, Captain...!"

Annoyed that he was suddenly awoken, Carter then yelled, "Get lost!"

"Captain! Gerald and that special forces soldier from Weston have just left the hotel! Should we send our men over to keep an eye on them?" replied the butler who wasn't intimidated in the least.

Under normal circumstances, the butler would've surely sent people after the duo without even needing to ask for Carter's permission. However, since Carter apparently had his own ways of dealing with Gerald, the butler refrained since he was worried that sending their men to tail Gerald would eventually ruin everything.

"Let's just talk about it once I'm up...! With that said, if you don't get lost now, you're in for a world of trouble ...!" growled Carter. Since he wasn't fully sober yet, he hadn't really heard what his butler had said. To him, everything was simply gibberish.

"With all due respect, captain! Gerald and his ally have left the hotel...!" replied the butler who had no choice but to raise his voice a little.

"Are you courting death?!" roared Carter as he fished for his pistol that was by his bed before aiming it at the butler!

“I-I’ll leave immediately...!” cried out the butler before rushing out of the room. While he knew that the half awake Carter hadn’t gotten the message, the butler wasn’t about to risk his life just to get his point across.

Knowing that he had successfully gotten rid of the loud butler, Carter then tossed his pistol onto the floor before lying in bed again. It wasn’t long before his snoring resumed.

Back on Gerald’s side, he and Aiden continued speeding toward the Grubb family’s manor. Though the wipers were doing their best to clear the windscreen, the rain was absolutely horrendous. Not wanting to risk crashing the vehicle since he could barely see the road by this point, Gerald had no choice but to slow the car down.

Staring at the onslaught of rain outside his window, Aiden was prompted to ask, “Do you think Miss Lawrence is in danger, Gerald...?”

“You know I can’t answer that,” replied Gerald as he focused on the road. Honestly, had it not been a mission to save his friend’s love interest, Gerald wouldn’t even have considered driving in this weather.

“I see... Still, since we’ve gotten rid of Prey, she should be fine if she’s currently with the Grubbs. After all, aside from being her father’s good friend, Lucian is also Miss Lawrence’s godfather. With that in mind, I really hope that she’s there and that her phone is just broken or she just hasn’t been looking at it...” muttered Aiden.

“That would be for the best,” replied Gerald with a shrug.

Chapter 2265

While the journey to the Grubb manor should’ve taken three hours at most, it ended up extending to five hours due to the torrential rain. With that said, it was near noon by the time they got to the manor.

After parking the car, Gerald checked his phone and saw that Master Ghost had seen his message. Pleased that Master Ghost had also said that he would relay the message to the others, Gerald was

about to leave the car when he suddenly noticed a servant running toward him with an umbrella.

Outstretching his hand that was holding onto a folded umbrella, the servant then asked, "Good day, sir. May I know why you're here?"

"I'm looking for Mr. Grubb to discuss something," replied Gerald as he took the umbrella and opened it.

Once Aiden was under Gerald's umbrella as well, the servant smiled before asking, "Pardon me, but which Mr. Grubb could you be referring to?"

Aside from the live in son-in-law and the daughter-in-law, most of the people living there were Grubbs.

"Lucian," replied Gerald in a calm tone.

"Oh? You're here to meet the master?" replied the stunned servant who quickly straightened his back to appear more respectful.

"Is he in? If he isn't, there's no need to ring him up. We'll just wait here for a bit," said Gerald as he and Aiden began walking into the manor.

"He's in. With how heavy the rain is today, he doesn't have any other guests visiting either," explained the butler as he lowered his gaze, not even daring to look Gerald in the eye. After all, not only had the youth dared to come over, but he had even called his master by name! All that could only mean that Gerald either possessed a high status or he was someone his master took extremely seriously.

"Lead us to him," replied Gerald.

With that, the servant instantly led the two to the reception room, where they were promptly served some hot tea.

A short while later, Aiden who had ants in his pants couldn't help but say, "... I'm taking a look around."

If Lindsay really was locked up in here, he was going to take every chance he could to search for her.

Frowning slightly, Gerald replied, "Just remain seated here. I'm sure he'll come soon."

"But I'm worried about Miss Lawrence's safety...!" grumbled Aiden as he stared out the window. Not showing signs of letting up at all, the rain was so heavy that he could barely see a thing.

"Even if she's here, haven't we already alerted the enemy by showing ourselves? If you start searching now, aren't you just making it even more obvious that we're looking for her?" replied Gerald as he sipped his tea.

"I... didn't think of that..." muttered Aiden as he quickly calmed down.

"I'm glad you've realized. Now get back here and have your tea while it's hot," replied Gerald as he held Aiden's cup out for him.

The second Gerald's sentence ended, Lucian under the guide of his servant could be seen entering the reception room. Though his pants were drenched in rainwater, he didn't seem to care at all, especially when he saw Gerald.

Instantly breaking into a smile, Lucian then walked up to Gerald his hand extended while saying, "And here I thought my servant was kidding when he said you were here!"

"It's been a while, Mr. Grubb," replied Gerald as he began walking toward the enthusiastic man as well.

“Indeed! Still, why are you back so soon? Do you have some affairs to attend to? Or could it be that... You’ve managed to grasp the meaning behind the Devotion Mirror and you’re here to return it?” asked Lucian as he shook Gerald’s hand.

“You’re thinking too highly of me, Mr. Grubb. There’s no way I’d be able to see through the mirror this quickly! Truth be told, I’ve yet to even scratch the surface of the mirror’s secrets!” replied Gerald as he shook his head with a laugh.

Chapter 2266

The truth was, Gerald hadn’t even looked at the Devotion Mirror from the second he got it. He had simply been too busy to unravel its mysteries. What more, the mirror wasn’t exactly as important as Lucian would’ve liked to believe, though Gerald knew better than to tell him that. After all, an enraged Lucian would only spell more trouble for him.

“Oh please, your talent’s exceptional, mister! After all, you’re the first person who’s been able to retrieve the mirror from the cave! Since you’ve even obtained recognition from my ancestors, I have reason to believe that it’s only a matter of time before you uncover its mysteries,” declared Lucian as he shook his head, making it clear that he trusted the Devotion Mirror’s choice.

“Don’t worry, I’ll definitely share what lies within the mirror if I manage to crack the code,” replied Gerald with a hearty laugh.

“If you manage to do so, you’ll truly be a great benefactor to my family!” declared Lucian, his eyes glimmering with hope.

According to his family’s ancestral records, anyone who managed to grasp the meaning of the mirror would gain supreme skills and cultivation that would then grant them easier access in becoming a top cultivator. With that said, if Gerald succeeded in decoding the mirror, then the Grubbs would easily become the largest and strongest family in the entirety of Yanam! Actually, since all the cultivators in their family would be able to max out their cultivation by then, forget Yanam, they’d become the strongest cultivating family in the cultivation realm!

Regardless, Gerald then replied, "It's already an honor to be given the chance to inspect this mirror..."

Throughout their conversation, Gerald had kept tabs on Lucian's expressions. Aside from excitement, however, Gerald couldn't discern any other vague expressions, which meant that Lucian hadn't kidnapped Lindsay. Though that was the case, that didn't mean that the other Grubbs hadn't done the deed.

Whatever the case was, upon hearing that, Lucian couldn't help but exclaim, "You truly are my family's lucky star, mister!"

"You flatter me. Speaking of which, have any weird incidents happened within your family recently?" asked Gerald.

"Hmm? Everything's been normal as far as I'm concerned... Honestly, have you returned to deal with my family's affairs, mister? Does it concern the cave or the mirror...?" replied Lucian after thinking for a bit.

"Let's just say that I've returned to look for something, though it doesn't concern your family. Don't overthink my earlier question," replied Gerald with a wave of his hand, not wanting to accidentally mention that he was here to investigate Lindsay's disappearance.

"I see... You scared me for a moment there... However, there is one other thing I'd like to talk to you about..." muttered Lucian after heaving a relieved sigh. It was something that he had realized right after Gerald left back then.

Chapter 2267

"Go on," replied Gerald as he momentarily looked at the heavy rain outside.

"Well... I'm sure you know of my adopted son, Frey, right? You see, it's been ages since I've last seen him... He seems to have just vanished into thin air! It doesn't help that as far as I know, he didn't have

any disputes with my other family members. With that said, I was wondering if you had bumped into him..." muttered Lucian with a slight frown.

In his search for Frey, not only had Lucian searched every nook and cranny of his manor, but he had even gone to all the places Frey usually went to. Hell, aside from meeting up with Frey's friends, he had also used all his connections to locate his son to no avail even after two entire months.

"Frey?" asked Gerald in a calm tone, though honestly, he couldn't help but feel sad for Lucian. After all, he had killed Frey back in that cave, and Gerald was pretty sure that not even Frey's ashes remained. Still, to think that Lucian the mighty master of the Grubb family would end up adopting such an evil son... How truly pitiful.

"Yes... While I had initially doubted that he had met with an accident or was kidnapped, after so long, I just want news about him already... Any news..." muttered Lucian, his eyes now slightly red and teary.

Unable to bear telling Lucian the truth, Gerald simply replied, "...I'll keep an eye out for him. If I hear anything about Frey, I'll definitely notify you."

"I appreciate it. Still, I have a feeling that he's probably been killed by an accident somewhere... Even if that's the case, I still have to find his corpse in order to give him a proper burial..." said Lucian before sighing heavily. It was clear that he no longer had any hope that his son was alive, and that he was only saying all this to get it out of his system.

"I agree. As Weston customs go, all dead individuals need to be buried," replied Gerald.

Nodding in response, Lucian then wiped his tears away before looking at Gerald and saying, "... Either way, do stay here till the rain goes away... It's dangerous to drive in such horrid weather... Speaking of which, you said you were here to look for something, right? Tell me what it is. I get my men to obtain it for you."

"I can get it easily, so don't worry about it. Whatever the case is, let's talk about it once the rain stops in a few days," replied Gerald as he looked outside.

"A few days indeed... Well, it doesn't seem like the rain will be letting up anytime soon, why not stay here in the meantime? I'll get my butler to clean up a few of our guest rooms later. Also, you've probably driven for quite a while to get here, correct? You must be starving! I'll get my chefs to prepare something for us right this instant! We can just eat in the reception room," said Lucian with a subtle smile. Gerald's arrival had honestly been the best thing that had happened to him in the past few days.

"I'll be troubling you then, Mr. Grubb," replied Gerald as he placed his hands together before Lucian.

"Oh please, you're no trouble at all! Truth be told, I'm glad you're staying here!" replied Lucian with a wave of his hand. As it turned out, Lucian's temperament had undergone quite the change ever since Frey disappeared.

...

"Well, looks like we'll be staying here for the next few days, Aiden," said Gerald as he turned to face the dazed boy.

Quickly snapping out of it, Aiden simply replied with a nod.

It wasn't long after before servants began appearing with several dishes in hand. To celebrate Gerald's arrival, Lucian even got his special wine out, and the trio found themselves enjoying their meal in the reception room as rain continued pouring outside.

Once they were done with their meals, Gerald and Aiden headed to their guest rooms that had thoroughly been tidied up. The second Aiden closed the door behind him, he immediately inched closer to Gerald before whispering, "Do you think Lucian's aware of Lindsay's disappearance...?"

Narrowing his eyes, Gerald then thought for a moment before replying, "...I don't think so, no..."

Chapter 2268

"I see... Still, let's start investigating tonight. After all, even if Lucian's not aware of it, his other family members are still highly suspicious. The longer we don't make a move, the higher the chances of Miss Lawrence being in danger... !" declared Aiden who didn't even bother whispering anymore. Though the heavy rain masked his voice well, it didn't change the fact that his tone suggested that he wanted to flip through the entire manor to see if Lindsay was present.

Frowning slightly, Gerald then replied, "Calm yourself."

"Like hell I can! If Miss Lawrence ends up bumping into someone like Frey again, she'll definitely be ruined!" grumbled Aiden with a sigh.

"And that's exactly why you should remain calm. How are you going to save her with an unclear mind?" replied Gerald who knew how Aiden felt.

After all, he had been much more anxious than Aiden back when Mila first got captured. As Gerald would come to learn, until he calmed himself, he wouldn't ever be able to resolve his problems. Thankfully, he managed to slowly calm himself over time.

Whatever the case was, knowing that Gerald's words made sense, Aiden then lowered his head with a sigh before saying in a resigned tone, "Fine, I'll try to remain calm..."

"Atta boy. Now... let's think this through. If it really was a Grubb who kidnapped Lindsay, who would be our prime suspect?" asked Gerald slightly loudly due to the crashing rain as he sat at the side of the bed.

"Frey's men," replied Aiden almost instantaneously. He had already considered that possibility while they were still in the car earlier.

“While they do sound like the most plausible suspects, why would they want to capture her in the first place?” said Gerald with a nod.

“That... I... can’t say for sure...” muttered Aiden as he shook his head. It was clear that he hadn’t thought that far ahead.

“First off, Frey’s men only went after her in the first place because of Frey’s orders. Now that he’s dead and the members of the Grubb family have no idea where he’s gone to, why would his subordinates suddenly want to kidnap her?” replied Gerald.

“I mean... when Frey was about to deflower her that night, plenty of his men were with him... I’m sure at least some of them yearned for her... To me, that alone is reason enough for them to kidnap her!” said Aiden as he recalled the events of that night.

“While that’s certainly a possibility, it’s a low one. Besides, that’s mostly just speculation,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Then... Where do you think Lindsay has disappeared to?” asked the puzzled Aiden.

“For one, I don’t think the Grubbs have anything to do with her going missing. However, I do have a feeling that they have other issues that they didn’t report to your superior... ” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes.

“Other problems...? Come to think of it, back when my superior contacted me, he told me that the Grubbs had only told him that Lindsay had gone missing on her way back to Yanam and nothing else...” muttered Aiden, now starting to feel enlightened.

“Lindsay isn’t a fool, Aiden. After that incident, I believe that she’d have reported any subsequent journeys she made to her family. What more, there’s a high chance she had made sufficient preparations before even arriving at the Grubb family’s manor. With all that in mind, there’s no way a

similar incident could've taken place," replied Gerald with a faint smile, seeing that Aiden was finally starting to see his point.

"That's right! Lindsay should've told her family before coming over!" exclaimed Aiden who now had a new outlook on the case.

"Bingo. While we don't know whether she's being locked up in the manor or she's just having general troubles reporting back, I can say for sure that the Grubbs are definitely hiding something from us," replied Gerald as he opened the window before lighting a cigarette.

Chapter 2269

From the looks of it, the heavy rain wasn't stopping any time soon.

"Should we ask the members of the Grubb family then?" asked Aiden as he fished his phone out, fully prepared to contact his superior.

"Let's do a thorough investigation here first. Still, if she isn't in the manor, then this incident is definitely much more complicated than what we initially imagined... The Grubbs may have either been afraid of the other party which would explain why they've remained quiet about it, or there's just some other reason we're not seeing yet," replied Gerald as he placed his hands against the windowsill while staring outside.

"The Grubbs truly are an interesting bunch... Lindsay's gone missing yet they still refuse to reveal it! Are they only going to be satisfied once something bad happens?" growled Aiden as he slammed his fist against a table, wondering what Lindsay was experiencing right now. If she ended up getting defiled by someone like Frey, Aiden wasn't against murdering the culprit...!

"I can't say for sure," replied Gerald as he shook his head, making it clear that even he had no idea what the Grubbs were thinking and why they would commit the deed.

"Then... what should we do now...?" asked Aiden as he walked up to Gerald.

“Let’s get some test first. I’ll try getting some information out of Lucian tomorrow. Hopefully that’ll clear our suspicions of the family,” replied Gerald as he tossed his cigarette out into the rain.

Knowing that that was probably the best course of action, Aiden simply nodded in response.

Fast forward to the next day, the rain didn’t seem to be letting up at all. In fact, had Gerald not checked the time and realized that it was already eight, he would’ve surely assumed that it was still in the middle of the night with how dark it was outside. Regardless, after getting himself cleaned up, Gerald immediately headed off to look for Lucian.

Once they met up, Lucian invited Gerald for breakfast. Soon enough, the two were sitting opposite each other as servants served them their meals.

Biting into a loaf of bread, Lucian then turned to look at Gerald before asking, “So, had a good rest?”

“The rain was a bit too loud for my taste, but I mostly slept well,” replied Gerald with a smile, making sure to carefully observe any changes in Lucian’s expression the entire time.

“It’ll unfortunately be raining cats and dogs in the next few days. Still, that means you’ll get to stay longer here. Truth be told, it’s been the longest time since I’ve had a chance to have breakfast with a youth ever since Frey went missing...” muttered Lucian with a sigh.

Though he was aware of Frey’s bad habits, Frey was still Lucian’s adopted child. In a way, this was his fault since he had spoiled Frey too much as a child. Hell, he had even promised to make him the heir of the family! However, that didn’t mean that he didn’t want Frey around. Honestly, Lucian would’ve surely fallen into much deeper depression by now had it not been for the fact that he still needed to take care of his large family.

"I see... Could you detail me on the incident...?" asked Gerald who had been waiting for Lucian to bring it up.

"I don't know much myself, though it seems that he vanished not too long after you guys left back then..." replied Lucian who looked particularly saddened every time he had to talk about Frey.

"How unfortunate..." said Gerald, expertly pretending that he didn't know anything.

"Indeed... After about a week of attempting to contact him to no avail, I finally lodged a police report to investigate his disappearance. However, as I've said, he seems to have vanished into thin air..." replied Lucian with a heavy sigh.

Chapter 2270

"Were there no clues left behind at all...?" asked Gerald who was now pretty sure that Lucian had nothing to do with Lindsay's disappearance. After all, Lucian hadn't revealed any odd expressions throughout their conversation.

"If there were any, we would've found them ages ago. What a tragedy... Not only do I not know whether my son's dead or alive, but even if he's passed on, I can't find his corpse! This is truly as depressing as things can get..." muttered Lucian as he shook his head.

"Have you considered questioning Frey's subordinates? After all, they were closest to him so they may have an idea of what befell him," replied Gerald as he scratched his chin.

"I've asked them on multiple occasions, but every time I did, their responses remained the same. Essentially, all of them said that after Frey left one afternoon, he ceased to contact any of them. That was probably the day he went missing," said Lucian who had already considered everything that Gerald had suggested, making it evident that he had gone all out to locate his son.

"I see..." replied Gerald with a sigh.

“Well, I don’t have much hope that he’s alive by this point, so I’m only hoping that I can at least bury him. Still, being buried abroad is quite frowned upon by us Westoners...” said Lucian as he shook his head.

“It’s simply karma...” muttered Gerald to himself.

“Come again?” asked Lucian who genuinely hadn’t caught what Gerald had said.

“Hmm? Oh, I said it’s such a pity. After all, he’s the heir of your family, no?” fibbed Gerald.

“He is. Though he’s my adopted son, his character and behavior are much more outstanding compared to my biological children... He’s been helping me manage my family business a lot in recent years, you know? And as far as I know, he’s never made a mistake. I was about to tell him that he was going to be the heir of the Grubbs too, but alas, he ended up vanishing off the face of the earth!” muttered Lucian in a helpless tone.

“Truly a pity...” repeated Gerald.

“Well... Let’s not talk about him anymore... Speaking of which, there’s going to be a local auction in a few days. I could bring you there if you’d like,” replied Lucian who didn’t want to sound overly sad before his guest.

After all, though his son was most probably dead, the fact that Gerald had returned meant that not everything was all doom and gloom.

As his butler had previously said, it truly was the right choice for him to hand the Devotion Mirror to Gerald. After all, not only did he trust that Gerald wouldn’t run off with his family’s treasure, but he also believed that the youth would eventually share his findings with him once Gerald cracked the mirror’s

code.

By that point, everyone in his family would undoubtedly be able to improve their cultivation, and Lucian genuinely hoped that that would help give birth to more outstanding youths like Frey who would try their best to be part of the family.

Either way, upon hearing that, Gerald simply shook his head before saying, "I'm not that interested in auctions."

"Well, this isn't an ordinary auction by any means. It's actually the largest auction of the cultivation realm that's held once every five years! With that said, lots of rare treasures will be there, and if you're lucky, you may be able to get your hands on some!" explained Lucian.

"... Oh? The largest you say..." replied Gerald as he raised a slight eyebrow.

"That's right. Just so you know, Mr. Lawrence is coming along as well. Come to think of it, it's been almost twenty years since I last met him... With that said, meeting Lindsay back then was truly an eye opener. To think that two decades had passed in the blink of an eye..." muttered Lucian with a sigh.

With the mention of the Lawrence family, Gerald took a deep breath before saying, "...If it's alright with you, could you answer a question of mine honestly?"

Chapter 2271

"Of course! Ask away!" replied Lucian with a nod.

"Well... Miss Lindsay... She never returned since she left, correct?" asked Gerald with a slight frown, though after talking twice to Lucian about it, he felt that the man truly didn't know a thing about all this. What more, with how fondly he spoke of Lindsay, it was hard to imagine Lucian to be her kidnapper.

“... What do you mean by ‘returned’? Weren’t you and Aiden the ones who came with her?” replied Lucian, clearly startled to hear that.

Shaking his head, Gerald then replied, “No, I meant after that...”

“Well... Ever since you left together, she’s never returned... Besides, Mr. Lawrence never mentioned anything about sending his niece back...” muttered Lucian in response.

“I see...”

“Though... Where’s this coming from? Could something have happened to Lindsay...?” asked Lucian in a serious tone. He, for one, wasn’t the head of the family for nothing.

“Unfortunately, yes,” replied Gerald.

“What? Why haven’t I heard about this? Actually, how did she even manage to disappear? After all, not only does she have you, a person who was able to take out the high elders of the three largest families in Yanam, but she also had Aiden a special forces agent on her side!” exclaimed Lucian as he clenched his fists.

“It happened after Aiden sent her back. Apparently, she received a mission from her family and supposedly returned to your manor in Yanam. That was when she went missing,” explained Gerald in an indifferent tone.

“But that’s impossible! Mr. Lawrence never even told me that Lindsay was coming back! I’ll call him right this instant to ask what really happened! How could she have just disappeared on her way here? And why hadn’t he told me about this serious matter!” exclaimed Lucian as he got to his feet before getting his phone.

“Hold it, Mr. Grubb!” replied Gerald as he grabbed Lucian’s arm.

“With all due respect, not only is Mr. Lawrence my lifelong friend, but Lindsay is also my niece! How do you expect me to wait when something could’ve happened to her?!” exclaimed Lucian who was honestly more anxious now compared to when he was talking about Frey.

“If things were really that simple, then the Lawrences would’ve surely notified you the second Lindsay departed. After all, she had only made it back safely back then since Aiden was with her!” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

“Are you saying that the Lawrences don’t want me to know about all this?” asked Lucian after a slight pause.

“While I don’t know what’s happened between you two, I suspect that to be the case. After all, we only learned about her disappearance from Aiden’s superior who was the only one the Lawrences had notified about the incident. With that said, Aiden and I had come here in the first place to investigate whether the Grubbs were involved with Lindsay’s case,” explained Gerald once Lucian calmed down a little.

“What? Why on earth would we do that? It’s not like she has anything particularly valuable that we need...” replied Lucian as he firmly shook his head.

Chapter 2272

“Well... that should be the case...” said Gerald as he raised a slight brow.

“Are you hiding anything else from me, mister...?” asked Lucian, curious about Gerald’s response.

“The truth is, Frey had previously attempted to harass Miss Lindsay, though I managed to stop him in time,” replied Gerald as he stared straight into Lucian’s eyes.

“That utter b*stard!” yelled Lucian.

“Hmm? Aren’t you going to at least suspect me of slander...?” replied Gerald who couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Unfortunately, while Frey is good with most things, the one thing he’s bad at is self control... I can’t even count how many girls he’s harmed, and every time it’s my job to compensate them... Still, to think that he’d actually set his eyes on Lindsay this time... That boy really is losing his conscience! If he succeeded, I don’t think I’d ever have the face to meet Mr. Lawrence for the rest of my life!” explained Lucian with a deep sigh.

“I see... Well, since we’re now on the same page, I admit that I had initially suspected the culprits to be Lucian’s men. However, from what I’ve managed to gather here, I believe that they may not be involved this time. Still, since the Lawrences are trying to limit the number of people who know about her disappearance, I have reason to believe that the case isn’t going to be cracked that easily...” replied Gerald. By telling him all this, not only would he be able to curb Lucian’s anxiety, but he could potentially get the Grubbs to also help in the search for Lindsay.

“There’s no reason for her to come over in the first place. Also, as you’ve said, Mr. Lawrence should’ve notified me about all this... What could he be hiding...?” muttered Lucian as he pondered the situation.

“There’s no point in brooding over it. Either way, I’d like to meet up with Frey’s men so that I can completely rule your family out. Once I confirm that they’re not involved, I can head off and start investigating elsewhere. Are you alright with that?” asked Gerald as he lit a cigarette.

“I have no problem with that,” replied Lucian before fishing his phone out and giving his butler a call. Once his message got across, Lucian placed his hands on the table as he racked his brains, wondering what the hell was going on.

Minutes later, the duo saw the butler running in with his umbrella, though the heavy rain still managed to completely drench his pants. Regardless, after walking over and giving Gerald a nod, the butler was

prompted to ask, "You called, master?"

"Indeed. How's the investigation on Frey's disappearance going?" asked Lucian with a sigh.

"Unfortunately, we've made no progress even after using all the family's connections... With that said, please mentally prepare yourself, master..." replied the butler as he shook his head.

"Indeed. Well, I'm already expecting the worst. Either way, go call Frey's men over. I have some things to ask them about," ordered Lucian with a wave of his hand.

"But master, we've already questioned them over ten times now... Adding that to the fact that you've promised them a million dollar prize if they managed to provide any clues, I'm sure they would've told you anything they knew by now..." muttered the butler.

Chapter 2273

"This isn't about Frey... It's about Lindsay. She's apparently gone missing on her way here! Also, since Frey's harassed her before, Gerald's asking for his men to come over to see if they're involved!" replied Lucian with a sigh.

"W-what? She's disappeared?!" exclaimed the butler, clearly shocked by the news.

"Indeed... Also, if any of his men refuse to come, call the police to conduct a search on them! We have to ensure that Lindsay's disappearance has nothing to do with our family!" ordered Lucian.

Nodding in response, the butler then quickly rang all of them up, telling them to gather there. Once he was done, however, the butler couldn't help but ask, "Um... Why haven't I heard that Miss Lindsay was coming over, master...?"

"I was just made aware of this myself," replied Lucian.

"If that's the case, then why would the other family members know about this? Could one of the Grubbs know someone from the Lawrence family...?" muttered the butler as he scratched the back of his head.

"You make a fair point! How on earth had they known about this before us?" exclaimed Lucian.

"Mr. Grubb, as I've said, Lindsay's disappearance may have nothing to do with your family. With that said, I'm merely asking for Frey's men to come over to confirm that," replied Gerald.

"If I may, could you detail all that's been happening? I'm just curious as to how Miss Lindsay suddenly disappeared. After all, not only were we notified in advance of her arrival back then, but I also remember Miss Lindsay getting escorted by a special forces agent from Weston the last time she came over," asked the butler, wondering what changed that led to her disappearance.

"Well, the Lawrences apparently notified Aiden's superiors about Lindsay's disappearance while she was on her way to your manor. With that said, we in turn only found out about all this through Aiden's superiors. Either way, aside from that, the Lawrences apparently gave no further details..." explained Gerald.

"How absolutely strange..." replied the butler as he continued scratching the back of his head.

"Whatever the case is, Lindsay's gone missing within Yanam, so we have to find her!" growled Lucian as he clenched his fists.

Shortly after, Frey's men came running in, completely drenched in rain. Not knowing why they were called over, they simply stood at the door, waiting for Lucian to say something. However, Lucian simply stared at them without saying a word, immediately causing all of them to gulp. Had they messed up? But that couldn't be! After all, ever since Frey went missing, they hadn't left the manor at all...!

Eventually, the butler who realized that Lucian wasn't going to say anything soon was prompted to say, "So... Do all of you realize why you've been called over?"

"We don't..." replied a few of the men as they shook their heads.

"I'd like you to consider everything you've done in the past few days. If you admit to doing something wrong, then you won't be held responsible. However, if you continue trying to keep it a secret, then I'm afraid the consequences will be dire," said the butler.

Chapter 2274

"B-but we haven't done anything!"

"Yeah! We've been staying in the manor this entire time! If you don't believe us, you can check the surveillance footage!"

"Is this about young master Frey? Is there any news about him?" asked the frightened men as they tried to remember whether they had accidentally violated any of the family's rules.

"How many days ago, Gerald?" asked Lucian.

"About a week ago," replied Gerald.

"Send someone to go through all the surveillance footage from the past week! Conduct thorough investigations on anyone who's left the manor for personal matters in the past week! " ordered Lucian, prompting the butler to begin calling someone to review the footage.

Either way, after hearing all that, Frey's men couldn't help but feel dumbfounded. After all, aside from how serious Lucian and his butler looked, Frey's men were well aware that Lucian barely ever requested for the surveillance footage to be checked. With that in mind, they knew that something major was

definitely happening.

Once the butler was done with his call, he turned to look at Frey's men before asking, "So... What have all of you been doing in the past few days?"

"As we've said, we really haven't done anything! The footage will prove our innocence!"

"That's right! Still, what's all this about...? Did something big happen...?" asked one of the men with a gulp.

"You don't need to know. However, note that till this matter is properly investigated, none of you are allowed to leave the manor. Know that all your movements within the manor will be monitored as well," replied the butler with a frown.

"Understood!" declared the men in unison. Whatever was happening within the family, they were apparently involved.

Regardless, upon hearing that, the butler simply waved his hand before saying, "Now leave..."

Nodding in response, the men then left the scene, disappearing once more in the pouring rain.

Once they were gone, the butler closed the door behind them before walking up to Lucian and saying, "I don't think they're involved with her disappearance."

"Let's check the footage first before jumping to conclusions. Even if they didn't leave the manor, there's always a chance that they sent someone else to do the deed! With that said, I'm sure traces of the crime will be left behind! Either way, if they truly are the culprits, I won't be letting them off lightly...!" growled Lucian.

"I'll make sure to run a thorough investigation," replied the butler.

"While I'd like to contribute, I only know as much as you do know," said Gerald with a sigh. Since he didn't even know where Lindsay had first gone missing, locating her was near impossible at this point in time.

Still, since this was for Aiden, Gerald was going to do his best. He, for one, had already experienced the pain of losing Mila, and he didn't want Aiden to go through the same agony.

"Still, Mr. Lawrence is quite the character. After all, his daughter's gone missing yet he refuses to notify us about it! Even if he has his reasons, he can't just disregard Lindsay's safety...!"

Chapter 2275

Knowing that looking for her this way was no different from looking for a needle in a haystack, Lucian couldn't help but feel slightly helpless. It certainly didn't help that the longer they took to locate her, the higher the chances of her being in danger.

"Then... should we just call Mr. Lawrence for an explanation...?" asked the butler.

"I attempted to, but Gerald stopped me earlier, stating that if the Lawrences were already refusing to elaborate to the Weston special forces, there was little chance that they'd give us any more details. With that said, however, I believe that Mr. Lawrence must be in quite a pickle. Since he probably won't provide us with any necessary information, let's just try our best to save Lindsay. Even if we fail to do so, at the very least, we can say we tried our best. That way, it won't be too embarrassing for me to meet him in the future," replied Lucian as he shook his head.

"Speaking of which, the organizers for the big auction sent us three admission tickets for the auction last night, master. With that said, not counting the both of us, we're going to have one extra ticket due to young master Frey's absence..." muttered the butler as he fished three golden tickets out from his breast pocket before placing them on the table.

Hearing that, Lucian then looked at Gerald before asking, "Well... Are you interested in going...?"

"I'd be glad to. After all, you said it only takes place every five years, correct?" replied Gerald with a nod.

While he hadn't been interested in it at the start, after being told that it wasn't an ordinary auction, he figured that he may as well try his luck there.

Besides, while it was true that his priority was still to learn the secrets of the Seadom tribe in the ancient ruins in order to get to the island and save his family, getting stronger was equally as important. After all, though he had the power of the Herculean Primordial Spirit on his side, he still wasn't that confident that he would be able to take on Daryl. Hell, he wasn't even sure if he could take on Will or the other Crawfords that he had yet to meet.

Regardless, upon hearing that, Lucian couldn't help but smile as he said, "It's a deal, then. The auction's a week away. If it's not a problem, let's head there together."

Nodding in response, Gerald then left Lucian's room before returning to his room to update Aiden on all that had happened. Once that was done, Gerald then left the manor in his car.

Gerald, for one, estimated that reviewing all that footage would take at least three days. Since the auction wasn't taking place any time soon anyway, he may as well use the time to check the ruins out. After all, the sooner he learned the secrets of the Seadom tribe, the sooner he could plan things out.

Still, the rainstorm wasn't making things any easier for him... In the end, he managed to arrive at the forest through memory in the late afternoon. Due to the continuous rain, however, the second he stepped out, he immediately realized that he was going to be trudging through a muddy path the entire way. Completely drenched in a matter of seconds, all Gerald could do

was wipe some of the rainwater off his face before making his way into the forest. Though the canopy blocked quite a bit of rain, Gerald still had to occasionally wipe the water off his face to even be able to

see the path before him.

It was about half an hour later when Gerald finally made it to the mountain cave. Upon entering, he saw bones littered all over the ground just like last time, though he was less cautious now. After all, the old man guarding the cave had previously told him that everything in here was his.

With that in mind, the second he entered the cave, the old man's voice could be heard saying, "You're back."

"I am, senior," replied Gerald with a bow, his palm and fist meeting each other.

"I expected you to return in a few years, not in two months. With that said, have you returned to find something?" asked the old man in a much kinder tone than before.

"You guessed correctly," replied Gerald as he walked further into the cave.

Chapter 2276

After stepping on several mounds of bones, Gerald soon arrived at the innermost part of the cave.

Walking out the stone chamber, the old man momentarily looked at the drenched boy before shaking his head as he said, "A rare heavy rain..."

"Indeed... Regardless, I'm here because--"

"Stop. Come over here and warm up first. I'll go get some dry clothes for you," interrupted the man as he placed a finger over his lips before heading further down the stone chamber.

While Gerald honestly wasn't even bothered about his current condition, since the old man insisted, he

simply shook his head before following him. As he walked down the chamber, he couldn't help but note that the chamber had barely changed from the last time he was here.

Regardless, he soon saw the old man rummaging through a stone cabinet. Poking his head out, the old man then tossed a bag at Gerald while saying, "Try these on."

By the time Gerald caught the bag, the old man was already tossing some firewood into a basin next to his bed. With just a snap of his finger, flames flared out the dry wood, instantaneously warming the entire stone chamber.

Naturally, this surprised Gerald, and he was momentarily speechless. While he remembered Jobson performing something similar back at the Yamashita manor, it was clear as day that this old man was even more powerful than Jobson.

Noticing how stunned Gerald was, the old man couldn't help but laugh before saying, "Summoning a flame like that is nothing!"

"The fact that you can say that means I have a long way to go..." replied Gerald with a sigh. After all, if an old man tasked with guarding some ruins was already this strong, then Gerald's current cultivation was just the tip of the iceberg.

"So what if I'm strong? There's no place for me to use my powers! Though I guess being able to summon fire whenever I want is convenient... Either way, enough talk, go change already before you fall sick," said the old man as he sat cross legged by the fire while extending his palms out.

"But... this..." muttered Gerald in a slightly embarrassed tone as he looked at the bag the old man had thrown at him. Gerald figured that all the old man's clothes were hemp robes since he had only ever seen the old man wearing them, and while it definitely suited Gerald's temperament as a cultivator, they were now in the secular world! If he wore this out, then he would surely draw unnecessary attention, thus inconveniencing him to do things.

“What? You don’t like my clothes?” asked the old man as he glared at the boy.

“Of course, not...” muttered the flustered Gerald as he unwillingly undressed before opening the bag only to find himself surprised since it contained a set of rather modern and casual clothes! In fact, there was even modern underwear and socks! Gerald, for one, wasn’t going to complain, and he quickly got himself changed.

Upon hearing the buckling of a belt, the old man was prompted to ask, “Well? Does it fit?”

“It fits perfectly, honestly. Still, to think that you’d foresee my drenched arrival and even get me this fitting outfit...” muttered Gerald, feeling slightly touched.

“Oh please, I didn’t get them for you. I simply bought them to look at whenever I felt bored! As for the perfect fit, I guess you just happen to share the same measurements as my son!” replied the old man with a cackle. ‘

“H-huh?” said Gerald as he awkwardly took a sniff at his clothes.

Chapter 2277

“Don’t worry, they haven’t been worn before,” replied the old man in an indifferent tone.

Sheepishly nodding in response, Gerald then hung his clothes by the fire before sitting in front of the old man as he asked, “So... Do you know why I’m here, senior?”

“Do you think I know divination techniques or something?” replied the old man as he rolled his eyes.

“Well... I’m here to uncover the secrets of Yearning Island. From what the descendants of the Seadom tribe told me, all the important records of their tribe were kept here...” muttered Gerald with a sigh.

“Yearning Island? Seadom tribe?” replied the old man, looking slightly confused.

Seeing that, Gerald was prompted to ask, “Perhaps... I could look around myself...?”

“By all means. As I’ve said, everything in here is yours since you have the Herculean Primordial Spirit within you. I’m just here to guard your belongings,” replied the old man as he continued warming himself by the fire.

Nodding with a sigh, Gerald then got to his feet before walking toward the bookshelves in the stone chamber while saying, “For context, my parents and sister have been imprisoned on that island. With the help of the sea map that I previously obtained here, we managed to find the descendants of the Seadom tribe who then told us that the secrets to getting to Yearning Island were within these ancient ruins...”

“Then go ahead and start searching,” replied the old man without even lifting his head.

Hearing that, Gerald then nodded before starting to browse through the many books there.

Shortly after, the old man yawned before waving his hand slightly prompting the fire to move a bit closer to Gerald’s wet clothes and saying, “While I may be prying, with your power, you should’ve easily been able to protect your family. Unless, of course, you’ve offended some powerful people in the cultivation realm.”

“In a way. My grandfather’s the culprit,” replied Gerald as he momentarily stopped flipping through a book.

“Oh? How interesting... Are you telling me that your family fell out with your grandfather, resulting in him kidnapping them? If that’s the case, why didn’t he kidnap you as well?” asked the old man with a

slightly raised brow.

“Beats me,” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

Waving his hand fan for a while, the old man then laid on his bed before saying, “What a queer turn of events... Regardless, I hope you’re aware that you’ve just learned the basics of the Herculean Primordial Spirit. With that said, if your grandfather is really strong, you may not be his opponent.”

“Even so, I still have to try,” replied Gerald as he gritted his teeth, knowing how true the old man’s words were.

“Good luck finding information on whatever that island’s name is then,” said the old man as he closed his eyes.

“Yearning Island,” replied Gerald in a calm tone.

Upon hearing snoring, Gerald couldn’t help but turn around with a slightly raised brow. Realizing that the man had fallen asleep, Gerald went silent, not wanting to accidentally wake him up.

Following that, aside from the occasional sound of Gerald’s footsteps, pages flipping, and the crackling of burning wood, all else was silent. Even the old man stopped snoring after a while. Regardless, throughout that period, Gerald made sure to carefully read through every page he came across, fearing that the record on Yearning Island would end up being just a simple and easily miss-able footnote.

Unfortunately for him, there were bookshelves against all four of the walls. From what he could tell, there were at least a hundred books on each bookshelf, and it was honestly way more than Gerald had anticipated.

Truth be told, he had expected the old man to just get him the book that he needed the second he mentioned Yearning Island. Sadly, that simply wasn’t the case, and he was pretty much forced to slowly

flip through all the books there. While it was certainly annoying, this was the only way to get the information he needed.

After quite some time, Gerald found his eyesight getting blurrier and blurrier. However, he didn't dare stop since he had barely even finished reading a fifth of the books there. How frustrating.

Chapter 2278

Just as he was starting to smoke and rest his eyes for a bit , Gerald heard the old man say, "Found what you were looking for?"

"Not yet," replied Gerald with a sigh.

"I see. You should know that there are at least a thousand books in here, with most of them about cultivation skills and the others being historical records. With that said, if you really want information on that island, I'm afraid you'll need a minimum of half a month," said the old man while rolling off his bed.

"Is there no better way to do this...?" muttered Gerald as he watched the old man walk toward him.

"Of course, not! Though the ancient ruins have existed for over a thousand years, I've only been here for the past sixty of them. Even then, I've yet to touch a single book in here!" replied the old man as he sat beside Gerald before looking up.

Stubbing his cigarette out, Gerald then got to his feet before reaching for a book as he said, "How troublesome..."

Despite how time consuming all this was, Gerald knew better than to give up. After all, this was his best shot of learning the secrets of Yearning Island.

Regardless, seeing that Gerald had resumed reading, the old man went silent before eventually deciding

to head back to bed to take another nap.

Waking up again sometime later, he stared at Gerald for a while before leaving the cave, his hands against his back. Around half an hour later, the old man returned with a few bags.

Moving a stone table up to Gerald's back, the old man then placed the bags on it before saying, "Alright, time to eat. You'll need the energy if you want to keep searching."

Realizing that the senior had brought food back, Gerald then straightened his stiff neck before replying, "I appreciate it, Senior."

Watching as Gerald loosened his muscles, the old man then sat before tearing off a chicken drumstick and asking, "So, do you only plan on leaving after you've found the information you need?"

"Most probably," replied Gerald in a casual tone.

"Then be prepared to sleep outside. There's only one bed here," said the old man as he pointed at his stone bed.

"You're being a bit too much, don't you think...?" muttered Gerald, feeling slightly speechless.

"Were you thinking of sleeping on my bed then?" replied the old man as he raised a slight brow.

"...No, of course not..." said Gerald with a sigh. Truth be told, he didn't mind sleeping on the floor, but at the very least, he wanted to sleep someplace away from the wind and rain.

"Speaking of which, where's the general area of that island?" asked the old man who had nearly finished

eating the entire chicken on his own.

“Northbay,” replied Gerald.

“Finally, a familiar name. If I’m not mistaken, there’s an ancient book about the islands in Northbay on that bookshelf, though I’m not sure which book it is,” said the old man as he licked his fingers clean before pointing at one of the shelves.

“Oh?” replied Gerald, his eyes momentarily glinting with excitement.

“Relax, kid, get some rest after eating. You can continue once you wake up. From what I can tell, the rain should last for at least three more days, so it’s not like you can leave anytime soon,” said the old man as he took another roasted chicken out of another bag.

Chapter 2279

Watching as the old man then pushed the chicken toward him with a grin, Gerald simply nodded before saying, “I appreciate it, senior.”

Biting into a drumstick, Gerald couldn’t help but feel that it was a special treat to be able to enjoy a piece of hot and crispy fried chicken in such cold weather. Regardless, once he had his fill, Gerald sat by the fire to rest. Seeing that, the old man then got up to start looking for the book that contained information about the Northbay Sea.

After a while, Gerald couldn’t help but feel bored. Staring at the fire before him, he was suddenly reminded of the old man’s ability to conjure fire out of thin air. Since Jobson could do the same, Gerald was prompted to ask, “Say, senior? Do you know anything about ninjas?”

“No idea what they are,” replied the old man as he picked another dusty book up before starting to flip through it.

“I see... Well, back when I was in Japan, I met an elder who was capable of summoning fire out of thin air, just like you,” said Gerald.

Pausing for a moment, the old man then replied, “He’s pretty strong, then.”

“Indeed... I wonder when I’ll get to that level,” said Gerald as he looked at his palm, trying to figure out how it was done. After all, creating fire out of thin air was almost magical in nature.

“You’ll find out once you better understand the Herculean Primordial Spirit or Devotion Mirror,” replied the old man as he pointed at Gerald’s chest.

Looking at where the old man was pointing at, Gerald realized that he was pointing directly at his supposedly well hidden mirror! From the moment he had left the Grubb manor, Gerald had kept the mirror close to him at all times, fearing that he might accidentally lose it.

However, though he hadn’t mentioned it from the moment he entered the cave, the old man had apparently known about it from the very start! Fully aware that he had also been particularly careful to conceal it while changing earlier, the surprised Gerald couldn’t help but mutter, “Senior, you...”

“You’re wondering why I know you have the mirror, correct?” replied the old man with a smirk as he casually tossed the book in his hand to the top of the shelf.

Watching as Gerald nodded in response, the old man then added in a rather disdainful tone, “If I was able to detect your Herculean Primordial Spirit, what makes you think that you can hide the Devotion Mirror from me? It’s nothing special!”

The way he said it made it sound like the Grubb family’s ancestral treasure was nothing more than a common cabbage.

After pondering for a moment, Gerald then asked, “Then... Do you and the old senior I mentioned possess powers stronger than the Herculean Primordial Spirit?”

“Negative. In case you haven’t noticed, the Herculean Primordial Spirit is something all cultivators yearn for. If I had it, I’d certainly not remain stagnant at my current cultivating level. In fact, I’d probably have advanced to another legendary realm! Regardless, there’s no point talking about all this to a newbie like you,” replied the old man with a frown, making it evident that he believed that Gerald wouldn’t understand him even if he tried to explain things.

“Then... Why do I have to fully understand the power of the Herculean Primordial Spirit before I can attain a cultivation level like yours...?” asked Gerald who had constantly been fumbling throughout his path of becoming a better cultivator. With that said, since it wasn’t easy to come across someone who knew their stuff in terms of cultivation, there was no way he was going to miss this chance to learn from the old man.

Upon hearing that, the old man tossed his book away before sitting before Gerald and saying, “Alright, listen up.”

Chapter 2280

“To create fire out of thin air, you first need to create a resonance between your own power and the power of heaven and earth. With that said, you can use your essential qi to mobilize the natural elements. Know, however, that creating fire is one of the simplest things. From what I’ve heard, the great masters in ancient times were capable of overturning mountains and even making the sun and moon vanish with a simple gesture!” explained the old man with a longing gaze, knowing that that was the true limit of cultivation.

Unfortunately, a cultivator capable of that hadn’t appeared in over a thousand years. After all, not only did one need to be extremely talented, but they also needed to have great skill and luck before they could even remotely succeed in achieving such greatness.

Up on hearing that, Gerald couldn’t help but mutter, “But... isn’t making the sun and moon vanish impossible...?”

Gerald, for one, had received enough education to know that it was literally impossible to control the sun or moon. Such an action simply violated the most basic of natural laws!

Hitting Gerald on the head with a karate chop, the old man simply snapped, "Did you seriously just take me as a fool? Haven't you heard of figurative language before?!"

Watching as Gerald who was now holding onto the bump on his head groaned in pain, the old man then added, "Regardless, once you reach a certain level of cultivation, you'll be able to form a connection with the surrounding natural energy. It's been raining cats and dogs for a few days now, right?"

"Indeed..." muttered Gerald as he checked on his clothes that were now fully dried.

"Look at my palm," replied the old man as he extended his dry hand, prompting Gerald to keep a close eye on it. Watching as the old man frowned before moving his palm slightly, Gerald was soon able to feel moisture around him. As he stared on, Gerald was surprised to see more and more water droplets forming on the old man's palm. Soon enough, there was enough to form a small puddle.

As water began dripping from the old man's hand and onto the concrete floor, the stunned Gerald who hadn't witnessed such a technique before couldn't help but ask, "Is... this natural energy as well...?"

"But of course! This is merely an example of how my cultivation resonates with the surrounding natural energy. With how heavily it's been raining these past few days, I could flood this cave in a matter of seconds if I wanted! Would you like to see that?" asked the old man with a grin as he clapped his hands together.

"Please don't!" yelled Gerald, knowing that this cave was filled with his possessions. If the old man really decided to flood this place, then forget the treasures stored in here, he'd probably lose his once chance of locating Yearning Island!

"Heh. Either way, since you have the Herculean Primordial Spirit in your body, once your cultivation gets to my level, you'll be way stronger than me. Since I can mobilize the natural energy within ten

kilometers at my level, you'd probably be able to mobilize at least a hundred kilometers by then," replied the old man as he outstretched his hand toward the bookshelf and a split second later, a single book was launched from the shelf toward him!

Chapter 2281

He grabbed the book steadily and continued reading after licking his finger.

Gerald did not stay idle. Instead, he cleaned up the stone table, walked to the previous bookshelf, and started rummaging.

Meanwhile, in the Grubb family, under the instructions of the butler, the footage of the surveillance system over the recent week was checked.

“Where is Gerald?” Lucian glanced at the footage and turned around to ask the butler behind him.

“Master, Mr. Gerald has gone out this morning, saying that he is investigating something. He estimated that he would take around two to three days to come back,” said the butler.

“Where is the young man who came with him?” Lucian asked.

“In the guest room. However, this gentleman has not been in a very good mood. He didn’t eat the three meals sent to him today. He only asked for a few cups of water from the servants,” said the butler.

“Sigh. I guess the higher ups from Weston must have put pressure on him to get Lindsay out safely of Yanam. Still, with the information we have now, let alone save her, we don’t even know who abducted her and where she is.”

Lucian put his hands on the table and sighed.

“Master, should we ask for help in your name from a few families and consortia that are close to us to investigate if there have been any kidnapping cases or any strange situations recently?”

Although the butler had been working under orders, he had been thinking about how to solve this matter all the time.

“You’re right. You go and handle it in my name.”

Lucian frowned, and after thinking it over for a while, he said immediately, “Right, go and call the special forces agent over. Since Gerald is not here, let him take a look at the footage.”

“No problem.” The butler responded and left right away.

After a while, Aiden knocked on the door and came in, his face extremely gloomy. He hadn’t received any news of Lindsay over these two days, and he even suspected she had been killed.

“You’re Baker, right?” Seeing Aiden come in, Lucian asked.

“Yes.” Aiden nodded.

“Here is the footage of the manor over these seven days. I have ordered my men to look at all of them all day today. Nothing strange was found. It can almost rule out the possibility of the Grubb family being involved with Lindsay’s incident.”

Lucian pointed at the men going through the footage on the computer screen as he spoke.

“It’s not the Grubb family. Then, What should be the situation?” Aiden believed Lucian’s words. After all, when they talked about this last night, he had been present.

“We don’t know yet. I’ve just ordered the butler to ask the families and consortia in Yanam who are close to us to help investigate. I think there should be some clues.”

Lucian got up and poured a glass of water for Aiden.

“Thank you, Uncle Grubb.” Aiden took it with both hands and nodded his head to thank him.

“Don’t pressure yourself too much. If something truly happens to Lindsay and your higher-ups blame you, the Lawrence family and I will prove that you have done your best.” Seeing Aiden’s dejected face, Lucian couldn’t help but pat his shoulder and comfort him.

Aiden was just about the same age as his own youngest son.

“No. Nothing will happen to Miss Lindsay.” No one expected that after hearing Lucian’s words, Aiden’s eyes became stern immediately. Even the cup he was holding was cracked by his grip.

Chapter 2282

Lucian was a little surprised and wondered why Aiden’s reaction was so intense, but he didn’t question the latter any further.

“We all know that Lindsay will definitely not be in danger. Don’t worry!” Lucian continued.

“By the way, Patriarch Lucian, do you think it could be the work of the war department of Yanam?” Aiden dragged Lucian into a small room, closed the door, and asked in a soft voice.

“What do you mean?” Lucian frowned.

“You should know that Brother Gerald and I have had a conflict with the war department of Yanam before, right?” Aiden gulped and asked. Ever since he had woken up, this thought had been on his mind the whole day. The more he thought about it, the more he felt it was possible.

“I know. Gerald killed the high elders of the three largest families, and even the former head of the war department, Godwin Linwod, has disappeared strangely. This was also done by you guys, right?”

Lucian nodded. This matter was no longer a secret in Yanam. Everyone knew about it, but no one dared to talk about it in public.

“So, could it be that the war department held a grudge and abducted Miss Lindsay, and the Lawrence family could not have started a dispute between Weston and Yanam, so they chose to hide it from my higher ups?” Aiden continued. He had prepared to break the news when Gerald came back.

“Hmm...” Lucian’s face turned somewhat gloomy.

Aiden’s words were not entirely unreasonable. It was indeed possible for the war department to capture Lindsay. If that was really the case, it was right for Mr. Lawrence to not tell the truth.

“I’ll investigate the army!” Seeing Lucian’s reaction, Aiden was even more certain.

“Wait, don’t rush!” Lucian grabbed Aiden’s arm.

“Uncle Grubb, we cannot wait anymore. Miss Lindsay may be being tortured even at this moment. I have to save her as soon as possible to ensure her safety!” Aiden was very emotional.

“How are you going to go there?” Lucian held him tightly.

“Of course I’m going by car!” Aiden felt a little baffled.

From here to the war department of Yanam, it took at least three hours of driving. If he walked there, he would have no strength left by the time he got there.

“I’m not talking about that.”

“Although Yanam is not as strong as Weston, it is still a war department. There are countless soldiers and guns inside. With you going there alone, what other consequence would you face other than you getting killed by them? Besides, do you have a gun in your hand?”

Lucian sized Aiden up and asked slowly.

“I...” Aiden was dumbfounded. He had indeed neglected this aspect. Although he was the King of Soldier, the war department of Yanam was not weak Besides, when he had taken his leave, he had already handed over his gun and bullets. From head to toe, he didn’t even have a bayonet.

“So, although this may likely be the work of the war department, you still have to wait here at least until Gerald comes back to discuss the next step.” Seeing that Aiden had calmed down, Lucian lowered his tone slightly.

“Then, we can’t just sit here and wait. Brother Gerald said that he will come back in two to three days, but we can’t be sure.” Aiden knew what Gerald was going to do. So, two to three days was the shortest estimation, but as for how long it would take, it was not certain.

“How about this? I have a few friends in the war department. We can ask them to look into it.” Lucian didn’t know why Aiden was so impatient, but Lindsay was his niece, so he would try everything he could.

“Thank you, Uncle Grubb.” Aiden clasped his fist and bowed deeply to Lucian.

Chapter 2283

“There is no need to thank me. I am Lindsay’s uncle. You were only ordered to protect her. Talking about gratitude, I should be the one to thank you. I thank you for being so attentive. Even after your mission ended, you’re still very much concerned about Lindsay’s safety.”

Lucian grabbed Aiden’s hands. He had not seen such a sentimental young man for a long time. Although he was acquainted with some outstanding people in this industry, those were merely profit oriented men who were good at flattering people.

“Uncle Grubb, you’d better contact them quickly. I honestly feel that this was done by the war department.” Aiden continued.

“Okay, I’ll call those friends and ask them to find out what is going on in the war department. I’ll let you know if I find anything.”

“However, you must stay in the manor. Don’t rush out on a whim. With your strength alone, even if Lindsay was truly locked up there, before you can even find her, you’ll be caught.” Lucian was still a little worried, so he continued to advise Aiden.

“Don’t worry, Uncle Grubb. I will calm down.” Aiden nodded in agreement. “Then, I’ll go back first. Feel free to call me if you need anything.”

“Go ahead.” Lucian waved his hand.

Right after Aiden had left, Lucian called his friends in the war department. Instead of mentioning Lindsay, he pumped his friends for information about the war department under the pretense of chatting and catching up.

In the cave.

After a few hours of searching, the old man finally found the records about the Northbay Sea. He patted it to get the dust off and handed it to Gerald.

“This is the ancient book with records about the Northbay Sea. There should be information about that so-and-so island. If it is not even in this book, you can only go and search for the things left behind by that family. As for where it is, I truly don’t know.” The old man pounded his back and lay on the stone bed to rest.

“Thank you, Senior.” Gerald nodded in gratitude.

Ignoring the dust on it, after blowing it once, he opened the book.

It could be seen that the papers of the whole book had turned yellowish, and there were even some tears. In the book, there really were records about the Northbay Sea. However, as Gerald flipped through it, the smile on his face gradually disappeared.

Upon comparing it to the sea map, Gerald realized that the island he, Aiden, and Master Ghost had gone to was called Gong Island.

Even after reading it twice, there was still nothing about Yearning Island.

“It’s not there?” The old man leaned sideways. Seeing Gerald’s face, he could already make a guess.

“Yes.” Gerald sighed and shook his head as he put the ancient book back onto the bookshelf.

“This Yearning Island is indeed well hidden. I guess it should not be an ordinary island. Are you sure that whatever family left behind really has a way to find this island?” The old man leaned on his arm, looked

at Gerald, and asked.

“I don’t know, but right now, there is no better way other than this.” Gerald shook his head once again.

Chapter 2284

“Then, you can only continue searching here. It just so happens that I haven’t seen a single person here for decades, so you can chat with me.” The old man couldn’t help but show a smile on his face.

“Didn’t you go out and buy something just now?” Gerald glanced at the garbage he had just cleaned up.

“That’s different. If you were not here today, I would not have gone out. Before this, I would only go out once a week. If I keep staying in this stone chamber, I will turn into a psycho sooner or later.”

The old man rolled over and said, “Some years ago, there were still some people who tried to break in. I could still tease them for fun, but now, I don’t encounter those types anymore.”

“Tease them?”

Gerald raised his head and looked around the cave. Seeing the white bones on the ground, he suddenly felt a cold shiver running down his spine.

“I’m just joking.” The old man shook his head.

“By the way, did the former chief of Yanam come here before? I followed him to get here in the first place.”

Gerald suddenly thought of the previous incident and asked.

“He was just standing at the entrance. Apart from cultivators with Herculean Primordial Spirits, no one is allowed to come near this place. This is the rule set by our ancestors.” The old man rolled over again and looked at Gerald.

“It seems that I have to thank the Herculean Primordial Spirit in me, otherwise, I would have died here.” Gerald pointed at the piles of white bones and said with lingering fear.

“Not necessarily. With your ability, it’s impossible for you to barge in by force, but I wouldn’t be able to stop you either. Maybe you would have ended up with some serious injuries and run away.” The old man sized up Gerald as he responded.

“Serious injury...” Gerald felt that the old man was talking more and more boldly, so he stopped replying.

“By the way, Senior. I still have one question.” Gerald wanted to smoke. When he put his hand into his pocket, he touched the sea map and said hastily.

“Just ask” The old man said coolly.

“This sea map.” Gerald took out the sea map and walked toward the old man. “Previously, I saw the Yearning Island on this sea map, but it kept moving, and it only lasted less than a minute. Since then, I haven’t seen it anymore.”

“You want to ask me what happened and how to make it reappear, then with this map, you can confirm the exact location of the island and find a better way to get there?”

The old man took the sea map and looked at it twice before throwing it away casually.

“That’s right!” Hearing the old man say everything that was on his mind, Gerald nodded excitedly and waited quietly.

“I don’t know.” Who would have expected that the words that came out of the old man’s mouth would make Gerald feel incomparably depressed.

“I thought you would know.” Gerald retrieved the sea map and put it back safely into his pocket.

“I’m just a guardian here, not an encyclopedia. How would I know anything about those things?” The old man sat up and took out a metal box from the bedside. He took out a piece of cigarette paper and put a handful of tobacco on it. After rolling and sealing it with his saliva, he stuffed it into his mouth. “Do you have a lighter?”

“Yes.” Gerald took out his lighter and lit the cigarette for the old man. Then, he smoked one too.

“Although I don’t know anything about it, from what you’ve said, I feel that this Yearning Island is not an ordinary place. It should be very hard to locate it. I honestly don’t know how your grandfather found it in the first place.” The old man spoke as he smoked.

“If only I knew.” Gerald exhaled a puff of smoke and replied slowly.

“Let’s continue searching, then.” The old man stretched out his hand which was clutching the cigarette and pointed at the bookshelves.

Chapter 2285

Gerald walked to the front of the bookshelf and continued to search with the cigarette still in his mouth.

Meanwhile, as Gerald was still looking for the records of the Seadom tribe, far away in a secret base in the outskirts of Yanam, Lindsay had already been locked up there for three days.

She had been locked up in an almost pitch-black prison with no light, and there were only about four to five square feet of space. When she walked forward, she could feel the cold iron bars.

“Mealtime!”

An impatient and noisy voice came from the distance. Not long after that, Lindsay saw the light of a flashlight. It was with this faint light that she was able to see her surroundings.

She was indeed in a very small prison. The surroundings seemed to be of the same construction, but it seemed like she was the only one being held here. Lindsay never heard any other voice or saw anyone else sending food to the other cells.

Just as she was thinking about this, a rather old lunchbox was thrown into her cell.

“Where am I?” Lindsay gathered her courage to ask.

Not long after Aiden had sent her home, she had received an order from her father to return to Yanam once more to give Uncle Grubb a surprise, and the surprise gift was in her pocket, wrapped in an envelope. However, once she had arrived in Yanam, the moment she had gotten off the plane, she had been ambushed from the back, and her mouth had been covered with a wet towel. No matter how hard she struggled, she could not break free. When she had woken up again from the effect of the anesthesia, she was already here.

As for the envelope and other things with her, they were all gone. Only her clothes were left.

“Girl, I’m warning you not to ask, or else you might lose your life here.” A deep voice rang out.

“Are you a Westoner?” Hearing the voice, Lindsay was a little startled. “Am I in Weston or Yanam?”

“If you ask once more, your life might just be taken away.” The other party did not say much and left right away.

Lindsay called out a few times but did not get any reply. She could only helplessly look for the lunchbox in the dark and eat the mediocre food. Although it tasted rather bad, if she did not eat, she might really die here.

After drinking the water in the lunchbox and filling her stomach, Lindsay started thinking about why she was here.

No matter how much she thought about it, she could not figure out how it had happened.

Her heart was filled with anxiety and fear, and she suddenly thought of Gerald and Aiden. Although it was dangerous being by their side and they did not take care of her as the young lady of a large family, she had, nevertheless, always been safe.

Lindsay knew clearly that with either Gerald or Aiden by her side, she would not have ended up in this situation.

Now that she was locked up here, she was not even sure if she was in Weston or Yanam. She didn't even know who the other party was. The only thing she could do was stay in this small space.

After the man had delivered her meal, he went back the way he had come, up through the stairs. She got to know the reason this place was dark was because it was underground.

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A thick iron door was installed to the house and the prison, and not a beam of light could come in.

“Do you think it’s necessary to transfer all the people locked up here just because of this girl?” When he came up, a man in the uniform of the war department of Yanam asked.

These two people were the soldiers of the war department. They had been ordered to guard Lindsay. One of them was a leader of a small team of the war department, and another one was his subordinate.

“Don’t ask. This is not what we should know. Since it is a mission from the higher ups, we should just follow the order without question. Be careful not to get into trouble!” The one who had come up from the prison was the leader. Hearing his subordinate’s words, he scolded him hurriedly in a low voice.

“There are only two of us here. Besides, I am just whining to you, Leader. How can I say this to other people?” Being stuck here for two days, the subordinate felt rather bored.

Apart from the man who sent food and drinks on time every morning by car, he would not see anyone else the whole day, and not even a sound could be heard.

“Anyway, you should not talk nonsense. From what I know, this is a very important matter. What we are doing now is a secret mission for the war department. If you are not afraid to die, you can keep on mentioning this. If you get into trouble, don’t involve me.”

The captain apparently did not dare to say much. After saying that, he stopped.

The subordinate did not want to make a fool of himself, so he stopped talking.

Unexpectedly, just after their conversation, a car stopped outside.

“Remember, don’t say a word. You might want to die, but I don’t!” The captain reminded him in a soft voice before running to open the door.

“I know.” The subordinate nodded and cleaned up the table quickly.

Before the captain could open the door, the door was pushed open, and a middle aged man with a senior arm badge of the Yanam war department came in. Behind him, there were four armed soldiers.

“Is there anything?” Once the middle aged man came in, he asked.

“No. Ever since she was locked up, she has been staying in the cell obediently. When I bring her food, I talk to her in the Weston language as instructed. She is probably wondering if she is in Yanam or Weston now.” The captain stood straight and replied.

“Good. When this is over, I will give you all a promotion in rank!” The middle aged man patted him on the shoulder in satisfaction.

This middle aged man was none other than the man who had reported to Carter Lucab about Gerald’s arrival in Yanam and the person in charge who wanted to send the fleet to get rid of them. Since he felt that Carter Lucab had not done anything after becoming the chief, he had decided to secretly handle it himself. By the time he had gotten everything done, he would then take Carter’s place and become the new chief. Besides, he believed that after he had confessed everything he had done, the whole war department would support him.

“Thank you, Sir!” said the captain and his subordinate in chorus.

“I came here today not just to check the situation, but also to tell you that from today onward, there will not just be the two of you here. I will send a small armed team here every day.” The middle-aged man paused momentarily as he spoke.

“Is there any danger?” Hearing this, the two immediately felt a bit scared and asked hurriedly.

“Not for now.” The middle aged man denied.

Actually, the reason for his action was very simple. When he had abducted Lindsay after Gerald’s departure from Yanam, he had already sent his men to keep watch on the Lawrence family. The moment Lindsay had left, they had followed her and carried out the abduction when she had arrived at Yanam.

He did that because he wanted to use Lindsay to make Gerald return so that he could make him fall into the traps that he had prepared in advance.

Chapter 2287

As long as he could kill Gerald, he would be able to establish his position in the war department.

Still, he didn’t expect that Gerald would actually come back, and when he suggested this to Carter, his suggestion had been firmly rejected. If they had followed his suggestion, Gerald would have died at sea by now.

But now, they had let Gerald enter Yanam. He remembered clearly what had happened the last time Gerald had come, so he was worried that Gerald would find this place. After all, the impact Gerald had given him the last time was too strong. He had to be well prepared.

“We are not afraid of any danger!” The captain simply did not care about what he was saying and bit the bullet as he agreed to it.

“You can go out and prepare. Do it fast.” The middle aged man nodded and waved his hand at the people outside.

“Yes!” Unexpectedly, apart from the few standing at the door, a dozen men from outside also replied in unison.

“What is this?” The captain asked carefully.

“I am setting up traps around this place. You two don’t have to go out for the time being. I will send you food and water daily,” said the middle aged man.

“Understood!” The captain replied quickly.

“Is she inside?” The middle aged man pointed at the iron door.

“Yes,” said the captain.

“Bring me to her.” The middle-aged man walked toward the iron door.

The captain took a few steps quickly and walked in front of the middle aged man to open the iron door. Then, he illuminated the path with a flashlight. Walking along the long path, they finally came to the cell where Lindsay was being held.

“Lindsay Lawrence.” Looking at the woman in the cell, the middle aged man revealed a smile on his face. This was the bargaining chip he was going to use to threaten Gerald. He knew that as long as Lindsay was in his hand, Gerald would step into his trap sooner or later.

“Who are you?” Seeing the light from the flashlight, Lindsay stood up and asked.

“You don’t have to know who I am. You just have to know that as long as you stay here obediently, you

will be doing me a great favor. However, if you think of doing something else, I will kill you without hesitation.”

The middle aged man walked forward and talked to Lindsay from across the iron bars.

“You are from the war department of Yanam, right?” Lindsay stared at the man, and when the flashlight swayed, she saw the arm badge on his arm.

“That’s right. I am indeed from the war department of Yanam. But what can you do even if you know about this? Can you send a message out from here? Don’t forget that all your belongings have been confiscated. You can only shout.”

The middle aged man laughed loudly.

“Okay, then. I will just stay here.” After knowing his identity, Lindsay understood that it was no use for her to say anything. She turned around and sat down in the innermost part of the cell.

“Keep a firm eye on her. If anything happens to her, I will take your lives, understand?” After talking to Lindsay, the middle aged man turned to the captain and spoke in a low voice.

Chapter 2288

“What exactly is her identity?” The captain looked at the skinny girl in the cell and asked curiously.

Many people had been held in this secret prison, but no one had been treated so seriously before to the extent that they had to set traps outside.

“Do you know that there are things you should not ask?” The middle aged man glared at him and scolded him in a low voice.

The captain shuddered and did not dare to say anything anymore.

“Miss Lawrence, we will meet again. But when it happens, it will not be in this place.” The middle aged man looked at Lindsay. After saying this, he turned around and left.

Lindsay stood in the cell. She had roughly figured out the situation. She was most probably bait to attract his target, and the target should be Gerald, who had made trouble in the war department of Yanam before.

Other than that, Lindsay really couldn't think of a reason for the war department of Yanam to abduct her.

In the Grubb family.

Lucian received news from the war department.

“Are you serious? Where did he go?” After receiving the news, Lucian returned to his room immediately and asked in a low voice into the phone.

“I don't know. I just saw him leave with quite a few men. He seemed very nervous and cautious. Besides, when Gerald came to Yanam previously, he once proposed to make a move at sea, but Carter rejected his proposal.”

“Maddox Chabert has been very complicit and aggressive ever since Godwin Linwod was in power. Now that he has an unthinking chief like Carter Lucab, he should not be able to resist his loneliness.” Hearing his words, Lucian said.

“Yes. After Carter became the chief, Maddox has done a lot of things both openly and secretly. He has

the intention of replacing the chief. Miss Lawrence from Weston is most probably part of his plan,” said the person on the other end of the phone.

“Okay. Continue to keep an eye on it. Call me whenever there is news. If you can find out what Maddox is trying to do, that would be best!” Lucian nodded.

“I’ll try my best. Maddox is a very cautious person. It’s very difficult to follow or pry him, but I’ll see what I can do.” The person sounded a bit uneasy, but he still agreed to it.

“Sorry to trouble you. I will thank you properly the next time we meet.” Lucian was very grateful for his help.

“We’ll talk about that later. Don’t call me for the time being. When I get any clues, I will contact you,” said the man.

“No problem,” replied Lucian.

Hearing this, he directly hung up his phone.

Sitting in his room, Lucian drank his tea and began mulling over the phone conversation he had just had with that man. He was an office director in the war department, so his rank was considered not very high. Still, that was not to say that his rank was low. He would still be considered part of the upper level.

When Lucian had come to Yanam decades ago, he had gotten to know him coincidentally. It was with his help that Lucian could establish his position in Yanam. Although they had not contacted each other over several years, they were still very good friends.

This time, when Lucian asked him for help, he agreed to it right away.

“What did he say?” The butler stood beside him. When he saw Lucian hang up the call, he asked.

“Aiden’s speculation should be right. Lindsay’s disappearance really seems to have some connection with the war department, and it is very likely that Maddox is the one responsible for it.”

Lucian lit a cigarette and spoke slowly.

Chapter 2289

“Maddox Chabert? Isn’t he the person in charge of the sea? How can he be related to this matter?” The butler was confused.

“You don’t know that when Gerald returned to Yanam, the war department knew about it at once. Maddox planned to directly exterminate Gerald at sea, but Carter refused it firmly. If Lindsay’s disappearance truly has something to do with him, he should be planning to use her to threaten Gerald.”

“In that case, Brother Lawrence should not know about this. Or, if he knows a little, he is unlikely to say it directly. After all, it’s the war department who is responsible. If he reports it, it will inevitably make things even bigger.”

Lucian smoked his cigarette as he analyzed things. “Then, we cannot just stand by and watch. Master, I think I should remind you of this. Although our family has a high position in Yanam, we cannot fall out with the war department because of Lindsay. That would be very bad for us.”

The butler was worried that Lucian might not consider this for the sake of his relationship with the Lawrence family. No matter how strong a family was, it was impossible for them to fight against the war department head on. It would be like hitting a stone

With an egg.

“Of course I know.” Lucian rolled his eyes.

"Then, what do you mean?" The butler continued.

"Nothing in particular. I will just let him continue keeping an eye on the war department and Maddox Chabert. As for the rest, we will wait for Gerald to return and discuss it with him before making a decision." Lucian exhaled a puff of smoke and said coolly.

"This is indeed the best way." The butler nodded in agreement.

"By the way, has there been any news about Frey?" Lucian raised his head and asked.

"Still nothing, Master. I suspect that the young master has already been killed..." The butler sighed and shook his head. "We've done everything we could, but..."

"Enough. Don't say it." Not waiting for the butler to finish his words, Lucian waved his hand.

He knew what it meant, but he was not willing to believe it. He was such an outstanding adopted son. How could he disappear overnight without even leaving a single clue?!

"Do you want to continue the investigation?" The butler paused and asked.

"Sigh. Let's stop for now until after we settle the matter at hand." Lucian let out a long sigh. When he said that, he felt as though his aura had diminished. He did not look like the head of a family at all. In fact, he looked more like an old man in the latter years of his life.

"Understood." The butler nodded and stopped talking.

In the cave. Gerald was still searching for the secrets of the Seadom tribe kept here.

One whole day passed by in the blink of an eye. Although there was light coming in from the entrance of the cave, due to the heavy rain, the sky was dark. If he didn't check his phone, he wouldn't know if it was day or night.

The only sounds that could be heard vaguely were the sounds of the pouring rain and the occasional thunder.

"Not bad. You've searched one entire bookshelf in a day. I bet you will be able to find it in a week."

The old man spent most of his time sitting cross legged on the stone bed, leaning against the wall as he looked at Gerald.

"Don't make fun of me, Senior. Please help me out. I still have other matters to take care of, and I'm running out of time." Gerald smiled bitterly. He rubbed his somewhat sore hand and spoke.

Chapter 2290

"Look for it yourself. I am already so old. My physical strength has long been exhausted." The old man shook his head and lit a cigarette.

"Who would believe that?" Gerald said disdainfully.

"I can't help you search for it, but if you are interested, I can teach you how to make your essential qi resonate with the surrounding natural energy." The old man shook his head.

"Really?" The moment he heard that, Gerald's eyes shone immediately. However, after a while, he shook his head and refused. "Forget it. I'll just continue to look for what I need."

“Oh? Are you not interested?” The old man did not expect that Gerald would say that.

“I’m very interested in it.” Gerald shook his head again.

“Become my apprentice, and I can teach you.” The old man threw away the cigarette and said seriously.

“If it were any other time, I would surely agree to it immediately. But now, I still have many things to settle. Besides, controlling natural energy is certainly not something that can be learned overnight. I don’t have that much time to waste here.”

Gerald took a deep breath and said with some regret, “Besides, you told me before this that my current cultivating level is very low, and I have not mastered the power of the Herculean Primordial Spirit completely. Even if I wanted to learn, I am afraid I can only learn the basics.”

“I didn’t expect that you are still quite self aware.” The old man nodded in satisfaction.

“Senior, after I settle all my matters, I will definitely come back here and study under you. By then, it won’t be a problem for me to become your apprentice,” Gerald said as he continued to pick up the dusty books on the bookshelf and rummage through them.

“Can you tell me what other troublesome things you have to solve?” The old man crossed his legs and posed as if he was listening to a story.

“A friend of mine has strangely disappeared in Yanam. I have to save her.” Since the old man could even know about his Herculean Primordial Spirit and Devotion Mirror, Gerald thought that there was nothing to hide. Besides, it was probably a very small matter to him.

“Okay. Tell me where she is and how she looks. I can bring her back in half a day.” Sure enough, the old

man did not take it seriously at all.

“She disappeared strangely. If I knew where she was, I would have solved it already.” Gerald shook his head helplessly.

“So, she disappeared.”

“Why do you keep encountering such bizarre things?” The old man cocked his eyebrows and laughed hoarsely.

“If I knew that, I might not have encountered all this trouble.” Gerald randomly grabbed a book and flipped through it. However, before he could finish his words, his pupils dilated.

On the page he had turned to, the words ‘The Records of the Seadom Tribe’ were written clearly on it. Although it was written in the ancient script of the tribe, Gerald could still recognize them somehow. After all, he had seen many such scripts in the secret room of the Futaba family.

“Found it?” Seeing Gerald’s surprising reaction, the old man rolled out of the bed and asked as he rushed forward.

“This should be the one.” Gerald’s hands were shaking in excitement.-

Chapter 2291-2295

Chapter 2291

After taking a deep breath, Gerald slowly began flipping through the pages, making sure to be particularly gentle for fear that the thousand year old book would accidentally turn to dust.

To his dismay, however, he couldn’t understand what was written in it at all! At most, he was able to gather based on the crude sketches on a few of the pages that the book was detailing some sort of

sacrificial ritual, not unlike what he had seen on the sea map back then.

Carefully and slightly excitedly carrying the book over to the old man, Gerald was prompted to ask, "Can you read this, senior?"

Raising a slight brow, he then gave the book a look before eventually shaking his head as he said, "Unfortunately, I can't. However, based on the sketch, I'm assuming they're attempting to summon rain."

"What? Isn't this a sacrificial ritual?" replied Gerald.

"Whatever it is, it doesn't matter. After all, though you've finally managed to find the book, you can't make heads or tails of it! It's no different from a brick!" said the old man before laughing aloud. To think that after all that effort, it was ultimately just a waste of time.

Chuckling in response, Gerald then replied, "While I can't read it, there's someone who may just be able to..."

"Oh? Who?"

"A good friend of mine... Regardless, I'm saying this since after getting to know the descendants of the Seadom tribe, we were given access to a secret room that contained several books in an unknown language. However, this friend of mine seemed to be able to read them just fine," replied Gerald as he thought about Master Ghost.

"I see... Perhaps he'll be the key to cracking this code," said the old man with a nod.

"Indeed... Either way, I'll be taking my leave. I'll definitely come back to visit when I have the time,

senior!” replied Gerald as he carefully slipped the ancient book into his coat pocket. After placing his hands together and bowing in respect, Gerald then turned to leave.

“Hmm? You’re leaving already?” asked the old man, looking slightly surprised.

“Yeah! Don’t worry, I’ll definitely return to visit once I’m free!” declared Gerald rather enthusiastically.

“Aren’t you at least going to change back into your original clothes? They’re completely dry now!” replied the old man.

“Just leave them there for now! I’ll switch clothes again the next time I return!” yelled Gerald who was now so far away that even all his shouting sounded faint.

“How impatient can that boy get...?” muttered the old man to himself as Gerald disappeared in the distance.

Shaking his head with a chuckle, he then turned to look at the piles of books scattered all over the place before walking toward them to start tidying up.

The truth was, he had read nearly every book in here throughout his stay, which meant that he had no actual issues with understanding the language of the Seadom tribe. With that said, he had only lied to Gerald about not understanding since he wanted the boy to stay for another day or two.

Still, to think that Gerald would actually know someone capable of reading the Seadom tribe’s language! The boy was also lucky that he had managed to find the exact book he needed in a single day.

Clapping the dust off his hands once he was done rearranging all the books back on the bookshelf, the old man then muttered, “Return when you’re free? I’ll be lucky if you still remember me after ten years! Then again, I’ll probably be dead by then...”

Shaking his head, he then waved his hand causing a large shale to cover the cave's entrance before sitting cross legged on his bed. Closing his eyes, the old man then entered a cultivating state.

While it was still raining outside, it was much lighter than before. Understanding that, Gerald made a mad dash till he got to his car. Ignoring how drenched he was and how muddy his shoes were, Gerald immediately took his coat off the second he got into the car to check on the book. Thank heavens it had remained dry.

Leaning against his seat, Gerald couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief as he said, "Alright... I've finally found it..."

Once he had caught his breath, Gerald began driving out of the forest to return to the Grubb manor. On his way there, he made sure to send a text message to Master Ghost, telling him to bring Jobson and Fujiko to the Grubb manor as well. There was something important that he needed to attend to.

Chapter 2292

Though he had accelerated the entire way, it still took Gerald four whole hours to get from the forest to the Grubb manor. Regardless, upon Gerald's arrival at the manor at about nine that night, his return was quickly notified to Lucian who upon learning that instantly urged Aiden to head to the reception room. Lucian himself then jogged out the manor together with his butler to greet the youth.

Upon seeing them, Gerald nodded before asking, "Good evening, Mr. Grubb. Have my friends arrived?"

"... Friends?" replied Lucian in a confused tone as he led Gerald to the reception room.

"I guess they haven't. Either way, do prepare three guestrooms for them since they may need to stay for quite a while. Don't worry, we'll all leave once we've rescued Miss Lawrence," said Gerald as he estimated how long it would take for Master Ghost and the others to come over.

Just as he figured that they'd be here by the hour, Lucian who finally realized how drenched Gerald was hurriedly replied, "No problem, but before that, do get a change of clothes! You're soaked from head to toe!"

Simply nodding in response, Gerald then followed the butler to another room to get himself changed. Taking the opportunity to get a cold shower as well, Gerald returned about ten minutes later, looking fully refreshed.

Seeing Gerald, Lucian was prompted to ask, "So... Did things go smoothly, whatever you were doing?"

"They did, indeed," replied Gerald with a nod.

"Glad to hear. Regardless, while you were gone, we think we've managed to find the person responsible for kidnapping Lindsay!" declared Lucian with a smile.

"Go on..."

After exchanging glances with his butler, Lucian then said, "We believe that Maddox Chabert is the culprit!"

"Never heard of him before," replied Gerald after thinking for a while.

"While you may not know him, he definitely knows you," said Lucian.

"... Hmm? Havel offended him before?" replied Gerald, understanding just how many enemies he must have accidentally made throughout the years.

“You could put it that way. You see, Maddox is from the Yanam military, and he’s the one in charge of Yanam’s seas. From what I’ve been told, Maddox’s first reaction upon hearing that you had returned to Yanam was to propose to Carter to have your life ended while you were still out at sea. Since that didn’t happen, it’s fair to assume that Carter denied that,” replied the butler.

“So you’re saying that he’s captured Lindsay to threaten me?” asked Gerald as he thought about it.

“I believe so. I know a few people from the military, and after asking around, it appears that Maddox has rarely appeared at work in the past few days. For those who managed to catch glimpses of him, they stated that aside from him looking immensely vigilant, Maddox had apparently gotten ten replacement soldiers to follow him at all times as well. What more, some also said that he had taken a few items from the military’s equipment department!” explained Lucian.

“... It doesn’t add up,” replied Gerald after thinking about all that he had just heard.

“What do you mean?” asked Aiden who had been silent the entire time.

“Well, if Maddox kidnapped her to threaten me after Carter rejected his proposal, I find the timing for that to be a bit off. How long has Lindsay gone missing again, Aiden?” replied Gerald as he turned to look at Aiden.

“About a week ago. While we immediately took action after I got the mission, my superiors had actually received the request from the Lawrences a few days prior,” said Aiden.

“Bingo. But we’ve only been here for three days,” replied Gerald.

Chapter 2293

“... Are you saying that Maddox’s actions simply coincided with your return? As in, he kidnapped Lindsay to lure you back and finally deal with you, not knowing that you were planning to return anyway...?” said Lucian as he tapped on his desk

"It's certainly a possibility," replied Gerald.

"Indeed... Regardless, I've already told my friend to keep an eye out on Maddox. With that said, he'll definitely notify me the second Maddox does anything weird. With any luck, we'll soon get the opportunity to tail Maddox and hopefully be able to save Lindsay. So, what do you think, Gerald? Any better suggestions?" asked Lucian.

"Not at all. I'm fine with that plan," replied Gerald with a nod, knowing that going with Lucian's plan was probably their best bet of saving Lindsay, at least for the moment

The second his sentence ended, one of Lucian's servants entered the room with a dripping umbrella in hand before saying, "There are a few people claiming to be Gerald's friends at the door, master."

"How many are there?" asked Gerald.

Upon hearing that, the servant went silent for a moment before eventually replying, "Three, I presume. Unfortunately, it was a bit too dark for me to say for certain..."

Nodding in response, Gerald then said, "Invite them in."

Though Lucian knew that Gerald wouldn't just invite anyone random to his house, he couldn't help but ask, "... Care sharing who those individuals are...?"

"Of course. One of them is a good friend, and the other is the young lady of Japan's Futaba family. As for the third person, he's an elder from another Japanese family. In case you're worried about their trustworthiness, I know all of them well, Mr. Grubb,"

Explained Gerald.

“Glad to hear,” replied Lucian as he noted down everything that Gerald had just told him.

Shortly after, Jobson’s voice could be heard saying, “I’ve heard that the Grubbs are quite influential in Yanam. To think that you were acquainted with such a great family!”

Upon realizing that Jobson, Fujiko, and Master Ghost who were being led into the reception room by the servant from before were here, Gerald immediately got to his feet before greeting, “Senior Jobson!”

Seeing that, Lucian quickly got up as well, understanding that Jobson was no ordinary person since even Gerald respected him.

As the butler immediately began serving the three new faces some hot tea, Jobson walked over to Lucian before placing his hands together and saying, “Ah, you must be Mr. Grubb! I’ve heard quite a bit about you!”

Before Lucian could reply, Gerald could be seen gesturing toward the seat beside him as he said, “Whatever the case is, do take a seat first, sir. After all, I’m sure the journey here was long and tiring.”

Hearing that, Jobson then nodded as he, Master Ghost, and Fujiko took their seats. Once seated, Jobson was prompted to ask, “So... I’m assuming you’ve found a way to save that missing girl?”

“We have, though it’ll probably be a while before we manage to get any results,” replied Gerald as he poured more tea for Jobson.

Having a feeling that Gerald still wanted to talk about other things with them, Lucian then cleared his throat as he said, “Regardless, it’s getting rather late so I’ll be excusing myself first. Also, your rooms have already been prepared, so once you’re all ready to turn in, just tell the servant who led you in to bring you there.”

Following that, Lucian gave his butler a brief glance, and the two then began leaving the room with umbrellas in hand.

“Thanks for having us, Mr. Grubb!” called out Jobson just seconds before Gerald closed the reception room’s door behind them.

Once the two were gone, Jobson’s smile instantly vanished as he whispered, “So... Since you called all of us here, I’m assuming you’ve made progress in our main mission?”

Chapter 2294

“I have indeed,” replied Gerald with a nod as he placed the ancient book that he had guarded carefully up till this point onto the table.

Frowning slightly, Jobson then asked, “... And this is?”

As the others got closer to the book as well, Gerald carefully opened it before pointing at the squiggly, worm like words as he said, “I found this in the ancient ruins, and I believe that it contains the Seadom tribe’s knowledge on how to get to Yearning Island.”

“This belongs to my family...?” muttered Fujiko as she curiously looked at it.

“It should be. Though I can’t read the language, the words look similar enough to the ones in the books in your family’s secret room back in the Futaba manor,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Well, your assumption was right on the mark!” said Master Ghost after getting a good look at the book.

Chuckling in response, Gerald then playfully jabbed at Master Ghost’s arm before replying, “I knew you could read it! Hurry and see if there’s any information regarding how to get to Yearning Island!”

Immediately feeling pressured by Gerald's words, Master Ghost immediately said, "Just to clarify, I only learned a little about the Seadom tribe from my master. With that said, I'm no expert in the language, so don't expect my translation to be perfect..."

Patting his back, Gerald simply replied, "Just do your best!"

Nodding in response, Master Ghost then took a deep breath before picking the book up and attempting to translate it. Upon seeing that, everyone instantly went quiet, not wanting to affect his concentration.

Fast forward to half an hour later, Master Ghost made it past the fifth page before rubbing his slightly sore eyes as he said, "So... From what I was able to gather, the very start of the book details how to conduct one of the Seadom tribe's sacrificial rituals... With that said, I believe the parts about getting to Yearning Island should come much later on..."

Watching as Master Ghost then took a sip of his tea that had already gone cold, Gerald replied, "That's great progress! Don't worry, you're doing good. Take your time..."

Following that, Master Ghost resumed reading. However, once he got to the later parts of the book, his frown started getting deeper and deeper. As he had said, he was no expert in the language, and it certainly didn't help that most of the words were near indistinguishable since the book had been in that damp cave for so long.

Eventually, however, Master Ghost finally said, "... Alright, so apparently, the Seadom tribe had to leave Yearning Island about a thousand and two hundred years ago due to the arrival of a group of people who suddenly took over their home... Since the invaders had mastered the elements of water and fire, the Seadom tribe had no choice but to leave..."

"The invaders are most likely cultivators of old..." replied Gerald as he thought about Jobson and the old man's ability to bend natural forces to their wills.

Regardless, upon hearing Master Ghost's groan after he resumed reading for a while, Gerald who had a bad feeling about that was prompted to ask, "... Is something the matter?"

"Well... According to the book, Yearning Island is a magical place that was formed by the essence of heaven and earth. With that in mind, to prevent others from easily locating it, the Seadom tribe had placed the sole method to get to Yearning Island on the island that they moved to after being kicked out of their home. In other words, you'll have to find the island that the Seadom tribe moved to in order to even remotely get a chance to get to Yearning Island..." muttered Master Ghost as he looked at Gerald.

Chapter 2295

"C-come again...? Are you sure you didn't mistranslate...?" replied Gerald as his expression stiffened.

"Unfortunately, while I may mistranslate a word or two, I doubt that I'd get an entire section wrong..." muttered Master Ghost with a sigh, knowing that his translation was probably right on the mark.

Upon hearing that, Gerald flopped onto his chair, feeling immensely drained.

"G-Gerald?!" called out Aiden as he rushed to Gerald's side.

"I'm fine, I just... need a moment..." muttered Gerald as he closed his eyes while waving his hand. This was simply too much, even for him.

After all, every clue he got only seemed to lead him further down the rabbit hole. While he had initially thought that he'd be able to get to the island by locating the Seadom tribe, that only ended up leading him to the ancient ruins of Yanam in search of his answer. Despite all his efforts to obtain this book, however, he now apparently had to search for yet another island.

It certainly didn't help that he'd probably need to scour through that entire island to even remotely stand a chance of finding a way to get to Yearning Island. All these repeated let downs were starting to take a serious toll on his morale.

Truth be told, he was now most worried that he'd fail to get to Yearning Island even after finding the island that the Seadom tribe had relocated to. How much longer did he need to wait in order to reunite with his family...?

Looking at the disheartened boy, Jobson cleared his throat as he got to his feet before saying, "Well, I'm feeling rather sleepy, so I'll leave you young people to talk among yourselves."

Realizing that Jobson was leaving, Fujiko gave Aiden a look before whispering, "You said you were sleepy earlier, right? Let's head back to our rooms together. It's dark outside, so I'm a little unsettled to go out there alone..."

"I'm not sleepy... I'm staying here with Gerald," replied Aiden who failed to get her hint.

"Oh, for heaven's sake...! Just come along... !" grumbled Fujiko as she glanced at the exhausted looking Gerald.

"Fine..." muttered Aiden. Though he still didn't get the message, he still obediently followed her out and with that, the only people left in the room were Gerald and Master Ghost.

A short while later, Master Ghost took a cigarette out before handing it to Gerald and saying, "Care to have one?"

Taking in a deep breath now feeling much calmer than before, Gerald then frowned slightly before asking, "Are you sure you translated it correctly?"

"Most of it, yes. So, what's our next step? From what I can gather, the island mentioned by the book should be the one we had previously seen in the corner of the sea map. The one where we saw the Seadom tribe performing the sacrificial ritual," replied Master Ghost who was just relieved that Gerald

was talking again.

“What else can I do? All we can do is try locating that island next...” muttered Gerald with a tired smile.

“It won’t be easy to locate that island,” replied Master Ghost as he began smoking.

“I know... I plan to head to the ancient ruins again to see if that old man will be able to help. After all, he was the one who had located this book for me in the first place,” said Gerald as he thought about the old man.

“Are you heading out already?” asked Master Ghost.

“No, I’ll do that after we save Lindsay. After all, I can’t just postpone things now that we finally have more clues on her case,” replied Gerald as he shook his head.-

Chapter 2296-2300

Chapter 2296

“Got it,” replied Master Ghost with a nod.

“Either way, let’s put this incident aside for the moment. I’ll need some time to consider how to resolve the issue,” said Gerald as he puffed on his cigarette as well, now completely calm.

Truth be told, he simply couldn’t figure out how Daryl had led the entire Crawford family to Yearning Island. After all, it was extremely difficult to even locate and get to the place!

He already had everything needed to get to that island, right? Could the past Daryl have taken the same approach as him to locate Yearning Island...? But if that was the case, then Takuya would’ve surely told him about it. What more, the Futaba’s would’ve surely recorded such a major incident, but since Takuya had been so bewildered when Gerald first mentioned the topic, Gerald was sure that the record didn’t

exist.

Regardless, after giving a nod, Master Ghost pointed at the ancient book before replying, "Can I keep that for a while?"

"What do you intend to do?" asked Gerald.

"I'd like to look through it whenever I have the time. While the possibility is low, there's always a chance that I missed something out," replied Master Ghost.

"I see... Feel free to take it, then, but keep it safe. I still need to return it to the ancient ruins," said Gerald with a nod. While the book was useless in his hands, the same didn't apply when Master Ghost had it.

Watching as Master Ghost then carefully kept the book, Gerald was prompted to stub out his cigarette before getting to his feet with a stretch and saying, "Well, do get some rest for now. We'll be saving Lindsay first before resuming our main mission..."

After thinking things through, Gerald realized that he wasn't all that devastated. After all, he already knew that it wasn't going to be easy to save his family. This failure only solidified that the journey was going to be a complicated and dangerous one.

He hadn't obtained any new information about the Sun League either, though Gerald was pretty sure that he would only get the slightest chance of learning a thing about them once he got rid of the Crawfords. While achieving that would surely be no piece of cake, Gerald had made up his mind. He wasn't stopping till he got to his goal.

Either way, upon returning to his room and getting a cold shower, Gerald was able to put those thoughts away just in time for him to turn in for the night.

Fast forward to the next morning, Gerald was determined not to talk about the incident again. With that in mind, he immediately went off to look for Lucian and the others to discuss how they were going to get more news from the military.

“Really?!” exclaimed Aiden once they were all gathered with excitement after hearing Lucian’s good news.

“Indeed! Remember that friend of mine? He was able to eavesdrop on a conversation between Maddox and his subordinates!” replied Lucian with a nod.

“He must not have wanted to attract unnecessary attention. After all, he did do all this at night, which is rather suspicious, to say the least...” muttered Gerald though he knew better than to slander them without any evidence. Still, after obtaining all this information, it was getting clearer and clearer that those from the Yanam military especially Maddox were involved in this affair.

“Truly so... Regardless, since my friend didn’t follow him not wanting to accidentally expose himself and get into trouble with the military, we don’t exactly know where he went...” said Lucian.

Chapter 2297

Upon hearing that, Gerald quickly replied, “No worries there. Aiden and I will just head over to have a look.”

“Agreed!” added Aiden who would’ve requested to do so even if Gerald hadn’t wanted him to come along in the first place.

Hearing that, Fujiko then said, “I’m coming along too!”

“Just stay here. Don’t worry, I’ll definitely ask for your help in the future when I need it,” replied Gerald as he shook his head.

“But... I’m stronger than Aiden!” muttered Fujiko, feeling slightly puzzled.

“Take into consideration that we’ll be making our move at night. With that said, it’d be slightly inappropriate for you to be with two men in the dark. Besides, we won’t know where Maddox will go, so I’d prefer if only Aiden came along with me,” replied Gerald.

Hearing how resolute he was, Fujiko had no choice but to obey. After all, she remembered promising him that she’d listen to all his orders as long as he allowed her to follow him to Yanam back then. With that said, she’d rather listen than to potentially get sent back to Japan.

Regardless, pleased to hear that Gerald and Aiden were stepping in, Lucian who knew how powerful Gerald was then said, “I’ll be notifying my friend about this so that they can cooperate with you once you’re there, then!”

If they truly managed to locate Lindsay, then they’d surely be able to bring her back by dawn.

“Unnecessary. Aiden and I will just wait at the entrance of the military base. Speaking of which, I need to know what he looks like,” replied Gerald who’d rather not trouble others if he could do it himself.

“Hold on, let me find a picture of him,” said Lucian as he fished his phone out. After scrolling through several pictures, he finally managed to find the group photograph that had been taken during an event that had Maddox in it.

Showing it to Gerald, the youth then took a careful look at it before replying, “Alright, I’ve memorized his face.”

“Glad to hear. Either way, though you’re heading over at night, do be careful. Remember, since Maddox was trying to lure you over in the first place, he probably has all sorts of preparations to deal with you

should you appear!” muttered Lucian after lowering his phone in a slightly worried tone.

“No worries, dealing with such people is a piece of cake for me,” replied Gerald with a hearty laugh before patting his chest.

“Well, I’m sure the mission will go swimmingly then! Either way, since you’re making a move tonight, we may as well eat early so that you can rest a bit after the meal.”

Seeing that it was two in the afternoon, Lucian turned to face his butler before adding, “Order the chefs to prepare some food.”

“Right away, master,” replied the butler with a nod before hurrying out. About half an hour later, a multitude of dishes were served.

Throughout their meal, Lucian made sure to tell Gerald everything he knew about Maddox and the military in general. Naturally, Gerald made sure to note everything down. Once their meal was over, instead of heading back to their rooms to rest, all of them simply sat around in the reception room. It was when dusk began to fall when Gerald patted Aiden on the shoulder, prompting the duo to leave the reception room.

After they had left for a while, Lucian looked at his butler before saying, “Have some of our men follow them from a distance. While the priority is to keep both of them safe, should danger befall the duo, tell our men not to do anything rash. Instead, they have to report to me.”

While he was confident in Gerald’s strength, Lucian knew that Maddox was no ordinary person. With that in mind, Lucian was sure that the man had set several traps up for Gerald, and he was simply worried that Gerald would end up falling into one of them.

Chapter 2298

“Right away!” declared the butler with a nod. Soon enough, eight of the family’s stronger men began tailing after Aiden and Gerald.

Throughout the duo's drive toward the Yanam military base, Aiden kept his fists clenched, clearly worried about Lindsay's safety. After all, who knew whether Maddox and his men would do anything inappropriate to her.

Sensing how tense Aiden was, Gerald smiled subtly before saying, "Calm yourself. Remember, our main goal today is to get a firm grasp of the situation. While it's best if we manage to find Lindsay as well, there's no need to be overly anxious if we can't find her yet."

Hearing that, Aiden then took a deep breath as he replied, "Got it."

"Good. Also, even if we do come across Lindsay, I need you to remain calm and listen to my commands. After all, not only are we still dealing with Yanam soldiers, but there's also a good chance that Maddox has already set up traps for us. With that said, if you behave rashly, there's a good chance that we'll quickly be overwhelmed. By that point, even if we do manage to escape, our next attempt to save Lindsay will surely be exponentially difficult to achieve," said Gerald, knowing full well that Aiden was prone to behaving rashly. It certainly didn't help that there were already a few instances where Aiden had nearly ruined his plans.

"Got it!" replied Aiden with a nod. Pleased to hear that, Gerald then began accelerating to the military base, sending water on the drenched road flying all over the place.

Sometime later, Gerald through his rearview mirror noticed several cars following them. Though it was still raining rather heavily, he was able to make out that those cars belonged to the Grubbs.

Shortly after, Aiden couldn't help but say, "... Have you noticed those cars? They've been following us for a while..."

Though Aiden was generally playful, in the end, he was still a special forces soldier of Weston. With that in mind, it made sense why he was eventually able to notice the same thing as Gerald.

Hearing that, Gerald then looked at the cars one more time before calmly replying, "They're cars owned by the Grubbs."

"... Huh? But why are they tailing us?" muttered Aiden, unable to see the connection.

"Perhaps Lucian sent them over as backup, fearing that we'd get into trouble. Either way, just ignore them. Their presence won't affect us," replied Gerald who didn't take them seriously at all.

After all, it's not like they were capable of helping. Hell, they could potentially end up burdening him! Still, he didn't want to tell them to leave since Lucian had probably sent them over out of kindness. Whatever the case was, it was going to take them at least three hours to get to the military base.

It was around then when Maddox could be seen preparing to send a group of soldiers out to continue setting up traps near the area where Lindsay was locked up. If everything went swimmingly, then once everything was set up, he would release the news so that Gerald would learn where Lindsay was. Following that, Gerald would surely come rescue her.

While it was true that Gerald was immensely strong, in the end, he was still only a human. With that in mind, the boy would surely be unable to survive all the traps and snipers Maddox had set up around the area. The second Maddox gave his command, Gerald would be hit by an onslaught of bullets, and Maddox was sure that the youth would finally die by then!

Shortly after, a soldier entered his office before reporting, "The captain has sent a representative to us, asking why you've been continuously leading soldiers out in the night. He also wishes to know why you've taken quite a few resources from the armory..."

Chapter 2299

"Just make up an excuse. That good-for-nothing Carter is nothing but a coward... He's probably just worried that his position will be negatively influenced if anything happens! How unfortunate for our military to have a person like him as our leader!" sneered Maddox.

“Loud and clear,” replied the soldier with a nod.

Juggling his army dagger that had a crimson blade, Maddox then looked at the soldier before asking, “Speaking of which, have all of you prepared the things I’ve told you to?”

“We have. We’re just waiting for your command before we set off,” replied the soldier.

“Wait till night comes. Remember, if anyone asks, just tell them that I’m leading all of you out for a routine patrol. Don’t answer anything else!” ordered Maddox after thinking about it for a while.

Throughout this period, Maddox had been doing quite a few eye catching activities in preparation for getting rid of Gerald for good. Since it was clear that he was trying to replace Carter to become the new leader, Maddox was well aware that he could make new enemies within the military at any second. With that in mind, the less his men revealed, the lower the chances of his goals getting affected by those under Carter in the end.

“Not to worry! This isn’t my first day working under you, deputy captain!” replied the soldier with a chuckle.

“Glad to hear. Now leave me be. Once all this is over, not only will you get a two month vacation, but you’ll also be given fifteen thousand dollars to enjoy the new year with, ” said Maddox who was looking at his desk calendar as he gestured for the soldier to leave.

“I appreciate it, deputy captain!” declared the soldier with a wide smile before bowing and leaving Maddox’s office.

The second the door was closed, Maddox’s eyes went sinister as he stabbed his dagger into his office desk, causing the desk to crack a little.

“Once I end you, I’ll surely be promoted to military captain...” growled Maddox as he grinned wickedly.

Truth be told, he had already been planning all this ever since Gerald took down the three major families in Yanam. His excitement had only grown with Godwin’s disappearance, thinking that he’d surely become the next captain with how capable he was.

Unfortunately, that d*mned Carter had appeared out of nowhere and snatched the position from him! Naturally, this caused several of the more diehard military captains Maddox included to feel utterly repulsed by him.

Regardless, once he got rid of Gerald, Maddox was going to make sure that everyone in the country would learn about what he did. Following that, they’d surely believe that he was better than Carter at protecting Yanam, thus giving him a chance to replace that coward...!

Fast forward to dusk, Maddox and his secretary who was holding onto their umbrella could be seen walking toward a large gate at the side of their base. Aside from the ten prepared looking people whom Maddox had transferred over, Maddox could also see the equipment that he had taken from the armory being loaded into the back of one of the SUVs.

Upon realizing that Maddox was here, everyone immediately declared, “Vice captain!”

“Everything ready to go?” asked Maddox as he looked at his men.

Chapter 2300

“Indeed. We can set off as soon as you command us to,” replied the secretary.

“Let’s head out then. The sooner we get things done, the sooner we return. I’d rather not attract too much unnecessary attention either,” muttered Maddox with a slight frown when he saw all the staff members looking at him. Once Maddox got into the leading car, it didn’t take long before they began

making their way to a secluded prison.

Meanwhile, Gerald who had parked his own car in a well hidden corner near the entrance simply lit a cigarette when he saw the team of cars leaving.

Glaring at the vehicles, Aiden then muttered, "He should be in one of them, right...?"

"If you're talking about Maddox, yes, I believe so," replied Gerald as he took a puff of his cigarette before narrowing his eyes and starting to tail the cars at an appropriate distance.

Realizing that Gerald had made a move, those from the Grubb family began taking a detour using a smaller path instead of following them from behind. After all, though Gerald and Aiden were out in the open, a single car driving past the military base's entrance wasn't going to appear that suspicious. The same couldn't be said if their cars were included in the equation, and they'd rather not run the risk of getting halted by the military.

Regardless, when they finally got to the main road again, they quickly realized that none of the cars were there!

"They aren't here!" exclaimed the anxious driver of the leading car through his walkie talkie.

"Where have they driven off to?" replied the others at the back, feeling utterly confused.

"I... I don't know! They were clearly driving in this direction! It doesn't make any sense! They were only out of sight for about a minute! "

"Then what should we do? The master will surely have our heads if we return like this!"

“I suggest we split up! After all, there are three roads here! With any luck, we’ll be able to find them again! Remember to notify the others if you do!”

“Sounds good! I’m in on the idea! ”

“Then let’s take our alternate paths now! Keep in touch and pray that we manage to find Gerald again! I really don’t want to piss the master off! ” declared one of the Grubbs as the men immediately began executing their plan.

Moving back to Gerald, he hadn’t disappeared due to a sudden acceleration or anything. The truth was, the military cars had simply turned toward the opposite direction not long after they left the base!

Sitting in the shotgun seat, Aiden who had already seen the military cars make several turns by now couldn’t help but ask, “ ... Do they really have to be this cautious at their own base’s entrance...?”

“The Yanam military probably isn’t that peaceful. Regardless, it’s clear that Maddox is doing something shady. After all, he wouldn’t have to be this cautious if he was merely executing a mission issued by the military,” replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

“Indeed... Either way, if this b*stard really did kidnap her, I’ll definitely tear him to shreds!” growled Aiden as he clenched his fists.

“Let’s not do that,” said Gerald as he shook his head with a smile, making sure to always maintain a safe but not easily detectable distance away from the military cars.

As for the Grubb family’s subordinates, even after speeding along all three roads for over ten minutes, none of them even came across a single car.-

Chapter 2301-2305

Chapter 2301

After updating each other and knowing that they had truly lost Gerald, the men helplessly regrouped before reporting the incident to Lucian.

At the time, Lucian was entertaining Jobson and the others as they had their tea. As expected, upon picking the call up, his smile instantly vanished. A frown now on his face, Lucian then growled, "Get back here...!"

Hearing the clear change in tone, Jobson who was enjoying some dessert was prompted to ask, "Is something the matter...?"

"The men I sent out to help Gerald and Aiden have lost track of them, Senior Jobson!" muttered Lucian with a sigh. Still, to think that they'd make such an amateurish mistake at such a critical moment when they were key personnel of his family.

Laughing in response, Jobson then replied, "And here I thought it was something serious!"

"... Is this not serious enough? Gerald and Aiden are dealing with the military here... What if something happens to them?" said the worried Lucian.

"You truly underestimate that boy," replied Jobson as he stuffed a cupcake into his mouth.

"While I know that he's strong, this is the military we're talking about... Aside from the traps that Maddox has probably already prepared for him, he also has access to powerful weapons...!" said Lucian as he considered calling his friend in the military to step in.

Extending his hand and cupping it over Lucian's phone, Jobson then replied, "That's exactly why I said you underestimate him. Correct me if I'm wrong, but Gerald alone was able to take out the respected elders of the three major families in Yanam, right?"

Nodding slightly, the confused Lucian who had no idea how this contributed to the conversation said, "... Indeed, and several others in those families were killed as well. Without their leaders, the three families are about to completely crumble..."

"I see... I see... Now tell me, which is stronger? The military? Or the three families?" asked Jobson as he sat beside Lucian while gesturing for Fujiko to bring him more dessert.

"Well... though the military has access to modern weapons, the three families have cultivators... With that said, if they're pit against each other, I feel the three families are definitely stronger..."

"Bingo. So if Gerald was able to take them out alone, do you really think the Yanam military stands a chance against him? Truth be told, had your men managed to tail him all the way, I feel they may have ended up burdening him more than being a help!" replied Jobson with a satisfied smile, knowing that Lucian finally understood his point.

Smacking his forehead, Lucian who was now feeling much better then said, "... I get it. To think that I'd overlook something like this! All that worry was for naught!"

"I agree. Either way, let's just wait for his return. Even if he fails to rescue her today, I'm sure he'll be able to obtain some relevant news," replied Jobson as he continued eating.

Realizing that Jobson was almost finished with his plate of desserts, Lucian turned to look at his butler before saying, "Get more dessert for Senior Jobson."

"I'm good. While the desserts are good, I'm afraid I may get tired of them if I have any more. With that said, do you have any tea?" asked Jobson.

"Of course! Green or black?" replied Lucian with an enthusiastic nod.

Chapter 2302

“Either will do. Still, all of you truly underestimate him That boy’s way stronger than any of you could ever imagine...” said Jobson as he nonchalantly waved his hand.

“... Including me?” asked Fujiko as she pointed at herself. She, for one, believed that she understood Gerald extremely well. While she didn’t know why he was this strong, after spending so much time with him, she was pretty sure that she knew the extent of his capabilities.

“But of course. In fact, the boy probably isn’t aware of how strong he is either,” replied Jobson with a shrug before laughing heartily. From the looks of it, he appeared to be the one who knew Gerald best among the rest of them there. Regardless, Jobson’s tea arrived shortly after and the old man began drinking it in satisfaction.

Moving back to Gerald, he had been maintaining a safe distance from the military cars this entire time.

Feeling slightly impatient, Aiden who just wanted to know how Lindsay was doing was prompted to ask, “Where the hell are they going...? It’s been almost an hour now! All this is just too weird...”

“A bit anxious, aren’t we? Are you this impatient when you carry out other missions?” replied Gerald with a slight frown.

“But Lindsay...” muttered Aiden who knew better than to behave the way he currently was. However, he simply couldn’t help it. After all, Lindsay wasn’t someone random he had to save. Since emotions were involved, Aiden couldn’t deny that it slightly affected his professionalism.

“What about her? Also, last I checked, you’re not that emotional a person. Are you going to commit suicide if you find out that she’s dead?” sneered Gerald.

“I... No, I wouldn’t go that far...” muttered Aiden who didn’t dare to further anger Gerald.

“Good. Now be a bit more serious and stop saying such pointless things,” replied Gerald who could sense how much Aiden liked Lindsay. Even so, Aiden’s impulsiveness would only lead to their ruin, so Gerald had to keep him in check.

Recalling how anxious he had been when Mila first disappeared and his family got captured, Gerald reminded himself that he had only been able to start making rescue efforts after forcing himself to calm down and think things through. With that said, being anxious was completely useless.

“I was just venting a little...” muttered the slightly aggrieved Aiden.

Before Gerald could reply, he noticed that the military cars had suddenly slowed down. With that, he was prompted to say, “Quiet down. They’re about to make a move.”

“In this forest...?” muttered Aiden as he looked out the car window.

“Apparently. Still, it’s a wonder what they’re planning to do all the way out here...” replied Gerald who had a feeling that Lindsay may be close by. After all, why else would Maddox come to such a remote area in the dead of night? Adding that to how vigilant he had been upon leaving the military base, it was evident that his actions were nothing short of shady.

“Indeed... Regardless, just say the word and I’ll make my move!” declared Aiden rather enthusiastically as he unsheathed his army dagger.

“Relax. Let’s see what they’re planning to do first,” replied Gerald as he slowed the car down. Though they were quite a distance away, Gerald was still able to clearly see what the soldiers were up to.

Parking the car by the road, Gerald then placed a hand on Aiden’s thigh before whispering, “Let’s finally see what they’re up to. Don’t get discovered.”

After getting out of the car together, Aiden then gulped as he held on tightly to his army dagger while saying, "Loud and clear."

As for Maddox, he had no idea that the two were keeping an eye on him. After all, to him, his plan was perfect, so there was no way Gerald would be able to learn about all this. Till he eventually released the news, he was certain that only a few people would even know about this place.

Chapter 2303

Even those guarding the place had no idea who Lindsay actually was, which was why Maddox was so sure that nobody would be able to expose the incident till he released news about her capture. Everything was going to be perfect!

Whatever the case was, after getting out of the car, Maddox began walking deeper into the forest, making sure to carefully avoid all the traps that he had set up. Since the leader and team member who had been tasked with guarding the place had been informed that Maddox was coming over, they were already waiting for him by the time he walked over.

Watching as they quickly jogged over to greet him, Maddox who was now holding onto an umbrella looked around before asking, "So, how's the situation?"

"I mean... Nobody would ever come to such a remote place... Forget humans, both of us barely even see birds here!" replied the leader as he shook his head.

"Is that how you should report to a superior...?!" growled Maddox.

"N-no, sir! Nothing happened!" replied the frightened leader as he immediately straightened his posture.

"Good. Either way, I've brought your supplies for tomorrow so that I don't have to come over in the morning. The less I come here, the lower the chances of me getting found out," said Maddox as he gestured toward one of his soldiers who promptly walked over with a black bag in hand.

“We appreciate it, deputy captain,” replied the leader as he took the bag with a nod.

Nodding in response, Maddox then turned to look at the soldiers who had just gotten out of the cars before ordering, “Alright, get to work. Everything needs to be set up within three days. I can’t wait any longer!”

Following that, Maddox couldn’t help but imagine Gerald falling into one of his traps upon entering the forest. Unable to move an inch, Maddox would then order his hidden men to begin shooting at the boy!

There was no way he was going to survive that!

“About time!” yelled Maddox with glee, only to realize that he had yelled his thoughts out!

Looking at his men, Maddox then cleared his throat before saying, “... Either way, it’s eight now. We’ll be leaving at midnight, so make haste, or I’ll deduct your allowances!”

“R-right away, deputy captain!” declared the soldiers as they rushed to start work, not wanting their salaries to be cut.

Forcing a smile, the leader then walked up to Maddox before saying, “So... would you like to come in and have a seat, deputy captain...?”

Ignoring the question, Maddox simply asked, “Is she doing fine?”

“She is!” declared the leader.

“Good. Make sure to feed her the bare minimum just so she doesn’t starve to death. This is a prison, not a hotel!” growled Maddox as he walked into the room and looked at the iron door.

“W-we’ve already been doing so... If we feed her any less, she’ll die for sure! What more, the food she’s been getting is worse than what strays are fed...” muttered the leader who had almost gagged when he first saw what he was supposed to feed her.

“Are you taking pity on her?” asked Maddox with a raised brow.

“O-of course, not! I’ll do anything you ask!” stuttered the leader as he shuddered slightly.

Turning around, Maddox then said, “Tell me... Do you know why I chose you to guard this place?”

Chapter 2304

“I can’t say I do...” muttered the leader as he shook his head.

“It’s because you’re smarter than the others, and I intend to train you if you do well. Don’t miss this opportunity,” sneered Maddox.

“T-thank you, deputy captain...! I won’t let you down!” declared the leader with a broad smile as he quickly began massaging Maddox’s shoulders.

Meanwhile, Gerald and Aiden were still keeping an eye on things from the forested area. Gerald, for one, had refrained from getting too close to them since he wasn’t sure whether they had installed any surveillance cameras nearby.

Regardless, after paying close attention to his surroundings for a while, Aiden was prompted to say, “... There’s a house over there I think...”

Aiden had only been able to see the building's outline, which explained why he sounded slightly unsure of his statement. Regardless, upon hearing that, Gerald who had been sitting on a rock for a while now replied, "Indeed... Either way, what do you think Maddox plans to do? His actions have been extremely shady up till this point..."

"I don't know... Maybe he's trying to hide a corpse?"

"With his rank? He could've just told one of his random subordinates to do the deed. With that said, he wouldn't have come along if it was just to hide a corpse," replied Gerald as he shook his head.

"Well... what do you think, then?" asked Aiden.

"I feel that Maddox may be hiding something important here," replied Gerald, who was only able to clearly see the exterior of the desolate house from where he stood.

"Could it be Lindsay?" asked Aiden.

"We don't know that yet."

"Still... Regardless, are we going to eventually sneak in or are we just going to continue observing from here?" asked Aiden as he clenched his dagger, fully ready to heed Gerald's commands.

"Let's wait a bit more," replied Gerald as he crossed his legs...

It was sometime later when one of the cars was driven away. Thankfully, Gerald had parked his car behind a few large trees, and the darkness of night made it even harder for untrained eyes to detect.

Either way, it was almost four hours later when the other cars were driven off as well. After giving the cars a good look, Aiden couldn't help but whisper, "... Something's off."

"Elaborate," replied Gerald.

"Well... it's been raining this entire time, right?" asked Aiden as he continued staring at the boots of the cars.

"For three days in a row, yes. What's your point?"

"I'm getting to that... You see, when one of the cars passed by us earlier, I couldn't help but notice that the mud traces on its tires had been raised particularly high. In other words, they had probably been transporting quite a lot of heavy things earlier. With that said, the items have probably been left behind since I was able to discern all this in the first place," explained Aiden.

"You're not half bad!" exclaimed the surprised Gerald as she patted Aiden on his back. He hadn't considered all this at all!

Feeling slightly embarrassed to be praised by Gerald, the grinning Aiden then sheepishly scratched the back of his head as he said, "It was just a basic observation..."

"Regardless, I don't think we should make our move first. Still, we've definitely made quite a bit of progress just by locating this place," replied Gerald.

"... Huh? Why?"

"As you said, they probably left a bunch of stuff here. However, if they were simply leaving things behind, why did they have to spend so many hours here? The fact that they also scattered around the area throughout their time here leads me to believe that they were probably burying traps. Let's continue talking about this once we're back in the car," explained Gerald as he got to his feet.

Chapter 2305

“... Alright...” muttered Aiden in a helpless tone. While he had a feeling that Lindsay was definitely in there, since Gerald had prohibited him from entering, there was nothing he could do about it.

Regardless, after getting into the car, Gerald immediately began tailing the military cars again. After driving for a bit, he was prompted to say, “As I said, they probably have traps buried around the area. Adding that to the fact that there are probably people guarding the vicinity, I’d rather not risk getting caught while trying to save her. If we fail and get noticed, saving her in the future is going to be increasingly difficult.”

Shortly after, they caught up to the military cars again, and Gerald quickly slowed down to keep a safe distance from them. By that point, Aiden had mostly calmed himself, leading him to mutter, “... Well, at the very least, we now know that Lindsay is most probably in there...”

“From how shady Maddox has been, I agree,” said Gerald with a nod as they continued following the cars till they eventually arrived at the military base.

Naturally, Gerald didn’t follow them in, and instead began driving back to the Grubb manor. It was around two in the morning when they finally got back.

Before entering their guest rooms, Gerald made sure to look at Aiden before saying, “Try not to think too much about tonight and get some rest.”

“I will...” replied Aiden with a firm nod...

Nodding in response, Gerald was just about to enter his room when the butler suddenly ran over while saying, “Mr. Crawford! Master has ordered me to lead you to him the second you return! He said it was extremely urgent.”

“What’s the issue?” asked Gerald as he turned to look at the butler.

“I’m not sure either. However, following a call that made the master frown, he told me to keep an eye on the surveillance system and to also tell you to meet up with him the second you return,” replied the butler as he shook his head.

Frowning slightly, Gerald then replied, “Lead the way, then.”

With that, the butler then led the duo to where Lucian was currently resting. The second they entered, they were immediately greeted by a cloud of cigarette smoke. Looking at the ashtray that was brimming with cigarette butts, Aiden who was worried that all this had something to do with Lindsay was prompted to ask, “You called for us, Mr. Grubb?”

“Indeed. I received a call from Maddox about two hours ago,” replied Lucian as he puffed on his cigarette.

“What? But he was still in a remote area located west of the military base back then...” muttered Gerald with a slight frown.

Ignoring Gerald’s statement, Aiden then said, “Well, what did he say?”

“He was inviting me and those from a few other major families to discuss the development plans of each family over a meal. Maddox also stated that he wanted to take the chance to get the families to cooperate with each other in order to improve Yanam’s economy,” replied Lucian.

Chuckling in response, Gerald couldn’t help but say, “Isn’t he in charge of the Yanam’s seas? Why’s he meddling with the economy?”

“You’re telling me. Regardless, as you can probably guess, events like these were usually officiated by the ministry of finance as well as the ministry of commerce and industry. With that in mind, since Maddox is taking the initiative to run the event this time, I can only assume that he’s up to no good,” replied Lucian with a nod.

“No need to even assume, he’s definitely planning something. Still, since he wants to hold a party so much, let’s go together,” said Gerald as he lit a cigarette.

“You... Want to go too?” asked Lucian, feeling slightly surprised.

“But of course! Since he wants to kill me that much, I may as well take that chance to meet him,” replied Gerald with a smile.-

Chapter 2306-2310

Chapter 2306

“... Fine, I’ll bring you along. However, do keep in mind that Maddox has invited people from several other families and companies as well. With that said, even if he makes things difficult for us, we can’t just fight him there...” said Lucian in a concerned tone.

Laughing aloud, Gerald simply replied, “Don’t worry, I’m well aware of that! ”

“I’m glad to hear that. Well, putting this aside, how did things go on your end? Did you manage to find where Lindsay is being locked up?” asked Lucian, pleased to hear that Gerald wasn’t planning to do anything rash.

Hearing that, Gerald then began detailing everything that had happened in the past few hours.

Once he was done, the satisfied Lucian who now knew that Gerald wasn’t the kind of person who did things impetuously, was prompted to say, “From the looks of it, Lindsay is most probably being locked up there. Still, I’m glad you didn’t just rush in. I’ve heard plenty of bad rumors about that cruel man, and

I'm pretty sure you'd have triggered one of his traps if you had attempted to save her earlier. Whatever the case is, let's resume this discussion after properly considering everything..."

Seeing that their conversation was over, the butler cleared his throat before saying, "Speaking of which, the auction is in a few days. Would you like to start making preparations, master?"

"Hmm... Has the money been prepared?" asked Lucian.

"Everything's been prepared, including the money. We've sent the quota of people as well, but that's not what I meant. If you've forgotten, the auction is being held on a small island within Yanam. With that said, you'll need to make a move about three days from now in order to get there a day before the auction begins," explained the butler.

Upon hearing that, Lucian turned to look at Gerald as he asked, "Do you have a problem with that?"

"Not at all, I can go anytime," replied Gerald with a shrug.

"Then after joining Maddox's party tomorrow and taking the following day off, we'll set off early for the island on the third day," said Lucian with a nod.

"An auction on an island...? What kind of auction even is that...?" asked Aiden.

"Long story short, it's an auction for cultivators," explained Gerald.

"Even if you refuse to detail it, could I come along...?" asked Aiden who genuinely wanted to learn more about cultivators from the day he learned that Gerald was one.

“Unfortunately, we only have three tickets,” replied the butler.

“I see... What a pity...” muttered the disheartened Aiden.

“However... If you really wish to go there, I don’t mind giving you mine. After all, I’ve already partaken in multiple similar auctions with master, so missing out on one won’t mean much,” replied the butler.

“Can I...?” asked Aiden as he looked at both Gerald and Lucian.

“I don’t mind. Besides, if my butler stays, he’ll be able to inform us if anything goes wrong,” replied Lucian after thinking for a while.

“But... I’m not exactly a cultivator... Is it really fine if I come along?” asked Aiden, now feeling slightly worried.

“Oh, don’ t worry about that. Plenty of the attendees aren’t cultivators, you see. After all, aside from items that cultivators can use, rare plants and minerals with various special effects will also be up for auction. With that said, many of the participants will be regular people from large families,” explained Lucian.

“Well, that’s good to hear...” muttered Aiden with a relieved sigh.

“Indeed. Regardless, it’s getting late, so go on ahead and get some rest,” replied Lucian with a yawn.

Honestly, he would’ve headed to bed ages ago had Gerald returned earlier!

Chapter 2307

Regardless, after returning to his room, Gerald began thinking about all that had happened tonight...

As for Maddox, he could be seen sitting before a few of his confidants in a high end villa near the military base with a glass of red wine in hand. After gulping it down, he was prompted to say, "Alright, once you return, I want all of you to tell your subordinates to dress smartly tomorrow, got that?"

"We know. Don't worry, everything has already been well prepared. Things will surely be perfect tomorrow," replied one of the confidants after looking at the others.

"Still... Are you really sure that Gerald will come over tomorrow, deputy captain?" asked a bald confidant.

"Why wouldn't he?" replied Maddox as he poured himself another glass of wine.

"I mean... Ever since he entered Yanam, we've lost all news regarding him..." muttered the bald man in a slightly worried tone. He, for one, had been by Maddox's side for the longest time, which was why he didn't fear talking about his worries.

"While that's a good question, why don't you start considering where Gerald could've gone to ever since he arrived? After all, he couldn't have just been sleeping on the streets this entire time, right?" replied Maddox as he placed his wine glass down.

"Well... maybe he's been sleeping in a hostel or guesthouse...?" said the bald man.

"Or maybe he's at a friend's house," added another confidant.

"Though those are definitely viable suggestions, all of you have ignored the fact that it's been about a week since we've captured Lindsay. With that in mind, I'm sure the Grubbs would've already heard about this. Since Gerald would've surely taken the chance to meet up with the Grubbs upon arriving, I have reason to believe that Lucian would've asked for his help to save the girl. Due to the fact that he

knows Lindsay, Gerald would surely be compelled to assist. Little does he know that she's in our possession!" declared the smiling Maddox in a confident tone.

"I understand now!"

"You truly are the smartest person within our military base, deputy captain!" exclaimed Maddox's subordinates who hadn't even come close to seeing the way Maddox saw things. Truth be told, they had been wondering why he wanted to organize a business party out of the blue. After all, he hadn't done anything like that in the past. Now, everything was clear as day.

"Flattery will get you nowhere. Regardless, just follow and learn from me and I assure you that you'll all be promoted in no time! By that point, I'll expect all of you to be able to think critically and handle other affairs for me. That's the only way you'll improve!" declared Maddox as he pointed at them.

"We await our promotions!" yelled the men as they bowed toward Maddox.

"Well said. Either way, make sure to check for any imperfections tomorrow! Everything needs to be perfect! If Gerald dares to come over, we'll finally be able to capture him! Following that, I'll have Lindsay killed right before his very eyes!" declared Maddox.

After the meeting was adjourned, Maddox couldn't help but hum as he returned to his room. He, for one, was sure that Gerald wouldn't be able to escape his grasp this time, no matter how strong he was. Unfortunately for him, Gerald had already seen

Through all his plans.

Fast forward to the next day, Gerald uncharacteristically remained in bed past dawn. After all, now that he had momentarily put research on Yearning Island aside and he already had quite a bit of information on Lindsay's case, he didn't have much to do but wait to participate in Maddox's party that night.

Perhaps he could get more information there.

Lying in bed, he couldn't help but think about all that he had gone through in the past few months just to learn more about Yearning Island.

Chapter 2308

In no time at all, evening came, and Gerald got himself cleaned before changing into a nice set of clothes. Though the event was organized by Maddox, a party was a party, so he had to make sure that he was at least well dressed.

Regardless, once Lucian was prepared, both of them left the manor to head to Maddox's villa where the party was being held. The villa itself was only two streets away from the military base, so soldiers could be seen patrolling the area all daylong.

Aside from Maddox, this high-end villa neighborhood was also where most of the military leaders including Carter stayed. Rather than being interconnected, each of the villas was built individually with separate access paths and small gardens.

Whatever the case was, upon entering the car, Lucian instead of telling the driver to start the car up was prompted to look at Gerald before asking, "Honestly, do you think we should bring a few others with us? After all, if Maddox is really attempting to set us up, I'll end up burdening you since you'll have to focus on protecting me..."

"While I see where you're coming from, in the end, I feel that I'll have to protect both of you instead of you alone! With that said, bringing more people along is only going to be more troublesome for me," replied Gerald who knew that he was at least capable of protecting Lucian as long as he was alone from the most dangerous of situations.

"I see.. Well, I'll be in your care, then..." muttered Lucian before chuckling awkwardly.

"Indeed. Either way, let's go meet him already," replied Gerald as he leaned against his seat before closing his eyes. Hearing that, Lucian then nodded at his driver, and the car came to life just seconds

later.

Meanwhile, Maddox could be seen puffing on a cigar in his villa as he stood before twenty sniper soldiers whom he had specially chosen for tonight about two days ago.

Knowing how capable they each were, Maddox couldn't help but say, "Truly elites among elites..."

Hearing that, his confidant stepped forward before reporting, "I've already given them an entire day's worth of special training for this event, deputy captain! Once Gerald appears, they'll definitely be ready to snipe his head!"

"And who told you that I wanted Gerald dead?" replied Maddox with a raised brow.

"Huh...? But... then why did you organize this party and request for all these snipers...?" asked the puzzled confidant who had assumed that everything had been prepared this way to finish Gerald off.

"Use your head and don't ask things you shouldn't!" grumbled Maddox as he stubbed his cigar against his confidant's neck!

Flinching from the searing pain, the confidant then backed away as Maddox puffed into his cigar and ordered, "Alright, enough dilly-dallying! Head to your respective positions and prepare yourselves! Remember, nobody shoots unless I give the order!"

By the time the twenty snipers got into position all around the villa, the sky was already starting to darken. More and more guests were starting to arrive as well, and all of them were discussing why Maddox had invited them there. While they were all confused, all of them had still rushed over since they were well aware of how high Maddox's status was, being the deputy captain and all.

Standing on the Villa's top floor, Maddox placed his hand against a window as he peered down, constantly on the lookout for Gerald's arrival. When he finally saw the youth exiting a car, Maddox instantly smiled as he slammed his fist onto the windowsill.

Taking in a deep breath, he then said in a sinister tone, "Gerald...! So you really were with the Grubbs...!"

Chapter 2309

Moving back to Gerald, he and Lucian could be seen walking into the villa, leaving their driver behind in the car.

Upon seeing Lucian, everyone in the villa immediately cupped their hands as they greeted, "Mr. Grubb!"

Though the Grubbs didn't have the best properties in the country, they were still a cultivating family, so they were definitely worthy of respect.

Regardless, Lucian simply smiled as he replied, "Evening, everyone."

"Who's that young man, Mr. Grubb? And where's Frey?" asked one of the members in the crowd, prompting everyone to look at Gerald. They were rightfully curious since Lucian was well known for bringing Frey along regardless of the event. Not even

His biological sons were given such a right.

Fighting the urge to frown upon hearing his son's name, Lucian quickly managed to calm himself before replying, "This is Gerald Crawford, and he's an important guest of my family. I brought him over in hopes of introducing him to all of you."

"G-Gerald...?! " exclaimed several people from the crowd, making it clear that they all recognized the name. Then again, it was impossible to forget after that person wreaked havoc in their country back then.

Sensing how tense everyone suddenly was, Gerald quickly cupped his hands before saying, "Greetings. I'm new to this place, so I'll be in your care from now on!")

Upon hearing that this was his first time here, everyone immediately breathed a sigh of relief. Since they had only heard about Gerald's name, they quickly assumed that this youth only shared the same name as the other more dangerous Gerald. With that in mind, a few people from the crowd began saying, "But of course! A guest of the Grubbs is a guest of ours! Feel free to ask for help should you need any in the future!"

"Indeed! Aside from your good temperament, you look rather handsome as well! I'm sure you'll be an even finer man in the future!"

After the duo walked through the sea of compliments, the crowd slowly began sharing details about the properties they owned, with some even starting to discuss potential collaborations.

Though the scene got rather noisy, the second Maddox showed himself, everyone instantly went silent. Momentarily looking at Gerald, Maddox then pretended not to see the youth before enthusiastically declaring, "Greetings, everyone! Please move to the banquet hall..."

While he definitely noticed Maddox's leer, Gerald simply chose to ignore it.

Either way, the two thousand square feet banquet hall was located beside the villa, and Maddox usually used the area for either organizing social activities for members of the military or for entertaining guests.

As everyone began walking toward the hall, Lucian and Gerald made sure to lag behind the group. Once most of them had walked past the hall's doors, Lucian took the chance to whisper, "Is anything wrong...?"

“What do you think?” replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

Gerald, for one, had already sensed the presence of several snipers from the moment he arrived at the villa, and he was pretty sure that there were even more that he hadn't pinpointed yet. Maddox had definitely prepared a large surprise for Gerald.

Nodding in response, Lucian then sighed before saying, “Just be careful... If necessary, notify me of any danger in advance so that I don't end up burdening you too much...”

“Don't worry, there's hardly any danger,” replied Gerald with a nod.

Regardless, once everyone entered the hall including Gerald and Lucian, the doors to the banquet hall were slowly closed.

Chapter 2310

The second that happened, the snipers who had been lying in ambush immediately rushed toward the banquet hall's exterior, efficiently surrounding the area in no time flat as they patiently awaited Maddox's command from the outside.

Meanwhile, inside the banquet hall, Maddox cleared his throat before declaring, “Thank you all for attending tonight! While some may say that the military shouldn't be involved with the country's economy, I say otherwise! We're truthfully interested in knowing how you're all developing as well! With that said, let us begin discussing the next step in improving Yanam's economy!”

Ashe said all that, Maddox made sure not to even look at Gerald for fear that his true intentions would end up getting exposed. That idiot would finally be his...!

Unfortunately for Maddox, Gerald had already seen through all his plans.

Whatever the case was, Maddox then turned to look at Lucian making sure to casually glance at Gerald in the process before adding, "Why don't we start with you, Lucian? Do share what the next step for your family is!"

"Though the Grubbs don't have that many properties when compared to the others here, I'm honestly satisfied as long as I can keep them up and running. With that said, my family's just going to continue doing what it's always done. However, we aren't against change, so do share your plans with us!" replied Lucian who had momentarily been caught off guard as he replied in a bureaucratic manner.

"Well said! What about the others?" said Maddox with a nod, clearly not planning to do anything just yet.

"I do have some things planned. Ever since 'that' incident, the three major families' properties have been on the decline. If we just continue ignoring that, our economy could be negatively affected! With that said, since my family's in the food industry, I'm planning to acquire all the food factories belonging to the Jewells. What do you think?" asked a middle aged man who was donning a suit rather loudly.

"I think it's an excellent idea! If you need anything, do notify me and the military will try our best to fulfill your needs!" replied Maddox without the slightest hesitation. After all, he didn't have much interest in who did the job. Still, he wasn't against obtaining long term benefits from them by helping them now.

"I appreciate the feedback, deputy captain!" declared the middle aged man with a bow.

"As for my family, we don't have any plans to further develop yet, so we'll be doing the same as the Grubbs. Even so, I'd still appreciate help from the military!" said another middle aged man.

"But of course, we'll help! Just contact my secretary whenever you need aid!" replied Maddox.

"That..." muttered the middle aged man, feeling rightfully puzzled. After all, throughout his many years

doing business, not once had he gotten involved with those from the military. Yet here Maddox was, telling him to just contact his secretary. Since when had the military started getting involved with Yanam's economy? It certainly didn't help that Maddox sounded serious about all this!

"Hmm? Any questions?" asked Maddox.

"No, I... was just wondering how I should repay you for your help!" replied the middle aged man after quickly making something up, knowing that he'd get into trouble if he revealed his true thoughts.

Laughing in response, Maddox simply said, "We're all people of Yanam, are we not? I'm just doing my part as a citizen! Also, I thought that this would be a good chance to get to know you guys, so don't worry about repaying my aid!"

"Hear! Hear!" declared everyone, unable to help themselves from breathing sighs of relief...-

Chapter 2311-2315

Chapter 2311

"Regardless, enough talk! You can contact my secretary when the time comes, but for now, dig in! No need to hold back just because I'm the deputy captain!" declared Maddox with a wave of his hand, prompting several servants to begin serving dishes and drinks.

"As if everything's that simple... If his words were genuine, then the Maddox we're looking at is a fake..!" sneered Lucian in a soft tone.

"Either way, we'll see how things go. Still, I don't think he'll be daring enough to cause a mess before so many people," replied Gerald as he began eating.

"Aren't you worried that he'll try to poison you...?" muttered Lucian in a slightly concerned tone.

“Even if he does, his poison probably won’t affect me at all. Remember, I’m no ordinary person,” replied Gerald with a smile.

“... You’re right. Well, I guess I’ll dig in as well!” said Lucian who hadn’t considered that earlier. Only someone with high cultivation like Gerald would’ve been able to obtain the Devotion Mirror in the first place. With that said, ordinary poisons would definitely be ineffective on someone like him!

Either way, Gerald quickly finished his meal before raising his hand as he said, “Deputy captain? Could I have another set? I’m not quite full yet!”

Though he hadn’t expected Gerald to just call out to him like that, Maddox simply smiled as he faced one of the servants before ordering, “But of course! Serve that boy more food!”

To Maddox, the fact that Gerald had used such a friendly tone to speak with him must’ve meant that he was completely unaware of his plans. With that in mind, Maddox didn’t mind humoring Gerald’s request. After all, the boy was going straight to hell once he was full!

After thinking about that for a bit, Maddox turned to look at Lucian before saying, “Lucian!”

“Yes? Can I do anything for you, deputy captain?” asked Lucian as he lowered his fork and spoon.

“Indeed! Now that I think about it, who’s that young man beside you? I don’t recall seeing him before this,” replied Maddox as he looked at Gerald.

“Hmm? Oh, his name is Gerald Crawford, and he’s a guest of the Grubbs. Since his family owns quite a number of properties in Weston, I brought him over to widen his horizons. Who knows, he could end up collaborating with some of the bosses here!” explained Lucian.

“Oh? I heard that companies from Weston are known for their honesty and integrity!”

“Same here! I’m up for a collaboration!” exclaimed several of those present.

All of them knew that Lucian wouldn’t just bring someone random over. With that said, though Lucian hadn’t specified the kinds of properties Gerald’s family owned, the attendees were pretty sure that they were big ones. After all, why else would Lucian treat Gerald so respectfully?

“Gerald Crawford...? Wasn’t that the name of the person who had caused quite a bit of chaos in our country a while back?” replied Maddox with a slight frown, still pretending that he wasn’t aware of who Gerald was.

Hearing that, Gerald then got to his feet before cupping his hands before Maddox as he said, “I assure you that we just share the same name, deputy captain. After all, not only is this my first time in Yanam, but I’m also merely an ordinary person! There’s no way I’d ever be able to cause any sort of chaos!”

“... I see! True enough, plenty of people on the planet share the same name! Either way, I’m quite interested in Weston, so why don’t you stay back and introduce me to some of your properties after the party? Who knows, I could facilitate your collaborations with those in Yanam!” sneered Maddox.

Chapter 2312

Though Lucian’s hands instantly began trembling, Gerald simply replied, “Why not? I may as well take the chance to learn more about Yanam as well!”

Upon hearing that, Lucian couldn’t help but whisper, “Why on earth would you promise him that...?!”

“Don’t worry about it. Since he wants me to stay so much, I’ll just oblige,” replied Gerald with a faint smile.

“Still... Allow me to remind you that we’re still pretty close to the military base, so don’t do anything unnecessary to him. Remember, Lindsay is very likely in his hands, so if you kill him, we may never be able to get her back!” muttered Lucian who knew that Gerald wasn’t easily dissuaded.

“Copy that,” replied Gerald with a slight nod.

“Good to know... Either way, I’ll be trying my best to stay back with you,” replied Lucian as he resumed eating, not wanting Maddox to find him suspicious.

Shortly after, Gerald finished his meal and leaned against his seat with his eyes closed. Though he looked like he had dozed off, the truth was, Gerald was actively spreading out his essential qi to get a better grasp of what was happening around the mansion.

By the time he was done, Gerald sensed the presence of twenty snipers and over a hundred special forces soldiers around the area. There was apparently a group of people surrounding the banquet hall’s exterior as well.

Seeing all the effort Maddox had made to trap him, Gerald couldn’t help but smile. It would be rude of him not to stay back.

Meanwhile, Maddox who was unaware of what Gerald was doing could be seen talking and laughing with the entrepreneurs and patriarchs whom he had invited. While it was true that he had set all this up just to deal with Gerald, he wasn’t about to pass up the chance to get into these peoples’ good books. With their support, he would surely have an easier time snatching Carter’s position from him in the future...!

Regardless, the party soon ended and almost everyone was left satisfied. After all, Maddox was providing them with benefits unlike any other military official had done in the past! Of course, they were well aware that they’d have to return more commissions to him in exchange. However, since they were still going to be earning much more anyway, they didn’t find sharing a part of their earnings to Maddox as something unprofitable.

With nothing else to talk about, the drunken middle aged men then hobbled out of the banquet hall while saying, "Well... We'll be taking our leave first, deputy captain...! We'll surely pay you a visit once we're free in the future...!"

Naturally, the soldiers outside had long retreated before the men even left the building.

Whatever the case was, upon hearing that, Maddox walked up to them with a smile as he replied, "Feel free to come anytime you want! I'll be sure to keep all of you company!"

Once he had sent all of them off, Maddox's smile instantly vanished as he nodded at his confidant before gesturing toward Gerald who was still in the hall. Seeing his cue, the confidant then got his walkie-talkie out before telling the snipers to get ready.

Following that, Maddox returned to the banquet hall and sat beside Lucian before saying, "You know, it's getting rather late, Lucian. Why don't you head back first? Don't worry, I'll have someone drive him home once I'm done talking to him."

"With all due respect, Gerald's new to this place, so he's still unaware of many of our customs. Because of that, I insist that I say," replied Lucian with a slightly awkward smile, not wanting to offend Maddox.

"It's fine, isn't it? In the end, we were all once ordinary people who worked our way up, so I couldn't care less about formalities. Besides, it's not like we're going to have an important talk or anything. It's just going to be a friendly chat," replied Maddox in an annoyed tone.

"... Fine... Then... Can I at least wait outside...?" muttered Lucian in resignation.

Chapter 2313

"Just head back first. I'll get someone to send him home later," replied Maddox with a wave of his hand.

Though he was clearly worried, all Lucian could do was nod as he slowly left the area. On his way out, however, he recalled what Jobson had said regarding Gerald's strength. If the boy was strong enough to take out the elders of the three major families, then Maddox was probably nothing to him. The thought of that definitely helped Lucian relax a bit more.

Regardless, once Lucian was gone, Maddox lit a cigarette before clearing his throat as he said, "So... Any idea why I told you alone to stay back?"

"Hmm? Not the slightest idea," replied Gerald in an indifferent tone as he lit his own cigarette before turning to look at Maddox.

"Well, not only does everyone now know that you're staying back with me, but they're also aware that you're Lucian's guest! With that said, should anything happen to me, the Grubbs will surely suffer!" scoffed Maddox as he crossed his legs, sounding like he had everything under control.

"You make a fair point," replied Gerald.

"Of course, I do. Either way, allow me to say that I really hadn't expected you to be daring enough to return to Yanam. Just so you know, the second we saw you out at sea, my first action was to propose to Carter to send out a fleet to end you! To think that that coward of a man would reject my idea! Had he simply listened to me, you would've been dead by now! You have no right to be sitting before me, got that?!" growled Maddox.

Though he said that, he couldn't help but feel thankful that Carter had rejected his idea back then. After all, had Gerald died then, Maddox probably wasn't going to get his chance to replace Carter as captain by claiming the glory of killing Gerald himself this soon. While he was no longer that angered by him, Maddox was still disgusted by Carter's cowardice.

Either way, upon hearing that, Gerald simply pretended to be innocent as he said, "Come again? I don't get what you're saying at all!"

“Oh, cut the act. We’re the only ones here now,” replied Maddox with a wave of his hand.

Not even bothering to play along anymore, Gerald who truly felt that what Maddox was doing was meaningless simply asked, “Fine, fine... Regardless, why do you want me dead that much?”

“Glad you asked. Once news about me killing you spreads, I’ll surely be promoted to captain!” said Maddox as he got up before slowly walking around the boy.

“Do it, then,” replied Gerald as he placed his hands against his chair’s armrests while leaning back.

“While I’d love to, I’m going to be the prime suspect if I kill you here. Not to worry, you’ll definitely fall into my hands in the next few days,” said Maddox as he shook his head.

“You sound pretty sure of yourself. ”

“For good reason. Regardless, know that when the time comes, you’ll surely come to me obediently,” replied Maddox.

“I look forward to it, then. Now if you’ll excuse me, I’ll be taking my leave, deputy captain,” said Gerald as he got to his feet before tossing his cigarette butt onto the floor. The second he walked out, however, he was immediately greeted by the sight of twenty armed men, all of them aiming their sniper rifles at him.

Chapter 2314

“A bit overprepared, don’t you think?” scoffed Gerald before chuckling.

“Can’t be helped. After all, I had several prestigious guests over today. Have to make sure I keep them safe, you know? Either way, step aside and let him leave,” replied Maddox.

“Roger!” declared the snipers before making way for Gerald.

Simply shaking his head, Gerald then walked out of the villa as everyone watched him leave.

Shortly after, Maddox’s confidant inched over to Maddox’s side before whispering, “... Um... Deputy captain...? That was our best shot of killing him...! Why did you just let him off like that...?”

Smacking the back of his confidant’s head, Maddox then grumbled, “Do I have to spell everything out? Today’s goal was just to see who Gerald had been staying with! The last thing I want is for him to continue being off radar! Putting that aside, if we deal with him now, not only will the Grubbs be after our heads, but Weston as a whole will also be giving us trouble!”

“I... I get it now...! You’re planning to get rid of him once he finds out that we have Lindsay and attempts to save her, right...?” whimpered the confidant as he covered his head.

“Bingo. If we take him out like that and everything goes perfectly, then his death will be called a ‘mysterious disappearance’ that won’t implicate us!” said Maddox as she watched Gerald finally leave his sight.

Moving back to Gerald, he had barely left the villa when he saw the Grubb family’s car parked not too far away. Up on seeing Gerald, Lucian immediately got out of the car before asking, “That was fast. Why did you leave so quickly? Did he make things difficult for you?”

“Putting that aside, why didn’t you head home, Mr. Grubb?” asked Gerald as he got into the car.

"I was just worried for your safety... I figured that as long as I was here, they wouldn't dare to do anything to you," replied Lucian with a sigh of relief now that he knew Gerald was safe.

"He wouldn't have dared to kill me with or without you. Besides, his men wouldn't have been able to defeat me in the first place," said Gerald without a worry in the world.

"His... men?" asked Lucian, feeling slightly puzzled.

After all, he had previously asked Gerald if he sensed any danger, but the boy had simply shrugged the question off.

"Indeed. Twenty snipers and about a hundred special forces soldiers, to be exact. They had been hiding all over the villa this entire time," replied Gerald as he patted the driver's shoulder, prompting him to start driving.

"My god!" exclaimed the shocked Lucian.

"Don't worry, it was all just for show. He probably wanted to scare me or something," replied Gerald as he rolled the car window down to look around.

"That's absolutely terrifying! Had Maddox simply ordered his soldiers to open fire, all of us could've died there and then!" exclaimed Lucian, his forehead now drenched in cold sweat.

"Relax. Remember, he's still the deputy captain of Yanam's seas, so he won't make such an amateurish mistake," replied Gerald.

"Either way, let's head back... I was slightly drunk earlier but this conversation has fully sobered me up..." muttered Lucian as he rolled his own window down to feel the cool night breeze on his face.

“Speaking of which, I no longer have any doubts that Lindsay is with Maddox,” replied Gerald with a sigh. “Oh? Did he mention anything about her?” asked the surprised Lucian.

Chapter 2315

“He said that I’d fall into his grasp within the next few days, so what else could that imply?” replied Gerald, honestly amused by how confident Maddox had sounded.

“Well, that pretty much confirms it. All the things you learned that night pretty much pointed to him being the culprit anyway. Either way, what’s the next step? With how confident he seems with his plan, you should really refrain from acting rashly...” muttered Lucian in a worried tone.

“I’ll just wait for him to tell me the news,” replied Gerald as he looked out the window.

It was nearing midnight when they finally got back to the manor. The second they got out of the car, Aiden immediately rushed out, yelling, “Gerald!”

The butler who had two umbrellas in hand soon ran out as well, calling out, “Master!”

Upon standing before Gerald, Aiden immediately added, “Why didn’t you tell me you left? I could’ve followed to give extra protection!”

“While I appreciate the thought, you’d probably end up needing my protection instead,” replied Gerald with a chuckle as he patted Aiden’s shoulder.

“Heavy rain is apparently going to persist for another week, master. With that said, I’ve already prepared some thick clothes for all of you. That way, you won’t get too cold during the auction,” said the butler as he handed an umbrella to Gerald before raising the other above Lucian’s head.

“Let it rain. It’s rare to get such long periods of heavy rain anyway,” replied Lucian.

“Indeed. Regardless, did Maddox make things difficult for both of you...?” asked the butler as the group began walking back into the manor.

“Not too much, though he did have several men lying in wait...” muttered Lucian who couldn’t help but shiver at the thought.

“I assume he did so out of worry that his guests would find themselves in danger,” replied the butler who lacked the context that Gerald and Lucian had.

“I suppose you’re right,” said Gerald, ending the conversation.

Since it was already past midnight by the time they entered the manor, Lucian chose not to say much and simply returned to his room guided by his butler to rest. The party had given him enough scares for one night.

Gerald himself returned to his guestroom, followed by Aiden. Hanging his coat in the closet-and seeing that Aiden had no intentions of leaving, Gerald was prompted to ask, “Not planning to get some rest?”

“I already took a nap in the afternoon, so I’ve had plenty of rest. Regardless... Did you manage to gather any clues while you were there?” asked Aiden as he shook his head before pulling a chair out for Gerald to sit on.

“What clues are you hoping for?” replied Gerald as he poured himself a glass of water.

“Clues regarding Miss Lawrence, of course!” said Aiden.

“I guess I did manage to gather something.”

"Go on..." muttered the anxious Aiden.

"Well, it's confirmed that Lindsay has been captured by him," replied Gerald as he gestured for Aiden to sit beside him.

After taking a seat, Aiden waited patiently for Gerald to continue... However, the youth showed no signs of having anything else to say. With that, Aiden eventually asked, "... Is that it? What about whether Lindsay is being imprisoned back in that forested area?"

"And how would I learn about that?" replied Gerald as he rolled his eyes.

"... Huh? Then... What should we do...?" muttered Aiden in a disheartened tone. It was clear that he had expected Gerald to bring more news back.-

Chapter 2316-2320

Chapter 2316

"What else can we do? We wait for news to come, of course! Do you really think it's that easy to expose Maddox? Do you take him as a fool?" replied Gerald as he ruffled Aiden's hair.

Brushing Gerald's hand off, Aiden then said, "... So... We really can't do anything...?"

"Precisely. Look, it's pretty much confirmed that Maddox has Lindsay with him now, so all that's left to do is to wait for his news. It probably won't be a long wait anyway since he wants to kill me so much," replied Gerald with a chuckle as he took another sip of water.

"Then let's prepare ourselves in the meantime," said Aiden as he relaxed slightly.

“There’s nothing to prepare. After all, you won’t be helping out much in the first place,” replied Gerald.

“Huh..? Why would you say that?” asked Aiden, rightfully confused.

“Aiden, you only have a single army dagger. Maddox had twenty snipers and at least a hundred soldiers under his command earlier. Tell me again how you’re planning to help?”

“That...” muttered Aiden as he looked at his only dagger before falling silent...

“Still, I’d rather not expose the fact that I’m a cultivator if possible. With that said, I’ll still be bringing you along. Go ask Lucian tomorrow to see if he can get you better equipment,” replied Gerald with a shrug.

“Expose? Gerald, I’m pretty sure everyone in Yanam already knows you’re a cultivator!” said Aiden with a laugh.

“The fewer people who know, the better. Regardless, now that I think about it, just let me ask Lucian about the equipment. Hopefully I can get some good ones for us,” replied Gerald with a sigh.

“Got it,” said Aiden as he nodded in response.

Fast forward to the next day, Gerald went off to look for Lucian the second he got up.

Upon hearing what Gerald had to say, the surprised Lucian couldn’t help but reply, “You... need equipment...?”

“It’s fine if you don’t have any, though I just thought I’d ask,” said Gerald, who was well aware that guns

couldn't be legally obtained in Yanam, which meant that even families with high statuses like the Grubbs had trouble getting their hands on them. With that in mind, apart from the guns owned by the military, all other guns in the country were most probably smuggled in.

"Well, I can get some, but I'll need some time... Regardless, why are you requesting for them out of the blue?" asked Lucian.

"Let's just say I don't want too many more people learning that I'm a cultivator while I'm saving Lindsay. With that said, having guns will surely help with keeping that a secret," replied Gerald.

"I see... How about this? I'll make some arrangements later to see if I can get some supplies from the war department. It'll probably still take a few days, though," said Lucian, who was eager to help as long as it contributed to saving Lindsay.

"I appreciate the help," replied Gerald.

"Now, now, remember, you're the one doing a big favor for me! I should be the one thanking you for going all out just to save my niece!" said Lucian in a sheepish tone.

Before Gerald could reply, Lucian's butler showed up and said, "Oh? So you're here as well, Mr. Gerald! How convenient!"

"Is something the matter?" asked Lucian as he watched his butler jog over.

Chapter 2317

"Well, due to all this heavy rain, it's honestly best if you leave for the island today. Otherwise, delays may happen and you wouldn't want to miss the first day of the auction, right?" said the butler.

Hearing that, Lucian turned to look at Gerald before asking, "Are you fine with leaving today?"

"I'm good to go," replied Gerald with a shrug.

Nodding in response, Lucian was about to leave when he suddenly remembered Gerald's request. With that, he turned to look at his butler again before saying, "Speaking of which, use our family's connections to obtain some guns. The more, the better."

"That'll be difficult, but I'll try my best," replied the butler with a slightly troubled expression.

"I don't care even if you have to spend extra to get smuggled ones. They're crucial for the rescue mission," declared Lucian.

Upon hearing that, the butler had no choice but to reply, "... Understood."

"Now that that's out of the way... Go get Aiden. We'll be leaving as soon as we're done packing up. As Mr. Schmidt said, the rain will probably impede our journey, so the sooner we head out, the better," said Lucian as he looked at Gerald. Fast forward to half an hour later, all three of them were all packed up and ready to go.

After driving for quite a bit, they eventually arrived at the port where they would be transported to the island at around noon. As the trio made their way to the small pier, they saw that at least a dozen small boats had already been moored there. From the looks of it, they had been hired by the auction's organizers to help people get to the island. Regardless, though the boats were pretty small, together, they were still a sight to behold.

Whatever the case was, after approaching a seated man who was wearing a long robe, Lucian asked, "How much to get to the island?"

"Twenty thousand dollars," replied the man without even looking up.

“Here,” said Lucian as he handed the man a wooden box, unsurprised by the outrageous price. After all, this wasn’t Lucian’s first time here, and the pricing had been different every time anyway. Still, it was lucky that he had prepared enough before coming over.

Taking the box, the man then looked inside before closing it again, not even bothering to count the exact amount inside. Following that, he handed it to another man-who was standing nearby-who then tossed the cash into his car.

“The three of you, right? Go on!” said the man as he pointed at the boats.

As they began walking down the dock, Aiden couldn’t help but mutter, “... Isn’t that pricing a bit outrageous...?”

“Twenty thousand is nothing for those attending the auction. In a way, the pricing also acts as a screening process to differentiate between those who really wish to participate and those who are merely here hoping to get some excitement,” replied Lucian as he displayed proof of his payment upon arriving at one of the small boats.

Following that, the three were handed oars before they got into the boat and began rowing. Looking around, Gerald saw that many others were also rowing in the same direction.

Before he could wonder how long they would need to row, however, a tailwind suddenly began blowing. While the wind itself wasn’t all that strong, it allowed their boats to sail forward extremely smoothly.

“You know, I really can’t even begin comprehending the power that the auction organizer holds!” muttered Lucian as he stopped rowing and placed his oar to the side.

“Indeed... This really is something else...” said Gerald with a nod. After all, aside from the fact that there were so many boats on the move, the island wasn’t even in sight yet! How strong was the organizer if they were able to conjure winds to move them forward from this range...?

Lighting a cigarette as he enjoyed the cool sea breeze, Lucian then muttered, "I wonder what's going to be on auction this time... I remember the final auction item being a treasure map the last time the auction was held."

"I see... speaking of which, do they accept cards?" asked Gerald, remembering that Lucian had paid in cash earlier.

"Of course they do. It's not like they're completely isolated from the world. Still, bear in mind that everything here will cost at least a few million dollars..." replied Lucian with a nod.

Chapter 2318

"Glad to hear," said Gerald.

"Is there something you're hoping to buy?" asked Lucian in a curious tone.

"Nothing in particular, though if I find anything good, I may bid for it," replied Gerald as he shook his head. While he wasn't a big fan of auctions, since this one was held once every five years, he had a feeling that there were bound to be items that would catch his fancy. Should he come across one, he would surely bid for it.

After all, what was money to Gerald?

"... Well, alright, but again, I warn that this auction is going to be unlike anything you've ever seen in Weston. Once we're on the island, even random street stall items can cost millions of dollars! With that said, you'll need millions to purchase even a single auction item..." explained Lucian, hoping that his warnings would help Gerald avoid getting overly disappointed by his lack of purchasing power later.

"I understand," replied Gerald in an indifferent tone.

After all, he already knew that this was a game for the rich ever since Lucian had told him that the auction was only held once every five years.

"I'm glad. Either way, we'll probably be on the boat for a few more hours, but rest assured, the organizers have designated places for us to rest once we arrive at the island. While the auction starts the day after tomorrow, the street stalls on the island will begin operating by morning. With that said, maybe we'll find something nice tomorrow morning," explained Lucian as he looked at all the other similar boats.

After giving a nod, Gerald simply closed his eyes in response, releasing his essential qi in the process. Since Lucian had mentioned that many cultivators were attending the auction, Gerald knew he had to be careful. True enough, with the aid of his Herculean Primordial Spirit-which allowed him to sense everything within a ten kilometer radius, Gerald quickly learned that there were cultivators in almost every boat. Some of them were even stronger than him, but only marginally.

Gerald wasn't about to let his guard down before those who didn't appear to be cultivators either. After all, who knew whether they were actually at cultivation levels so high that even he was unable to detect them?

While he wouldn't have been this cautious in the past, after getting to know Jobson and the old man in the ancient ruins, Gerald now knew that there were countless more cultivators out there who were much stronger than him. He just wasn't strong enough to be worthy of meeting them yet!

Regardless, as he looked at the boats around them, Aiden couldn't help but ask, "... Say... Won't commoners find all these boats leaving the port suspicious...?"

"Well, every time there's an auction, the organizers disguise the event as something else. Due to that, commoners tend to just ignore all this. Besides, the island is quite far from shore and there's even a sea fog around it, so there really isn't a chance of the auction getting found out," explained Lucian as he pointed at the fog in the distance.

Fast forward to around five hours later, the outlines of the island could be seen, prompting Gerald to stretch before giving his surroundings a good look. Though this was just an auction, there were countless cultivators attending, so he had to remain vigilant at all times.

Chapter 2319

It was half an hour later when the boats were finally anchored at the shore by a few men donning long robes.

Upon disembarking, Lucian immediately displayed their tickets before saying, "The three of us are from the Grubb family in Yanam."

"Right this way," replied one of the men after taking a brief glance at the trio.

Nodding in response, Lucian then put their tickets away before gesturing for Gerald and Aiden to keep close as he said, "Alright, let's have a meal before getting some rest. Since the sky's going dark soon, I believe that the street stalls won't open today."

Though the island appeared small, upon entering, Gerald quickly realized that it was probably even bigger than Gong Island. What more, instead of having a modern look, the island honestly felt like an ancient Weston town. Gerald, for one, felt like he had just time-traveled a thousand years back.

Now feeling a bit more curious about the island, Gerald was prompted to ask, "Do people actually live on this island...?"

"From what I know, the organizer only sends people over a month or two-before the auction takes place-to clean the place up. Following that, they'll host all the bidders and once the auction ends, the place will be cleaned up again before the island is sealed off. Speaking of which, there's something that you may find interesting. You see, quite a few people who've attended the auction before have claimed that as they were passing through this area-when the auction wasn't on, the island couldn't be seen at all! It was almost as though the island only appeared whenever an auction was about to be held! Though many already know about this rumor, nobody's been able to crack the code of the vanishing island!" explained Lucian as he continued leading the duo to the place they were going to be staying at, at least

according to the invitation card.

Regardless, upon hearing that, Gerald instantly frowned as he said, "... Come again?"

"Hmm? Did I say something wrong?" asked Lucian as he stopped walking for a while.

"Well... you mentioned the island only being visible whenever an auction is being held, correct?" asked Gerald as he thought about Yearning Island. After dealing with the Crawford cultivators back then, he had learned of Yearning Island's mysterious ability to just vanish, something that this very island they were on was apparently capable of doing as well.

"I did, though I assure you it's only a rumor. Unless you've seen this island before?" replied Lucian as he shook his head.

"Negative. I never even knew that this auction existed before you told me," muttered the frowning Gerald who was already certain that this island was equally as abnormal as Yearning Island.

Knowing Gerald well enough, Aiden-who had thought the same thing as Gerald after hearing Lucian's explanation-was prompted to ask, "Are you thinking about Yearning Island, Gerald?"

"Indeed... If there truly is a relationship between this island and Yearning Island, then if I learn this place's secrets, I may finally be able to figure out how to get to Yearning Island!" declared Gerald with a nod.

"... What exactly is this, Yearning Island...?" asked Lucian, feeling utterly confused.

Chapter 2320

After looking around to make sure that nobody was listening in, Gerald then whispered, "I'll tell you

about it another time. There are more pressing issues at hand now.”

“Hmm..? Like what? Do share. Maybe I can help!” replied Lucian.

“Let’s talk about this once we’re in a more private area. The walls have ears and I’d rather not have others hear this,” muttered Gerald, prompting Lucian to nod before continuing to lead the way following the path on the invitation card.

It was about twenty minutes later when the trio arrived at a wooden, three-story building that was surrounded by food stalls and even two pawn shops that apparently only accepted gold and silver as currency. The scene naturally puzzled Gerald who couldn’t help but wonder how those pawnshops and food stalls had even come here in the first place. Though he was confused, he put the thought aside for now as he headed upstairs.

The organizer had arranged for them to stay in the easternmost room on the third floor, and since the invitation grouped the trio together, they soon found themselves looking at an antique-looking suite with three bedrooms connected by a living room. Though the austere-looking room was well furnished, there wasn’t an electrical appliance in sight, not even a lightbulb! As Gerald was wondering how they’d keep the room lit at night, his question was quickly answered when he saw an unopened pack of candles on the table.

Shaking his head, Gerald then put his luggage down before lighting a cigarette and saying in a monotonous tone, “I’d like to learn the island’s secrets.”

“That’s... going to be a bit difficult. After all, no ordinary island would have rumors about it only reappearing every time there was an event...” muttered Lucian as he shook his head. While past attendees had certainly been curious about all this, they had never seriously attempted to crack the code. After all, everyone knew that the organizer-who had never even shown their face before-was not someone they could afford to mess with.

“Even so, I’m giving it a go. Understanding how this island works is extremely important to me,” replied Gerald with a sigh, knowing full well how powerful the organizer was. Even after squeezing every ounce of his power, it was still probably going to be impossible for him to use his essential qi to blow boats

forward for hours!

“... Is all this related to that Yearning Island you mentioned earlier...?” asked Lucian.

“Indeed. Let’s just say that that island is similar to this one. As for why I’m trying to get there, it’s because my parents and sister are trapped on that island, which explains why uncovering this island’s secrets is so important to me. With any luck, should I manage to learn how this island operates, I may finally get my chance to head to Yearning Island...” muttered Gerald as he looked out the window.

“I see... Still, you should know that the organizer never makes an appearance. With that said, none of us know their true identity!” replied Lucian with a slight nod.

Sensing Lucian’s worry, Gerald simply said, “I believe that that can change. While I won’t do anything too drastic just to crack the code, I’ll still be prying around to see if I can learn anything useful.”

“I’ll help,” replied Lucian as he patted Gerald on the shoulder.

“I appreciate it. Either way, I’ll be getting some rest first. Call me if there’s anything,” said Gerald as he puffed on his cigarette before walking toward one of the bedrooms.