

CHAPTER 2001

Regardless, Gerald found himself momentarily stunned by the woman's beauty. To think that there would be someone this charming in the Autremonde Realm... What more, just about anyone could tell that she was an extremely extraordinary woman...

Either way, once all the representatives of the major sects arrived, a simple opening ceremony was held before they were allowed to return to their respective rooms to rest...

Gerald himself was sharing a room with Yalinda since they were both representing the Juans Delivery House...

Fast forward to that night, a few black figures could be seen leaping across the rooftops of Gardale City... From the looks of it, they were headed for Yudell's room.

Thankfully, before they were able to get too close to her, Gerald noticed their presence. Since they were heading in the direction of Yudell's room so sneakily, Gerald immediately had a hunch that these were bad people.

Knowing that Yudell could possibly be in danger, he quickly left his room and headed toward her room as well to investigate.

Meanwhile at Yudell's room, her two attendants could be seen standing at the door. Though they were sent over by the Thundering Cloud Sect to protect her, the dark of night would soon cost them their lives since they were unable to react in time to the two knives that flew toward them at that moment!

Getting stabbed right in their chests, the two of them promptly slid to the floor, dead...

Naturally, Yudell heard this, and she immediately drew her blade before glaring intently at her room's door.

Due to all the footsteps outside, she knew that they were here for trouble.

At that moment, a barely audible 'thud' could be heard above her, prompting Yudell to look up... only to see Gerald there waving at her from the open roof!

"Come with me, hurry...! Those men out there are after you!" whispered Gerald, prompting Yudell to look at the door again.

Hearing the footsteps slowly inching toward her door, Yudell knew she didn't really have much of a choice but to leap up the roof and hide with Gerald....

Thankfully, she managed to do so just in time before the door to her room was opened.

Following that, the few black figures rushed into the room, hoping to deal with Yudell. To their dismay, she was nowhere to be seen!

“She’s not here, leader! What should we do now?” asked one of the black figures.

“This lucky b*tch...! It seems that we’ve been discovered! No matter! Let’s head off for now!” scoffed what appeared to be the leader as he snorted before leading his men away...

Once they were gone, Gerald and Yudell leaped back into the room...

Looking at her, Gerald was prompted to ask, “So... Who exactly were they? And why were they looking for you in the first place?”

Ignoring his question, Yudell simply walked out the room... and when she saw that her two attendants were dead, she couldn’t help but frown.

After a short while, she turned to look at Gerald before asking, “...Who are you? And how did you know they were coming after me?”

It was at that moment when Gerald came to realize something. While Yudell looked even more beautiful up close, Gerald was more stunned by the fact that her aura was extremely similar to Yalinda’s...

CHAPTER 2002

Since Gerald was staring at her so intently, Yudell couldn’t help but blush slightly as she raised her longsword, pointing it at Gerald as she said, “Why are you looking at me like that? Also, why haven’t you answered my questions?”

Snapping out of it, Gerald quickly replied, “...My name is Gerald Crawford, and I’m a participant representing the Juans Delivery House in the competition between cultivators! As for why I’m here, I couldn’t sleep so I came out here for a stroll. While walking about, I happened to notice the black figures from before bolting toward your room, so I simply followed them here!”

While Yudell wasn’t completely convinced with his explanation, she put her sword away before saying, “...I see. Either way, you may leave now. Since none of this concerns you, you saw nothing tonight! Understand?”

Hearing that, Gerald was left utterly speechless.

'I just saved you, you know? Would it kill to show a bit of gratitude? Your temper's as bad as Yalinda's!' Gerald thought to himself as he left the scene...

Regardless, once morning came, the first day of the competition between cultivators officially began. By that point, a spacious arena had been set up in Gardale city for the participants to duel...

Once everyone was there, General Lucarl walked up the arena before declaring, "Good day, ladies and gentlemen! Before anything else, allow me to apologize to Miss Yudell, the representative of the Thundering Cloud Sect! From what I've been told, she was attacked last night, and I'm sure this stems from the fact that our guards didn't perform their garrison duty properly! As a result, not only was she nearly attacked, but her two attendants were killed in the process!"

Upon hearing that, all the audience members turned to look at Yudell who—unlike the day before—was now standing alone...

Seeing that, an uproar immediately sprung up, with many among the crowd discussing why the murderers targeted solely Yudell when so many representatives from other sects were present.

In the end, the majority agreed that the Thundering Cloud Sect must have offended some major party...

"While all this is deeply upsetting, it doesn't change the fact that the competition between cultivators is still on today. With that said, the competition will commence as planned! As for our first contenders, the first duel will be between Yudell Mullington from the Thundering Cloud Sect and Watts Jobe from the Sect of Steel! Contenders, please prepare yourselves!"

Hearing that, everyone was slightly surprised, including Gerald. After all, who would've expected that she would be first to fight?

Still, Gerald didn't see that as a bad thing. After all, he would now be able to witness how strong she truly was. Yalinda herself had previously told him how powerful she was, so he was keen on finding out how true that statement was.

Either way, it was shortly after when both Yudell and Watts entered the arena...

The Sect of Steel was equally as famous as the Thundering Cloud Sect, and it was located in Liverbrook Valley south of Shontell. From what Gerald had heard, Watts was also the first disciple of the sect, which was probably why he was sent here to represent them.

Regardless, it was a pleasant surprise that such major sects would be dueling straight off the bat. It definitely made everyone excited.

Whatever the case was, Watts gave a good look at Yudell before smiling smugly as he said, "You know, the Thundering Cloud Sect has always won first place in the past... I wonder if you can maintain their winning streak!"

"Cut the cr*p! My sect is definitely going to win first prize again!" scoffed Yudell arrogantly.

While Watts definitely appeared confident, his smug smile would make anyone feel pissed...

CHAPTER 2003

Regardless, once the battle commenced, Yudell took the initiative to draw her sword out before running toward Watts!

Watts himself wasn't going to be easy to be dealt with. After all, he was the first disciple of the Sect of Steel, which meant that he had much more experience than Yudell. Due to that, he didn't fear Yudell in the least, and simply drew his own sword out when he saw her running toward him... before launching an aurablade at her!

Seeing that, Yudell instantly moved to the side to avoid the hit before launching her own aurablade toward the attack!

With an explosive sound, the two aurablades met, creating such a massive blast that both Yudell and Watts had to take a few steps back to steady themselves.

As it turned out, both of them were evenly matched...

Staring wide-eyed at all that had just happened, Yalinda couldn't help but whisper, "It looks like Yalinda and Watts have about the same amount of strength!"

"Not quite. Just so you know, Yudell hasn't exerted all her strength yet!" replied Gerald in a confident tone.

While Yalinda was left confused as to why he had said that, Yudell herself simply raised her blade before closing her eyes...

Upon seeing that, Yalinda couldn't help but squeal before saying, "Master! If my guess is correct, Yudell seems to be ready to attack with the Blintz Sword Technique! It's the Thundering Cloud Sect's most powerful sword attack!"

"Hmm... Is it really that powerful...?" asked Gerald slightly skeptically.

“It is! Just so you know, only disciples of that sect are allowed to even learn the technique!” explained Yalinda, prompting Gerald to nod.

As for Watts, he could already tell that Yudell was about to attack with her strongest move. Knowing that, Watts—who was unwilling to just lose like that—immediately began setting up his own skill. After all, it was the only way to get past her attack!

Unfortunately for him, he was a bit too late.

“First move of the Blintz Sword Technique... Cloud Execute!” roared Yudell as she opened her eyes!

Following that, her sword began glowing in a dazzling aura... and barely a second later, Yudell disappeared!

Naturally, this made Watts’s heart skip a beat, and he immediately went into a defensive position, exerting a strong aura that would possibly help him withstand her attack a bit better.

Sadly for him, the second his aura was all set to go, a ray of light shattered it into pieces!

Now standing right before him, Yudell—who wasn’t giving him any room to defend himself—immediately yelled, “Second move of the Blintz Sword Technique, Clear Moon!”

The second she said that, several shadowy blades that flickered like moonlight began bolting toward Watts!

Unable to even respond in time, Watts could only accept his defeat as multiple shadowblades slashed at him, eventually causing him to stumble right off the arena! He never stood a chance against Yudell’s attack!

Then again, it was the most powerful sword technique of the Thundering Cloud Sect. With that in mind, it was pretty obvious that not anyone could survive it...

CHAPTER 2004

“Holy cr*p...! That attack was so terrifyingly awesome...!” exclaimed Yalinda, unable to help but wonder if she’d even stand a chance against Yudell if she ended up having to duel against her...

“It truly is... Still, it has its flaws. It’s a pity that Watts wasn’t able to find a way to properly deal with it!” replied Gerald rather casually.

Unlike other people, Gerald's trained eye was immediately able to identify how to counter that attack.

"...Huh? Have you already found a way to counter the attack, master?" replied Yalinda in disbelief.

"Of course I have!" said Gerald in a confident tone.

With how confident his reply was, Yalinda knew better than to doubt her master.

Whatever the case was, now that Watts had been beaten, General Lucarl stepped forward before announcing, "And the winner for this round is... Yudell! The Thundering Cloud Sect's representative!"

Hearing that, Yudell then sheathed her sword... Since this was simply a competition, there was no need for her to overdo things. Besides, if she had really wanted to kill Watts, she wouldn't have held back her full strength earlier...

Watt himself was naturally dissatisfied with the results. However, he knew better than to be a sore loser before all those spectators. Doing so would only bring shame to his Sect of Steel...

Regardless, Kay then cleared his throat before declaring, "A stunning first fight! Let's proceed with our next contestants, Gerald Crawford, the representative of Juan's Delivery House, and Clyde Gower, the Gower family's representative! Please prepare yourselves!"

"Oh? I didn't think you'd go up against Clyde, master! If he's your opponent, you're definitely going to win!" said Yalinda rather excitedly.

"You seem familiar with him... How powerful is he?" asked Gerald.

"He's about as strong as I am. In other words, he's nowhere near your level!" explained Yalinda.

Nodding in response, Gerald then walked into the arena...

Clyde himself was already there, and the second he saw Gerald, he immediately frowned before scoffing, "Why are you representing the Juans Delivery House instead of Yalinda?"

While the others didn't know it, Clyde had specifically trained himself to deal with Yalinda for the longest time. With that in mind, he was understandably grumpy now that this random nobody showed up instead of her.

'Who even is this guy...?' grumbled Clyde in his mind.

Simply chuckling in response, Gerald then smiled subtly before replying, "You won't be able to take her on with me here!"

Upon hearing that, Clyde grew even more gloomy. Still, Gerald didn't look particularly strong to him, so he wasn't planning on taking him seriously...

While all this was happening, Yudell herself kept a close eye on Gerald, her eyebrows slightly furrowed. After all, since there was a chance that she'd face him later, she wanted to see how strong he truly was.

"Ahh... Who cares if the Juans Delivery House has two representatives! I'll just take you down first so that I can beat Yalinda later!" scoffed Clyde confidently, knowing full well that the weak-looking man before would never be able to pose a threat to him!

CHAPTER 2005

"While it's good to be confident, arrogance will only lead to downfall!" retorted Gerald.

"Cut the cr*p and let's just get this over with!" scowled Clyde with a snort before bolting angrily toward Gerald!

Still, just as Yalinda had earlier said, Clyde was about as strong as she was. With that in mind, there was no way in hell he could ever defeat him!

Before Clyde could even get to Gerald, the youth had already launched him out of the arena with a single kick to the chest!

The second Clyde landed, he immediately passed out... and upon snapping out of their shock, the audience members instantly got to their feet before turning to stare wide-eyed at Gerald! To think that he had taken Clyde out in only a single move! Who would've thought that Gerald was this powerful...!

Even Yudell was shocked by this turn of events. After all, Gerald had moved so quickly that by the time she knew it, Clyde was already flying out of the arena! What inhuman speed...!

Kay himself had his jaw dropped. No wonder the contestant's name sounded so familiar! To think that Gerald had joined the competition as well!

He remembered meeting Gerald outside the city when Tanner was attacked, and he also recalled Tanner telling him that Gerald was incredibly strong. While he had his doubts back then, he was now completely sure that Gerald had monstrous strength...!

While it was true that Clyde wasn't particularly strong, he wasn't weak enough to be taken out in just a single attack! With that in mind, it was obvious just how strong Gerald was...

Whatever the case was, Kay quickly snapped out of it before ordering, "Men! Carry Clyde away to let him recover! Also, the winner for the second round is Gerald from the Juans Delivery House!"

With that announcement made, Gerald then returned to his seat.

Once he sat beside Yalinda, she immediately praised, "You were so strong earlier, master! To think that you were able to defeat Clyde with just a single attack!"

Yudell—who was seated opposite of them—, on the other hand, couldn't help but stare closely at Gerald. Since he was this strong, she knew it was going to be far tougher now to get first prize...

Moving on, the following rounds weren't particularly noteworthy, and the duels for the first day soon came to an end...

With nothing more to do that day, everyone simply returned to their rooms to rest up, knowing that there would be more duels to come tomorrow...

Yalinda herself was apparently going to duel tomorrow.

Regardless, not everyone who lost on the first day would be immediately disqualified. It all depended on the scores everyone got, and only the ten people with the lowest scores would end up getting disqualified...

Since Gerald had successfully gained one point, he was currently in the lead...

Fast forward to nighttime, Yalinda—who was currently in her shared room with Gerald—couldn't help but ask, "Say... If you end up having to face Yudell, what will you do, master...?"

Upon hearing that, Gerald realized that he hadn't thought about that.

After a slight pause, Gerald then replied, "Well, what do you propose I should do? Defeat her? Or maybe you're thinking I should just throw in the towel?"

“That... I’m... not sure, honestly... Regardless of what your choice is, I’ll still respect it, master! Still, I do believe that Yudell won’t ever be able to take you on!” said Yalinda. After all, she, of all people, knew that nobody in Shontell was as powerful as he was...

CHAPTER 2006

Hearing that, Gerald simply chuckled in response. Still, he had a feeling that he was going to have to go easy on Yudell if they really did end up facing each other...

After thinking about it for a bit longer, Gerald was prompted to ask, “Is there any actual advantage in winning the first prize?”

“There are! For one, you’ll obtain the extremely honorable title of ‘national scholar’ in Shontell! The champion will also be given a chance to choose and obtain one of the precious treasures from our national treasury!” explained Yalinda rather excitedly.

“Oh? Are there many treasures in the national treasury?” asked Gerald in a curious tone.

“Of course!” exclaimed Yalinda, her eyes glinting with excitement as she nodded.

“I see! Then I’ll definitely have to win first prize then!” replied Gerald, his interest now piqued.

“Glad to hear that, master! While I may not have a very high chance of getting first place, you’ll surely have no problems with that, master! Once you’ve won, the Juans Delivery House’s popularity will surely skyrocket!” said Yalinda in a joyous tone.

Since Gerald was representing the Juans Delivery House, if he won, Tanner and his daughter would also be winners. It was a win for all of them!

Truth be told, she had initially participated just to have some fun. She never imagined that she would actually be able to enjoy the benefits of getting first prize...

At that moment, knocking could suddenly be heard coming from their door.

Instantly growing vigilant as both of them glared at the door, Yalinda was first to ask, “...Who is it?”

“It’s Yudell! I’m here to ask Gerald something!” replied Yudell.

Upon hearing that it was Yudell, Yalinda immediately looked surprised. Turning to look at Gerald, she then whispered, “To think that Yudell would come looking for you, master...!”

Whatever the case was, Yalinda then opened the door for her...

Once Yudell was inside, she turned to face Gerald before saying, "There's something I need to talk to you about, Gerald. Would you mind sparing a minute?"

Hearing that, Gerald then looked at Yalinda before nudging toward the door's direction.

Understanding what he meant, Yalinda then walked out and closed the door behind her...

Standing right outside, Yalinda waited there patiently, knowing that her master and his future wife had important things to discuss...

Regardless, now that Yudell and Gerald were alone in the room, Gerald gestured at a couch before politely saying, "Please, have a seat."

After doing so himself, Gerald then added, "So... Why exactly have you come looking for me this late, Miss Mullington?"

"There's just something I need to ask you!" replied Yudell without beating around the bush.

"Go on..." muttered Gerald.

"Essentially, I've seen how powerful you are, and I know I'll never be your match! However, I hope you'll allow me to win first prize! Becoming champion is extremely important to me...!" pleaded Yudell with a serious expression on her face...

CHAPTER 2007

"...Fine. However, you'll owe me one, and I can ask for your help whenever necessary! Deal?" replied Gerald.

Though she was slightly surprised to hear that, Yudell had a feeling that it was alright making such a deal with Gerald. With that in mind, after a brief pause, Yudell replied, "...Deal!"

With the agreement made, Yudell then left Gerald's room...

Fast forward to morning, Yalinda and Gerald returned to the arena. While everything else remained mostly the same, an old man was now the representative of the Thundering Cloud Sect.

Regardless, it was finally time for Yalinda to enter the ring today...

Truth be told, she had only ever participated in small competitions before this. In other words, this was her first time participating in such a major competition, which explained why she was feeling so anxious right now...

Not long after, Zenon Lightning stepped forth before announcing, "Good day to all! It's the second day of the competition between cultivators, and the first match will be between Yalinda Juans, the representative of the Juans Delivery House, and Levi Homewood, the eldest son of an aristocratic sword family! Please prepare yourselves!"

Hearing that, both Yalinda and Levi walked to the center of the arena, staring intently at each other throughout the process...

Once they were standing right in front of each other, Levi smiled subtly as he said, "Well, well, who'd have thought we'd be going against each other today!"

Chuckling in response, Yalinda then replied, "Indeed! I hope you'll go easy on me today, Mr. Homewood! After all, I've heard countless tales of your swordsmanship! While I'm glad to be able to widen my horizons through our upcoming duel, let's try not to overdo it, alright?"

As Yalinda had said, this was just a martial arts competition, and such competitions were usually held to deepen bonds between the challengers. Killing was naturally prohibited, so defeating the opponent was usually good enough.

"But of course, Miss Juans!" replied Levi.

Since both of them came from rich and powerful families in Shontell, Yalinda believed that Levi was a nice person. At the very least, he probably wouldn't do anything too despicable...

Regardless, now that they had agreed on that, both of them drew their weapons...

While Yalinda was wielding a long, black whip, Levi had a longsword—that was manufactured by his family—in hand.

Being an aristocratic family in Shontell, not only were the Homewoods well known for manufacturing excellent swords, but they were also famed for their swordplay. Time and again, the Homewoods' swordsmanship had evolved for the better, and few were able to win against them. Due to that, they received fewer and fewer challengers by the year.

With that in mind, not many people had been able to witness the Homewoods' true sword-fighting capabilities in recent years, which explained why Yalinda was feeling so honored to be able to duel against the eldest son of the Homewood family today. Even if she did end up losing, she'd still be left satisfied...

Whatever the case was, after staring at each other for a bit longer, the duo then rushed forward simultaneously!

Taking the initiative to strike, Yalinda lashed her whip, creating thunderous sounds that almost made it feel like the air was getting shattered into pieces...!

While that was certainly impressive, Levi wasn't about to let her take all the action. With a swift slash of his sword, the sheer power of it caused Yalinda's whip to get flung backward!

CHAPTER 2008

Despite Levi's counterattack, Yalinda was quite skilled with her whip. With that in mind, she immediately switched up her attacking style, constantly barraging Levi with ranged whip attacks that prevented him from coming too close.

Upon seeing that, Gerald—who had been watching the fight from the moment it began—couldn't help but widen his eyes in surprise. After all, he had never seen Yalinda use a whip before. Still, with how skillful she was with the weapon, Gerald had a feeling that Yalinda had spent ages training for the competition.

While he had to admit that Yalinda was skilled with the whip, Gerald knew that she wasn't Levi's match. After all, he could tell that Levi was still going easy on her.

If Levi truly decided to get serious, then Yalinda would surely have zero chance of winning... It wasn't as if he was trying to look down on his disciple, but this was simply the reality of the situation...

Regardless, it wasn't long after before Levi began displaying his true capabilities. Enveloping his sword in a shadowy aura, Levi then began sending shadowblade after shadowblade flying toward Yalinda!

Seeing that, Yalinda immediately retracted her whip, spinning it rapidly before her to form a protective aura against his attack! Unfortunately, Yalinda was a bit too late...

Before she could even fully get her protective shield up, one of the shadowblades struck the base of her whip, causing it to fly right out of Yalinda's hand!

Upon realizing what had just happened, Yalinda instantly knew that she had lost. With that in mind, she immediately yelled, "I admit defeat!"

Yalinda, for one, wasn't an idiot. The second Levi began using his true strength earlier, she already knew that she wasn't his match. Honestly, she was thankful that he hadn't used too much of his strength. Otherwise, she would've surely been unable to end the match unscathed...

Either way, upon hearing that, Levi sheathed his blade before smiling at Yalinda as he said, "I have to say, I'm quite impressed by the way you use your whip! I hope we'll have another chance to spar again in the future! Perhaps we could learn a thing or two from each other then!"

Smiling in response, Yalinda then nodded as she replied, "Of course, Mr. Homewood! Also, thank you for going easy on me!"

Following that, both of them bowed politely at each other before leaving the arena...

With that, Zenon took the chance to announce, "And so it's been decided! Mr. Homewood from the aristocratic sword family is the winner!"

Shortly after, Yalinda returned to her seat beside Gerald. Lowering her head rather meekly, she then muttered, "...I'm sorry for losing, master...! I must be an embarrassment to you...!"

Smiling in response, Gerald simply replied, "There's no need to apologize... After all, you did your best. Besides, I could already tell from the start that Levi was much stronger than you were. It was just your luck to have to deal with such a strong opponent straight off the bat! Still, winning and losing is all part of competitions like this, right?"

Gerald himself truly meant what he said. After all, his disciple was clearly daring enough to go against someone much tougher than her.

Whatever the case was, now that he had said that, Gerald was prompted to ask, "Speaking of which... How famous is the Homewood family in Shontell...?"

Based on his question alone, it was clear that his interest in that family had been piqued...

CHAPTER 2009

"Well, pretty famous I'd say! After all, not only are the Homewoods one of the top aristocratic families in Shontell, but they're also well known for the swords they manufacture as well as their swordsmanship! In fact, they're the only people who know how to utilize the Homewood Sword Technique!" explained Yalinda.

"I see... Could you introduce Levi to me then? I'd love to get acquainted with him!" replied Gerald.

“...Oh? Why so sudden, master?” asked Yalinda rather curiously.

“Well, there’s nothing wrong with getting to know more people. Besides, I have a feeling that Levi is a nice person!” explained Gerald with a subtle smile.

“Well... Alright then! I’ll bring you over to meet him once I’m done later!” replied Yalinda. After all, she had no reason to reject her master’s suggestion.

Regardless, the morning session of the competition came to an end at noon, and it was then when Yalinda led Gerald to Levi. They were just in time too since Levi was about to leave Gardale City when they found him.

Seeing that, Yalinda immediately yelled, “M-Mr. Homewood! Wait up!”

Upon hearing Yalinda’s familiar voice, Levi then turned around and waited for them...

Once they were before him, he then smiled before asking, “To what do I owe this pleasure, Miss Juans?”

Simply laughing in response, Yalinda then said, “Well, I’m not the one looking for you... My master’s the one!”

“Oh? Your master, you say?” replied Levi, feeling slightly puzzled as he turned to look at Gerald.

Levi, for one, had witnessed Clyde’s defeat by Gerald’s hands yesterday. While it was true that he greatly admired Gerald after that, he still couldn’t believe that Yalinda’s master looked to be around the same age as he was!

Either way, since Levi wasn’t saying anything, Gerald took the chance to smile before saying, “Good day, Mr. Homewood! As Yalinda said, I’m her master. You can call me Gerald Crawford!”

Hearing that, Levi then snapped out of it before replying, “...Ah, yes! Forgive the silence, I was just surprised that you wanted to meet me in the first place! Regardless, I remember seeing you defeat Clyde with just a single move yesterday... Quite impressive, I must say!”

“You flatter me, Mr. Homewood! Either way, Yalinda’s already told me about you some time ago, and it truly is an honor to meet you in the flesh, Mr. Homewood!” replied Gerald, knowing full well that rich young masters like Levi loved it when others fawned on him.

As expected, Levi instantly smiled widely after hearing that. Laughing heartily, he then declared, "Now you're just exaggerating, Mr. Crawford! Regardless, I'm about to head out to have a grand lunch now. Would you two like to join me?"

"Well, since you've invited us so courteously, how could we say no?" replied Gerald.

Yalinda herself simply smiled while nodding. Wherever Gerald went, she would go as well...

With that, the trio left Gardale City together...

Unbeknownst to them, however, two men had been keeping an eye on the party from a high platform within Gardale City...

CHAPTER 2010

"...It looks like Gerald has gotten acquainted with Yalinda and Levi, young master!" muttered one of the men to the youth donning luxurious clothes standing beside him.

The youth himself was none other than Clyde! He had felt extremely humiliated ever since Gerald took him down in a single strike, and his resentment toward Gerald knew no bounds! After all, he hadn't been humiliated before in his life, so he was going to teach Gerald a lesson if it was the last thing he did!

"As if I care! Gather the four great envoys! I want Gerald dead by the end of this! That way, he'll no longer be able to continue participating in the following competitions!" scoffed Clyde, grinning sinisterly as he looked at the man standing beside him.

"Understood, young master!" replied the man with a nod before swiftly leaving the scene...

Naturally, Gerald and Yalinda had no idea what dangers they would soon come to face...

Regardless, the three of them soon arrived at a restaurant and sat at a table. After chatting while eating for a while, all three of them almost seemed like old friends who hadn't met each other in ages...

Funnily enough, despite Levi and Yalinda coming from famous and prestigious families in Shontell, they had never personally contacted each other before this. To think that the competition between cultivators would be the push they needed to finally get to know each other...

Whatever the case was, after eating for a while, Levi turned to look at Gerald before curiously asking, "Speaking of which... I wonder which sect you're from, Mr. Crawford?"

Levi was asking since he had never seen anything similar to the aura and move that Gerald had used in his battle with Clyde yesterday. With that in mind, he was pretty sure Gerald wasn't a local.

Chuckling in response, Gerald then replied in a rather embarrassed tone, "You'll have to forgive me, Mr. Homewood... My master's forbidden me from revealing his title and sect!"

While Levi was stunned to hear that, he didn't continue inquiring...

Seeing that Levi wasn't pressing on, Gerald himself took the chance to ask, "Actually, I do have some questions of my own, if you don't mind me asking, Mr. Homewood..."

"Oh? Go on!" replied Levi.

"Well, I heard that your aristocratic family manufactures swords, right?"

"Indeed we do! Honestly, almost everyone in Shontell—who's proficient in swordsmanship—uses blades made by my family! Why the question, though? Could it be that you're interested in manufacturing swords as well?" asked Levi rather curiously.

Nodding with a slight chuckle, Gerald then sheepishly replied, "You caught me red-handed, Mr. Homewood! I'm just interested since I've never seen how swords were made before. Besides, I also wish to possess a suitable weapon for myself!"

Gerald wasn't kidding either. After all, if things went swimmingly, there was a chance that he would be able to get the Homewoods to manufacture a perfectly suitable weapon for him. That way, he wouldn't have to fight others unarmed anymore.

"I see... Well, since you're Miss Juans's master, I'll just have to pay you some respect! Very well, then! You can follow me to my family's smithery after lunch! You can pick a suitable sword for yourself then!" replied the sensible Levi, without the slightest hesitation...

CHAPTER 2011

Hearing that, Gerald was immediately prompted to say, "Thank you, Young Master Homewood!"

Honestly, Gerald had thought that Levi would be a little more reluctant. After all, this was their first meeting. As it turned out, Levi was quite the generous person!

"You're being way too polite, brother Crawford! In exchange, however, I do have one small request that I hope you can fulfill!" replied Levi.

"Go on, Young Master Homewood!"

"Essentially, I hope that you won't go easy on me should we end up having to duel in the competition!"

"Deal!" replied Gerald, who was already planning to do that anyway. After all, he wanted to have a taste of how strong the Homewood Sword Technique actually was.

Now that Levi had specifically asked for it, Gerald knew he didn't have to hold back any longer... It truly was a win-win situation.

Regardless, the trio then continued having jovial conversations till they finished their meals. As promised, Levi took the duo to his family's smithery right after lunch.

The smithery itself was a landmark in Shontell, with the building looking like a gigantic sword that had been stabbed into the ground. As if that wasn't already impressive enough, the massive workshop inside was optimized to provide constant stocks to all the sword-selling shops in Shontell...

Moving back to the trio, with the smithery in sight, Yalinda's eyes instantly widened as she exclaimed, "Oh boy! This is the first time looking at the smithery up-close!"

Naturally, not many were granted access into the smithery. Aside from workers and family members of the Homewood family, anyone else would need to have proof of their identity before being allowed to enter, which explained why Yalinda had never even come close to the building after living in Shontell for so long.

Since they had Levi leading their way, however, Gerald and Yalinda had no problems entering...

Once inside, the two were immediately amazed by how hot and steamy everything was! With endless 'clanking' of metal getting hammered all around, it was evident that the workers were serious with their craft. It truly was a remarkable scene...

Gerald, for one, figured that people of old—back on earth—must have manufactured swords like this as well...

Looking at Gerald, Levi then asked, "Come have a look here, brother Gerald! What do you think?"

"Amazing is the only word I can think of at the moment... Your smithery truly is spectacular!" praised Gerald from the bottom of his heart.

Chuckling in response, Levi then said, "As a trivia, know that my smithery can produce over a thousand high-quality weapons every single day! They're so sharp that you can easily slice stones with them!"

Following that, Levi then led Gerald and Yalinda to the area where the finished products were stored... and inside, there were at least a hundred swords, with each sword looking different from the other.

Smiling, Levi then declared, "Pick one for yourself, brother Gerald! Consider it my gift to you!"

CHAPTER 2012

With Levi smiling so generously as he pointed toward the swords, Gerald saw no reason not to oblige.

To his slight disappointment, however, Gerald couldn't help but feel that the swords weren't as good as Levi described them to be. Sure, they were all pretty good, but they were probably only perfect in the eyes of commoners. In other words, none of them were good enough for Gerald's standards. Still, Gerald knew better than to reject the offer after going through all this. With that, he began carefully observing the swords...

A few minutes later, he finally found one that was a little better than the rest in the pile. At the very least, he would be able to use this as a temporary weapon...

With that, he lifted the sword, showing it to Levi and Yalinda before saying, "I shall choose this one, then!"

"A fine choice, brother Gerald! I hope you'll use that very sword on the day of our duel!" replied Levi with a laugh.

"But of course!" said Gerald enthusiastically.

Fast forward to that night, Gerald and Yalinda made it back to the delivery house...

There wasn't exactly a rule that they had to stay in Gardale city, so they saw no reason not to return here. Honestly, the only plus to staying in the city was the fact that if anything happened to them there, the authorities would have to take full responsibility...

Contrarily, if something happened to them outside the city, the consequences would be their own to bear. It was why Clyde had sent his men to kill Gerald once he was outside of the city. Once the deed was done, even if the king and queen of Shontell and Zenon found out about what he did, they wouldn't be able to hold him accountable...

Whatever the case was, the second the duo entered the delivery house, Yale—who just so happened to be there—instantly leaped into Gerald's arms before yelling, "Brother Gerald! You're finally back! It's been two whole days since we last met! I've missed you so much...!"

Raising a slight brow at the childish man, Gerald could only helplessly say, "For heaven's sake, it's only been two days! Get a hold of yourself!"

Yalinda herself simply rolled her eyes in annoyance as she added, "You know, instead of simply waiting here, you really should try picking up some simple martial arts! Master can't protect you all the time, you know?"

True enough, Yale couldn't just rely on Gerald all the time for protection, and he knew that. Still, Yale couldn't help but pout, "That... Well, with neither of you here, who could I have even learned from?"

"Simple! Just ask my father for help! Just so you know, he was the one who showed me the ropes!" replied Yalinda.

The moment she said that, Tanner approached them while saying, "Oh? Yalinda! Gerald! You're back!"

"Father!" yelled Yalinda as she quickly ran over to hug him.

Patting her lovingly, Tanner then asked, "So... How did the competition go, Yalinda?"

CHAPTER 2013

Simply sighing in response, Yalinda then said, "I... lost to Levi on my very first battle! I don't really want to talk about it... However, you should've seen how strong master was, father! He took down Clyde with only a single move, you know?"

Chuckling in response, Tanner then replied, "Oh? Impressive! Regardless, losing is just part of the learning process! It's no big deal! Besides, you only participated to have some fun, right?"

Nodding in response, Yalinda then said, "Speaking of which, father, I need your help with something!"

"Hmm? What is it?" asked Tanner curiously.

"Well, starting tomorrow, I'd like you to start teaching Yale martial arts!"

"...Huh? Why so sudden? And why me?" asked the surprised Tanner, clearly not expecting that request from his daughter.

"Yale's been meaning to learn for a while, but master and I currently have no time to teach him! So... yeah," replied Yalinda as she shrugged.

After thinking for a while, Tanner then looked at Yale before asking, "Well... Are you willing to learn from me, Yale? While I'm not as powerful as Gerald, I can still teach you the basics!"

Nodding in response, Yale then said, "I am! I just don't want brother Gerald to keep having to protect me... With that said, please allow me to start learning martial arts from you from tomorrow onward, Captain Juans!"

"Well said. I'll start waking you up early in the morning then! Consider this a warning, but if you don't get up in time, don't blame me for being merciless!" replied Tanner as he nodded in satisfaction.

Upon hearing that, Yalinda couldn't help but snicker. Inching closer to Gerald, she then whispered, "Yale's going to be in so much trouble tomorrow, master...! Just so you know, he's notoriously strict! I was punished time and again by father when I first started learning martial arts under him!"

Smiling subtly, Gerald wasn't really against that idea. After all, Yale had chosen to learn martial arts, so he may as well do it properly. If Yale succeeded in withstanding all the torture and challenges to come, he would surely be successful in his quest...

Whatever the case was, it was late that night when Gerald and Yale were in their shared room, resting in their beds.

Shortly after, however, Gerald's eyes opened when he suddenly heard footsteps on the roof. Sitting up straight as he continued listening vigilantly, Gerald then turned to look at Yale who was unfortunately sleeping like a log...

Either way, knowing that danger was close by, Gerald then got off his bed before rushing out of the house. Once he was outside, he leaped onto the rooftop... and was instantly greeted by the sight of four men donning black clothes!

Seeing that all four of them were holding machetes, Gerald was prompted to ask, “Who are you? And what are you doing here?”

Hearing that, the four men exchange glances at each other... and after a while, they turned to attack Gerald!

With how fast they all were, Gerald could immediately tell that they were all stronger than his disciple...

CHAPTER 2014

Realizing that, Gerald then leaped down again, landing in the field below. Naturally, the four assassins followed, and they soon encircled the youth...

Glaring at each of them, Gerald then said, “I’ll ask one more time. Who sent you here?”

Despite his intimidating tone, none of them said a word... Instead, they simply raised their machetes and began charging toward Gerald! Seeing that, Gerald knew that peace simply wasn’t an option...

While all four of the assassins had near-perfect teamwork, with each of them even having their own attack styles that complemented the others—that would most definitely confuse their targets—, it was unfortunate that their opponent was Gerald...

Before they could even land a single attack on him, Gerald had already flung dozens of silver needles—that he had kept concealed under his clothes—at each of them with lightning speed!

Due to how fast his attack was, neither of them were able to dodge in time! Since Gerald had aimed the needles at their key chakras, all of them ended up getting instantly paralyzed as well...

With that done, Gerald then walked toward one of them to uncover his face... but the moment he did so, he immediately furrowed his brows.

As it turned out, the assassin’s mouth had been sewn shut! Checking in on the other three, Gerald saw the same thing... No wonder they didn’t say a word this entire time!

Still, the person who had sent the assassins over must have been really wary about revealing their identity... Even so, to mute someone just to do that... How utterly inhumane...!

At that moment, Tanner and Yalinda—who had heard the racket outside—came running over...

“Master!”

“Gerald!” yelled both of them, worried that something had happened to him.

“I’m fine!” replied Gerald as he waved his hand...

Once they saw the four paralyzed assassins, Yalinda couldn’t help but frown as she said, “...These people... came to kill you? But why?”

Shaking his head, Gerald simply replied, “I have no idea, though I do know they were sent over by someone else. After all, all their mouths are sewn shut! The person in charge of all this really doesn’t want their identity exposed!”

Upon hearing that, Tanner thought for a moment before exclaiming, “...Hold on. I’ve seen these people before!”

Hearing that, Yalinda and Gerald immediately turned to look at Tanner in anticipation.

“I... I remember now! I think they’re from the Gower family!” added Tanner.

“...What? The Gowers? Master, do you think Clyde could have...” muttered Yalinda after some thought.

“Well, we’ll just have to find out from these four! Though they can’t speak, they can still shake their heads and nod!” replied Gerald with a wry smile.

With that said, Gerald then unsealed the chakras of one of the assassins and pressed his hand hard on his shoulder, firmly pinning the man to the ground...

CHAPTER 2015

“Alright, listen up. Answer my questions honestly and maybe I’ll spare your life. Nod if it’s true, and shake your head if it’s not, got it?” growled Gerald as he glared at the assassin.

Upon hearing that, the man could only nod.

“Good. First off, are you from the Gower family?” asked Gerald, pleased to get a reaction.

While he hesitated for a while, the mute man eventually nodded.

"I see. And was it Clyde Gower who sent you over?" asked Gerald, squinting his eyes as the assassin nodded again.

Understanding the full story now, Gerald then turned to look at Tanner as he said, "Please get your men to tie them up first, Captain Juans. I'll report this to General Lucarl tomorrow!"

Gerald was planning to confront Clyde in the presence of the king, queen, and Kay tomorrow, and since the four assassins could still be used as evidence, Gerald didn't feel the need to finish them off just yet.

Regardless, it wasn't long before Tanner's men came along with some ropes and sacks. Though the assassins were tied and locked up in the storeroom, Gerald made sure not to unseal their chakras, just for extra measure...

Soon enough, morning came, and Gerald and Yalinda returned to Gardale City. As for Tanner, Gerald had told him to wait outside the city's gates with the assassins, bringing them into the city only when Gerald gave the cue to

By the time they entered the arena, everyone was already seated. As it turned out, the only contenders who had yet to arrive were Gerald and Yalinda...

Naturally, when Clyde saw Gerald and Yalinda still alive, his eyes instantly widened. He, for one, knew the capabilities of his four great envoys. With that in mind, how the hell was Gerald still alive?!

Gerald himself turned to face Clyde, and their eyes momentarily met. Seeing how panicked Clyde was, Gerald couldn't help but smile rather smugly.

Whatever the case was, once Kay saw that they were finally here, he immediately said, "Representatives of the Juans Delivery House! A bit late, don't you think?"

Upon hearing that, Yalinda walked toward him before respectfully replying, "Our apologies, General Lucarl, but we're late for a reason! We encountered a... situation of sorts last night that we'd like to bring up to the king, queen, and also you!"

Raising a slight brow, Kay then said, "Go on..."

"Essentially, my master was attacked by some assassins last night in the Juans Delivery House! From what we've gathered, the assassins were sent by one of the competitors of this competition!" replied Yalinda in a serious tone.

Hearing that, everyone present immediately exchanged glances with each other before starting to discuss the situation...

Clyde, on the other hand, found himself going pale with rage and shock. After all, not only had his assassins failed to take Gerald out, but they were also caught by him! There was no way he was going to worm out of this one...!

CHAPTER 2016

Kay himself couldn't help but frown after hearing that. After thinking about it for a while, he then walked toward the king and queen who were seated at their thrones...

After whispering something to them, he then returned to his initial spot before declaring, "His Majesty has decreed that this is criminally unruly behavior! With that said, an investigation will immediately be carried out! Since we're already on the topic, do you know who sent those assassins, Miss Juans?"

Nodding in response, Yalinda then replied, "I do! Your Majesties, it was Clyde Gower who planned the assassination last night!"

The second she said that, everyone instantly became stupefied.

Realizing that Kay was now looking at him, Clyde then stood up before roaring, "Utter nonsense!"

"Or so you say, Young Master Gower! I'm sure you know who's the real person spouting nonsense here! In case you didn't know, we managed to capture the assassins, and they're currently right outside the city's gates! With that in mind, I request that they be allowed in to confront their young master!" replied Yalinda with a cold smile on her face.

"Permission granted!" declared Kay.

A few minutes later, Tanner and Yale led the four assassins into the arena with the help of a few soldiers...

"These are the Gower family's assassins, General Lucar!" announced Yalinda as she pointed at the four tied-up men.

Seeing that they were now here, Kay waited for a moment before raising a slight brow. Walking closer to them, he realized that they were all fully paralyzed, unable to even blink!

With that, Kay was prompted to ask, "...What's wrong with them? Why have they gone all rigid?"

Upon hearing that, Gerald quickly walked toward the four and began poking their chakra points to unseal their bodies. Once they were done, they were freely able to move again...

Nodding when he saw that, Kay then said, "Alright... Now that you're no longer paralyzed... Was what she said true?"

Naturally, none of them could say a word. After all, their mouths remained sewn shut.

Realizing that Kay was expecting a verbal answer, Yalinda quickly explained, "General Lucarl, their mouths have been sewn shut so they can't speak!"

"What? They're all mutes?" replied the surprised Kay.

Understanding that this was his chance to avoid facing the consequences, Clyde then retorted, "Hah! If they can't talk, why are you putting the blame on me?! As you can see, General Lucarl, she's clearly spouting cr*p!"

"While they can't talk, they can still shake their heads and nod!" refuted Yalinda, instantly silencing Clyde again. He hadn't considered that!

"...Nod if it's true, and shake your head if it isn't. Was it Clyde Gower who sent you to attack them?" asked Kay as he glared at the assassins.

With how intently Kay was glaring at them, the four assassins couldn't help but sneak peeks at Clyde...

CHAPTER 2017

After a short pause, all four of the assassins eventually shook their heads!

Upon seeing that, Yalinda was rightfully angry as she growled, "You...!"

Realizing that he still had a chance to get out of this situation, a sly smile flashed across Clyde's face. Following that, he feigned grievance as he said, "You see, General Lucarl? I'm innocent! Please clear my name, general!"

With the current turn of events, Gerald was now wondering whether he should've let Yalinda do the talking...

After all, though the assassins were mute, they were by no means dumb. They probably figured that Gerald wouldn't be able to do anything to them in the presence of so many people. By choosing to lie, not only would Clyde's life be spared, but also theirs!

Whatever the case was, Kay then cleared his throat before asking sternly, "Again, just to confirm. Is it true that Clyde didn't send you over?"

Watching as the four then nodded again, Kay added, "Very well. We'll put the matter aside for the moment, then. Guards, lock them up immediately! We'll look further into this once the competition is over!"

Naturally unwilling to just accept that, Yalinda then said, "But General Lucarl-"

Before she could even finish her sentence, Kay simply raised his hand before replying, "Again, let's put the matter aside for the time being. Not only have they already said that Young Master Gower wasn't the one behind this, but the incident also happened outside Gardale City. With that in mind, we aren't responsible for handling the case. Due to that, we'll talk about this once the competition ends!"

Once Kay turned around to leave, Clyde moved closer to Yalinda before chuckling sinisterly as he jeered, "Heh, did you really think you could frame me that easily, Yalinda?"

Hearing that, Yalinda immediately glared at the despicable man as he returned to his seat. To think that the assassins would retract their confessions at the last second!

While she was furious at him, she knew better than to waste her energy feeling angry. After all, just as Kay had said, nothing would be investigated till the competition was over...

"Leave him be, Yalinda! Come back for now!" called out Gerald, prompting Yalinda to helplessly return to her seat...

Once she was sitting beside Gerald again, Yalinda couldn't help but grumble, "...To think that Clyde had planned this far ahead...!"

Instead of sharing Yalinda's dissatisfaction, Gerald simply laughed coldly in response as he said, "It's fine, we'll just accept this as our loss for now... However, know that I still have other ways to deal with him!"

Just as Gerald had said, though they had failed to immediately take Clyde down, it didn't mean that they had automatically lost. Since Clyde was now pulling all his triumph cards, Gerald would do the same...

Regardless, the matches for the day soon ended...

While the matches were still on earlier, Gerald had plenty of time to think of his next step. In the end, he figured that since the semi-finals would be held in the next two days, Clyde would surely use that time to cause more trouble for him.

Due to that, Gerald decided that he would finish Clyde off within the following two days...

CHAPTER 2018

Upon returning to the delivery house that night, Yalinda immediately yelled angrily, "That bastard Clyde...! To think that he would be shameless enough to deny his sins in public! And those four bastards are just as bad as he is!"

"Just forget about it, Yalinda. We couldn't have predicted that scenario... Well, if we were a bit more careful, we probably could. With that in mind, we just need to be more careful next time!" comforted Tanner as he patted his daughter's back.

"Captain Juans is right, Yalinda. There's no need to be angry since Clyde's dying by my hands sooner or later! Regardless, during these two days before the semi-finals, I'll be sure to make him pay the price for messing with us!" added Gerald as he narrowed his eyes, now fully determined to kill Clyde.

"Oh? Do you already have a plan to take him down, Gerald?" asked Tanner.

"I do, though I'll need to trouble you a bit... Essentially, I need you to send someone out to constantly monitor Clyde. I just need to know where he is at all times! Is that manageable?" replied Gerald.

"No problem!" declared Tanner without the slightest hesitation. After all, he trusted Gerald when it came to making plans, and he had no doubts that Gerald's plan was well thought out.

Regardless, upon hearing that, Yalinda looked at Gerald before curiously asking, "What exactly are you planning to do, master...?"

"Well, since General Lucarl specifically said that he wasn't responsible for things that happened outside of Gardale City, we'll just use that to our advantage like how Clyde did to us!" replied Gerald with a smug smile.

Upon hearing that, Yalinda, Tanner, and Yale immediately understood where Gerald was coming from. With that, Tanner then ordered one of his men to begin monitoring Clyde...

It was evening when the man Tanner sent out returned to the delivery house. After updating Clyde's location to Tanner, Tanner quickly relayed the information to Gerald.

Now that he knew where Clyde was, Gerald immediately left the delivery house to prepare himself for tonight...

That night, Gerald leaped over rooftops to hasten his journey... and eventually, he arrived at the brothel where Clyde was last seen. That b*stard had come all the way out here looking for fun!

Either way, Gerald soon found the room Clyde was in. With how jovial Clyde looked, Gerald couldn't help but smile wryly as he thought, 'This f*cker really knows how to enjoy himself!'

Shaking his head, Gerald then slipped into the black outfit that he had previously prepared, making sure to properly cover his face with a black cloth as well. All this was done just so Clyde wouldn't find out who he was.

With everything set, Gerald then crashed into the room through the window!

Eyes immediately widening when he saw the assassin, Clyde angrily yelled, "Who the hell are you?! I'm the young master of the Gower family, you know? Disrupting my fun... are you that tired of living?!"

Before Clyde could say anything else, he suddenly felt something wet dripping from his neck...

By the time he looked down, Clyde was already coughing mouthfuls of blood... and seconds later, the life in his eyes disappeared.

CHAPTER 2019

Upon realizing what had just happened, the prostitute—that Clyde had hired—immediately shrieked in fear as she cowered on the bed, her voice echoing throughout the brothel...

Gerald himself simply looked at the shrieking woman for a while before leaping out the window and disappearing into the darkness. All in all, the process of Clyde's murder had gone perfectly, and Gerald was certain that Clyde had no idea who his murderer was...

Whatever the case was, it was sometime after Gerald left when the owner of the brothel came running into the room with some guards.

Upon seeing Clyde's fresh corpse, the brothel owner almost fainted in shock. Something extremely troubling had just taken place...! As if Clyde's death here wasn't already bad enough, the brothel would surely be in extra hot water with the Gowers...

Of course, aside from Gerald, Yale, Tanner, and Yalinda, nobody knew who the real culprit was. With that in mind, Gerald knew that their grudge had finally been resolved...

Fast forward to the next morning, everyone in Shontell was thoroughly shaken as news about Clyde's assassination spread around.

The Gower family's head was understandably enraged by all this, and not only did he send his men to smash the brothel up, but he even paraded the prostitute—that his son had slept with the night before—along the streets! While doing so, he swore that he would find his son's murderer if it was the last thing he did...!

As for Gerald, after waking up, he sat in the garden to relax...

All of a sudden, Yale could be heard shouting, "B-brother Gerald...!"

Watching as Yale, Tanner, and Yalinda ran into the garden, Gerald couldn't help but ask, "Yes? What's wrong?"

"W-well...! When we were out earlier, we heard that Clyde had been killed in a brothel last night...! Were you the one who did it...?" whispered Yale.

Nodding calmly, Gerald then said, "Indeed!"

"...W-what...?! Brother Gerald, you should know that Leroy Gower, the head of the Gower family, is looking everywhere for the murderer...!" replied the terrified Yale.

"And? I made sure to conceal my appearance well last night, so you don't have to worry about anyone recognizing me. Besides, even if Leroy does come, I'll just keep denying that I did it!" said Gerald in a nonchalant tone as he waved his hand.

Upon hearing that, the trio found themselves breathing slightly easier. After all, as long as Gerald didn't admit to the crime, then the Gowers wouldn't be able to do a thing to him.

At that moment, all four of them heard angry shouts yelling, "Out of my way!"

Turning to face the voice, the party was greeted by the sight of Leroy rushing into the Juans Delivery house with his men, cursing loudly throughout the process.

Once Leroy was close enough, Tanner—whose face had already gone dark—glared at the man before saying, "What is the meaning of this, Mr. Gower?"

Snorting in response, Leroy then glared at Gerald before yelling, "Cut the cr*p, Tanner! You know I'm not here for you! I'm just here for my son's murderer!"

Hearing that, Tanner then retorted, "I have no idea what you're going on about, Leroy! As if the representative of my delivery house would ever murder your son!"

"Tanner, just because he's your delivery house's representative, it doesn't mean you should be taking his side!" growled Leroy in response...

CHAPTER 2020

After staring at Terenzio—who was lying on the floor—for a while, Tarek Crawford eventually dragged his body onto a cart. Tarek had decided that he would simply say that he was going out to fish as an excuse to toss the body into the sea tonight...

Regardless, the woman soon returned with some water, and two immediately grabbed some brushes to begin scrubbing off the blood on the floor...

While doing so, Tarek—who was still a bit worried—couldn't help but say, "Remember, nobody finds out about what happened tonight...!"

"B-but if Terenzio doesn't return, his family will surely investigate...!" replied the woman who was equally as worried.

"It's not like we can stop that. If his family does eventually interrogate us, simply say that you don't know anything! In the end, this is a matter between the head of the family and his grandson, so we shouldn't meddle!" instructed Tarek as he rapidly waved his hand.

"...Huh? The head of the family and his grandson...? What's going on between them...?" Asked the woman who was now more confused than ever.

"You wouldn't understand no matter how much I explained! Regardless, just remember not to tell anyone about what happened tonight...!" grumbled Tarek who wasn't in the mood to explain anything. The important thing now was cleaning the bloodstains off and getting rid of the body...

"...G-got it...!" replied the woman with a nod as she stopped asking more questions...

It was about two hours later when the smell of blood in the house lessened... Since the bloodstain was all cleaned up and it was already rather late at night, Tarek slipped on a jacket and began pushing the cart out of the farm, knowing it was high time to dispose of the body...

Fast forward to the next day, Gerald opened his eyes the second dawn broke...

By killing Terenzio last night, it meant that he had officially declared war on the Crawford family...

With that in mind, after washing up, Gerald slipped on his jacket and headed over to Tarek's house...

Meanwhile, Tarek had just returned from sea, looking extremely tired and disheveled... Sitting on his chair, he immediately curled up, his eyes looking as dead as a dodo...

Shortly after, Gerald entered the house, and after closing the door behind him, he was prompted to ask, "So, how are things going, brother Crawford?"

"I've done everything you've told me to... The blood in the house has all been washed off and I've tossed Terenzio's corpse into the sea..." replied Tarek, shivering slightly when he saw Gerald.

"Good. Regardless, how long do you think it'll take for the main family to realize that Terenzio's gone missing?" asked Gerald as he calmly stood beside Tarek, feeling somewhat pleased that there really were no bloodstains left.

"I don't know... As if someone from the side family like me would ever know how the main family thinks!" replied Tarek as he shook his head.

"Point taken. Either way, remember why Terenzio died. As long as you don't do the same stupid mistake as he did, I'll let you live," said Gerald before placing his arms against his back and walking out the room...

At this moment in time, nobody knew that Terenzio had been killed by Gerald. Still, looking at all the relatives, Gerald couldn't help but sigh.

What the hell was Daryl actually planning...? Did he really have to build a cultivating Crawford family overseas? And why kidnap his parents just to become his enemy...?

Chapter 2021

What Gerald didn't know, however, was the fact that news about the island had already reached Yearning Island...

Sitting beside a moth-eaten wooden table—that looked like it was going to collapse at any second—inside a relatively simple-thatched hut, was none other than a cloaked Daryl...

As he poured some tea out of his ancient teapot, a fierce-looking young man walked up to Daryl before whispering, "According to our men in Gong Island, Terenzio and a few strangers have gone to one of the nearby islands, and they've been staying there for a few days now. We suspect that Gerald could be there as well."

"Let's just wait for them to come. I'd like to see how strong his cultivation has gotten after so many years. Also, what's Trenzio's cultivation level?" asked Daryl, his hand quivering slightly as he held onto the teapot.

"Not too strong. From what we've gathered, he's simply in the middle level among our family members," replied the man after thinking for a while.

"I see. Just keep watching then. Remember, don't let Gerald notice our men. Since he was able to single-handedly kill the three great clans of Yanam, you can imagine how strong he already is by this point," said Daryl as he sipped on his tea.

Hearing that, the impatient man was prompted to say, "...But chief, if you really want to get rid of them, we can just send our men to surround Gong Island right this instant! I guarantee you that he'll be killed before dark! All our troubles will be gone then!"

With barely any changes in his expression, Daryl then lowered his teacup before asking in a hoarse voice, "Tell me, Will... How many years have you been following me again...?"

"...Twenty-five. I still remember how you saved me from freezing to death back then..." replied the man as he bowed respectfully.

“I’m glad you’re aware. While Gerald may be my grandson, in my eyes, you’re my true successor. With that in mind, know that once Gerald comes to Yearning Island, death will surely come for him...” said Daryl before chuckling.

“...I understand, chief!” replied the man who was now able to breathe much easier.

“Now then... We’ll see if Terenzio is strong enough to get rid of Gerald first. If he fails, we’ll just send more of our skillful men over to deal with him. Since he’s come looking for trouble so daringly, let’s make sure we’re prepared for anything he has up his sleeve...” said Daryl as he continued sipping his tea. From the looks of it, Gerald’s appearance barely even garnered a response from him...

Delighted to hear that, the man then exclaimed, “Then... Chief, I-”

“Don’t even dare think about showing yourself before Gerald. If you even try to, I’ll immediately remove your cultivation powers,” replied Daryl as he turned to face the man.

“...I-I understand!” declared the now shivering man as he nodded in agreement.

“Good. Now leave!” replied Daryl with a wave of his hand...

Back on Gong Island, Gerald was still thinking of how to locate Yearning Island. If even Tarek didn’t know where the island was, Gerald was pretty sure that all the other family members on the island wouldn’t know either. It certainly didn’t help that Terenzio—who was the only one who knew how to get to Yearning Island—was now dead.

With how things were going, Gerald was pretty sure that all he could really do was to wait till next week when the main family’s ship arrived... That would surely allow him to find Yearning Island...

In other news, the people on the island didn’t seem to care about Terenzio’s sudden disappearance, probably thinking that he had just returned to the main family. After all, despite sharing a surname, the main and side families were completely different...

Regardless, in the following days, Gerald mostly remained inside his room. To kill time, he studied the sea map, continuously analyzing the islands at the center of the map in hopes of figuring out which one was Yearning Island...

While Gerald was calm, the same couldn't be said for those on Yearning Island.

After all, in the past three days—under Daryl's orders—, Will Crawford had been unable to contact Terenzio at all... Something was definitely off...

Upon establishing the Crawford family, Daryl had made a rule stating that members of the main Crawford family couldn't leave Yearning Island all willy-nilly. With that in mind, since Terenzio had gone to Gong Island and hadn't reported back in a few days, he had clearly violated the taboo...

Chapter 2022

After waiting for about two more days, Will couldn't take it anymore and rushed to report the situation to Daryl...

"Oh? Terenzio's disappeared, you say?" replied Daryl—who was in his hut—quite nonchalantly. The news itself wasn't all that surprising to him. After all, though he hadn't taught much to Gerald, the boy was still a Crawford by blood. In other words, Daryl didn't doubt Gerald's natural talent.

Regardless, Will then clenched his fists as he replied, "That's right! I've been trying to contact him for a few days now to no avail... I'm just worried that he fought with Gerald and ended up... Well... I'm just worried that Gerald's killed him!"

Will was naturally uneasy by this. After all, Daryl was already treating him as his own son and everyone on the island knew that he was to be Daryl's successor. With that in mind, he saw Gerald—who was Daryl's grandson—as a natural threat to his position, and the only way Will would be able to feel at ease would be by killing Gerald...

Upon hearing that, Daryl simply chuckled, waving his hand as he said, “He’s just a middle-ranking cultivator in the family, so it’s no big deal. I wouldn’t be surprised if he really was dead, honestly. After all, if Gerald could turn Yanam upside down on his own, what’s Terenzio to him?”

Gritting his teeth, Will then asked, “Then... what should we do now?”

“We’ll send some skillful men over to investigate. I need to know his current level of cultivation,” replied Daryl as he sipped more tea.

“Understood,” said Will, already expecting Daryl to say that. While he was rather reluctant to just sit there and let others do the job, he could only nod, knowing better than to go against Daryl’s orders.

Will was pretty confident that he could easily kill Gerald. However, since Daryl wasn’t allowing him to go to Gong Island immediately, all he could do was wait...

Just as Will was about to leave, Daryl called out, “Speaking of which, if he isn’t acting alone, then get his allies away from him. While I’m granting you permission to hurt them, his allies can’t be killed, understand?”

“Got it, chief!” replied Will with a nod...

Moving back to Gong Island, though the skies had been clear the past few days, the arrival of a ship seemed to bring along stormy weather with it...

At the time, Gerald was still trying to find where Yearning Island was on the map. Just when he thought that he had truly met a brick wall, he noticed the presence of the fishing boat that had just docked at the pier...

Upon seeing that, he immediately got to his feet. Tarek had previously told him that all the residents of this island were relatives of the Crawford family. Gerald had also been told that whenever a ship came to the island, it was most likely the main family—on Yearning Island—coming over to get some supplies.

Come to think of it, it had only been four days since the ship last left. While the ship was definitely here earlier than scheduled, Gerald knew this was it since no other ships would ever dock here.

With that in mind, Gerald secretly headed to the docks without telling anyone else...

While Gerald was now heading toward the ship, a few men from the ship were already rushing to Tarek's house. Upon opening the door, they soon found Tarek sitting in his living room...

Seeing that, the two men—who had chosen to enter the house—then crossed their arms before asking, “Under Mr. Will’s orders, we’re here to investigate your third older brother, Tarek. Why hasn’t Terenzio been replying to the main family?”

“What? I... How should I know?” replied Tarek, shaking his head as he thought about the incident that night.

Realizing that there was something off, the other man then asked, “How could you not know? You, for one, should know that Terenzio is in charge of communication between Gong Island and us. We’re also pretty sure that you’re the only person who’s constantly been in contact with him. Are you seriously telling us that you have no idea where he is now?”

Chapter 2023

“Look, I really have no idea where he is! Please stop asking me!” replied Tarek, worried that if he let anything slip out, Gerald would surely have his head. However, if the men kept pressing on, then the main family would end him instead...!

“If you refuse to comply, I’ll simply bring you to the Penalty Division right now to let the elder in charge personally question you!” retorted the same man as he grabbed Tarek by his collar.

At that moment, a woman rushed out of a room while yelling, “D-don’t! We’ll tell you everything we know...!”

Though they had never seen the elder of the Penalty Division before—since they had been living on Gong Island their entire lives—, they had heard many horrifying things about him from Terenzio over the years.

One of the crueler punishments they've heard was about a person who was sentenced to get bitten by a hundred snakes just because he left Yearning Island without permission. Listening to the punishment alone was enough to send chills running down anyone's spine...

Regardless, upon hearing that, the man then released Tarek's collar before asking, "So, where's Terenzio?"

"H-he was killed by Gerald two days ago...! We tossed his body into the sea last night...! We... We had no choice...! If we didn't listen to his orders, Gerald could've easily killed us...!" whimpered the woman as she immediately knelt...

Hearing that, the two men then exchanged glances before one of them said, "So, Will was right. Gerald did kill Terenzio!"

Gulping, Tarek then knelt as well before muttering, "N-now that you know all this, could you please spare us, sirs...?"

"Whether you get to escape punishment or not is up to the Penalty Division," said one of the men as the duo turned to leave, leaving Tarek and the woman kneeling behind them...

Regrouping with the two other men—who had descended the ship—in the courtyard, the duo then said, "Tarek confessed that Terenzio was killed by Gerald. Apparently, his corpse was thrown into the sea."

"I see... then... should we take action now?"

"I suppose. However, remember that Mr. Will told us not to kill Gerald. It may be his way of testing our strength."

"Indeed. Then we should all remember to keep our strength in check. In the end, he's still the chief's grandson, and we can't afford to hurt someone like that too much..."

With all four of them agreeing with that, they then left the area...

Meanwhile, Gerald himself had already snuck into the ship. While he was able to map out the entire ship within minutes, he couldn't find any valuable information about Yearning Island at all! It was just an ordinary ship...

With that in mind, Gerald knew better than to remain on the ship any longer. Since the ship wasn't providing him with any clues, he'd just have to investigate those who came in it.

Once he got off the ship, he then used his Herculean Primordial Spirit to detect the movements of everyone on the island... Soon enough, he was able to find a total of four people who hadn't been on the island before. From what he could tell, they all had about the same strength as Terenzio. In other words, they weren't very strong.

Looking in the direction where the cultivators were, he then swiftly made his way toward them...

Upon seeing them, Gerald walked up to the four astonished men as he asked, "Are the four of you from Yearning Island?"

Hearing that, the leader of their team then took a step forward, staring at Gerald as he said, "Before that, are you Gerald Crawford? If you are, we're here to meet you under Mr. Will Crawford's orders!"

Chapter 2024

"Will Crawford? Doesn't ring a bell," replied Gerald with a smile.

"There's no need for you to know about him. All you need to know is that you'll be kneeling and begging for mercy soon," replied the leader as the four men stood side by side before promptly releasing their strong auras...

Knowing that this was going to be a battle between powerful cultivators, members of the side family—who were present—immediately rushed to hide behind large stones and trees...

As for Master Ghost, he was standing on the balcony of the wooden house, a compass in hand as a nervous Aiden stood beside him...

Sweating anxiously, Aiden couldn't help but ask, "...Do... you think Gerald will be fine, Master Ghost...?"

Aiden was rightfully worried since this was the first time he had seen Gerald come across such powerful people.

"He'll be fine. Still, his grandfather must have found out that Gerald was here... Regardless, Gerald should easily be able to handle these people that Daryl sent over," replied Master Ghost as he shook his head. He, for one, was sure that Gerald wasn't in any immediate danger since the compass wasn't reacting negatively.

"With all due respect, I should just rush out with the other brothers of the Sacrasolis Palace to deal with them! Once that's done, we can just force them to tell us where Yearning Island is!" exclaimed Aiden, not understanding how Master Ghost was remaining this calm.

"Look, if you don't want to anger Gerald, just stay put," replied Master Ghost with a sigh...

Moving back to Gerald, after an awkward silence that felt like it lasted forever, Gerald clenched his fists before saying, "...Regardless, just relay Daryl's message already."

While Gerald had previously found his grandfather to be amiable, kind, and skillful, no matter how hard he thought about it, he simply couldn't comprehend why he would suddenly turn out this way and even kidnap his sister and parents!

Whatever the case was, now that he was so close to solving the mystery, Gerald had a hunch that Daryl already knew about everything that he had done here...

"He doesn't have anything to say to you. We're just here to test your strength!" replied the leader as he positioned his hand before him, causing it to produce a faint, yellow glow...

Barely a second later, he then rushed forward, aiming to strike Gerald's shoulder! Seeing that, the three other men began launching their own attacks! While Will had said that the chief didn't allow them to kill Gerald, they could still hurt him!

Looking at the four attacking men, Gerald couldn't help but frown slightly as he rested his left arm behind him. Positioning his right hand in front, Gerald then easily blocked the leader's attack. Following that, he elbowed the leader before kicking him back!

With the leader's body colliding against the three other men, all four of them soon found themselves lying on the ground... Gerald had taken all of them out in just a single move...!

"What, is the cultivating family this weak?" asked Gerald as he looked at them calmly.

Upon hearing that, the men quickly helped each other up. While their statuses in the Crawford family weren't exactly boast-worthy, they were still serious cultivators in the family. With that in mind, getting defeated by Gerald in just a single move was unacceptable!

Still, knowing that they had underestimated Gerald's strength, the leader quickly spat, "It looks like you're quite skillful as well!"

"Look, let's not waste any more of our time. Tell me where Yearning Island is already!" retorted Gerald, not wanting to waste his time dealing with lackeys.

"We aren't telling you anything! Now cooperate or prepare to have a taste of Crawford Style Arm Boxing!" yelled the leader—who had now gathered his strength again—as he began jabbing several punches into the air! With how fast his fists were moving, any fallen leaves in his way ended up dancing in the wind as dust cloud after dust cloud formed...!

Laughing when he saw that, one of the other men then disdainfully yelled, "Give it up, Gerald! Among the Crawford family members, he's the best at Arm Boxing! We really don't want to end up accidentally killing you, you know? How would we explain that to the chief!"

While it was true that Gerald was the chief's grandson, he hadn't grown as a cultivator together with the rest of the Crawfords. With that in mind, how powerful could he really be?

Chapter 2025

They, on the other hand, had been cultivating their combat skills in the Crawford family from the very beginning. With that in mind, they were all extremely confident that they would be able to represent the Crawford family in the coming cultivation competition.

Who knows, if they managed to perform well in the competition, they could end up becoming disciples of the chief! By that point, they'd become stars of the Crawford family, and if things went swimmingly, they could even end up being one of the successor candidates in the chief's eyes! After all, though Daryl was a cultivator, he was already extremely old. Currently in his eighties, he would probably die in another twenty to thirty years...

"Arm Boxing?" replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes.

He recalled his father mentioning that the first chief of the Crawford family had developed a powerful boxing technique known as Arm Boxing. The technique itself was so powerful due to the fact that it was a combination of four separate boxing techniques...

Under normal circumstances, learning just the basics of the technique would surely be enough to defeat a strong cultivator. Unfortunately for the man, his opponent was Gerald.

Gerald himself couldn't help but laugh as he shook his head while thinking about his current situation. It was honestly ironic that despite being the grandson of Daryl—and being the rightful successor of the Crawford family—he was now being attacked by the strongest cultivators of the main Crawford family just so he couldn't get to Yearning Island. As if that wasn't already ironic enough, they were even fighting him using a technique invented by the Crawford family!

In the end, though Gerald didn't like this Crawford family—nor did he like Daryl—, he still had Crawford blood running through him...

Whatever the case was, the man from before then brought his fists together, producing a loud, metallic sound as he yelled, "Indeed! Bet a b*stard like you have never even heard of it before! No matter! I'll just show it to you if you continue to resist!"

"Go on, show me then!" replied Gerald with a smile.

Truth be told, Gerald didn't really want to kill any of the Crawfords if he could help it. Terenzio himself only ended up dead since he tried to harm those close to him.

Either way, knowing that the men weren't going to take no as an answer, Gerald withdrew his essential qi before entering a fighting stance...

Upon seeing that, the man immediately stomped his right foot on the ground—sending even more dust clouds swirling into the air—before bolting forward! Once he was close enough to the youth, he began launching an onslaught of punches that were so fast that they could hardly be seen!

Seeing that, Aiden couldn't help but grab onto the railing as tight as he could, cold sweat flowing down his forehead. He swore that if Gerald ever came close to losing, he would immediately take action...!

Frowning slightly, Gerald couldn't help but say, "So that's the Crawford family's Arm Boxing technique...?"

Shaking his head, Gerald then took in a deep breath before swinging his fist right toward the incoming man's arm...!

What followed was a crisp 'crack' that drew everyone's attention to the scene...

The trio themselves couldn't help but smirk. After all, they—of all people—knew that a single punch with the Arm Boxing technique was enough to split steel. Since Gerald had swung his fist toward that volley of punches, the trio had no doubt that his arm must have completely fractured...

Chapter 2026

However, just as they were thinking about that, the agonizing shriek of their companion rang through the air...! It sounded so painful that everyone couldn't help but shiver...

As the screaming went on, Gerald simply took a step back, resting his other arm against his back as he nonchalantly said, "Is this truly the full extent of the Crawford family's Arm Boxing technique? Or are you just too incompetent to properly use it?"

The truth was, Gerald had earlier struck the man's arms before he even got the chance to hurt him. Due to the immense force of his attack, both the man's arms instantly broke! Forget worrying about being able to use the technique any more, the man was probably going to find it difficult to even use his hands to eat from now on!

Regardless, once the man finally stopped screaming, he immediately glared resentfully at Gerald.

He didn't get it at all. How could Gerald have countered him so perfectly when he was using the Arm Boxing technique? What more, Gerald hadn't even used the slightest bit of essential qi when he counterattacked! Was their difference in strength that immense?!

Either way, when Gerald saw how much hatred was in the man's eyes, he simply laughed before saying, "Look, if Daryl really wants me dead, then he should've sent stronger men, not pathetic wimps like you!"

"How imprudent...!" growled the three other men in a rage as they immediately began charging toward Gerald from different directions! If they couldn't win in a one-on-one battle, maybe they had a chance of taking him down in a group!

Upon seeing that, Gerald's smile faded as he quickly picked a stone off the ground before tossing it to his left!

The stone grazed against the man on the left's cheek, causing him to stop rushing forward due to the immense pain. Upon touching his cheek, the man realized that he was already bleeding profusely...!

As Gerald tossed two more stones, the remaining duo found themselves flying backward! With acute pains in their chests, the men instantly spurt out blood the second they hit the ground...

"To think that you amateurs would even dare to mess with me... Still, you're all Crawfords so I'm willing to spare you... Now, go back and tell Daryl that if he wants to deal with me, send someone stronger over. Otherwise, I'll just head to Yearning Island sooner or later to take his d*mn life away..." growled Gerald as he gritted his teeth.

Still, despite the fact that his grandfather had kidnapped his sister and parents, Gerald knew that he would still be slightly hesitant to kill his grandfather should they meet.

Regardless, the four men now knew better than to further challenge Gerald. After all, if they did, they would most probably end up dead. With that in mind, the leader then yelled, "Move out!"

Watching as the four battered men then left, Gerald couldn't help but sigh with relief...

As for everyone else on the island, after watching the four board their ship again before leaving, they immediately began discussing what had just taken place.

"He's... the chief's grandson...?"

"It appears so... Still, why did the chief send his men over to harm his grandson?"

"Who knows? Either way, this matter doesn't concern us. I have a feeling that getting involved in all this will only bring us suffering!"

With that said, after staring at Gerald for a while longer, the clansmen then dispersed...

At that moment, Aiden came rushing toward Gerald while exclaiming, “B-brother Gerald...! Are you alright? Those men were sent by your grandfather, right? If we start following them now, we’ll surely be able to locate Yearning Island!”

Shaking his head helplessly, Gerald simply replied, “Just forget about it...”

Chapter 2027

“...Huh? But why? Did we risk getting here from Yanam just to find where Yearning Island is?” asked the puzzled Aiden.

Before Gerald could even answer, Master Ghost stepped in and replied, “We can’t follow them.”

Turning to face Master Ghost, Aiden then asked, “...Why exactly...?”

“Well, since Daryl already knows that we’re on this island, he must’ve considered the fact that we might follow them back as well. With that in mind, if we rashly follow them, now only may we get ourselves in danger, but we may not be able to save anyone as well. You, for one, know that Gerald’s parents are still in his hands. We may be willing to risk our lives, but let’s not risk his parents’ lives as well,” explained Master Ghost with a frown.

“...My thoughts exactly, Master Ghost...” replied Gerald as he shook his head with a wry smile.

“...But... But now’s the perfect chance to locate the island...!” retorted Aiden, clenching his fist as he hammered his thigh in annoyance.

“It is, but the closer we are to our goal, the more careful we’ll have to be,” replied Gerald as he slowly faced his back against Aiden...

Though he had a rough idea what Daryl was up to, he knew that he couldn’t do anything about it. After all, he was still being on the defensive, so all he could do was accept Daryl’s taunts for now. Hopefully, he would be able to find a crack in his plans sooner or later...

Fast forward to that night, all four of the men finally stood before Will. Will himself could only frown when he saw them. After all, one of them had both his arms broken, another had horrible bruises on his right cheek, and the remaining two were holding onto their chests...

Raising a slight brow, Will eventually took the initiative to ask, "...What the hell happened to all of you?"

Exchanging glances with each other, the leader then gritted his teeth before saying, "...Gerald... was unexpectedly strong... All four of us were taken out, even though he didn't use any cultivation powers..."

The second his sentence ended, four loud, consecutive slaps could be heard...

"You useless things...! Don't the four of you have intermediate ranks in this family? How could all four of you fail to take Gerald down?! Regardless, how seriously did he get injured?" yelled Will.

"He... Didn't get injured..." muttered another of the four men after hesitating for a while.

"...What? He... Didn't get injured at all? How could all four of you be in such sorry states while Gerald remains fine?!" yelled Will, pointing at them as he laughed to release his rage.

"W-with all due respect, Mr. Will, Gerald's extremely strong...! We aren't his match at all! The only reason we're still alive is because we're all Crawfords...!" whimpered another man.

"Just... Get out of my sight...! All of you!" roared Will as he tossed his teacup to the floor, smashing it into a million pieces...

After they left, Will couldn't help but pace back and forth in the living room, panting heavily throughout the process. To think that his family was wasting all their time raising these incompetent men when Gerald was way stronger than they were...!

Come to think of it, how the hell was a self-taught cultivator this strong? He shouldn't have been able to beat up the Crawford's disciples so easily...! As much as Will hated to admit it, he wasn't even sure if he could take down all four of those men on his own! With that in mind, all this was simply flabbergasting to him...

After pacing a while more, Will eventually took a seat. Clenching his fists, he then growled, "How the hell are you so powerful, Gerald...?! If he remains alive, he'll surely end up becoming a hindrance! While it's true that the chief is currently trying to get rid of him, how long will that last? Since that b*stard is a Crawford by blood, he could still have a chance of becoming the next successor...!"

Chapter 2028

Will had his reasons for being this worried.

After all, though Daryl had kidnapped Gerald's parents and sister, he didn't make things difficult for them. On the contrary, he made sure to take good care of them! That fact bugged him to no end.

Thinking about it, while Daryl had promised that he would be the Crawford family's successor, in the end, he was simply an adopted child. Gerald, on the other hand, was a true Crawford. If he didn't get rid of Gerald quickly, Gerald could very possibly end up taking his place one day...!

Closing his eyes to think about his next step, Will eventually walked to the door and called out to his two most loyal followers, "Both of you, come in."

Upon entering, the two closed the door behind them before replying, "Brother Will."

Nodding in response, Will then lit cigarettes for both of them—and also himself—before sitting on a bench. Crossing his legs, he then asked, "You two should already know that Gerald's at Gong Island now, right?"

"We're aware," replied one of the men as both of them looked at each other.

“Good. I want you two to head there tomorrow to finish Gerald off. I want this assassination to be quick, and the fewer people notice you, the better,” growled Will as he narrowed his eyes.

“...With all due respect, brother Will, didn't the chief say that he simply wanted to test how strong Gerald was...? He doesn't want him dead, right...?” muttered the other man in confusion. Being Will's closest followers, they naturally knew about Daryl's orders.

Frowning in response, Will then retorted, “Which part of ‘I want him dead’ don't you understand? Look, as long as Gerald remains alive, he'll be a threat to my position as the successor of the Crawford family. Once he's out of the picture, nobody else will be able to get that position but me! Got it?”

“Loud and clear!” replied the two men, now understanding where Will was coming from.

“Excellent. Now prepare yourselves. I hope to hear good news from you tomorrow. After raising you two for so many years, it's high time for you to help solve my problems!” declared Will whose cigarette was already half-burnt by this point...

“Roger that!” replied both of them, not saying anything more since they knew that Will was still angry...

It was only after they left when Will started feeling slightly better. After all, he raised those two from scratch, so he knew how strong they were. Hell, he had even planned to send them to the cultivation competition as representatives of the Crawford family before this. If they ranked highly in the competition, the Crawford family's status would surely rise, thus further securing his position as the next chief!

“I wouldn't have even bothered about you if you remained in Weston, Gerald... However, since you're so keen on looking for trouble on Yearning Island, I'll make sure you never leave this place!” grumbled Will as he grabbed onto the corners of his table, tightening his grip until the table's corners were crushed...!

Moving back to Gerald, he was barely affected by yesterday's incidents.

As for the residents on Gong Island, not only did they now know that the chief's grandson was on the island, but he was apparently in conflict with the main Crawford family as well.

Regardless, Gerald turned to look at the summoned disciples of the Sacrasolis Palace before saying, "I'll be counting on all of you from today onward!"

"Not to worry, brother Gerald! We'll be sure to guard this island properly! Nobody will get on this island without you knowing!" yelled the crowd in response as they took turns nodding.

Smiling when he heard that, Gerald then nodded as he said, "It's such a relief to have you guys around..."

Chapter 2029

Following that, the disciples of the Sacrasolis Palace walked out in pairs to begin guarding the fringes of the island. After yesterday's events, Gerald had a feeling that Daryl was no longer simply testing him. From what Gerald could guess, more Crawford family members were definitely on their way to look for trouble...

While Gerald wasn't afraid of them, he was worried that they would do bad things to the people around him, just like how Lindsay was captured by Terenzio back then. Gerald, for one, didn't need something like that happening again...

At that moment, Aiden couldn't help but ask, "What exactly is the main Crawford family up to...? If they really wanted to welcome you as Daryl's grandson, then they should've just invited you back! On the contrary, if they wanted you gone, they could've just kicked you out! Why even go through the tedious process of testing your strength...?"

"Like I know..." replied Gerald as he shook his head with a wry smile.

While he didn't know what Daryl was thinking, he knew better than to go against that old man's words. After all, he didn't want to put his parents and sister in unnecessary danger.

"Well, we can't just remain here forever..." grumbled Aiden as he stretched.

"Let's just wait and see what happens first. Besides, the more men he sends over, the higher our chances of learning more about the situation on Yearning Island. We'll make our move once we know enough!" replied Gerald in a helpless tone.

"Honestly, you should be more worried about protecting Miss Lawrence. She's your soulmate, is she not? Remember, had Gerald not stepped in in time, Miss Lawrence would most probably be dead by now," said Master Ghost who had gotten much more familiar with Aiden. Now that they knew each other better, they no longer shared awkward silences, and even joked around at times.

Regardless, upon hearing that, Aiden immediately yelled, "S-she's just my employer...!"

As if he'd choose to have such a brutal person as his girlfriend! If she was the last woman on the planet, he'd very much prefer staying single and living comfortably!

"Alright, quit it, you two... Now's not the time for this. Either way, you should both get some rest while you can. After all, we don't know when the Crawfords will strike again," replied Gerald as he furrowed his brows slightly.

"Not like you're going to let me fight anyway," said Aiden.

"He has a point. While he may need to in order to protect Miss Lawrence, I, for one, lack fighting skills of any sort, so I don't really need the rest. Regardless, I did learn something new about the sea map," added Master Ghost.

"...Oh? What did you find out?" asked Gerald quickly.

“Well, the thing is, the sea map should clearly state where Yearning Island is. However, the island simply isn’t there. Why do you think that’s so?” replied Master Ghost as he shut the doors tightly.

“No idea,” said Gerald while shaking his head.

“Well, after thinking about it for the past few days, a thought suddenly came to me today. Since the sea map points in this direction in general, could it be that we’re already in the Yearning Island area?” suggested Master Ghost as he took the sea map out and pointed at their island.

“What? You’re saying we’re already on Yearning Island?” replied Gerald, his eyes fully widened.

“As I said, the Yearning Island area. You see, I have a feeling that the name ‘Yearning Island’ isn’t designated to a singular island, but instead to all the islands within this area!” said Master Ghost as he drew a circle around the islands on the map.

“...You’re... saying that Yearning Island is the name for this clump of islands...?” muttered Gerald with a frown. He had never thought of it this way...

Chapter 2030

“It’s just a hunch. There’s always a possibility that Yearning Island’s true location is well hidden and can’t be located just by looking at the sea map. Then again, that doesn’t mean that my theory is completely wrong either,” replied Master Ghost while shaking his head.

“That... does make sense...” muttered Aiden.

“It does. Still, if Yearning Island truly does refer to this clump of islands, all we need to do now is find out which island the main Crawford family is on... At the very least, we know they aren’t on this one,” replied Gerald with a slight frown on his face.

“Indeed... Still, I’m a little confused about all this...” said Aiden while scratching the back of his head.

“If you can’t understand such a simple concept then just focus on protecting Lindsay,” replied Gerald while atting Aiden’s shoulder.

“No, of course I understand Master Ghost’s theory! It’s just that... Don’t you find it a bit weird? Since all the islands are so close to each other, why hasn’t the main Crawford family just sent people over in the night to make their move? Why send people here just to pry on our situation...?” explained Aiden as he continued thinking about it.

Upon hearing that, Gerald paused for a moment before waving his hand as he said, “Well, thinking about it won’t get us anywhere. Just leave the question be for now.”

“I suppose... Well, you go on ahead first then... I’ll... Go get some rest,” replied Aiden with a sigh, giving up on thinking for now. After all, he knew for a fact that he only had to make a move when Gerald ordered him to. The rest had nothing to do with him...

Watching as Aiden then returned to his room, Gerald couldn’t help but shake his head as he helplessly said, “This kid...”

Now that Aiden had left, Master Ghost was prompted to ask, “So... Do you think what I said makes sense? If you do, then since Yearning Island is probably one of the other nearby islands, we should begin investigating them instead of waiting here...”

“Let’s refrain from doing that just yet. While we can surely consider doing that later on, do remember that while we stand in the light, those scoundrels lurk in the dark. If we act hastily and get discovered, the situation may take an unfavorable turn...” replied Gerald.

“I figured you’d say that. However, don’t you think we’re being a bit too passive now?” said Master Ghost who knew where Gerald was coming from. However, anything was better than just staying put...

After pondering about it for a while, Gerald eventually said, "...Hand me the sea map."

Nodding in response, Master Ghost then retrieved the sea map from his jacket's inner pocket before replying, "Here you go."

However, just as he was about to hand it to Gerald, Master Ghost couldn't help but notice something weird about the map.

After carefully studying it for a while, Master Ghost—who had looked at the map so many times that he had memorized all its locations—eventually said, "...The...map has changed... Gerald, could this be Yearning Island...?"

The map had clearly been different while he was studying it just minutes ago...

"What? Where?" asked Gerald as he quickly looked at where Master Ghost was pointing at.

True enough, there was now a new island on the map! However, before Gerald could get a closer look at it, the island disappeared before their very eyes...!

Naturally, this greatly confused both of them. After all, up till this point, they had simply assumed that it was just an ordinary map. Now that they had witnessed this disappearing island, however, they knew that the map definitely held more secrets within it...

After staring at the blank spot—where the island initially was—for a while, Gerald snapped out of it before asking, "...What on earth was that about..."

"...Give me a moment to think about it," replied the equally flabbergasted Master Ghost.

The second his sentence ended, the island suddenly reappeared at the edge of the map! As it turned out, the island was constantly on the move!

Upon closer inspection, the duo realized that there appeared to be people on the island... More worrying, however, was the fact that those people seemed to be hosting some kind of sacrificial ritual...

Chapter 2031

“The Seadom tribe?”

Seeing this, Master Ghost blurted out.

“What is the Seadom tribe?” Gerald was even more confused. He didn’t expect that the sea map could change. It was almost beyond his imagination.

“I remember now, Gerald. I know how to find the location of Yearning Island!” Master Ghost slapped his thigh and wore a smile on his face.

“Just say it already. Don’t keep me in suspense.” Gerald frowned.

“The Seadom tribe is an ancient tribe. They have been living on Yearning Island. Then, Daryl came and drove them away from the island and occupied the island.” Master Ghost said in excitement.

“I don’t quite get it. Isn’t Yearning Island one of these islands?” Gerald lit up a cigarette. He couldn’t understand what Master Ghost had said.

“It’s my fault. Yearning Island is very mysterious. I only heard about it from my master. If it wasn’t because of the change on the map, I wouldn’t have been reminded of that.”

“Yearning Island is not among these islands. It’s a floating island that only appears on the map by chance. The Seadom tribe knows the way to go to Yearning Island. Of course, we can also get there if we follow the ship of the main Crawford family.” Master Ghost cleared his throat and explained.

“Of course we cannot follow the Crawfords.” Gerald disagreed immediately.

“So, that means that we must find the Seadom tribe if we want to find Yearning Island. We can learn the way to get there from them. Only then can we find the island and go there.” Master Ghost continued.

“Then what are you still waiting for? Let’s get going.” Gerald extinguished the cigarette in his hand.

“Where to?” Master Ghost grabbed Gerald’s arm.

“To find the Seadom tribe, of course. The island they live on is already marked on the sea map. If we know the exact location of Yearning Island, we will gain dominance over this.” Thinking that he would be able to see his parents soon, Gerald felt overwhelmed.

“This is just an image of Yearning Island. The Seadom tribe has long since ceased to live on the sea. If I’m not mistaken, their descendants should be in Japan. But whether they still know the way to go to Yearning Island, I’m not very sure.”

Master Ghost said, shaking his head.

“An image?” Gerald frowned immediately and looked at the sea map.

Sure enough, the island where the Seadom tribe was located did not look like the other islands at all. It looked very illusory, almost as if it would diffuse if you waved your hand at it.

“Now, it’s up to you to decide.”

“Whether to continue to stay here and wait for the Crawford family to keep sending people here, to continue investigating the situation on Yearning Island, or to go to Japan to look for the Seadom tribe to learn the location and way to get to Yearning Island.” Master Ghost stared at Gerald and asked softly.

“Let me think.” Gerald puffed out a cloud of smoke.

Sitting in his chair, Gerald lit up another cigarette and began smoking it.

They were not very near Yearning Island, but they had come into contact with the main Crawford family. This meant that he was getting closer to his parents and sister.

Chapter 2032

Still, it was not guaranteed for them to get the information of Yearning Island, nor know about the next idea Daryl would come up with to deal with him.

If they left and went to Japan, it was not certain that they could find the Seadom tribe. Even if they found them, it might be as Master Ghost had said. The descendants of the tribe might have already forgotten about Yearning Island, and their efforts would have been in vain, wasting their time.

For a moment, Gerald was in a dilemma.

Master Ghost sat beside him, not rushing him nor saying anything.

After nearly half an hour, Gerald cleared his throat and stood up. After pacing back and forth in the living room, he stopped in front of Master Ghost.

Master Ghost raised his head and looked at Gerald.

“Let’s go to Japan.” Gerald pondered for a moment and said calmly.

“What about the situation here?” Master Ghost asked.

“We’ll not bother about it. As long as we learn the location of Yearning Island from the Seadom tribe, we will gain dominance. Staying here will only keep us on the submissive side.” Gerald shook his head. Within half an hour, he had thought about all possible scenarios that might happen.

“I’ll follow you.” Master Ghost did not say anything else.

“Then, get ready. We’ll leave in the next two days. We’ll send Lindsay back to Weston first and head to Japan right away.” Gerald nodded and said.

“Do we need to tell them?” Master Ghost was referring to Aiden and the disciples of Sacrasolis Palace.

“No, we’ll tell them before leaving.” Gerald shook his head.

In the evening, Gerald went back to his room after dinner. He wanted to plan the trip to Japan. Since it was about the safety of his parents and sister, he could not act hastily. Moreover, tracking down the Seadom tribe was not a simple task.

At the same time, the two followers of Will Crawford, Arnold Crawford and Sawyer Crawford, had gone to Gong Island in the night. Instead of docking openly at the pier like the previous four men, they had gotten on the shore at the back of the island instead.

After all, the four had come here with the order of the chief to test Gerald’s strength, whereas the two of them had come under the secret order of Will Crawford to assassinate Gerald.

“Sawyer, if the chief knows what we are doing, what do you think will happen to us?” After docking the boat, Arnold got onto the shore first. However, he didn’t enter the island directly. Instead, he sat on a big stone on the shore and asked softly.

“What else would happen? Certainly nothing good would happen to us.” Sawyer smiled bitterly and shook his head.

“There should be no problem. After all, this is the mission Will gave us. Either way, he is the disciple of the chief. If anything goes wrong, he will be able to hold up.” Arnold glanced toward the island.

“Cut the crap already. Let’s hurry up and finish off Gerald so that we can go back early. If we delay it any longer, it will not bring any good to us.” Once Sawyer got to the shore, he walked directly to the island.

The two disappeared into the darkness.

In the room, Gerald briefly sorted out the plan for his impending arrival in Japan. Just as he was about to go to sleep, he suddenly felt something was wrong and found the power of his Herculean Primordial Spirit burning uncontrollably in his body.

Cultivators were approaching him.

This was the first thought that came to his mind.

Gerald got out of the bed and stood sideways at the edge of the window. His instinct was warning him that someone was very near to him.

Using his finger, Gerald drew the curtain slightly and looked outside, squinting his eyes.

Chapter 2033

However, it was dark outside, seeming as if nothing strange was going on.

Still, Gerald felt that something was off. He grabbed his jacket, pushed open the door, and walked out to the end of the corridor. Then, he went through the window and climbed to the roof.

Two men were crouching on the rooftop.

“What are you looking at?” Seeing them, Gerald smiled and asked.

Gerald didn't even have to think to know that these people had been sent by Daryl, and they were stronger than the previous four.

“Move!” Hearing the sound behind them, Arnold drew out the knife from his waist without hesitation. The knife exuded a cold aura under the moonlight.

He leaped forward like a black panther and charged toward Gerald.

Sawyer, who was beside him, did not hesitate, and he attacked from the other direction. He ran to Gerald from the side. When the two attacked in formation, anyone who was equally or less strong than them would be unable to resist.

“You really don’t find it bothersome.” The moment Gerald saw the knives and their actions, he immediately took up a fighting stance.

Almost instantly, the three got entangled with each other. Gerald dodged the attack constantly. As he resisted their attack, he was still able to counter-attack. However, Gerald did not dare to kill the people from the Crawford family as it might affect his parents’ safety.

Besides, Gerald knew that they were sent by Daryl just to test his strength and would not truly harm him.

Snap!

Gerald snatched the knife from one of them sideways. Then, he stretched out his hand and slapped his back.

The strong force nearly made the man lose his footing. He stumbled backward and fell from the rooftop.

Falling from the second floor was not dangerous at all to the cultivators.

Thus, Gerald knocked the other person down with another slap. Then, he leaped onto the ground. Before the man could stand up, Gerald gave him another kick.

“Cough!”

Arnold couldn’t react at all. When he tried to resist, he already felt a sharp pain in his chest. Then, he spurted out a mouthful of blood and took a few steps backward, holding onto the wooden pillar to stabilize himself.

“Arnold, are you alright?!” Sawyer leaped down after Gerald. When he saw this, he asked hurriedly.

“I’m fine. Do it quickly! Don’t hesitate!” Arnold shouted, holding his chest and panting heavily.

They had wanted to take advantage of the night to assassinate Gerald, but they never expected that they would be discovered. If they drew the attention of others, even if they could kill Gerald, the people on the island would see them and spread the news to Yearning Island.

“You rest first. I’ll deal with him!” Sawyer held the knife in a reversed grip and glared at Gerald fiercely. As soon as he said that, he rushed forward and brandished the knife in his hand.

Gerald turned around immediately, hit his arm with one hand, and punched him on his chest with another hand.

Sawyer counter-attacked immediately. He stabbed hard at Gerald’s chest with the short knife in his left hand.

Seeing the knife, the smile on Gerald’s face disappeared immediately. He realized that the person in front of him was trying to kill him, unlike the four men Daryl had sent to test his strength earlier.

“You want to kill me?” Gerald gripped the man’s wrist immediately and asked indifferently, looking at the knife.

“Arnold, don’t just stand there! Come and help me!” Sawyer didn’t expect that Gerald could overcome his attack and grab him, so he shouted hurriedly.

Chapter 2034

Hearing Sawyer’s yell, Arnold rushed over without hesitation.

Snap!

Gerald narrowed his eyes. After the fight just now, he now knew that these two disciples were not coming to test his strength. Instead, they truly wanted to kill him. Since that was the case, he would not spare them so easily.

Exerting more force, Gerald squeezed the man's hand. The sound of bones cracking was heard right away, and Sawyer's wrist was broken immediately, with his palm and arm twisted like an arc.

"My hand!" Feeling the tremendous pain, Sawyer's face changed immediately. He struggled hard, stumbled backward, and fell to the ground.

"Gerald, how dare you come near Yearning Island?! Don't even think about leaving this place alive!" Seeing that Gerald had harmed his brother, Arnold was enraged, and he charged toward Gerald once again with a knife in his hand.

After having settled one man when they had fought one-on-one, Gerald could overpower him very easily. He threw the knife to the side and trampled Arnold to the ground.

"Let go of me!" Arnold widened his eyes in fear. He didn't expect that he would not be able to resist Gerald at all when the latter suddenly showed his strength. In just a flash, he was being stepped on by Gerald to the ground. He struggled very hard, but Gerald's strength was immense. No matter how hard he tried, he just could not break free.

Looking at the man under his foot and the other one who was trembling hard, holding his wrist, Gerald lit up a cigarette and started smoking slowly.

Soon, Aiden was attracted by the commotion outside.

Master Ghost rushed to the front and stood before Gerald. Looking at the scene, he asked softly, "These men were sent by the main Crawford family again to look for trouble?"

"It's not just looking for trouble. This time, they wanted to kill me." Gerald narrowed his eyes. If they were not Crawfords, he would have killed them immediately as soon as he realized their true motive.

"To kill you?!"

“Those who came looking for trouble before said that they came under the order of the chief to test your strength. Has your grandfather changed his mind?!” Master Ghost found this unbelievable.

“Probably.” Gerald shook his head and smiled. He couldn’t retrieve any memory of him having spent time with Daryl. This grandfather, to him, was only kin related by blood. He didn’t know about his character and style of action.

However, Gerald had some doubts. How could the head of the family change his mind so fast? Before he could ponder it any further, an idea came across his mind. Gerald smiled and said, “Or maybe, they were sent by other members of the Crawford family. After all, there isn’t just one leader in the family.”

“What do you mean?” Master Ghost scratched his head.

“Bring them in. I shall interrogate them myself to see who wants to kill me!” Gerald put his foot down and grabbed Arnold from the ground. As Arnold was dragged into the living room, no matter how hard he struggled, he could not break free from Gerald’s grasp.

Five minutes later, Gerald was sat on the sofa with a cigarette in his hand.

Arnold and Sawyer stood before him in defiance. The knife was placed right on the table in front of Gerald.

“Tell me, which senior member of the Crawford family sent you to kill me?” When the cigarette was about to finish, Gerald raised his head and looked at them.

“Gerald Crawford, now that we are in your hands, you can do whatever you want. Don’t try to manipulate us, we won’t tell you anything!” Arnold looked at Gerald with reddened eyes.

Chapter 2035

He simply did not expect Gerald's strength to be so strong. In his impression, a clansman who had grown up outside the family should only be an entry-level cultivator. Even if this grandson of the chief had some talent, they should be able to handle him easily with their strength.

However, only when they had fought did they realize that Gerald's ability was beyond their expectation.

Not to mention the intermediate level disciples of the family like them, even the advanced disciples might not be able to hurt Gerald.

"Well. You seem to be very tight-lipped." Gerald raised his eyebrows. What they had said didn't surprise Gerald much

"Gerald, if you are sensible, you should leave this place. Even if we tell you who ordered us to come to Gong Island, will you be able to find Yearning Island?" Sawyer covered his wrist and said through clenched teeth.

"So, this place is called Gong Island." Gerald lit up another cigarette.

"Cut the crap. Don't think about getting any information from the two of us today. You can kill us if you want. We admit defeat!" Arnold turned his head away.

"I will not kill you so easily. After all, in a sense, I am the young master of the Crawford family. You are the disciples of the Crawford family, so you should be considered my men. But today's matter is not likely to end well either, so since none of you want to talk, let's try my methods."

Hearing their words, Gerald's hand, which was holding a cigarette, stopped for a moment.

Then, he crushed the cigarette he had just taken two puffs of into the ashtray, stood up, and walked toward them.

As soon as those words left his lips, Gerald was already standing in front of Sawyer.

"What are you trying to do?" Looking at Gerald, Sawyer gulped in fear.

“I’m not going to do anything. I just want to get to know you.” Gerald smiled faintly. He stretched his hand out, grabbed Sawyer’s hand which was twisted, and exerted force on it again.

Crack...!

The sound of bones cracking was heard.

Hearing the sound, Aiden and Master Ghost couldn’t help but frown. Lindsay went into her room right away. She had never seen such a thing before, and she didn’t expect that Gerald was actually this cruel, that he would twist someone’s hand so brutally.

“Gerald, you...” The great pain made Sawyer nearly gnash his teeth.

After suffering two consecutive severe injuries, Sawyer knew very well in his heart that his right hand was already ruined. Even if he received treatment after returning to the family, he would still suffer permanent disability.

To a cultivator, a disabled hand was tantamount to a death sentence.

“Gerald Crawford, if you want to kill us, just hurry up! Stop torturing us!” Arnold clenched his fists. If he wasn’t already aware of the wide gap between his and Gerald’s strength, he would have fought for his life.

“Since we share the same surname, I will give you another chance. Answer my question honestly, and I can consider sparing you two and letting you return to Yearning Island safely. Otherwise, I will keep you by my side. As for when you will lose your arm or your leg, it will totally depend on my mood.”

As Gerald spoke, he held Sawyer’s hand once again.

Chapter 2036

Just as Gerald prepared to exert more force once again, Arnold suddenly spoke up.

“Wait!”

After having an internal battle for a moment, Arnold still decided to stop Gerald. He and Sawyer were actual brothers after all, and they had practiced together since they were young. He couldn't bear to see Gerald snap both of his brother's arms. Not only would he not be able to be a member of cultivation sects, but he would also be incapacitated as well.

"Oh?" Gerald stopped moving to look at him.

"Arnold, we would definitely not end up well if you say it!" Sawyer suppressed the pain. Although they were considered close to Will Crawford due to following him for many years, they knew just how cruel Will could be.

"I can't just stand and watch you get incapacitated just like that!" Arnold said through gritted teeth as he clenched his fist.

"Who sent you over? Was it Daryl Crawford or someone else from the Crawford family?" Gerald wasn't bothered by anything else. He just wanted to know the situation on Yearning Island.

"It was Will Crawford," Arnold took a deep breath and confessed.

"Who is Will Crawford?" It was the first time for Gerald to have heard this name.

"Will was adopted by the master, and he would probably have been the heir to the head of the Crawford family. We're his trusted subordinates and have followed him for nearly twenty years." After saying Will's name out loud, Arnold actually felt sort of relieved.

"We have no beef against each other, and I've just heard his name for the first time in my life. Why would he want me dead? Or was it an order from Daryl?" Gerald was interested in Will. Even though it was the first time he had gotten to know of this person, he got a strong sense of enmity from Will.

"No. The master didn't issue this order, but Master had passed him the task to deal with you. The four men from before were all sent by Will, but it was unexpected that you would be so strong. Will was worried that once you get connected with Yearning Island, you would be a threatening existence to his

status, so that's why he secretly sent us to get rid of you." Arnold shook his head.

"Me replacing his position?" Gerald was slightly taken aback.

Apparently, he hadn't expected to hear this, and he started to laugh out loud after a moment.

He had only gotten to know the Crawfords after his parents had been kidnapped, and although Daryl was his own grandfather, they were merely blood-related. It wouldn't be too much to call them strangers or even enemies. Gerald's hatred had almost made him want to destroy the whole Crawford family entirely.

And now, Will was actually worrying about him snatching away his position as the family head's heir.

This was the funniest thing he had ever heard in so many years.

"I've told you everything you wanted to know, so can you let us go now?" Arnold asked with his eyes fixed on Sawyer. Now that Sawyer's wrists had just been broken, they might have a way to save him if they returned to Yearning Island immediately.

"One more thing." Gerald waved him down.

"Where is Yearning Island, and how do I get in there?" Gerald asked as he looked at him intently.

Gerald didn't really have any hope for this, but these two were, after all, close to Will. They might know how to enter Yearning Island. If he could get the answer from them, he wouldn't have to visit Japan and seek out the Seadom tribe, and it would save a lot of trouble.

"I don't know." Arnold shook his head.

"You exited the Yearning Island and are about to return there now. How can you return if you don't know?" Gerald sneered.

Chapter 2037

“To tell you the truth, although we’re from Yearning Island, the way we leave and return is always strange. We have to report to Will in advance and travel according to the direction specified by him, and the directions are always different. Not long after reporting, we would be able to see the outline of Yearning Island, and we can then enter the island.”

“However, if we don’t report in, we will never be able to find Yearning Island even if we sailed across the sea forever.” Arnold shook his head.

“Is that true?” Gerald’s sneer faded.

“We even told you about Will, why would we not tell you the exact address of Yearning Island if we knew?!” Arnold was afraid that Gerald wouldn’t believe them and continue to torture Sawyer, and his tone became anxious.

“Looks like it’s as we thought. Yearning Island is an island that floats around the sea surface. Unless there’s a special way, we would never be able to find it,” Master Ghost walked up to Gerald and spoke in a low voice. “Now, it seems that it wouldn’t be possible to get the answer from them. The only way is to find the Seadom tribe.”

Gerald breathed in deeply.

“Go back and tell Will Crawford for me that he should come to me himself if he wants to get rid of me. There’s no need for these petty assassinations. They won’t work on me.”

“Don’t worry. We will surely pass the message.” Hearing this from Gerald, the two immediately relaxed.

Without another word, Arnold helped Sawyer up, and they left the scene immediately, disappearing into the dark in the blink of an eye. Gerald got up and headed toward the door to check the situation outside before shutting the door after a while.

“Brother Gerald, are you really letting them off just like that?” Aiden spoke up in dissatisfaction.

“What else can we do? Kill them?” Gerald asked with a chuckle.

“I’ll kill them if I have the chance to in the future!” Aiden tightened his fist. He knew that Gerald couldn’t kill the two because his parents were still being held at Yearning Island, but he still felt bad about it.

“Alright, we’ll talk about this later on in the future. Go and pack your stuff, we’re leaving tomorrow.” Gerald waved him down. For now, he only wished to go to Japan and meet the Seadom tribe to find a way to reach Yearning Island. It wouldn’t be too late to discuss any other matters after they had successfully gotten onto Yearning Island.

“Leaving? Where are we going?” Aiden was confused.

“Japan,” Gerald replied casually and stuffed the half-box of untouched cigarettes into Aiden’s hand.

Before Aiden could ask for more details, Gerald had already entered his room. Aiden could only turn to Master Ghost. “What are we going to do in Japan? Are we not going to search for Yearning Island anymore?”

“You don’t have to ask more about this. Gerald must have his own reasons for doing this.” Master Ghost smiled and patted Aiden on his shoulders.

By the time Arnold and Sawyer returned to Yearning Island, the sky was bright

“Have you gotten rid of him?” Will was still smoking an imported cigar. After finding out that he had a chance to become the next head of the Crawford family, he had become puffed up with pride, even picturing himself as the Crawford family’s head already sometimes.

“No... we couldn’t...” Arnold shivered. He felt terrified as he recalled all the words he had said to Gerald on Gong Island.

“What happened to your arm?” Will raised his head to find that Sawyer’s sleeve was covered in blood.

Chapter 2038

“It seems that Gerald isn’t that weak. He actually caused you to make such a big sacrifice. But he shouldn’t be much of a threat to me anymore since he’s incapacitated even though not killed.”

“Brother Will, we didn’t manage to hurt Gerald Crawford. He’s too strong, and we weren’t his opponents,” Arnold cut Will off. “If we hadn’t used all our might to escape from Gong Island, we would’ve been killed there by him.”

“You weren’t Gerald’s opponents?!” Those words made the smile on Will’s face disappear, and his rage could be seen as he exerted tremendous force onto the cup he was holding.

Bang!

After a moment, the glass cup burst into pieces all over the floor.

“We had no idea Gerald would be that powerful. There’s a huge gap between our strengths and his,” Arnold trembled in fear, but he still continued to explain.

“Scram,” Will breathed in deeply and spoke through trembling lips.

“Sawyer’s wrist was snapped and broken by him.” Arnold took a step back.

“I told you to get out!” Will got up in a fury and bellowed as he pointed toward the door. “From now onward, don’t appear before me, or else I will make you regret it!”

The two had never seen Will so enraged before, and thus, they didn’t dare to stay there any longer. They turned and left the room at lightning speed, fearing that they would be punished for not getting out of his sight in time.

“Gerald Crawford... now that my underlings can’t do anything to you, I’ll meet up with you myself!” Will continued to smoke the cigar and vowed with his eyes squinted.

As soon as he finished his sentence, he had a coat on, and he left immediately, heading toward the shore of Yearning Island.

The next day.

Upon waking up, Gerald led everyone to leave Gong Island by boat. Seeing Gerald leave, all the families on Gong Island immediately became relieved. They were afraid that Gerald would continue living there and bring about more trouble for them.

Standing on the deck, Gerald looked around the ocean's surface.

When Lindsay Lawrence and all the students of Sacrasolis Palace had arrived and stood before him, Gerald turned to look at them and said, "We will pause on the matter of searching for Yearning Island for now. Aiden, after stopping at Weston's dock, you can accompany Ms. Lindsay back home, and the rest of you from Sacrasolis Palace should have some rest at home. I'll come for your assistance once I have located Yearning Island."

"Understood."

All the students from Sacrasolis Palace nodded in unison, and they obeyed Gerald's order completely, not questioning him when Gerald asked them to return first.

It was Aiden who didn't move an inch.

"What about you, Aiden?" Gerald set his eyes on him.

"No problem. I'll send Ms. Lindsay back." Even though Aiden wanted to follow Gerald, he knew that he couldn't leave Lindsay behind. He should send her back safely as he had been the one who had sent her out from the Lawrence family himself. If he didn't, with the Lawrence family's power and status in Weston, he wouldn't be let off that easily.

"It's settled, then. Go back and rest up. Everyone's tired after this whole ordeal. I, Gerald Crawford, did witness everything you all did." Gerald put on a small smile, and the boat continued to head toward Weston.

Meanwhile, Will had just reached Gong Island.

Filled with rage, Will went further into the island and grabbed someone from the clan on the island.

Chapter 2039

“I’m asking you, where are Gerald Crawford and his people?!” Will Crawford wore a dark look. He had exited the island secretly with the sole intention of getting rid of Gerald once and for all. It would be a big problem if Daryl Crawford found out about this.

“Gerald? They’re staying at the two-story wooden house block not far from here.” The clansman knew Will and didn’t dare to say anything unnecessary.

Just as Will had let go of him and started walking toward the direction where the wooden house block was, the clansman continued, “But they left early this morning.”

“Left?” Will was dumbfounded, and his expression darkened.

“That’s right. They all left first thing in the morning.” The clansman was terrified and couldn’t move, but he still spoke the truth.

“I’m one step late!” Will bellowed in a low voice and hit his own thigh.

If Gerald hadn’t left today, he believed that his strength and power would make them all stay on Gong Island forever, but now that they had left, it was impossible to chase after them or reach them. It was not known how long it would be before they would return here, and maybe something unexpected would happen by then as well.

“There’s none of your business here anymore, scram!” Seeing how the clansman was still standing before him, Will waved him away impatiently.

Standing on the same spot, Will observed the situation around Gong Island and became more furious as he thought about it more. Not killing Gerald this

time would bring so much trouble after this, and he wouldn't be able to stay as the heir of the family's head as comfortably with zero worries.

Till then, if Gerald and Daryl decided to cease hostilities and return to being grandfather and grandson, Gerald being the heir of Crawford's family head would be crushing Will's status. Will might be excluded or even kicked out of the Crawford family.

Thinking of this, Will grew even more furious, and he decided that he had to kill Gerald no matter what way he had to use. He wouldn't be able to rest for even a day as long as Gerald was still breathing.

Although he was angry, Will had no choice but to return and walk back to the shore.

After seven days.

Gerald's boat stopped at the dock in Japan.

The students of Sacrapolis Palace had returned, and Aiden had escorted Lindsay Lawrence back to Weston.

Gerald and Master Ghost had left the dock intending to find a place to stay temporarily. The Seadom tribe was a tribe that had existed hundreds or thousands of years ago. They had all completely assimilated into Japan's normal way of living, and they would never bring up their statuses that could affect their daily lives. Almost nobody knew of the existence of the Seadom tribe.

Staying at a hotel in a city by the sea in Japan, Gerald ordered some food and ate in the room with Master Ghost.

"Where would the Seadom tribe be?" Gerald asked right away as he ate.

"I don't know about that either. The current Seadom tribe isn't the same as the one thousands of years ago. It won't be easy to find them. We have to start finding out bit by bit." Master Ghost shook his head.

“No rush, then. We’ll take it slow.” Although Gerald was slightly disappointed, it was good enough that they had information on the Seadom tribe’s existence as it wasn’t easy to get.

“There’s something you need to take note of as well. Japan is not like Weston nor Yanam. You have to be careful in doing anything here and not trigger any conflicts. If you offend someone here, even if you found the Seadom tribe, they won’t admit their status to avoid troubles,” Master Ghost swallowed the food after reminding Gerald as the thought came up.

“I understand, I’ll be careful with that for sure.” Gerald waved him down with a smile. He knew how to determine the importance of a certain matter when he faced serious ones.

“Then, let’s eat. We should rest up for a few days after working for so long.” Master Ghost didn’t add anything else after seeing Gerald’s acknowledgment.

Chapter 2040

After dinner, Gerald returned to his room for a rest while Master Ghost stayed in the living room.

Throughout the entire night, Gerald was still thinking about the situation with the Seadom tribe, and the name ‘Will Crawford’ crossed his mind too. Gerald wasn’t interested in a child whom his grandfather had adopted, and he didn’t even want to be some heir to Crawford’s family head at all.

However, it was obvious that Will had already taken him as an opponent.

Thinking of this, Gerald couldn’t help but shake his head and chuckle.

“Brother Gerald, are you in Japan?” His phone rang, and it turned out to be Aiden who had called him.

“Just arrived today. You’ve sent Ms. Lindsay back?” Gerald took a deep breath. Now that Aiden had returned to Weston, he didn’t want to release any of the negative emotions anymore.

“Hehe, open your curtains and look down, Brother Gerald!” Aiden chuckled over the phone.

“Curtain?” Gerald frowned a bit and got up from the bed to pull open the curtains of the hotel room. A familiar figure could be seen standing down there, and it was none other than Aiden Baker.

“You didn’t expect this, did you! We’re meeting again! Wait for me upstairs, I’ll go up immediately!” After this sentence, Aiden hung up the call and entered the hotel as he pulled his luggage behind him.

After a few minutes, someone rang the doorbell.

“Have a cigarette, Brother Gerald!” Aiden invited himself into the room and tossed his luggage aside casually as he took out a box of Ricken’s and handed a cigarette to Gerald from the box.

“After escorting Ms. Lindsay back to the Lawrence family house, I received an order from the higher authority to participate in a war contest in Japan. Then, I remembered that you were here in Japan as well, so I figured that I would be able to be of help. Therefore, I simply packed up some stuff and boarded the plane without even returning to the hostel.”

Aiden scratched his head bashfully, obviously overjoyed that he had gotten to stay with Gerald.

“Then, how did you know that I was here?” Gerald patted his shoulder with a smile.

“Of course Master Ghost told me about it! I specifically made a call to him asking where you were staying to surprise you!” Aiden continued.

“Okay. Now that you’re here, just stay here with us. I’ll tell you when I need your help, but don’t let it affect the order you got from your boss.” Gerald accepted his help.

Japan wasn’t like Yanam. There wasn’t really any cultivation activity here, and without the need to protect Lindsay, perhaps Aiden, as a member of the special forces, might indeed be of help to him.

“No rush! The war contest is half a month away, it’s still early!” Aiden grabbed the ashtray and placed it in front of Gerald.

“Go ahead and book a room for some rest. We can talk about other matters tomorrow.” Gerald patted his shoulder.

“Alright!” Aiden nodded and left with his luggage.

Meanwhile, Will had not taken a break even after finding out that Gerald had left Gong Island.

He had accumulated his own network of connections ever since he had entered the Crawford family. The network had gradually expanded all over the world and covered not only Yearning Island. It was just that he didn’t usually have to leave Yearning Island, so he could order his underlings to do certain tasks for him when he had other matters to attend to.

Chapter 2041

“...What? Gerald’s reached Japan?” replied Will with a frown.

“Indeed. I saw him arriving at the dock with two other people! They’re currently in a hotel in one of Japan’s coastal cities!” reported the person on the other end of the line.

“...Odd... Why’d he suddenly decided to head there...?” muttered Will as he pondered the situation.

“If I may, could it be that he’s come to Weston to look for more helpers...?” replied the caller.

“It’s a possibility, though the guess could also be wrong. Regardless, keep an eye on him and don’t let him find out that he’s being tailed. I want to know every move he makes, so don’t you dare lose him or there’ll be consequences!” retorted Will before hanging up.

As he continued sitting in the living room, Will couldn’t help but continue wondering why Gerald headed to Japan.

After all, according to the information he obtained through thorough investigations, all of Gerald’s main connections were in Weston. As for any involvements Gerald had with powers outside Weston, the only thing Will could think of was Gerald’s reign of chaos in Yanam. Aside from destroying the three major families there, did Gerald really have any other involvements with powers outside of Weston?

In the end, Will simply couldn’t figure out why Gerald had gone there. With that in mind, Will knew that constantly monitoring Gerald was his best shot at gaining a better understanding of the youth’s actions. If everything went swimmingly, perhaps he would finally be able to kill Gerald...!

At that moment, several knocks could be heard from his door, prompting Will to get up and open it... And to Will’s surprise, it was Daryl!

Supporting himself with a walking stick, Daryl smiled at Will before asking, “Ah, here you are, Will! Have you heard about what happened on Gong Island...?”

“I have. Gerald brought the people along and ran off, right?” replied Will.

“Indeed. Still, his strength has gone well beyond my expectations... To think that the two groups of people you sent over failed to even lay a scratch on him... Regardless, do you have any idea where he’s gone?” asked Daryl as he stroked his beard.

Upon hearing that, Will’s legs quivered slightly as he said, “I... I’m afraid I don’t...”

Will was rightfully nervous since Daryl should’ve only been aware of the initial four people he had sent over to the island. After all, those were the ones he sent under Daryl’s orders to test Gerald’s strength.

By right, Daryl shouldn’t have known about the two confidants he had secretly sent over to assassinate Gerald. Despite that, after hearing Daryl’s statement, Will knew without a doubt that the old man knew about his actions. Thinking back, had Daryl actually come to violently interrogate or warn him that night...?

Seeing how nervous Will was, Daryl simply smiled as he patted Will’s shoulder while saying, “There’s no need to be so ill at ease...”

While he was still stunned, Will eventually snapped out of it before replying, “...I... I only did that to test Gerald’s strength... To be quite frank, I had no idea that Gerald was that strong... Neither of my confidants was even able to pose a challenge to him... In fact, one of them ended up having a broken arm! Due to that, his cultivation will surely be influenced negatively from now on...”

Waving his hand to signify that he didn’t mind, Will then said, “I see... Either way, again, do you have any idea where he is now?”

“I... don’t... From the moment he left Gong Island, I’ve lost all news about him...” replied Will as he shook his head.

Will, for one, had kept his network of information so confidential that he was sure that Daryl had never found out about it throughout the years. With that in mind, there was no way in hell he was going to tell Daryl about it now.

“...I see. Well, if that’s the case, it’s unfortunate, but I guess we won’t be able to tell when he’ll return...” muttered Daryl in a cold and stern voice...

Chapter 2042

After a slight pause, Will eventually brought himself to say, “...Do... you really want to meet him that much, sir...?”

“To kill him, yes. I’ve told you time and again that you’re the only heir of the Crawford family, haven’t I? If you still refuse to believe that, then you can just leave!” retorted Daryl as a frown formed on his face.

“I-I apologize for doubting you! I believe you! I truly do...!” replied Will, quivering in fear.

“If you do, then why did you secretly plan that assassination that night?” replied Daryl in a hoarse voice as he stubbed his cigarette out before loudly tapping his walking stick against the floor.

“...T-that...” muttered Will, momentarily at a loss at what to say.

Will, for one, had always thought that his plans were flawless. He never imagined that despite all his efforts to hide it from Daryl, that old man still managed to find out...!

“I’ll say it right now that you nearly ruined all my plans!” scowled Daryl with a snort.

“I-I know what I did was wrong now, sir...!” replied Will as he lowered his head.

In the end, Will was merely an adopted child, and his ultimate fear was having Daryl suddenly give up on him. It definitely explained why he generally didn’t

dare to disobey Daryl's orders. Still, if Daryl truly did decide to drop his protection and care for Will, then not only would Will lose his high position in Yearning Island, but there was a high chance that he would be driven away as well!

Knowing that Will had been scared straight, Daryl then said in a frigid tone, "This had better be the last time... If I ever find out that you disobeyed me again, you can just pack up and leave Yearning Island for good!"

Following that, Will left the room without another word, leaving Will frozen on the spot for quite some time.

Eventually, a cold breeze blew into the room, snapping Will out of it. Heaving a heavy sigh, Will then flopped onto a chair...

Though Daryl's words were law, Will's resolve to kill Gerald was even greater than his fear of abandonment. The truth was, he simply couldn't bring himself to believe that Daryl wanted Gerald dead. With that in mind, Will knew that until he had personally killed Gerald, his position as the Crawford family's heir would remain uncertain...

Gnashing his teeth as he grabbed a glass of water, Will then growled, "Gerald...! I'll kill you if it's the last thing I do...!"

Seconds later, the glass shattered from his immense grip, sending glass shards falling all over the place...

Moving back to Gerald, his body had returned to peak condition after a night's rest in Japan. After breakfast, the three of them sat in their room to begin discussing things...

"Even after asking around last night, I wasn't able to get any news about the Seadom tribe. However, it's a fair assumption that this family has remained very well hidden in the real world's Japan. After all, they've yet to be discovered by others," said Master Ghost.

"I suppose so. There goes the hope of finding them in a day or two. I guess we'll only be able to find the tribe after some time. We can't get too hasty either or we may end up scaring them away when we actually find them..."

replied Gerald—who didn't find their current situation to be overly disappointing—with a nod.

“...Um... What are you talking about...?” muttered Aiden who was completely at a loss...

“Essentially, the Seadom tribe is a tribe that's existed for thousands of years... We're looking for them since according to rumors, they know a way of locating and entering Yearning Island. With that in mind, if the rumors are true and we do manage to find them, we can finally have a head start above Daryl,” explained Gerald, knowing that Aiden no longer had to focus on protecting Lindsay.

Chapter 2043

After hearing what Gerald had to say, Aiden's expression momentarily stiffened before he replied, “...But... we don't even know which area of Japan they're in! Aren't we essentially just on a wild goose chase?”

“...Unfortunately, we are,” replied Gerald with a sigh.

“Regardless, there's really no rush. I'm sure we'll find the Seadom tribe sooner or later,” said Master Ghost.

“Indeed. Speaking of which, what's up with that special forces competition of yours? Let's start investigating from there. It's better than staying cooped up in this room anyway,” asked Gerald as he looked at Aiden.

“Well, according to my force's leader, it's really just an ordinary competition that selects the most powerful people from each country's special forces to eventually compete in Japan. While it's not a standard competition, there's honestly not much honor to be gained by participating. Still, it is an international competition, so emphasis still needs to be placed on it,” explained Aiden.

“I see... Well, it wouldn't hurt to go have a look at it, right?” replied Gerald.

“We may as well since we don't really know where to start looking anyway. Still, since it's being held in Japan, I'm sure most of the participants will be influential and powerful... With that in mind, we could possibly gain more clues about the Seadom tribe from them,” added Master Ghost.

“Then it's settled, I suppose! I'll go contact the organizer!” said Aiden as he fished his phone out to make a call.

Though the call itself was short, Aiden successfully got the organizer to send a car over—to their hotel—to pick them up. The organizer didn't seem to mind Gerald and Master Ghost coming along either.

Either way, it was about half an hour later when a few men from the Japanese military came over to pick them up. After checking out, the trio then headed to the competition's venue...

The competition itself wasn't being held in the Japanese military's headquarters, but instead, on a training ground. Regardless, upon arriving, the trio saw that several of the houses were constructed with composite boards, a clear sign that they were temporary structures for the special forces to live in.

Aside from that, it was also noteworthy that many people were already there. As it turned out, though the competition was still half a month away, many of the participants had arrived in advance to practice and get themselves used to the environment in hopes that it would contribute to getting them the win. After all, who wouldn't want to do their countries proud?

Regardless, the person in charge eventually stopped before one of the houses. Getting out of the car, he then pointed at the house while handing Aiden a key before saying, “That's the place. Since you're the special forces from Weston, you'll be staying here for now.”

Upon receiving the key, Aiden couldn't help but widen his eyes. After all, if it wasn't for the fact that he had been told that this was the Japanese soldiers' training grounds, he would've surely assumed that the entire area was just a construction zone! With how shabby the houses looked, it almost felt like they would topple the second strong winds blew!

With that in mind, once the person in charge left the scene, Aiden turned to look at Gerald before apologetically saying, "...Had I known the living conditions would be this poor here, we should've just remained in the hotel..."

"Well, since we're here anyway, let's just take it easy. Besides, living here for half a month won't kill us," replied Gerald as he took the key from Aiden and opened the door...

Though the house was only meant to be lived in temporarily, it was by no means small. In total, there was a living room, three bedrooms, a washroom, and a dining room...

Either way, once they were done unpacking, Gerald looked out the window to see what the situation was like outside...

Shortly after, Aiden entered Gerald's room before saying, "It's almost noon, Gerald. Are you hungry? I'm about to ask for some food, myself!"

"Go ahead," replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

Once Aiden left, Gerald fished out the sea map from his pocket... As expected, Yearning Island had disappeared from the map... Aside from that, the island where the Seadom Tribe held their sacrificial ritual was nowhere to be seen as well...

Chapter 2044

Since the map itself looked like scrap paper, had Gerald not witnessed the disappearing islands before this, he wouldn't have believed that the map was actually more complex than it looked.

At that moment, Master Ghost walked in and asked, "Anything new on the map?"

"Nothing. I don't even know when Yearning Island will reappear again. It seems that the sea map truly has a lot of unresolved mysteries... Had I known about this back then, I wouldn't have left the ancient ruins so quickly... That

old man could've possibly helped with this!" replied Gerald as he shook his head with a sigh.

True enough, had he known about all these mysteries back then, he would've surely remained in the ancient ruins till he uncovered all the mysteries of the sea map, no matter how long it took.

"Indeed... Do you think we should return to the ancient ruins?" asked Master Ghost.

"Just forget about it... So what if we manage to uncover the sea map's secrets? All we'd be able to do is locate Yearning Island a little easier. In the end, we'd still have to look for the Seadom tribe to even get there," replied Gerald as he shook his head.

Hearing how dispirited Gerlad was, Master Ghost then patted him on the shoulder before saying, "Don't get too anxious. Just so you know, we're progressing quite speedily. After all, not only do we have the sea map now, but we also know about the island where the Crawfords are staying on. Once we find the Seadom tribe, we'll definitely be able to rescue your parents..."

Hearing that, Gerald then took in a deep breath before smiling as he said, "...I know..."

Shortly after, Aiden returned with some food prepared by the Japanese military. Completely different from the common dishes in Weston, lunch appeared to be extremely traditional Bibimbap and Kimbap, served together with a large bowl of Miso soup...

Regardless, the trio then surrounded the dining table to have their lunch.

Halfway through, however, they were suddenly greeted by the sound of rapid knocking, followed by someone yelling, "Is Aiden in there? Aiden Baker from Weston!"

Sipping on his soup, Gerald then said, "Looks like someone's looking for you."

"Who is it?" asked Aiden as he lowered his bowl and chopsticks before heading toward the door...

Upon opening it, he was greeted by the sight of a few Asian special forces, all of them wearing combat uniforms...

After sizing Aiden up, one of the men angrily growled, "Are you Aiden? I go by Adler Lightbody, and I'm a special force member from the Yanam military. From what I've heard, you came to my military's headquarters one and created a giant mess there with your friend, no?"

Not wanting to bother with him, Aiden simply said, "You're mistaking me for someone else."

Before Aiden could even close the door, Adler grabbed onto it, getting a good look at Gerald and Master Ghost.

"Who are those two? Is one of them Gerald?" asked Adler.

"With all due respect, we aren't in Yanam, good sir. If there's anything you wish to clarify, then go look for Carter! He's your current acting leader, no? Now stop trying to mess with us!" retorted Aiden as he frowned. After all, not only was Adler challenging him, but he was also challenging Weston.

By this point, the racket had attracted the attention of several other special forces from overseas. From the looks of it, they seemed to be enjoying the scene, with many even advocating Aiden to challenge Adler to a duel...

Chapter 2045

"So you even know the name of my military's acting leader! I'm now more certain than ever that you're the ones who made the mess! Had I not been out on a mission back then, I would've definitely prevented you from leaving all willy-nilly! Regardless, now that we've finally met, why don't you start explaining about the mysterious disappearance of my leader?!" growled Adler as he glared at Aiden.

Had it not been for the fact that so many people were currently looking at him, he would've surely beat up Aiden by now.

“...What? Yanam’s leader has gone missing?” exclaimed several of the onlookers at that moment.

Following that, almost everyone turned to look at Aiden. Making a national leader ‘mysteriously’ disappear was no easy feat, but if a member of Yanam’s special forces was saying so, it must be true. Besides, if it was just a hoax, Adler wouldn’t have declared all this in the presence of so many people!

Staring at Adler for a while, Aiden then replied, “As I’ve said, it’s useless to ask me about this. Just go back and ask Carter if you’re that keen on the topic. Either way, now that you’ve successfully ruined my appetite, I implore you to leave. Otherwise, I’ll assume you’re challenging Weston’s special forces.”

“...Fine! Have it your way!” retorted Adler as he released his grip on their door. As much as Adler wanted to get rid of Aiden, he knew better than to make a move in front of so many people. After all, offending Weston as a whole would surely spell major trouble...

Before he left, however, Adler made sure to lower his head as he whispered, “I advise you to behave properly in the next few days. If you act out of line, you may just get whisked away by someone...!”

“Just leave already,” replied Aiden as he closed the door behind him. He really couldn’t be bothered by Adler’s taunts.

Once he got back to the dining table, Aiden simply resumed his meal as if nothing had ever happened.

Gerald himself had heard everything. With that in mind, once he finished his Kimbap, he smiled faintly before saying, “It seems that this competition isn’t as peaceful as we imagined.”

“Don’t worry, if he comes looking for trouble again, I’ll just get rid of him. We won’t get into trouble either since we’ll only be practicing self-defense,” replied Aiden as he clenched his fists. While he knew he couldn’t match against cultivators, he was still quite confident in his ability to get rid of a regular member of the special forces.

“Negative. Remember, you’re representing Weston in this competition. If you make a move, it’ll only paint Weston in a bad name. Just let me handle this trivial affair. You just have to focus on the competition,” replied Gerald as he waved his hand.

Gerald, for one, didn’t want Aiden to get into trouble. Besides, if Gerald was to be completely honest, Aiden had simply accompanied him to Yanam back then. Even when Aiden was there, he barely did anything.

“It’s alright, brother Gerald! Just leave everything to me! I can handle this much!” declared Aiden as he patted his chest confidently.

“Look, either you leave this affair to me, or Master Ghost and I are leaving right now,” replied Gerald as he wiped the corner of his mouth with his sleeve.

Before flabbergasted Aiden could even reply, Gerald had already gotten up and entered his room...

Looking at the stupefied Aiden, Master Ghost simply smiled before saying, “As Gerald had said, it’s best that you leave this to him. Remember, you’re a member of the special forces. If you fight them before the competition and get caught by the Japanese military, you’ll surely be disqualified in no time...”

Following that conversation, evening soon came, and everyone had their dinner before returning to their rooms to rest...

Once he was full, Gerald himself laid on his bed, a cigarette in hand as he intently observed the map...

Chapter 2046

It had been nearly a week since he had last seen Yearning Island on the map. Despite the fact that he kept a close eye on the map whenever he was free, the island simply refused to show up again...

As Gerald continued looking at the map, he suddenly heard someone say, “You’ve got some nerve looking for trouble with us...!”

Slipping the sea map back into his pocket, Gerald simply smiled wryly as he left his room...

Upon exiting, he saw Master Ghost and Aiden—who were seated in the living room—staring at the front door, making it quite evident that they had heard the same voice.

Just as Aiden was about to get up, however, Gerald firmly pushed him back into his chair.

“Just stay here. This has nothing to do with you,” replied Gerald in a casual tone as he exited the house and closed the door behind him.

Of course, the owner of the voice was none other than Adler...

“Ironic that you say that we’re looking for trouble when you’re doing the same,” said Gerald as he narrowed his eyes.

Ignoring that comment, Adler simply crossed his arms, looking completely unafraid of Gerald as he replied, “You’re Gerald, right? Before coming to Japan, I’ve heard about the incidents that happened in Yanam. There were rumors that you were responsible for my leader’s disappearance, you know. In fact, it was also said that you were the one who killed so many of those men in the military! With that in mind, it’s my duty to not let you leave this place alive...!”

“It appears that you know little about me. I’ll say it now that my issues with Yanam have been resolved, and I see no reason to cause any trouble. With that in mind, leave now and I’ll pretend this conversation never happened. How about it?” said Gerald with a subtle smile before pointing to the side, clearly indicating for Adler to leave.

“Cut the cr*p! You’re coming back to Yanam with me now!” growled Adler as he reached out to grab Gerald’s collar.

However, before he could even do so, Gerald quickly smacked the back of Adler’s hand! Due to how rapid Gerald’s counterattack had been, Adler was only able to register what had happened when he felt the searing pain in his hand!

“M-My hand...!” hissed Adler as he desperately tried to keep his voice down.

Looking at his swollen hand, it was already as red as a beet. It was barely an exaggeration that his hand felt like it had just been smashed by a hammer! With such immense pain, for a moment, he couldn't even feel his fingers...

Whatever the case was, Gerald—who was now frowning—then said, “I'm giving you one final chance. Get the hell out of my sight.”

Honestly, had it not been for the fact that he didn't want to cause any unnecessary issues for Aiden—from the other special forces from overseas—he would've gotten rid of Adler the second he came looking for trouble.

“Tell me where my leader is...!” retorted Adler as he drew out an army dagger after realizing that Gerald hadn't injured him too seriously.

After thinking about it for a while, Gerald then said, “No idea. He's probably in some forest.”

Enraged, Adler then lifted his dagger, aiming it at Gerald's heart as he yelled, “To hell with you!”

Gerald didn't move an inch as the dagger came diving straight for his chest! Adler himself smiled wickedly as he felt the dagger collide against Gerald... before it stopped.

Eyes widening, Adler's immediate thought was that something must have been placed on Gerald's chest to prevent the dagger from stabbing though. With that in mind, he increased the force of his thrust, figuring that whatever the armor was, it would eventually get pierced through.

However, no matter how much force he applied, the dagger simply wouldn't budge...!

“Are you done?” replied Gerald with a slight frown.

While he was previously still worried about negatively affecting Aiden's performance in the competition, Adler was courting death a bit too much by this point...

Chapter 2047

“...W-who are you...?!” said Adler, his fear now apparent in his eyes. After all, he was now certain that there was nothing on Gerald’s chest. However, that meant that the tip of the dagger was currently against his skin! Why the hell hadn’t it pierced through him yet? Was his skin made of steel or something?!

“I’m just a person from Weston,” replied Gerald as he grabbed Adler by the neck, not wanting to play any more games with this person.

Before Adler could even resist, a loud, ‘snap’ could be heard... and just like that, Adler was dead.

After looking at the corpse for a while, Gerald dragged it to the back of the house. Following that, he used the Herculean Primordial Spirit to gather immense heat in his hand... and within a blink of an eye, Adler’s corpse completely evaporated.

With the body now gone, Gerald dusted his hands and looked around to see if there were any witnesses. Seeing no one, Gerald then re-entered the house...

Seeing that Gerald was now back, Aiden—who had earlier heard signs of fighting outside—immediately got to his feet and asked, “Is he still trying to look for trouble, brother Gerald?”

Had Gerald not prohibited him from leaving, he would’ve surely picked a fight with Adler earlier...

Whatever the case was, Gerald simply waved his hand as he replied, “He’s no more. With that said, nobody is allowed to bring this incident up again.”

Before Aiden could ask for more details, Gerald had already returned to his room, closing the door behind him...

Though he was puzzled, Aiden eventually sat back down to finish his soup. He didn’t even bother asking Master Ghost about it since both of them had remained seated there earlier, completely unaware of what Gerald had done.

Knowing that he wasn't going to get any answers, once he was done with his soup, Aiden then returned to his room to sleep...

The very next morning, instead of being awoken by Gerald or Master Ghost, Aiden was snapped awake by a racket not too far from their house.

Wondering if something serious had happened again, Aiden then hopped out of bed and put on a coat before walking out of his room. Upon walking past the dining room, he saw that Gerald was having his breakfast, cool as a cucumber. It almost seemed like he didn't hear all the noise outside at all.

Raising a slight brow, Aiden then opened the front door... Only to realize that a group of people had gathered right outside their house! Including the person in charge of Japan—that they had previously met—, the group consisted of special forces from various other countries.

Wondering what all the ruckus was about, Aiden frowned slightly as he asked, "...What seems to be the problem here?"

Hearing that, the person in charge showed Aiden his identification card before replying, "Yes, well, before anything else, we'd like to ask whether you've seen Mr. Adler from Yanam recently, Mr. Baker. From what I've heard, you and him had a dispute yesterday, and I find it quite odd that he mysteriously disappeared right after that!"

Remembering what Gerald had said the previous night, Aiden simply replied, "No, I haven't."

"I beg your pardon? Look, some of the participants heard him looking for trouble with you last night. Are you absolutely sure you didn't meet him then?" said the person in charge.

For a special forces member from overseas to go missing in a foreign country, the person in charge knew that he had to find the culprit. Otherwise, he would surely be held accountable for this incident. This was no longer a small matter...

“While it’s true that he tried to bother us last night, we simply ignored him. Following that, he left and we have no idea where he went off to. Not that it concerns us,” replied Aiden.

Upon hearing that, the person in charge then turned to look at those behind him while asking, “Have any of you seen him since then?”

Naturally, all of them shook their heads, unwilling to be involved in the incident. After all, if Adler truly was in trouble—or even dead—everyone knew that the matter wouldn’t be easily resolved...

Chapter 2048

Scratching the back of his head, the person in charge then sighed as he said, “How strange... It doesn’t really help that he disappeared right after he had some conflict with you yesterday... If this incident can’t be resolved, what do I even say to the Japanese military!”

When he first heard about Adler picking a fight with Aiden, he figured that it would just end in a fistfight. After all, incidents like that weren’t uncommon during competitions involving special forces. Unfortunately, now that someone had gone missing, death wasn’t completely off the table. With that in mind, the entire situation had become more troublesome than it should have been.

As the person in charge, he knew that he had to be held responsible no matter the outcome. Honestly, resigning from his position was a light punishment compared to having to bear the consequences if the case turned out to be a serious one...

“That’s for you to investigate. I hope you understand that that doesn’t concern us in the least,” replied Aiden as he waved his hand. As Gerald had said, he had gotten rid of Adler last night, so all Aiden could do was act dumb so that Gerald wouldn’t get into trouble...

“...Well... Alright, then. You can continue resting now. However, if you do find anything, remember to report back to me as soon as possible,” said the person in charge, knowing that he wasn’t going to get any more information from Aiden.

It certainly didn’t help that this newly established place didn’t have any surveillance cameras. With that, all he could do was investigate the incident step by step. Honestly, he didn’t really need to immediately report the case to the headquarters.

After all, if Adler truly had been murdered, there would definitely be traces of the crime. With that in mind, the person in charge figured that reporting to the headquarters—and Yanam—about the case after he caught the murderer would definitely take care of the situation...

He couldn’t just blame Aiden right off the bat either since he didn’t have any evidence. Japan, for one, couldn’t afford to offend Weston without solid proof, and the person in charge was well aware of that.

Whatever the case was, Aiden then nodded before replying, “Will do.”

With that said, he then returned into the house, closing the door behind him. Now that he was inside again, he made sure to close all the curtains and windows as well.

Walking up to Gerald, he then asked, “Brother Gerald... Did you really get rid of Adler...?”

Before Gerald re-entered the house last night, Aiden distinctly remembered hearing faint shuffling outside. Though he was pretty sure that this wasn’t Gerald’s first rodeo at disposing of a body, Aiden couldn’t help but feel worried. After all, he was participating in the special forces competition. If evidence about the murder was found, it would surely trouble him and Weston—as a whole—greatly...

“Of course,” replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

“You... didn’t leave any traces behind, right...?” muttered Aiden.

“Are you doubting my capabilities?” replied Gerald as he lit a cigarette.

“No, of course not... I’m just worried that they’ll find proof that we did it. After all, we’re in foreign territory now. If they somehow manage to find out that we’re the culprits, then the entire Weston will surely be in hot water...” said Aiden as he shook his head. If he alone was to bear the burden, Aiden wouldn’t have been this worried. However, now that the entirety of Weston was involved...

Understanding Aiden’s worries, Gerald then patted his shoulder before replying, “Don’t worry, I’ve made sure to be extra careful while I was doing the deed. You won’t end up in trouble.”

Hearing that, Aiden then slowly nodded as he said, “...Well, if you’re that certain, I feel rest assured...!”

Moving back to the person in charge, he had decided to stick with his plan to not report the incident to the Japanese headquarters till he found the murderer. To his disappointment, however, even after scouring the training grounds, they weren’t able to find a single clue as to where Adler had disappeared to.

Currently, the person in charge was sitting in his office, and before him, stood a team of special forces—that belonged to the headquarters—who were specifically here to maintain order...

Chapter 2049

“So... Any of you find anything...?” asked the person in charge as he looked at them.

“Unfortunately, even after all our investigation efforts, Mr. Komura seems to have vanished into thin air! We haven’t even been able to find a single clue!” replied the leader of the small team.

“Not one?!” replied Komura as he slammed his fist onto the table in his frustration.

“Zero. Regardless, do you think Adler could’ve simply returned to Yanam last night...?” asked another special forces soldier.

“Negative. Even if he did receive an urgent mission and had to return to Yanam, the Yanam headquarters would’ve surely informed us about it first. Him leaving without a word is highly improbable, especially since he’s someone working with the military. Besides, even if he did return to Yanam, why would he leave all his luggage behind?” replied Mr. Komura.

“Then... Could those men from Weston really have killed him...? After all, I remember Adler saying something along the lines of three major families in Yanam being completely destroyed quite recently... He also said something about several of Yanam’s men—in the military—losing their lives! However, his biggest claim yesterday was that those Weston men caused the mysterious disappearance of Godwin Lindod, his leader!” explained the leader of the small group.

“...While even I’ve heard about that incident a while back, we have no evidence that those Weston men murdered anyone. Even if they’re related to the actual people who did the deed, we can’t just place the blame on them without having any solid evidence! Regardless, continue investigating the case! If we’re still unable to find any clues about Adler, I’ll eventually have to report this to headquarters, and all of you know that punishment comes next!” growled Komura as he slammed his fist onto the table again.

Truth be told, Komura had only volunteered to be in charge of this competition so that he could get a promotion. If things went smoothly, his military rank would surely get promoted right after the new year. Now that such an incident had happened, however, Komura had a feeling that demotion awaited him...

“Loud and clear, Mr. Komura!” declared the members of the team as they nodded.

“...Well? Hurry on, then! Even if the headquarters doesn’t trouble you, I will if you still fail to find any clues! For Christ’s sake... To think that a special forces soldier would suddenly disappear during a competition... It’s simply too humiliating! I can only pray that word about this doesn’t get out!” grumbled Komura as he sighed.

After exchanging glances with each other, the other men then left the room without another word...

In the following two days, Gerald and his party mostly remained indoors and only left to get their meals. Though Komura had come to interrogate them four times by this point, Aiden always claimed that he knew nothing about the case. With that, All Komura could do was leave, dejected...

It was on the third day when all the participants were informed by the Japanese Military that the venue of the competition was going to be changed. Aside from that, the participants were also told to look for their own places to stay, with the Japanese Military paying for any accommodation expenses.

The sudden announcement evidently stemmed from the fact that Komura had reported the case to the Japanese Military. After all, he hadn't managed to find a single clue on Adler's whereabouts even after all this time...

Since nothing could be done about the disappearance, the Japanese Military could only separate the participants to prevent similar incidents from repeating...

Chapter 2050

Still, if Adler truly was murdered by the men from Weston—or any other special forces soldiers from other powerful countries, for that matter—the Japanese Military knew that they were going to be in hot water...

While getting the soldiers to look for their own accommodations would make things slightly messier, at the very least, the Japanese Military would have to take less responsibility if a similar case took place...

Gerald himself could guess why the Japanese military was doing this. With that, after hearing the news, he simply smiled before saying, "Guess the Japanese Military is getting worried."

"Indeed, though I can't blame them. After all, I'm sure the Japanese Military has ever encountered a case like this before. Nobody would've been able to foresee the disappearance of such an outstanding special force soldier," replied Master Ghost.

“Regardless, let’s focus on finding ourselves a new place to stay first. I doubt safety will be an issue since aside from those from Yanam, there aren’t any others here who’d pick a bone with us. Still, locating the Seadom tribe has proved to be quite difficult... I wonder if they’ve already integrated themselves into Japanese society...” muttered Gerald as he felt a slight headache coming.

To think that they had to locate the Seadom tribe members who could be anywhere in this country... It certainly didn’t help that there was a high chance that they kept their identities well hidden... While the task was as difficult as looking for Yearning Island, it was thankfully not as dangerous...

Whatever the case was, after leaving the Japanese training grounds, Gerald and his party ultimately decided to return to their initial hotel. Since the competition was still half a month away, they figured that as long as they asked for the competition’s new venue two days before it was held, they would definitely make it there in time.

Just as they were checking into the hotel, Gerald couldn’t help but notice that Master Ghost was staring at a woman—who wore clothes that suggested that she was part of the Japanese special forces—who was also checking in. While not as common as men, most countries also had women in their special forces. After all, some missions could be carried out easier by women instead of men.

Regardless, with how intently Master Ghost was staring at her, Gerald couldn’t help but chuckle before asking, “What? Have you fallen for her?”

“As if I’d fall for such a woman! Either way, I’m just interested in her necklace,” replied Master Ghost as he shook his head, his eyes never leaving the woman.

Frowning slightly in response, Gerald then said, “...And... Why exactly are you so interested in that? Did you bump your head hard this morning or something?”

“Look, it’s no ordinary necklace! If my hunch is correct, it seems to be a pendant of the Seadom tribe. After all, one of the tribe’s special totems is on it, or at least I think it is. I’m still not too familiar with the tribe so I could be wrong,” muttered Master Ghost.

Though Master Ghost had been speaking softly this entire time, Gerald found the revelation to be explosively loud!

“...A pendant of the Seadom tribe, you say...” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes at the woman. True enough, she had a pendant around her neck, though she was a bit too far for him to have a good look at it...

“Again, I could be wrong. Just keep that in mind,” said Master Ghost when he saw how excited Gerald was. He was just worried that Gerald would end up sorely disappointed again if he ended up getting it wrong.

Taking in a deep breath, Gerald—whose hands were now shaking slightly—then replied, “It isn’t easy to stumble across such a specific-looking totem. With that in mind, we could very well be on the right trail.”

“Well, what do you plan to do? Are you going to just ask her about it?” asked Master Ghost in his low voice.

“I’m... not too sure yet. Let’s just observe her for a while first,” replied Gerald as he shook his head, wondering how he should face the Seadom tribe member without frightening or disgusting her. A bad first impression would surely hinder their efforts of learning the secrets of Yearning Island...

“Agreed. Then I’ll be bringing Aiden upstairs first,” said Master Ghost as he took their room card from the receptionist and dragged Aiden toward the elevator...

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Chapter 2051

Nodding in response, Gerald then continued observing the woman who finally completed the check-in procedures shortly after.

Following the woman into the elevator, Gerald kept a close eye on her all the way up to the twelfth floor where she eventually stepped out. While he didn't follow her out, Gerald had a feeling that knowing which floor she was staying on was as good a start as any.

After all, Gerald knew better than to converse with her straight off the bat. If he really did end up frightening her, she would surely be unwilling to talk about the Seadom tribe no matter how much he asked...

Whatever the case was, Gerald then returned to his room...

Flopping onto the couch, Gerald then began smoking a cigarette as he pondered his next step.

Seeing that, Aiden—who hadn't heard Gerald and Master Ghost's conversation earlier since he was busy thinking about the conversation—was prompted to ask, "Where exactly did he-"

"Just leave him be for a while. We should focus on getting our own rest in the meantime," replied Master Ghost as he cut Aiden's question short and pushed him into his room. With that done, Master Ghost entered his own room, making sure to close the door behind him...

Gerald himself didn't budge an inch, and he spent most of his time staring out the window while occasionally puffing on his cigarette...

It was quite a while later when Gerald finally crossed his legs. Honestly, he had expected to have much more trouble locating members of the Seadom tribe. That was pretty much his main worry from the moment he left the Japanese training grounds. To think that one of the tribe's members would just show herself like that within a few hours!

What more, since she had that pendant, it seemed that she had a special rank within the Seadom tribe. With that in mind, Gerald knew that there was now a higher chance of him unlocking the secrets of Yearning Island...

As he thought about his parents and elder sister—who were still on Yearning Island—, Gerald’s heart began to ache, and it ached so much that Gerald ended up choking on some cigarette smoke...

It was sometime later when Gerald finally got to his feet again. Looking at the many cigarettes he had burnt through, Gerald then turned to look out the window as he reminisced about his childhood...

Daryl had always had a lasting impression on him, even in his earliest memories. Now that he was getting closer to his grandfather, that feeling was honestly getting overpowering. Still, to think that he still didn’t know what kind of person Daryl actually was.

Why did he have to kidnap his sister and parents? What was his true goal...?

After thinking about it for a while longer, Gerald eventually turned to look at the two other rooms and said, "...Hey, both of you... Come out for a while."

Seconds later, Master Ghost and Aiden opened the doors to their rooms...

Clearly concerned, Aiden—who had been wondering about Gerald’s sudden silence and change in mood the entire time he was inside his room—was first to ask, "...Um... Why are you feeling down all of a sudden...?"

"You see, back when we were in the lobby, Master Ghost saw a Japanese female special forces soldier wearing a special pendant that appeared to be native to the Seadom Tribe," explained Gerald, figuring it was high time that Aiden knew...

Chapter 2052

"...Huh? If that’s the case, what are we still waiting here for? Let’s go ask her about the Seadom tribe while we can! What’ll we do if she suddenly runs off?" asked Aiden in a slightly nervous tone.

"Calm yourself," replied Gerald as he patted Aiden’s shoulder. He had already expected the boy to get anxious the second he heard about the news...

“What do you mean, ‘calm myself’? This may be our best shot of finding someone from the Seadom tribe! We can’t let her leave! If she does, what are we going to do? Extend our stay in Japan indefinitely?!” grumbled Aiden as he flopped onto the couch.

Watching as Aiden then lit one of his cigarettes and began puffing it, Gerald explained, “First off, since she’s in special forces, it’s evident that she’s here for the competition. With that in mind, she won’t be leaving anytime soon. Besides, the hotel has a record of her registration. Regardless, if we head there all willy-nilly, what makes you think we won’t end up scaring her? Forget calling for help from her tribesmen, she may even call the police!”

“Gerald’s right. I say we slowly get to know her first. That way, we can prevent a situation where she feels disgusted with us right off the bat. Regardless, we should only start asking about the Seadom tribe when we’re on friendlier terms. With any luck, we’ll finally be able to learn more about Yearning Island then...” added Master Ghost.

“My thoughts exactly,” replied Gerald as he nodded in agreement.

“...So... We just wait here for now...?” muttered Aiden. Though he now got where they were coming from, he couldn’t help but feel that they were simply procrastinating.

Shrugging, Gerald then said, “We wait for an opportunity to present itself. If she really does leave before we get a chance to talk to her, we’ll just have to look for another way...”

“Now that would be a great pity...” replied Aiden with a sigh.

“If it happens, it happens...” replied Gerald with a bitter smile before starting to head downstairs alone...

Since they were going to be staying here for a while, Gerald made it a point to learn more about the area. While he didn’t have any Japanese enemies, that didn’t mean that his enemies wouldn’t pursue him all the way over here. Regardless, this wasn’t Weston, all he could do was rely on himself to do all this. What more, he couldn’t just do things casually like how he had done back in Yanam.

Whatever the case was, upon seeing that Gerald was leaving, Master Ghost and Aiden immediately wanted to follow. However, Gerald quickly rejected the idea.

After all, Master Ghost wasn't capable of defending himself. With that in mind, he would only end up becoming someone Gerald had to protect if they bumped into any trouble. As for Aiden, he was here for that big competition, so Gerald didn't want to involve him in his affairs. With his point made, the duo could only remain in their rooms as Gerald took the elevator downstairs, a cigarette in his mouth...

Night had already fallen by this point, and after staring at the endless stream of pedestrians for a while, Gerald found himself getting more relaxed as he came to terms with the situation.

While his sister and parents had been on Yearning Island for a while now, Gerald had a feeling that his grandfather hadn't mistreated them too badly. After all, in the end, they were still blood-related with Daryl, so his grandfather probably wouldn't kill them right off the bat. His hunch was further supported by some things his father had previously told him regarding his grandfather...

Either way, as he continued walking down the street, he began thinking about how he should get to know the woman from the Seadom tribe. After all, he was pretty sure that the term 'Seadom tribe' itself was a taboo among those from that tribe. But if that was the case, how was he going to ask her about it?

Just as Gerald was feeling a slight headache coming, he noticed a supermarket nearby. Figuring that he may as well get himself more cigarettes, Gerald then began walking toward the building... Only to suddenly stop in his tracks.

With the aid of his Herculean Primordial Spirit, Gerald was able to sense dangerous situations around him. Due to that, he could now sense a fight happening in the alley behind the hotel and the supermarket...!

Though he remained momentarily stunned, Gerald eventually snapped out of it and entered the supermarket...

Chapter 2053

In the end, this wasn't Weston, and he wasn't some superhero obligated to save the world. With that in mind, Gerald reminded himself that he didn't need to meddle in their business and land himself in unnecessary trouble...

Shortly after he had entered the supermarket, however, Gerald ended up freezing again. Thinking back, his Herculean Primordial Spirit would only react to dangerous fights between cultivators. With that in mind, this wasn't a normal fight at all...!

Realizing that, Gerald then walked to the counter and said, "A pack of cigarettes. And make it snappy."

After paying for his purchase, he then walked over to where the fight was happening. If there really were cultivators staying nearby, it would do him good to silently assess the situation, with emphasis on the 'silently'. Until he knew who he was dealing with, Gerald preferred remaining hidden...

Whatever the case was, Gerald stuck close to the wall as he made his way down the small, dark alley between the supermarket and hotel. Contrary to the hotel's luxurious-looking front, construction waste lay everywhere behind it.

Regardless, the more he inched his way to the back, the more motion—from the fight—he could feel. Still, now that he was much closer, he couldn't help but feel that these people weren't exactly cultivators. That, however, didn't mean that they were weak.

Either way, once he got to a corner, Gerald slowly peeked out... and from where he stood, he was able to see a man and woman fighting amongst the construction waste. From what he could tell, the man had the upper hand, and the woman wasn't going to be able to last much longer...

Still, since they weren't cultivators, he didn't feel the need to get himself involved in the fight. With that in mind, he lit another cigarette, prepared to return to his hotel after watching for a while longer...

Just as he was about to leave, however, he suddenly realized that the woman in battle looked awfully familiar... As Gerald pondered where he had met her

before, her chest area was momentarily illuminated by moonlight, causing something hanging from her neck to glint... and the second he saw the pendant she was wearing, Gerald's jaw instantly dropped.

It was the woman from the Seadom tribe! Now that he knew who she was, he immediately tossed his cigarette away and dashed toward the scene!

He had already thought long and hard about how to approach her to no avail. With that in mind, now that this opportunity was presenting itself, he was definitely grabbing it.

Though he had been at least thirty feet away from the two at the start, it barely took him a second to intercept the man who was about to stab a dagger right into the woman's chest!

The woman herself already had her eyes closed by that point, knowing full well that she didn't have the strength to fight back anymore. However, instead of searing pain, she was instead greeted by the feeling of a massive gust of wind that stopped right before her...

Following a soft, 'thud,' the woman was prompted to open her eyes... and standing before her, was a man who had successfully deflected the attack!

Though she was confused, she snapped out of it when the man—that she had been fighting—frowned before growling, "Who the hell are you? Why are you meddling in our affairs?"

Ignoring him, Gerald simply spread his arms out before glancing at the woman and saying, "Stay behind me."

Chapter 2054

By this point, Gerald was a hundred percent sure that the woman was someone from the Seadom tribe. With that in mind, he needed to protect her at all costs.

While she had no idea why Gerald wanted to help her in the first place, she simply agreed and remained close to his back...

“Answer me! Why are you meddling in our affairs? Which family do you belong to? Are you even Japanese?” growled the man who was understandably annoyed since he was so close to finishing Futaba Fujiko off just now.

Continuing to ignore him, Gerald then turned to look at Fujiko before asking, “Do you want him dead?”

“Don’t kill him... Just get him to leave...” whispered Fujiko.

Nodding in response, Gerald then faced the man again... and with lightning speed, he punched him right in the chest! Unable to even react in time, the man was instantly sent flying a good thirty feet from where he initially stood!

After the cloud of dust finally settled, the man slowly got to his feet, clutching his injured chest as he stared fearfully at Gerald. He, for one, was no idiot, and he knew better than to fight someone so inhumanly strong. Forget failing to accomplish the mission his family had given him, there was a high chance he would end up dead if he continued to fight back!

With all that in mind, the man then speedily disappeared into the night...

Watching as the man left the scene, Gerald couldn’t help but smile. After all, he was pretty sure that he had now left a good first impression on her. With that in mind, all he needed to do now was to slowly get to know her better, and with any luck, he would soon be able to ask about the Seadom tribe...

As he turned back to face her, he made sure to peek at her pendant to see if she truly was the person he was looking for. Once he confirmed it, Gerald scratched his cheek before looking to the side and asking, “...Um... Are you hurt...?”

“...It’s just a few bruises. Nothing serious. Regardless, I don’t think we’ve met before... Why did you help me out of the blue?” asked Fujiko as she stared at Gerald.

“I just enjoy playing the white knight,” replied Gerald.

“...I see. Thank... you...” said Fujiko in a soft tone as her body began to sway...

Luckily, Gerald caught her in time before she fell. After calling out to her a few times and getting no response, Gerald raised a slight brow as he placed his finger right under her nose... Thankfully, she was still breathing, and Gerald found himself heaving a sigh of relief...

Following that, Gerald then carried her back to the hotel...

While he knew which floor she was staying on, he hadn't the slightest clue what her room number was. Since he couldn't just bring her back to his room either, in the end, Gerald decided to simply book her a new room.

After placing her on the bed, Gerald couldn't help but sigh. Like hell she had only suffered from minor bruises...

For her to faint like this, she must have taken quite a bit of damage. However, since there weren't any bloodstains on her, he had a feeling that the injuries were internal... In order to confirm that, however, he first needed to undress her...

Chapter 2055

The second the thought crossed his mind, Gerald quickly ran to the washroom to splash his face with water.

While he didn't really want to undress her, this was a life-or-death situation. It had taken forever for him to find a member of the Seadom tribe, and since she had that special pendant, Gerald had a feeling that she had quite the status in her family as well.

With that in mind, if she ended up dying, Gerald knew that the chances of him finding another member of the Seadom tribe—with her rank—would surely be close to zero...

After thinking about it, Gerald sighed as he tried to calm himself. This wasn't the time to be thinking of such earthly desires. With that, he walked out of the bathroom and carefully began undressing her...

It was around two hours later when Gerald completely healed her internal injuries with his Herculean Primordial Spirit. With that done, he quickly draped her with a blanket before taking a cold shower to calm himself. Thankfully, it seemed to work.

Now that he was much calmer, Gerald sat on the couch and began smoking cigarette after cigarette as he waited for her to wake up...

It was a few hours later when Gerald suddenly heard shuffling sounds coming from the bed. Turning around, he saw that the undressed woman had finally woken up!

Immediately looking away, Gerald loudly explained, "B-before you say anything, you fainted back there... Just so you know, I'm proficient with medicine, and fearing that you could be fatally injured, I took the initiative to try healing you. Thankfully, I think I managed to heal most of your wounds... R-regardless, please put your clothes on first..."

Blushing in response, Fujiko—who knew he wasn't lying since she was feeling much better now—then replied, "T-thank you...!"

Honestly, even if Gerald hadn't said a thing, she wouldn't have been mad. After all, he had saved her twice tonight... She now saw Gerald as her benefactor, and she honestly didn't mind if he requested for her to be in a relationship with him...

Whatever the case was, upon realizing that his efforts hadn't been misunderstood, Gerald was so glad that he quickly waved his hand before saying, "You're very welcome."

"...Speaking of which, I still don't know what your name is... Also, you're not Japanese, right...? I may be wrong, but could you be from Weston...?" asked Fujiko as she stared at Gerald's back. Unknowingly, she was already starting to develop feelings for him...

“Well, yes, I’m from Weston, and you can call me Gerald Crawford. I came to Japan to settle some affairs,” replied Gerald in a casual tone.

“I see... I go by Futaba Fujiko, and I’m part of Japan’s special forces. I’m here to participate in a special forces competition. Unfortunately, I somehow ended up getting sneak attacked by enemies of my family. Had you not stepped in, I would’ve surely died back there...” explained Fujiko as she shook her head.

Not even her family had been able to predict that their enemy would strike there and then. Honestly, she did think about taking out the enemy since they were both already there back then. In the end, however, she was defeated... Thankfully, Gerald saved her in the nick of time. Still, when she thought about how she could’ve died back there, Fujiko couldn’t help but shiver in fear... Then again, things could’ve gone much worse if the enemy had chosen to use her as a hostage instead to threaten her family...

“...Don’t worry about it. I just so happened to be passing by, so I lent you a hand. I’m sure anyone would’ve done the same,” replied Gerald whose face was still reddened after seeing her undressed figure.

As Gerald continued suppressing his earthly desires, he heard Fujiko sigh before saying, “...Even if you say that, I still have to thank you for helping me today.”

Upon hearing the familiar rustle of clothes—and gathering that she must finally be putting her clothes on—Gerald heaved a sigh of relief before replying, “Don’t worry about it... I’m just glad you’re all healed up now...”

Chapter 2056

“Speaking of which... you said that the person who attacked you was an enemy of your family?” asked Gerald, refusing to turn around in case she hadn’t fully dressed herself yet.

“Indeed... His family has consistently been hostile toward mine. I don’t even know how he managed to find out I was staying here, but he did and he immediately attempted to assassinate me...” replied Fujiko as she shook her

head. Her family was clearly not expecting the attack either since they hadn't warned her in advance...

Whatever the case was, upon realizing that Gerald was still facing away, she couldn't help but laugh before saying, "I'm dressed now, so you can turn around..."

Hearing that, Gerald gave a sigh of relief as he finally turned to face her again...

"So... you came here to settle some affairs, you said... Pardon my assumption, but based on what I saw earlier, you seemed to be much stronger than that man who tried to kill me. With that in mind, could you be representing Weston for the competition...?" asked Fujiko as she stared at Gerald with dreamy eyes.

Though how they had met was rather cliché—with a heroic man like Gerald saving her, a damsel in distress, in the nick of time—Fujiko couldn't help but adore every second of it.

Waving his hand in response, Gerald then smiled before replying, "Unfortunately, that isn't the case. My friend's the person participating, and I only accompanied him here."

"I see! Regardless, I think I should mention that by helping me, you've unfortunately offended the Hanyu family... They're an organization of top assassins here, and I'm afraid they won't be letting you off that easily..." muttered Fujiko, her worry clearly reflected in her eyes. After all, though she knew that Gerald was strong, no amount of strength could take on an entire family of world-famous assassins that had a history spanning hundreds of years... Hell, not even the Japanese military dared to mess with them...

Upon hearing that, Gerald raised a slight brow as he replied, "...Oh? The Hanyus, you say..."

"Indeed... Have you heard about them before?" asked Fujiko.

"Well, they're quite famous so it shouldn't really be a surprise if I have," replied Gerald with a smile as he began reaching for a cigarette. However, the

moment he considered Fujiko's presence, Gerald immediately refrained from smoking.

Whatever the case was, after thinking for a while, Fujiko eventually said, "...Well, since you're in all this trouble because of me, why don't you live with my family for the moment? I'll explain what happened today to my father, and from there, we'll have a proper discussion to guarantee your safety... Though the Futabas may not be as strong as the Hanyus, we're still quite influential in Japan. With that in mind, I have a feeling that the Hanyus won't attack you all willy-nilly once they realize that you're under our protection..."

"I don't mind going with that," replied Gerald with a subtle smile.

Truth be told, he wasn't afraid of the Hanyus at all. After all, even if all that family's elites came after him in one go, he was pretty sure that he wouldn't even suffer a scratch. Still, this was his prime opportunity to get to know Fujiko better. Better yet, if her family truly was part of the Seadom tribe—and he managed to get close to them—, he would surely obtain a greater chance of inquiring about the secrets of Yearning Island. With all that in mind, there was no way in hell he was ever going to reject that idea.

"Then it's settled! Go ahead and tell your friend that you'll be returning with me for the time being. The Hanyus usually act fast and I'm worried that they'll send people over before we even manage to get out of this place," said Fujiko as she gave a good stretch, revealing quite a bit of her well-endowed figure beneath her simple clothes. The sight of it alone was enough to make Gerald look away...

Seeing that Gerald wasn't budging from the couch, Fujiko then nudged him on the shoulder before adding, "Um... Hello? We're burning daylight here... The Hanyus could cause trouble for us at any moment, you know?"

Chapter 2057

"...Got it. I'll go inform my friend first, then! Give me ten minutes! I'll regroup with you at the hotel lobby by then!" replied Gerald as he got to his feet and left the room...

Soon enough, he got back to his room and told Master Ghost and Aiden all that had happened. Once they were updated about the situation, he then slipped his coat on before heading to the lobby where Fujiko was waiting for him...

After regrouping, the duo got into his car, and under Fujiko's guidance, he speedily began driving toward her home...

Fast forward to a few minutes later, a small group of dagger-wielding men in black could be seen rushing toward the back of the hotel where Gerald had first saved Fujiko... If one was close and attentive enough, they'd surely be able to smell the familiar tang of blood drenched all over their bodies...

Looking at all the construction waste that lay around, the leader of the group was prompted to ask, "...Is this the place, Third?"

"It is. Just as I was about to heavily wound Fujiko, some man suddenly appeared and got in my way! He was so powerful that I had no choice but to retreat!" replied the person who had earlier attacked Fujiko.

"I see. Find out where he's currently staying, and once you do, end him!" ordered the leader in his low voice...

Since the Hanyus rarely had any issues with other parties when they carried out their missions, Gerald's sudden involvement was definitely infuriating. After all, had they succeeded in their mission—given by the head of their clan—of capturing the injured Fujiko earlier, they'd surely have been able to use her to threaten the Futabas...

Unfortunately, someone meddled at the very last moment! Now all their plans were in ruins! As if that wasn't already enough, the enemy was now aware of them as well! From this point on, locating Fujiko again was surely going to be more difficult...

"...Speaking of which, are you aware of the meddlesome man's goals? Did he simply wish to save her or was he actually trying to take revenge on you or our family?" asked the leader after thinking about it for a while, wondering if Gerald was someone that the Hanyus had previously offended...

“I don’t know much about him, though I do know that he isn’t Japanese. From what I can guess, he’s probably from Weston,” replied Fujiko’s attacker.

“A person from Weston you say... Well, Weston or not, he meddled with the wrong family! Due to that, he’ll die by our hands if it’s the last thing we do!” declared the leader of the group as he clenched his fists determinedly...

Moving back to Gerald and Fujiko, it was about three hours later when they finally arrived at the city her family was living in. Though Gerald didn’t directly inquire about her family, he could tell that she was being rather secretive about them. After all, whenever the conversation led to her family, she would only provide the most basic of information.

Since she was being so reserved about sharing more about her family, Gerald decided to stop questioning her about them after some time. After all, the last thing he needed was her growing unnecessarily vigilant with him...

Regardless, it was about half an hour later when Gerald’s car pulled up in front of a manor. Before they were even able to leave the car, a uniformed young man had already walked up to them. Seeing him, Fujiko then got out of the car first.

Pointing at Gerald, she then said, “Calm down, he’s a friend of mine. I’ve brought him back here to discuss some important affairs with dad.”

Chapter 2058

Clearly appearing to be in a dilemma, the young person then walked closer to her before whispering, “You, of all people, should know very well that the master always opposes the idea of strangers coming over, miss...”

Though the man had whispered, Gerald was able to hear every word he said. With that in mind, he quickly found himself smiling. After all, based on what that man had said, the possibility of the Futabas being part of the Seadom tribe grew exponentially.

Whatever the case was, Fujiko then frowned slightly as she replied, “Just so you know, I was attacked by one of the Hanyus earlier! Had this man not stepped in to save me earlier, I would’ve been dead by now!”

Upon hearing that, the young man’s eyes instantly widened. However, he quickly snapped out of it before turning to look at Gerald and respectfully saying, “I-I see! Please, come in, sir!”

Stepping out of the car, Gerald was prompted to say, “It seems that you’re pretty highly ranked in your family...”

Smiling slightly awkwardly, Fujiko then replied, “Well, my dad’s the master of the family, you see...”

Honestly, it was exactly because of that that she kept getting into dangerous situations, even on the most normal of days...

Before Gerald could reply, the young man from before—who had noticed that Gerald was holding onto a bag—extended his hand before saying, “Please allow me to carry your belongings!”

Waving his hand in response, Gerald replied, “It’s fine.”

Following that, Gerald then followed Fujiko into the manor. Since she had contacted her father in advance, the two were immediately granted access to the reception room at the end of the manor...

Shortly after, a paunchy middle-aged man came rushing toward them. The second he saw Fujiko, he immediately grabbed her by her arms—completely ignoring Gerald—and began scanning her from head to toe while exclaiming, “Fujiko! I heard from the guard at the door that you were faced with danger earlier! What on earth happened? Tell me, quick...!”

Understanding that her father was simply concerned for her safety, Fujiko simply smiled as she replied, “I’m fine, dad... I’m not hurt at all!”

“That’s a relief to hear...! I was so worried the second I heard that the Hanyus attacked you! Still, how did they find out where you were...? Regardless, weren’t you participating in a special forces competition? Why the hell did the

military keep this from me?!” asked the middle-aged man as he sighed in relief.

“I’m not sure how they located me either, but just to be clear, I didn’t report this incident to the military. Call it a hunch, but I have a feeling that there’s a Hanyu hiding within the military. That would surely explain how the Hanyus found me,” replied Fujiko with a slight frown.

“I see... Whatever the case is, just stay home for now and leave the rest to me. I’ll be sending out some of our men to investigate further into this! You may not like what I’m about to say, but I’m also contacting the military to cancel your entry in the competition!” declared the middle-aged man, his eyes still filled with worry...

“...Alright... Regardless, this is Gerald Crawford from Weston, dad, and he was the one who saved me!” said Fujiko as she clung onto her father’s arms and pulled him closer to Gerald.

“Gerald... Crawford...? What a familiar name... Could it be that... you’re the one responsible for all that chaos in Yanam a while back...?” asked the middle-aged man as he looked closely at Gerald.

He, for one, was definitely influential enough to know about things like this. Besides, due to how impactful Gerald’s actions had been, it would surely be difficult to forget his name after hearing it...

Realizing that the man recognized who he was, Gerald found no reason to lie and simply replied, “Well, yes, that was me...”

Chapter 2059

“No wonder your name sounded so familiar! So you really are the person who had single-handedly taken out those three major families in Yanam! If I remember correctly, you caused the Yanam military quite a bit of trouble as well!” exclaimed Fujiko’s father.

Upon hearing that, Fujiko instantly saw Gerald in a new light. Truth be told, she had found his name to be oddly familiar as well when she first learned of it. To think that this was the very Gerald who had wreaked havoc in Yanam!

Realizing that he had brought something awkward up, Fujiko's father then cleared his throat before waving his hand as he added, "...Regardless, there's no need to explain why you did it. I don't have any interest in the affairs of Yanam, and I'm sure you had your reasons for doing that as well. Putting all that aside, the important thing is that you saved my dearest daughter... Had you not stepped in, she would've surely... Well, whatever the case is, from today onward, you're a benefactor of my family! If you ever need anything, just say the word and the Futabas will try our best to help you!"

"I appreciate it," replied Gerald with a smile, pleased that he had gotten into Fujiko's father's good books. That alone was enough for now, and Gerald knew better than to ask about the Seadom tribe straight off the bat.

"Indeed! Speaking of which, allow me to introduce myself! As you may have already known, I'm Futaba's father and also the master of this family. You can call me Futaba Takuya," said Takuya as he patted his forehead before extending his arm for a handshake.

"A pleasure to meet you. The name's Gerald Crawford, and I'm from Weston," replied Gerald as he shook hands with Takuya.

After their hands parted, Takuya thought for a while before saying, "Hmm... From past experience, I have a feeling that the Hanyus should already be investigating you. With that in mind, do stay with us in the meantime as I send my men out to deal with them for you. Also, if you need anything, just say the word!"

"It's fine, I can handle myself. Though I am interested in knowing why an assassin family like the Hanyus—that even accepts employment orders from outside Japan throughout the year—would be involved with your family..." replied Gerald as he lit a cigarette.

"It's... a long story, to say the least. Historically, my family has simply always had a grudge against the Hanyus, and detailing the story is going to take

much too long. Regardless, I'll have a nanny prepare a meal for you first," said Takuya as he shook his head with a smile.

"Well, I am slightly hungry..." muttered Gerald as he gently patted his stomach...

It was a short while later when the nanny returned to the main dining room—where the trio had earlier been led to—with several dishes...

While waiting for their meal to arrive, Takuya had made sure to order his men to investigate how news about Fujiko's participation in the military competition had been exposed. He also instructed them to keep an eye out around the hotel Master Ghost and Aiden were staying in.

Though the Hanyus were technically much stronger than the Futabas, under Takuya's guidance, the Futabas became considerably harder for the assassin family to deal with. Takuya's vigilance, for one, stemmed from the fact that he deeply adored his daughter, and would do anything to keep her safe. With that in mind, now that she had almost been assassinated, he very badly wanted to rush to the Hanyus to demand an explanation about all this.

Suppressing the urge to do so, Takuya then handed some chopsticks to Gerald as he asked, "Speaking of which, what's your reason for coming to Japan, Mr. Crawford?"

"Well, my friend is a special forces soldier, you see, and I'm keeping him company for the competition. I'm also here to gather some information," replied Gerald as he began eating.

"Oh? What information are you interested in obtaining? While my family isn't all that large, we still have quite a number of connections in Japan. With that said, do share what you need to know. I may just be able to help," said Takuya as he looked at the youth.

"Don't worry about it, I'll hunt for the information myself," replied Gerald with a smile, knowing full well that if he mentioned the Seadom tribe now, the duo would instantly get vigilant, and the last thing he needed was for them to become his enemies now.

“Well, I’m sure you have your reasons for that, so I won’t pry any further... Still, do remember that you’re my family’s benefactor, mister. If there’s anything you ever need help with, just say the word. We’ll try to help as best as we can!”

Chapter 2060

Since Takuya didn’t press into it, the meal soon ended without much else to note.

Following that, Takuya arranged for Gerald to stay in one of the manor’s top guest houses. With the arrangements made, Gerald then bid farewell to Fujiko before following a butler to his guest house...

Upon arriving, Gerald couldn’t help but whistle. Though this was just an ordinary house, it was rather luxuriously decorated... Regardless, a quick look around revealed that there were two halls and three rooms in the entire house, along with all the basic living facilities.

After closing his room door behind him, Gerald then placed his bag down and called Aiden... Once the call connected, Gerald was first to ask, “How’s it going back at the hotel?”

Realizing that Gerald was the one calling, Aiden then quickly walked to the window before looking down and muttering, “Well... there have been quite a number of people patrolling right outside our hotel... I have a feeling they’re looking for you.”

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded. It was just as he had expected.

Watching as those men continued loitering in front of the hotel—with some of them even occasionally going in and out of it—, Aiden then added, “Honestly, should I just go down and get rid of them...?”

“Negative. If they don’t look for trouble with you, just continue pretending that you don’t know a thing,” replied Gerald before immediately hanging up.

Realizing that Gerald had hung up, Aiden could only sigh.

Seeing that, Master Ghost—who had become all too familiar with Aiden’s body language by now—could help but ask, “He told you not to make a move, right?”

“Indeed... He said that we should only strike back if they look for trouble from us...” muttered Aiden with another sigh.

“He’s right, you know? After all, we’re in Japan, and it’s not like we know how strong or influential the other party is yet. Either way, offending them will most probably only spell trouble for us. Also, I advise you to restrain your rash personality... If you don’t, one of these days, you’ll get both of us into trouble. How will you explain that to Gerald then?” replied Master Ghost as he continued fiddling with his compass.

Since the sea map was with Gerald, all Master Ghost could do was continue calculating and checking the manifestation of divination to foresee whether Gerald would bump into any danger.

“I mean, I’m trying, aren’t I? Why do you think I called Gerald first before making a move?” grumbled Aiden as he scratched the back of his head. He wasn’t some simple-minded fool who only knew how to act recklessly! Still, he had to admit that he sometimes had trouble controlling his fiery nature. Even so, he had already made it a point to always ask for Gerald’s opinion first before making a move...

“Point taken. Either way, let’s head to bed early. Now that Gerald’s gotten in touch with the Seadom tribe, we don’t know when he could need our help,” said Master Ghost as he sipped some water before returning to his room with the compass in hand...

Before Master Ghost could enter, however, Gerald grabbed the man by his arm before asking, “...Are you really sure that they’re members of the Seadom tribe...?”

“Nothing’s set in stone yet, but it’s highly possible,” replied Master Ghost, knowing full well that they could be wrong. After all, they only had a few clues

to go with, and the members of the Seadom tribe had done a particularly good job at keeping themselves concealed...

"...Alright, then..." replied Aiden with a sigh before shrugging and releasing his hand...

The second he woke up early the next morning, Gerald reminded himself that his goal was to locate evidence to prove that the Futabas were members of the Seadom tribe. With that in mind, he then readied himself to start the day...

To his surprise, the second he left his room, Gerald saw Takuya standing not too far away.

Seeing Gerald, Takuya then beamed as he walked over while saying, "Well you're up early, Mr. Crawford!"