

## **The Girlboss 661**

### Chapter 661

Nothing was easier than for Quinn to avoid the guards and sneak into Dahok's residence.

She split up with Frank as he would be drawing the attention of the Sage Lake Sect leaders.

He strode through the mountain gates and immediately saw the stately board on which the name 'Sage Lake Sect' was carved—century-old sects really did impress.

The apprentices standing guard were glowering and barking when they saw Frank, "Who goes there?!"

"Frank Lawrence of Riverton."

The apprentices' faces fell as soon as Frank replied, and they encircled Frank while one of them ran into the building to report.

Soon, Maron Ocean and a group of Sage Lake Sect elders stepped out, standing above the stairs as they looked down on Frank with lofty contempt.

Maron was still in his white suit, clapping when he saw Frank. "Not bad. You have the balls to come here to die."

The two elders with him scowled in disdain, snapping, "Slaying our apprentices and our high elder?! Get down on your knees and accept your punishment!"

"What are you waiting for?! Kneel!"

"Oh, calm down, Elder Huxley and Elder Randel." Maron smiled meaningfully. "We have another guest today, and Frank here certainly looks confident coming here alone. Why don't we have him fight against our own elites, while our other guest offers some critique to improve ourselves and all that?"

Both elders frowned at his suggestion.

“Shouldn’t we keep our own problems to ourselves?” Elder Huxley soon asked.

“Exactly. What happens in the sect stays in the sect,” Elder Randel reasoned. “We should make this quick—cut Frank Lawrence’s head off as an offering to the souls of Bocke and our fallen apprentices.”

Maron raised a brow, however. “What, are you telling me what to do?”

“No, of course not.”

Both elders were stunned by Maron’s dark look for a moment and quickly lowered their heads.

Frank was actually surprised—Maron was just the son of the Sage Lake Sect chief, and Quinn had just told him that the Sage Lake Sect’s elders were mostly the ones who called the shots. And yet, Elder Huxley and Elder Randel were clearly scared of him...

“I’m giving you a chance now.” Maron walked up to Frank just then, chuckling under his breath. “Do your best during the duel and even help me impress my guest, and I’ll let you and your lovers go. How about that?”

“How about this?!” Frank suddenly bellowed, his hand suddenly shooting out at bullet speed as he seized Maron by the neck.

One move, and Frank would snap it!

Elder Huxley and Elder Randel panicked, seeing how easily Frank caught Maron.

“Insolence! How dare you behave with such impudence in our enclave!”

“Maron!”

"I'm giving you a chance now," Frank simply growled at Maron, returning his threat word-for-word.

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"I'm giving you a chance now," Frank simply growled at Maron, returning his threat word-for-word.  
"Release them, or you'll die!"

Elder Huxley and Elder Randel's faces fell at Frank's threat, but Maron appeared perfectly calm.

It was as he had expected Frank to attack and hold him hostage and did not even resist.

In fact, he almost appeared perfectly content as Frank's hostage.

"Don't move!" he snapped at Elder Huxley and Elder Randel as they were ready to save him before turning back to Frank and smiling. "Go on, do it. Kill me!"

"What?" Frank was dumbstruck that Frank was that fearless.

"Oh, don't be so surprised." Maron chuckled. "Kill me right here if you have the balls, Frank Lawrence—but you have to think about it: none of your girls are going to get away alive if you do. If that's what you want, then do it."

Maron was absolutely confident that Frank would back down—even if Frank could crush his neck like he wanted, it meant burning bridges with Sage Lake Sect.

Even Frank himself would have trouble bearing with the fallout, especially when Maron still held Helen, Vicky, Kiki, Winter, and Mona captive.

Maron's death would mean all five of them dead, which was why he did not care if he died.

"So? Made up your mind yet?" Maron sneered at Frank. "Go on, be quick with it and have all your ladies die with me... or let me go and play by my rules."

Seeing that Maron was immune to his threat, Frank turned coldly toward the Sage Lake Sect elders and apprentices. "Hand over the hostages, and I'll let him live!"

"Don't listen to him!" Maron bellowed at them, seeing some of them were being swayed. "If you defy me, I'll make it hurt even if I survive."

To no surprise, everyone followed his orders, leaving Frank growling, "Damn it."

He could not give up on Helen and the others, and that in turn meant he was helpless against Maron.

Eventually, he released Maron, who clapped him on the shoulder in satisfaction, laughing. "Not bad! You're a good man, biting off what you can chew."

Still, he suddenly glowered and slapped Frank across the face.

Smack!

It did not hurt Frank at all, but Frank was incensed inwardly.

"But now that you're in my house, you have to follow my rules." Maron sneered, whipping out his phone and brandishing it in front of Frank. "If this happens again, I'll kill one of the hostages. Understand?"

Frank looked up to see Helen, Vicky, Kiki, Winter, and Mona on the screen, all tied up and blindfolded.

"I must say that they're all so hot," Maron said, putting away his phone while whispering into his ear, "Yesterday, I almost had a taste of each of them personally... but I changed my mind. Do you know why?"

He smiled fearlessly despite Frank's murderous glare. "Because I met someone better! I mean, looks matter the most for the ladies, and I'm the son of the Sage Lake Sect chief and soon the chief. I need to weigh my decisions for the sake of the sect."

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Maron was endlessly pompous, clearly saying all he could to provoke Frank.

"It just happens that I have a guest from Morhen, but how do I put this? We can't afford to upset her."

Maron sighed, shaking his head dramatically as he walked circles around Frank. "She's so hot, but she's also too powerful. She'd just kill me if I try to force myself on her—that's why I need a fearless champion, and one who has nothing to do with Sage Lake Sect to take her down. But I don't mean to hurt her, I just want to incapacitate her—ideally unconscious."

"After that, leave everything to me," he finished, clapping Frank on the shoulder and patting his cheek. "I'm counting on you, Mr. Lawrence! If you do, I'll..."

Maron trailed off as he switched gears. "Hold on, letting off a martial elite like you so easily is a waste. Let's do it this way instead—I have five hostages, but you can pick the one I release while I release each of them after you fulfill a task for me. Generous, aren't I? That's decided!"

Maron was going to stride off contentedly when Frank chuckled behind him.

"What? What's so funny?" Maron scowled, his smile fading right away.

"I'm surprised someone in Sage Lake Sect is that shameless, and..."

Frank wiped his own face as he grinned at Maron. "You're really asking for it!"

Quinn scowled at the sight of Frank's grin.

Snorting, he suddenly leapt up and punched Frank in the stomach.

He really was Birthright rank and did not hold back from unleashing his vigor with his punch, almost bringing Frank to his knees.

As Frank straightened himself, his expression was placid even as he chuckled coolly. “Well done, Maron. You’ve really pissed me off now. I’ll remember this grudge—just don’t start bawling like a baby when you get your just deserts.”

His arrogant attitude left Maron’s eyes flashing viciously. However, even as Maron raised his fist to punish Frank again, their eyes met, and he backed down, lowering his knuckle.

“Keep talking all you want. There’s all the time for you to regret it.” Maron snorted and strode off with Elder Huxley and Elder Randel.

The Sage Lake Sect apprentices kept Frank surrounded as they entered the enclave.

Sage Lake Sect was certainly worthy of its hundred-year history.

Not only did they own all of Sage Lake Hill, but Frank also saw a vast square as soon as he entered the enclave, where countless apprentices were training.

Various stairs leading to different places branched away from the square, leading to the conclave, barracks, shrine, and dojo.

Frank was led toward the conclave, and he could hear Maron laughing even before he entered.

“Sorry to keep you waiting, Lady Silverbell. I was held back tending to some mundane issues concerning my apprentices—I can only ask for your understanding.”

As Frank strode into the conclave, Frank quickly saw Maron on the main seat, with a woman seated in the guest’s chair.

Her white silky dress made it appear as if she was shrouded in mist.

## Chapter 664

Silverbell had the air of a goddess unsullied, her skin fair as snow, and she kept her hands primly on her lap as she stared at Maron fixedly.

“If memory serves, I should be meeting your sect’s chief, Mr. Maron. Or perhaps he’s dismissive of my disposition as chief of the Martial Alliance, which explains his absence?”

Her words were sharp despite her unsullied appearance. Her voice was cool as spring, and it left Maron’s face stiffening right then, even as he forced a smile. “That’s not true, Lady Silverbell. My father has always secluded himself in his residence for his routine, but he recently got hurt and is recuperating. He also delegated his duties to me—”

“In that case, I shall come back another day.” Silverbell rose to her feet right then, ready to leave.

Maron quickly stopped her, flashing an apologetic smile. “Please, Lady Silverbell. It doesn’t mean we don’t have any champions to represent us just because my father is hurt.”

“Really?” Silverbell stopped, saying quietly, “You know the rule. Your champion must last twenty strikes against me to earn a place in the Martial Alliance. However, I’ve never sensed the presence of anyone who would last five strikes from my sword, and you only get one chance, so you’d do well to be prudent.”

Damn you, woman! How dare you belittle Sage Lake Sect!

Though Maron was cursing Silverbell endlessly in his mind, he was not about to pass up on a chance to join the Martial Alliance.

First and foremost, Cloudnine Sect of South Sea had helped them fight for this chance. And Maron had every intention to use this opportunity to prove that he was superior to his father in charisma and competence and legitimately inherit the sect.

Secondly, joining the Martial Alliance was a good thing—they would gain access to the alliance’s resources, while Sage Lake Sect would also secure influence in the eastern region of Draconia.

Thirdly...

Maron ever so subtly ogled Silverbell's lofty demeanor and her perfect figure.

He could not wait to taste her already.

In fact, he had lost all interest in other women the instant he laid eyes on her—they were all mundane in comparison to her, and the sense of accomplishment of conquering Silverbell far outweighed the rest.

"Lady Silverbell." Maron smiled. "The elders of my sect drilled overnight to cast a combat ward. They may be personally lacking to you, but if they combine to cast the combat ward, I'm sure even you won't fare well against them."

"Really?" Silverbell was actually curious. "Then let them cast it. Show me what Sage Lake Sect can do."

With that, Silverbell strode out of the conclave but paused, as if sensing something, when she passed Frank.

Frowning and glancing at him quizzically, she found his face familiar but could not place it.

It was true that she had met countless individuals as the chief of the Martial Alliance, but there was just something different about Frank. In fact, her heart that had always remained calm thanks to years of conditioning fluttered when she saw Frank's face!

"You are...?" she blurted.

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"Hahaha..."

Maron was laughing as he came over, throwing an arm around Frank's shoulder. "Lady Silverbell, this is my friend, Frank Lawrence."



“Frank Lawrence...?! No, that’s impossible.”

Silverbell’s cool gaze flickered for a moment, showing confusion and reminisce. However, it only lasted for a moment as she regained her cool composure, and she threw those thoughts away.

She had come to East Draconia for Frank Lawrence—Donn Lawrence, to be precise.

Donn was the son of Godwin Lawrence, the Lord of the Southern Woods. Silverbell was told that Donn had found success in Riverton, and she had traveled there to meet him... to clear the air and annul the engagement their parents decided for them while they were children.

As for the man before her... Even if he had the same name, Frank should not be here in Southdam, let alone get involved with Sage Lake Sect.

After all, Sage Lake Sect was a minor cabal in a remote location—the Lord of the Southern Woods’ son would never keep such frivolous company.

Presuming that this man of the same name caused a misunderstanding, Silverbell shook her head and drifted away before Frank said a word.

Frank frowned even as he looked on—he recognized her even though she could not recognize him.

It was indeed Silverbell, the daughter of his father’s valet.

She did not go by any last names—Frank remembered naming her Silverbell himself.

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When Donn was young and playing in the woods, he chanced upon Fenton telling Godwin that he was gifted with a daughter and asking Godwin to name her.

Though Godwin was happy for Fenton, he let Donn do the naming. However, Donn was just a boy at the time, and the wind chimes dangling beneath the roof just happened to catch his attention. He suggested Silverbell right then and was surprised that Fenton took it seriously.

With that, Donn had a playmate until he was ten, when his mother was slain in a revenge killing.

Under the rain and thunder, Frank clutched his mother's lifeless body and cursed her father for being too much of a coward to avenge his own wife.

Eventually, Donn became Frank, parting ways from his father and leaving Cloudington, eventually joining Mystic Sky Sect.

Now that he thought about it, it had been over a decade since they had last met—she had since become a woman of marvelous beauty and had the martial caliber to be chosen as the chief of the Martial Alliance.

Frank actually had no idea what the Martial Alliance was all about. Given Maron's attitude, however, it was definitely no child's play.

He did not take offense that Silverbell did not recognize him either, since people changed—especially over twenty years.

Still, he felt content, seeing that the young girl who always tagged along when he practiced martial arts had become such a goddess and remembering the cute way she used to say his name...

That was when Maron pointed at Silverbell, chuckling under his breath, "What do you think, Frank? That figure, that ass, and those pretty cheeks... Don't you just want to defile her viciously in bed?"

Chapter 666

"Whether I can do that tonight depends entirely on you. Hahaha..."

Maron laughed heartily as he strode off, leaving Frank standing there, clenching his knuckles as his visage flashed murderously.

One way or another, Maron would die tonight!

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Soon, Frank followed the Sage Lake Sect apprentices to the enclosed dojo, where he immediately spotted the white-dressed figure drawing her sword.

A faint pure vigor wafted among the Sage Lake Sect elders even as they encircled her, resonating harmoniously somehow.

“A combat ward...?” Frank narrowed his eyes.

It was commonly practiced by sect apprentices, requiring resonance in pure vigor and psyche. Moreover, most combat wards would enhance the individuals within while diminishing any disadvantages—pushing them beyond what they were usually capable of.

“Don’t worry, Lady Silverbell!” one of the elders barked. “This Divine Lotus Ward has never been beaten since its conception!”

“Hmph.”

Both Frank and Silverbell snorted at the same time—no sect ever got to brag when it came to combat wards because the strongest wielders of combat wards resided at the borders of Draconia.

Take, for example, the twelve generals serving the Lord of the Southern Woods.

The combat ward they cast in tandem was genuine in every sense of the word.

Working in perfect unity, they would complement each other while instantly pushing their Ascendant rank cultivation to peak potential, and even Divine rank elites would have trouble holding their own against them.

It was a godly stroke, and even the world would falter in their wake. Modern artillery would be futile against it... as such, one had to describe the ward cast by the Sage Lake Sect elders as 'pathetic'.

"How amusing," Silverbell said, looking at the combat ward cast around her before glancing at Maron in the distance. "I'd advise you to give up if this is all Sage Lake Sect is capable of. A measly sect like this has no business joining the Martial Alliance."

"Go!" Maron snapped at the Sage Lake Sect elders, as Silverbell's mocking left his cheek clenching.

"Apologies, Lady Silverbell!" the Sage Lake Sect elders bellowed as they took to the air, spinning like tops in the air as they cast their combat ward and charged at Silverbell.

"Ignorance." Silverbell's eyes flashed coolly, seeing that they were stubbornly attacking.

With a flick of her sword, dozens of beams fired away from her word like a blooming flower.

One elder's clothes was left in pieces, while the one beside him was screaming as he was sent flying.

Even before the Sage Lake Sect apprentices realized what was happening, Elder Randel was covered in a dozen gashes, bleeding like a stuck pig and barely alive.

All the Sage Lake Sect apprentices gasped.

The horror! Elder Randel was one of their strongest leaders, but he did not even survive a single strike from Silverbell?!

The other two elders left standing glanced at each other, and they subtly drew out a pack of white powder.

Without another word, they charged at Silverbell from both sides.

Thud!

The one on the left was lobbed into the air by Silverbell's sword, while the elder to the right was sent flying as well, coughing blood after Silverbell kicked him.

However, in the instant he was kicked, he managed to sprinkle his white powder on Silverbell's foot without her noticing.

Seeing the confirmation gesture from the kicked elder, Maron laughed as he walked up, clapping, "Hahaha! One could expect nothing less from you, Lady Silverbell. Our elders are really pushovers in comparison."

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Seeing that Maron actually knew his place, Silverbell nodded impassively. "In that case, your application to the Martial Alliance is now forfeited. Only approach us in Morhen again if one of yours actually reaches Ascendant rank. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have other matters to attend to."

She started to drift away, but Maron stopped her again. "Please wait, Lady Silverbell."

"What?" Silverbell's expression cooled, staring pointedly around at the Sage Lake Sect apprentices. "Is there anything else you have to add?"

"Certainly." Maron strode forward, shaking his head. "Like you said, my sect's right is rightly forfeited. But won't you agree it's a pity when my father just happens to be incapacitated, and the chance that Cloudnine Sect fought for us would only come to waste?"

"What are you trying to say?" Silverbell growled impatiently.

"Patience, Lady Silverbell." Maron smiled politely. "Even if current members of my sect have failed, my friend here is willing to join and help us fight for this chance, and he's a formidable one."

“Your friend?” Silverbell frowned as she turned toward Frank without knowing but soon shook her head. “I remember saying you only have one chance, Mr. Maron. You failed to take it, and asking for a third party’s help is against the rules.”

“Come now, Lady Silverbell!” Maron exclaimed in dramatic misery. “What’s another match when you’re that strong? My friend here comes from distant lands too, and it won’t do for him to leave in disappointment. Can’t you give us another chance for the sake of Cloudnine Sect?”

Before Silverbell could say another word, he threw up a palm. “I swear this will be our last chance. We will never bother you again if we lose!”

Silverbell certainly wanted to say no but felt that curious sensation from before as she glanced at Frank again, who remained impassive.

After some thought, she nodded despite herself. “Fine. Seeing that your father is unduly incapacitated, I can give you another chance. But this shall be the last.”

“Of course! Certainly!” Maron exclaimed delightedly, his eyes narrowing as he returned to Frank. “I’m sure I don’t have to elaborate, do I? If you want your ladies to survive, go all out and bring that pompous bitch down a peg. If you don’t...”

Maron trailed off but raised his phone to show a black-clad man smiling as he tore through Helen’s sleeve, baring her fair skin.

“No—!” Helen screamed and flinched in fear, while the black-clad man laughed and stood akimbo.

The laughter left Frank clenching his knuckle so hard it could break.

Maron chuckled darkly in turn. “If you lose, the guild will have their way with them... No woman ever survives, just so you know.”

“Understood.”

Frank nodded, impassive as he strode past the Sage Lake Sect apprentices as they cleared a path.

As he made his way toward Silverbell, who stood with sword in hand, she hesitated for a moment before asking, “Frank Lawrence... Have we met before?”

“Hmm...?” Maron frowned at the question that seemed to have come out of nowhere.

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As Frank looked up to meet Silverbell’s eyes, he said quietly, “No, Lady Silverbell. It’s our first encounter, just as this is my first time hearing about the Martial Alliance.”

“The Martial Alliance.” Silverbell spaced out for a moment and started explaining for some reason, “The South Sea Four founded the alliance, and only notable sects or factions in Draconia are offered a place...”

It was only at the end that she came to her senses, frowning as she wondered why she would explain the Martial Alliance to some punk she did not know.

Swish!

She whipped her sword, speaking quietly, “Less talking. Since you’re representing Sage Lake Sect for their trial, you must be prepared. Show me what you have and whether the Sage Lake Sect is worth the alliance’s time!”

“Go, go, Frankie!” Maron cheered for Frank with fake enthusiasm, waving his phone at Frank at the same time to warn him against pulling anything funny.

Frank was not actually going to do it—if he were to be honest, he would like to see how much Silverbell had improved, as he had not met the brat for a decade.

Turning toward one of the Sage Lake Sect apprentices nearby, he held out his hand. “Lend me your sword.”

“Sir...?” The apprentice was taken aback and turned toward Maron.

Maron nodded—he certainly wanted Frank to win.

Frank caught the sword thrown at him and calmly walked up to Silverbell without assuming any stance.

“You’re testing your skill with a sword against mine?” Silverbell frowned.

Her specialty was the sword, and Frank was challenging her with what she was best at?!

“Come at me,” Frank said and stopped talking.

As he strode up, he slowly remembered the footwork and strokes of the strongest sword style of Mystic Sky Sect: the Wandering Nephrite.

The fact that he did not assume a stance left Silverbell frowning further.

“Such an amateur... Whatever, time to crush your dreams,” she said and leapt forward, unleashing the first strike.

Her sword hummed as a deafening sword beam shot away, aimed squarely at Frank’s shoulders.

Clang!

But while Silverbell presumed it was over with her first stroke, she was left stunned to see Frank parrying her beam.

And when she was left stunned, Frank moved, leaping forward at breakneck speed and leaning forward so much that he looked as if he would teeter and fall.



It would take a trained eye to see that he was using pure vigor to pad his feet, and he would never actually fall.

At the same time, he swung his sword straight for Silverbell's kneecaps.

"Huh?" Silverbell was surprised by his opening stroke—where had he learned such a move? She had never encountered anything like that!

Clang!

Lifting one leg and standing on the other, she lightly swung her sword and parried Frank's ethereal blow.

But even before she could switch to the attack, Frank slid his pure vigor along her sword while he leapt past her flank.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

In a brief instant, Frank unleashed over a dozen strokes, leaving the Sage Lake Sect apprentices dumbstruck.

While Silverbell had every reason to be appointed Chief of the Martial Alliance, Frank's swordcraft was just too unpredictable and volatile that she kept being caught by surprise.

Still, she kept parrying Frank's blows thanks to her years of experience and even switched to attack.

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Elder Huxley walked up to Maron, his tone hesitant. "Master Maron, isn't Frank Lawrence..."

Maron shrugged. "He's better than I thought, able to challenge that bitch as an equal."

"But what about the chief—"

“Silence,” Maron growled as he shot him an icy look. “He’s barely alive, so shut it unless you want all of us dead!”

“Yes, Master Maron.” Elder Huxley sighed heavily.

“Come on, Elder Huxley.” Maron chuckled, seeing his concern. “I know that it’s hard on you as an elder of our sect, seeing how things have turned out... but would you rather have Sage Lake Sect stay stuck in measly Southdam for another hundred years?!”

“Just think about it in another way,” he continued with an enigmatic smile. “Bocek Ocean is dead, and my father will soon be too. Who else would know what we did? And once this match is over and I have my way with Silverbell, do you know what’s going to happen?”

Elder Huxley shook his head. “I’m not sure... and I’m confused. Wouldn’t Lady Silverbell punish us?”

“Punish us?” Maron laughed confidently and pointed at Frank, who was still fighting against Silverbell intensely. “Why would I be punished? What crime have I committed? It’s all Frank’s fault for drugging Silverbell with Passion Dust. I was merely aiding her in her distress but was caught in the moment as Silverbell was overwhelmed with passion.

“The rest will be history.” Maron’s grin broadened. “Frank will be dead, while Sage Lake Sect will be accepted into the alliance after I have Lady Silverbell’s body. And you elders will benefit from this too, don’t you think? The sky’s the limit—that is, after we join the Martial Alliance. How is that not better than suffering the whims of my old man or Bocek Ocean?”

Elder Huxley’s eyes lit up, and he bowed in deference. “Your plan is flawless, Master Maron. I’m earnestly impressed!”

Maron snorted, and he sat leisurely on the chair that some Sage Lake Sect apprentices brought. “Indeed. Now, let’s just wait for the drug to kick in—once it does, we’ll blame Frank for it!”

—

Clang!

Clang!

Clang!

The clash of swords between Frank and Silverbell raged on.

With a combination of misdirection and blurring speed, Frank's swordcraft continued to befuddle Silverbell, coming deadly close on occasion.

Silverbell was not backing down, however—it was rare for her to encounter a sword master of Frank's caliber, and she unleashed all the techniques she kept sheathed without a care.

"Rain of Blades!" she bellowed as she vaulted to the air, firing a multitude of sword beams at Frank as if it were raining.

Frank was quietly impressed—the brat had improved by leaps and bounds, and swordcraft alone was not enough to defeat her.

"Dancing Storm!" he cried as he swung his sword in turn, as if cutting through the rain.

He unleashed a burst of sword beams of his own, parrying the rain of beams that Silverbell unleashed.

In the distance, Maron narrowed his eyes. "That's over thirty strikes!"

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As Frank and Silverbell's sword duel intensified, Maron grew more wary of either of them.

At the same time, he felt lucky he had never fought Frank directly... or he would end up a corpse already!

“Take this—Thousand Mile Burst!”

A blur shot down from the above.

Too fast for Frank to avoid, he had to raise his sword to parry in the heat of the moment.

Clang!

The silver beam shattered the sword even as Frank looked on, and it never stopped as it kept pressing toward Frank’s face.

“Oof—” Frank grunted as he stepped backward, and he touched his forehead to feel blood welling out of a shallow scratch.

“I lost,” he said, throwing the hilt on the floor and openly admitting defeat.

“No, you’ve won,” Silverbell said even as she landed, her fingers twitching around her sword.

She leveled a look of mixed emotions at Frank before shaking her head. “It’s the rule—anyone in any sect who can last twenty strikes from my blade earns their sect a place in the Martial Alliance. And you’ve survived more than fifty.”

Glancing at the shards of the broken sword around the floor, she sighed in disappointment. “And it’s not as if you were incapacitated—the sword you wield was just too crude. I have to admit that you’re a class above me.”

Swish.

Silverbell sheathed her sword, nodding calmly at Frank. "You've cleared this trial."

"Thank you." Frank nodded in turn, not denying it since it was the reality.

When the best of the best stepped into the ring, they pitted their skills and warrior's mind against each other.

It was especially the case in swordcraft, with swords being elegant weapons wielded in a civilized time. Those without virtue could not hope to direct their sword to strike true, let alone cultivate their swordcraft to the pinnacle.

"And since you've won, I hereby announce that Sage Lake Sect... is eligible..."

Silverbell suddenly paused before turning toward Frank in disbelief and dropped to the floor limply, her cheeks flushed and her breathing rushed.

"It's working!" Maron exclaimed in delight, leaping out of the crowd and pointing at Frank as he bellowed in righteous indignation, "What do you think you're doing, Frank Lawrence?!"

"Hmm...?" Frank turned to Maron in confusion.

As the Sage Lake Sect apprentices looked on, Maron kept snapping, "To think I treated you as a friend! How dare you resort to such underhanded moves!"

"Underhanded moves?" Frank was left further confused about what Maron was up to.

Maron simply ignored him and bellowed, "I'm taking Lady Silverbell to the infirmary—I saw Frank blindsided her with a white powder just now!"

Then, turning towards Elder Huxley, he commanded, "Restrain him! Also, all other apprentices are to stay away from the infirmary and avoid getting into trouble."

Then, he went up to Silverbell to help her to her feet, but she pushed him away. "Sage Lake Sect... When did you... poison me?!"