

Hitched 1701

Chapter 1701

In the middle of the standoff, a Thyanian martial artist rushed onto the stage. He held a phone and whispered something in Shekao's ear. Shekao quickly took the phone and walked to the side, turning his back to the crowd to take the call. After hearing what the person on the other end had to say, Shekao nodded repeatedly. When he hung up, he shot a venomous glare at Elliot before facing the audience and announcing in Thyanian, "The Thyanian authorities are taking this incident very seriously. We have concluded that both fighter #3 and the referee were in the wrong, and they will be severely punished! Furthermore, we are overturning the previous decision. Fighter #9 may continue to compete normally! On behalf of the tournament organizers, I would like to extend our sincerest apologies to the Zhinoran martial artists!" With that, Shekao looked at the Zhinoran fighters in the crowd and gave them a deep bow. He continued, "From this point forward, we will uphold the principles of fairness and justice, and we will diligently oversee this competition. Please, compete with peace of mind." After another sharp glare at Elliot, he left the stage. The Zhinoran fighters let out a collective sigh of relief. Even though it was just a verbal apology, it was a much-needed victory. Elliot walked off the stage with his bodyguard, and the Zhinoran fighters erupted in applause. "Way to go, kiddo!" Elliot looked at them and said, "You got this!" When you're in a foreign land, your countrymen are your family. If we're wrong, we apologize. But if we're not, no one gets to bully us for free. The competition resumed with fighters #7 and #8 taking the stage. Fighter #7 was a 35-year-old man from Nipponora. Fighter #8 was a 40-year-old man from the Philippines. They were evenly matched, and after a long, drawn-out fight, #7 barely scraped by with a win. He was the first Nipponoran fighter to take the stage, and even though it was a narrow victory, a win was a win. The other Nipponoran fighters in the crowd celebrated like they'd just won the lottery, shouting and cheering loudly. Evan rolled his eyes. "It's not like he won the trophy. What's all the fuss about? Talk about low standards." Elliot reminded him, "Never underestimate an opponent, no matter how weak they seem. Your first priority is to fight smart and not get hurt. Winning is second." Elijah added, "You'll definitely beat him, but we just caused a scene. When you get up there, you have to play by the rules. Don't give them any ammunition." Evan nodded eagerly. "Don't worry, guys. I know." The new referee called out from the stage, "Fighter #7 will continue. Next up is #7 versus #9. Will fighter #9 please come to the stage?" Evan had been itching for this. The moment he heard his number, he sprinted onto the stage. Since he'd already made an impression earlier, the crowd was intrigued, and all eyes were on him. The Zhinoran fighters cheered for him, "Go get 'em, kiddo!" Like a young hero, Evan gave a slight bow to the Zhinoran section before turning to face fighter #7. The Nipponoran fighter stood with his arms crossed, eyeing Evan with a sneer. "Everyone bear witness," he said mockingly. "Don't say I'm picking on a little kid. If I make him cry, I'm not the one who's gonna comfort him." The Nipponoran fighters in the crowd roared with laughter. "Don't worry, his mommy's right there. If the brat starts wailing, she can change his diapers." "And if his mommy can't handle it, he's got all those Zhinoran fighters. You won't have to lift a finger. They might not be good at fighting, but they're probably great at babysitting, hahaha..." They were shamelessly mocking the Zhinoran team's skills. Elliot shot them a look but didn't waste his breath. Evan was already on the stage. There was no need for words; action would speak for itself. The more arrogant they were now, the more their faces would sting later. Evan's gaze turned icy as he glared the fighter #7. He wasn't intimidated by his opponent, but seeing a Nipponoran

fighter just reminded him of Bernard. A whistle blew, and the match began. The Nipponoran fighter cocked his head, his posture lazy and dismissive. "You..."

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Before he could finish his sentence, Evan's fist smashed into his forehead. The Nipponoran fighter's eyes went wide. He stared at Evan for a few seconds, then collapsed face-first onto the mat with a thud. Everyone: "Huh?!" The new referee, also stunned, hurried over to check. He glanced at Evan in shock before announcing, "Fighter #7 is knocked out! Number 9 wins!" Everyone: "????!!!" The arena fell silent for a moment before the Nipponoran fighters and Evan both yelled out at the same time, "Damn it!" The Nipponorans were furious that their teammate had been KO'd by a little kid, bringing them shame. Evan was furious that he'd knocked the guy out so easily. What a letdown! He hadn't even used much force, and the guy was out cold. According to the rules, you can't hit an opponent once they're unconscious. He had waited all this time for his turn, and this was it? It was completely unsatisfying. The little guy's face was a mask of disappointment. The audience stared at him in amazement. That a kid his size could deliver a one-punch KO was unbelievable. The Zhinoran fighters, after a moment of stunned silence, jumped to their feet, cheering and applauding. "Our kiddo is incredible!" "See? He's a real pro! Awesome!" "Sigh..." Evan let out a small sigh. They just didn't understand a kid's troubles. Evan started to walk off the stage. Since #10 was another Zhinoran fighter and he didn't want to fight one of his own, he chose to take a break. But just as he reached the edge of the ring, fighter #3 suddenly appeared below him. In broken English, he challenged, "You dare fight me?!" Fighter #3 had broken the rules earlier, but because he was a skilled fighter, the Koryonian martial arts association had fought to keep him in the competition. They wanted him to win glory for their country. Evan's eyes lit up instantly. "You want to fight me?" he asked. Fighter #3's brow was furrowed. "Are you afraid to accept?" "Ha!" A smirk spread across Evan's face. He had been bummed about KO'ing that Nipponoran schmuck too quickly and not getting a proper fight. And now, this guy was serving himself up on a silver platter. Evan looked at him, and for the first time, he actually felt a bit of warmth toward the guy for volunteering. Evan's mood brightened, and even his tone became friendly. "Come on, come on, get up here! Let's have a round!" Fighter #3 frowned. He had no idea that in Evan's eyes, he was just a living punching bag. Evan's enthusiasm was completely unexpected. He narrowed his eyes and warned, "I'm not a rookie like #7! I've fought several matches. You've seen my strength!" Evan nodded eagerly. "You're definitely stronger than that rookie #7! I'm sure you won't disappoint me!" Fighter #3 grew even more suspicious. "?" If he knew how strong I was, what's he so happy about? Shouldn't he be trembling in fear? Seeing the suspicion on his face, Evan worried he might back out. "Don't be scared," he said quickly. "I'm really not that good." Before #3 could react, Evan turned, raised his little hand, and shouted to the referee, "Referee, referee! I'm not taking a break! I want to fight him next! Right now!" All eyes in the arena snapped toward them. Everyone was shocked that he was challenging fighter #3. "This kid has a death wish. Number 3 is a beast!" "Plus, #3 has a grudge against him for that kick earlier! He won't hold back. Isn't he worried #3 will beat him to a pulp?" While the crowd was still murmuring, Evan had already grabbed fighter #3's uniform and was hauling him onto the stage. No escape now! Fighter #3 was completely bewildered. He angrily slapped Evan's hand away and straightened his clothes, glaring at the boy and thinking to himself: This little brat is dragging me onto the stage? Is he in a hurry to die?!

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Evan didn't get angry when #3 slapped his hand away. He just looked up at him with a small smile. After all, the guy had volunteered to be his punching bag; he deserved some credit. Seeing this, the Koryonian fighters got excited again. "He's scared! He's trying to be friendly!" "Of course he's scared! Our great Koryonian fighters can crush him with one finger!" "Hmph! Just some sheltered brat who dares to challenge us. He doesn't know his place! Kill him!" "Yeah! Kill him! No mercy, no holding back! Kill that little punk!" As the Koryonians roared, the Zhinoran fighters looked at the small figure on the stage, their faces filled with worry. Everyone had seen what fighter #3 was capable of; he was a strong contender to make it to the finals. Someone couldn't help but say to the bodyguard couple, "Isn't #9 on stage your kid? You should have him forfeit. Number 3 is too strong. Discretion is the better part of valor!" "He's still young. He can lose this time and have plenty of chances to win in the future! He shouldn't be so reckless!" The bodyguards turned to look at Elliot. Elliot just smiled. "Thank you for your concern for my brother. Don't worry about him, he knows what he's doing. If he really can't win, he'll forfeit on his own." He knew his brother's true strength all too well. Compared to Evan, #3 was nothing. Unaware of Evan's power, the others just frowned, anxiously watching the stage. The whistle blew, and the match began! Fighter #3 sneered at Evan, tilted his head, and clenched his jaw before lunging forward.

His punch was fierce, his eyes filled with killing intent. The Zhinoran fighters gasped. Was he trying to kill Evan?! Evan saw the murderous look in #3's eyes, and his expression grew ice-cold.

He had considered just ending it quickly, but then he remembered the image of this guy beating the Zhinoran fighters. Defeating him wasn't the point. Making him pay was. Evan sidestepped, dodging the attack. Fighter #3 reacted instantly, lashing out with a kick... The Koryonian fighters were ecstatic. "Good one! Kill him! Bring glory to Koryon!" "Come on, you little brat, don't dodge! You coward, you trash! Zhinoran fighters are trash!" "Yeah! Zhinoran fighters are trash! All of them!" Zhinoran fighters are trash? Evan's anger flared. With a scowl, he caught the incoming kick by the ankle and, with sheer force, slammed #3 onto the mat. Before #3 could scramble up, Evan planted a foot on his chest. "Pfft-" Fighter #3 coughed up blood. The cheering Koryonian fighters: "!" The anxious Zhinoran fighters: "?!" The entire arena: "...". Evan stood over him, his gaze icy. "Say 'Zhinora Forever,' and 'Koryonian fighters are trash,' and I'll let you go. Otherwise, I'll cripple you." Enraged, #3 gritted his teeth and struggled to his feet. "You little bastard, I'll kill you!" Evan caught his fist, raised his other hand, and unleashed a rapid series of punches into his chest— BAM! BAM! BAM! Then he let go, jumped behind him, and delivered another flurry of blows to his back. Fighter #3 became a human punching bag, stumbling left and right with no chance to fight back. Evan controlled his power carefully, avoiding his head and heart, ensuring he felt immense pain without passing out. After a solid few minutes of this relentless assault, Evan stopped. Just as #3 was about to collapse, Evan kicked the back of his knee. *THUD* Fighter #3 dropped to his knees, facing the Zhinoran section! The Zhinoran fighters stared, their eyes wide and shining. The Koryonian fighters also stared, their jaws on the floor. Evan spoke again. "Surrender. Say 'Zhinora Forever!' and 'Koryonian fighters are trash,' and I'll spare you." A Koryonian fighter immediately shouted, "This is supposed to be a friendly match! You can't personally insult the fighters!"

The Zhinoran fighters weren't having it. Who the hell started with the personal insults? What had #3 said when he'd beaten #5 and #6? "The Koryonians are shameless, hypocritical dogs!" "You rock, kiddo! Zhinora Forever! Go Zhinora! Koryon is trash!" On the stage, #3 knelt, gasping for air. He raised a hand, intending to strike a pressure point to knock himself out. If he was unconscious, the match would be over. But Evan was quicker. He stopped him, delivered another brutal beating, and then disabled both his arms and legs. Just before he passed out, Evan kicked him like a soccer ball, sending him flying into the Koryonian audience section. The man was finally unconscious. The match was over. The crowd was dumbfounded. Even the referee stood frozen for a moment before rushing forward and shouting, "Fighter #3 is defeated! Number 9 wins!" Everyone: "—" The Zhinoran fighters went wild, leaping to their feet, applauding and chanting, "Zhinora Forever!" "Zhinora Forever!" "Zhinora Forever—" The four words, 'Zhinora Forever,' echoed through the entire arena. Evan let out a slow breath, feeling much more at ease. Bernard had loved to hear those words. In the future, he would stand on an even bigger stage and make those words ring out for the whole world to hear. So loud that even the distant Bernard could hear them. ... In the following matches, Evan deliberately avoided fighting other Zhinorans. But every time a Zhinoran fighter was defeated, he would immediately jump in to challenge the victor, beat them, and then take a break. Soon, people noticed a pattern. He would avoid every Zhinoran fighter but wouldn't let a single Nipponoran, Koryonian, or Thyanian fighter pass. Whenever one of them took the stage, he would follow. And he wouldn't just KO them; he'd trap them and systematically dismantle them, leaving them on the brink of death.

The Nipponoran, Koryonian, and Thyanian teams were furious but helpless. The arena periodically erupted with chants of 'Zhinora Forever!' The masterminds behind the scenes had also taken notice of Evan. He was clearly the number one dark horse of the day. And hearing 'Zhinora Forever' over and over was starting to get on some people's nerves. Shekao soon received an order: fight Evan directly, and knock him out of the competition. Stop him from stealing any more of the spotlight. Shekao already couldn't stand the sight of Evan, so he immediately had the match arranged. When Evan heard that beating Shekao would get him a direct ticket to the finals, he didn't hesitate for a second and accepted the challenge. Elliot frowned. "It looks like they've noticed you. They want to eliminate you early." Evan scoffed. "They can try to kick me out, but they'll have to have the skills to back it up." He was determined to tear down this Thyanian school. Bernard never got the chance to do it, so he would do it in his place. Elliot hesitated for a moment, then looked at Evan. "I know something's been on your mind lately. Whatever you do, your brother will support you, but only on the condition that you protect yourself first. You can't risk your own safety. It's been easy so far because the preliminaries are full of amateurs. The real experts are still to come. You're incredibly talented, but there's always a bigger fish. No one can guarantee you're the best in the world right now. Before you do anything, you have to think about Mom, about us and Dad, and about our great-grandparents. If anything happened to you, we would fall apart. Especially Mom, with her personality. She wouldn't be able to handle you getting hurt." Evan understood what Elliot was saying. He nodded firmly, his small brow furrowed. "Don't worry, bro. I know my limits. I won't let anything happen to me." Elliot let out a heavy sigh. "Okay. Then do what you have to do. I've got your back." Elliot was smart. He knew Evan was brewing some kind of plan, but since

Evan wouldn't say what it was, he wouldn't push him. As long as Evan was safe, he would support him in anything.

Chapter 1705

When the referee announced the match between Evan and Shekao, the crowd thought they had misheard. It was only when they saw both Evan and Shekao step onto the stage that they believed their ears. They stared wide-eyed, a single thought running through their minds: "Good Lord, the kid has lost his mind-" The whistle blew, and the arena fell utterly silent. Everyone held their breath, their eyes glued to the two figures on the stage. Shekao frowned at Evan, his eyes devoid of mockery. He didn't waste a single word, his face just showing pure impatience. Evan could tell that Shekao felt it was beneath him to fight a child and wanted to end it quickly. Coincidentally, Evan had no intention of dragging it out either. Defeating Shekao was his ticket into the Thyanian Martial Arts Association's line of sight. This was the first step in his plan to tear down their school, and he had to make it a spectacular victory. Evan's expression hardened, and he took the initiative. Before Shekao could even move, Evan was in front of him, his speed astonishing. Shekao froze for a split second, then quickly retreated to dodge. But before he could catch his breath, a powerful kick landed on the back of his knee, forcing him to drop to a reflexive one-knee kneel. The next second, a crushing blow struck the back of his head. Shekao's eyes widened in sheer realization. He remained frozen for three seconds, then collapsed face-first onto the mat. Unconscious. The entire arena: "... A dead silence. An unknown amount of time passed before Evan turned and called out to the referee, finally snapping him back to his senses. He scrambled over to Shekao, checked him, and then looked at Evan in utter shock. "!" Evan just stared back at him. "Announce the result." The referee swallowed hard, his voice trembling as he stood up and blew the whistle. "Sh-Shekao is unconscious! Number 9 wins!" The arena remained silent until Elliot stood up and started clapping. Only then did the fiercely proud Zhinoran fighters erupt into a frenzied celebration. "Zhinora Forever! Zhinora Forever! Zhinora Forever!" ... The news spread like wildfire to the back rooms, shaking the entire Thyanian Martial Arts Association. Shekao's master looked on in disbelief. "Shekao lost?" The Thyanian fighter reporting the news nodded timidly. "Yes, he lost. He was knocked out." Everyone: "... A group of old masters huddled together, frowning as they watched the video of the match. The clip was pathetically short. From the moment Shekao stepped on stage to the moment he collapsed, less than ten seconds had passed. They watched it over and over, then pulled up videos of Evan's previous fights and watched those twice. Their faces collectively darkened. "...Against him, these other fighters are just punching bags. We can't gauge his true strength at all!" "And his fighting style... it feels familiar, but I can't place who he learned from." "We've studied all the major Zhinoran schools. His moves don't match any of them." "I heard he registered as an independent fighter. No personal information, just the name 'Mr. Gage.'" The old masters all pressed their lips together. A five-year-old Mr. Gage... "Is there any information about him from Zhinora? Has he competed in any tournaments there?" The young fighter who brought the news quickly replied, "No, we've already investigated him. Before coming to Thyania, he'd never made a public appearance. Even the Zhinoran Martial Arts Association doesn't know about him. He's a complete dark horse." Shekao's master asked, "Have you found anything on his family background?" "We have. His parents are business people, but we couldn't find out what they do specifically. It seems they've deliberately hidden their identities." They had mistaken the bodyguard couple for Evan's parents and had investigated them, but they only found the fake information deliberately planted online.

"A Zhinorian businessman who's unsearchable online is usually loaded. It means the kid comes from a wealthy family, probably privately tutored." "Even with private tutors, you should be able to recognize his style. Look at him, you can't tell a thing." "You can't tell because he hasn't met a real opponent. He hasn't even made a real move." "The problem now is that he effortlessly KO'd Shekao. He's definitely making it to the finals, and he'll be up against us!" Someone lamented, "A five-year-old kid is going to face us in the finals. What a disgrace!" "And it's a lose-lose for us. If we win, there's no glory. If we lose, it's the ultimate humiliation!" Someone else grumbled in frustration, "Years ago, that irritating Jake Warner popped up, and now we have a five-year-old Mr. Gage. Why is the Zhinorian martial arts scene such a damn nuisance?" At the sudden mention of Bernard, the group of old-timers fell silent. After a long moment, one of them finally spoke. "Honestly, the best solution is the same one we used for Jake Warner back in the day. Just make him disappear. Keep him out of the competition." If Evan didn't compete, they wouldn't be in this difficult position. They could even take the opportunity to mock the Zhinorian martial arts community again, claiming Evan was a coward who got scared and ran away. A younger martial artist spoke up, "That's easy to solve. Leave it to me. I'll handle it." The old men glanced at him but said nothing, giving their tacit approval for him to use dirty tricks on Evan. "...". Meanwhile, Elliot, Evan, and Elijah had already left the arena and were on their way back to their hotel. Holding a tablet, they had heard every word the old-timers said. Elijah had planted a bug on them earlier. "They want to deal with Evan privately!" Elliot said, "I'm not surprised. It's in their best interest if Evan doesn't continue in the competition." Evan wasn't scared in the slightest. "Alright, I'll play along. Let's see what kind of plan they can come up with to get rid of me." Elliot asked Elijah, "That young guy who spoke... he looks familiar. Have we run a background check on him?" Elijah replied, "We have. His name is Pana, a member of the Thyanian Martial Arts Association. His father is a high-ranking official in the Thyanian military and has private connections over in Mariana Land." Elliot immediately understood. "No wonder he said it would be easy to handle..." Just as Elliot finished speaking, Pana took out his phone and made a call. "I need a five-year-old kid taken care of. It's not convenient to do it in Thyania. You guys lure him to Mariana Land and finish him off there." The person on the other end asked, "A five-year-old? Can't you just quietly get rid of him yourselves?" "No, he's skilled and already making a name for himself in the martial arts world. It's not convenient for us to make a move." "...Alright, leave it to me. Send me his information. I guarantee he won't be coming back." As soon as they hung up, Elijah's face darkened. "The person who answered that call is the head of the AA Compound in Mariana Land, known as Mr. Dunn. They plan to lure Evan to Mariana Land and eliminate him there." Elliot frowned. "Evan has gained some influence now, so they don't dare touch him in this country. Getting people from Mariana Land to do it is the perfect cover." Evan was excited. "Great! I was planning on going after them anyway. This saves me the trouble of luring them out!" Elliot's eyes narrowed as he thought for a moment. "Mariana Land is too dangerous. They're armed with live ammo. You can't just barge in and take that risk. Let's go back to the hotel and plan this out carefully."

"..."

That afternoon, Elliot devised a brilliant plan. After laying it out and making sure it was foolproof, he gave Evan a long list of instructions before letting him go out. Elliot and Elijah would fill Tarquin in on the details later. After leaving, Evan first pretended to be a tourist wandering around. Then, he intentionally ditched his bodyguards— the married couple and played the part of a poor, lost kid, sitting on a bench and crying his eyes out. "Daddy, Mommy, where are you? Waaah..." Before long, a Zhinorian woman approached him. "What's wrong, little boy? Did you lose your parents?" Evan nodded repeatedly. "They're gone." "Don't be scared," the woman said. "Do you know their phone number?" Evan shook his head. "I don't know." "Well, do you know the way back to your hotel?" The woman asked. Evan shook his head again. "I don't know." The woman looked troubled. "Then I can't help you find your parents. But it's dangerous for you to sit here all by yourself. How about I take you to the police station? The officers can help you find them." Evan quickly nodded. "Okay, thank you, ma'am." "You're welcome," the woman said with a gentle smile. "Come on, I'll give you a ride." Evan immediately took her hand and went with her. Just as planned, the moment Evan got in the car, the woman drugged him. Evan was prepared. He lay down in the back seat, feigning unconsciousness. The woman sneered at the driver. "They told me to be careful, so, so careful. Said the kid was smart and knew kung fu. He looks like a total moron to me. Easiest target ever." Evan thought, "You're the moron! Your whole family is full of morons! So much for honor among countrymen. You liar!" The driver, a middle-aged Thyanian man, glanced at Evan and said to the woman, "Contact Mr. Dunn's people right now. Double-check if this is the right kid." The woman took out her phone, recorded a short video of Evan, and sent it off. "Mr. Stuart, can you confirm one more time, is this the boy?" The reply came back quickly. "That's him! The one Mr. Dunn wants! Bring him over immediately!" ... Several hours later, Evan was brought to the border district. The sky was pitch black, and the woman who had abducted him was long gone. The journey from the capital had involved several car swaps. Evan continued to feign unconsciousness as a man carried him to a riverbank and handed him over to people on a boat. After a few mumbled words, Evan was taken across the river. On the other side were the notorious scam compounds, Evan's destination for this mission. Once ashore, they put Evan in an SUV and called the head of the AA Compound. "Hello, Mr. Dunn? We have the package. Should we deal with him on the spot or bring him to the compound?" "Bring him here first," Dunn said. After hanging up, Dunn contacted Pana. "The kid is in my hands. You can relax." Pana asked, "Were there any problems?" "None," Dunn said confidently. "Everything went smooth as silk. He ended up in my hands without anyone knowing." Pana let out a sigh of relief but added a warning, "Don't underestimate that kid. He's highly skilled. Don't let him escape." Dunn laughed. "Escape? Not even God himself could escape from my turf! Don't you worry. No matter how good his kung fu is, it's no match for my guns. This isn't the age of fists anymore; it's the age of firepower." Pana added, "It's best to finish him tonight to avoid any complications. You'll be well-rewarded." Dunn's smile widened. "Consider it done. I'll arrange for my men to take care of him right now. You can rest easy." After hanging up, just as Dunn was about to call his subordinates, his phone rang. It was them. He answered and said directly, "No need to bring the kid back. Just kill him and dispose of the body cleanly. Make sure no one finds out." The voice on the other end was frantic. "We've got a problem, Mr. Dunn! The kid was snatched!" Dunn was stunned. "Snatched? By who?!" "... People from the BB Compound!" "Mr. Lyons's men?" "Yes! They were wearing BB Compound uniforms, driving BB Compound vehicles. They took the kid by force!" Dunn couldn't understand. "Are you sure it was them? Could there be a misunderstanding? What would Mr. Lyons want with that kid?" His man

insisted, "One hundred percent certain, we wouldn't lie. They really took him! I hear there's someone on the black market paying top dollar for kids' corneas." In that instant, Dunn understood.

Chapter 1708

"Damn it! Even if he wants to do business, he should have given me a heads-up. I did all the work to get the kid here, and he just snatches him? He's got no respect for me!" Dunn slammed the phone down and immediately called the head of the BB Compound, yelling into the receiver the moment he answered. "Lyons, what the hell was that? Crossing the line, aren't you? Raiding my haul right from under my nose! You think I'm a pushover?!" Lyons frowned. "What the hell are you yelling about? Who raided your haul?!" Dunn was furious. "So you did it but you won't admit it?!" "I always own up to what I do!" Lyons retorted, annoyed. "Either show me some proof, or stop talking crap!" Dunn gritted his teeth. "Fine! I'm warning you, I didn't want to grab that kid myself. It was an order from our Thyanian contact! He just called me and told me to get rid of the kid tonight! He's taking this very seriously. If you screw this up, you'll have to face the consequences yourself!" "I have no idea what crap you're talking about!" Lyons snapped back before hanging up. Fuming, Dunn was about to call Pana to explain the situation when Pana's call came in first. He demanded without preamble, "What happened? Didn't you say you'd handle it discreetly? How did you get discovered?" Dunn was confused. "Huh? Discovered by who?" "Right now, people from the Zhinorian Martial Arts Association and the embassy are here with a video, demanding we hand the boy over!" Pana snarled. Dunn was stunned. "Wh-what video?" "A video of your people handing the kid over in the border district! Your men on one side, our Thyanian people on the other! Now we have a hundred people blocking our gates, accusing us of selling the kid to Mariana Land!" Dunn was dumbfounded. "... That's impossible. I was very careful about this. I told them repeatedly to be cautious and not get caught!" "What's the use of saying that now?" Pana roared in a hushed voice. "They already have the video! Stop wasting time and figure out how to get that kid back here, now!" "I'm not trying to scare you, but if this goes south, my father and I can't protect you. Thyania will absolutely send in the military to flatten your compounds!" Dunn's heart sank. "B-but..... he's just a kid, isn't he? Is it really that serious?!" Pana gritted his teeth. "Why do you think I was in such a hurry to deal with him? These were orders from the top! He's not just some ordinary kid! The Zhinorian Martial Arts Association is treating him like a golden boy, a precious treasure! If he just vanished, the Zhinorians couldn't do much. But now they have proof that Thyanian people took him to Mariana Land!" Evan had become famous overnight. He had not only alarmed the Thyanian Martial Arts Association but also the Zhinorian one. The ZMA had rushed a background check on Evan, but like the Thyanian side, they found nothing. They had tried to meet with Evan privately at noon, but he had declined. It wasn't the right time to reveal himself. Even so, the ZMA was incredibly fond of Evan. After all, he was one of their own, representing the Zhinorian Empire abroad. A five-year-old who could take down a heavyweight Thyanian martial artist was a prodigy, a once-in-a-generation talent. And what happened? Before they could even cherish him, he was sold to Mariana Land by the Thyanians. Who would stand for that? The entire Zhinorian Martial Arts Association was in an uproar. Pana didn't have time to explain everything. His voice was frantic. "Stop asking so many questions and just figure out how to get that kid back!" "I can't!" Dunn panicked. "He's not in my hands anymore!" Pana's eyes widened. "What did you say?!" Just as Dunn was about to explain, Pana cut him off. "I don't care what your situation is. You brought him there, so you're responsible for bringing him back! If you don't have him back here tonight, we're all going down together!" With that, Pana angrily hung up. Dunn was stunned

for a long moment before he realized the gravity of the situation. He quickly called Lyons again. "You son of a bitch, get that kid back to me now! We're in deep trouble!" Lyons was both furious and felt wronged. "Dunn, are you looking for a death wish? I'll say it one more time, I did not take your kid!" Lyons hung up. When Dunn tried calling back, the line was dead. Gritting his teeth, Dunn yelled to his men, "Get your gear! We're going to war with Lyons!"

Chapter 1709

In a convoy of trucks, a group of men armed to the teeth sped toward the BB Compound. Lyons's men had already received word and were waiting, fully armed, blocking the entrance. The BB Compound's second-in-command stepped forward to negotiate. "Don't push it, Dunn!" Sitting in his armored car, Dunn rolled down the window and cursed, "Damn it! Who's pushing who? You dare to snatch a person I brought in! You think I'm a pushover?!" The second-in-command insisted, "We've already told you, we didn't take your man. You keep trying to pin this crap on us. Are you trying to start a war on purpose?" Dunn got even angrier. They stole his target and now they were accusing him of starting a war! It was a classic case of the pot calling the kettle black. "Son of a bitch! Men, no more talking! Light 'em up! We have to get him back!" "Yeah!" Dunn's men roared and immediately opened fire. The BB Compound's men were prepared. They didn't waste any more words and fired back. With both sides using live ammunition, the firefight quickly escalated into a full-blown battle. As casualties mounted on both sides, Lyons called Dunn. "I'm telling you one last time, I didn't take your person. If you keep this up, I'm reporting it to The Warlord!" The Warlord was the true leader of this region, a powerful military commander. All the dozen or so scam compounds in the area operated under his command and protection. Dunn, sitting in his armored car, was seething. "Even if you don't tell him, I'm going to ask The Warlord to get justice for me after this is over! And I'll tell you one more time, this firefight isn't just about my reputation. More importantly, that kid is now a threat to our entire operation! If we don't send him back to Thyania tonight, they will send their army to bomb us all to hell! We're all in the same boat here. If my AA Compound goes down, you can bet your BB Compound won't be safe either!" Lyons frowned. He was starting to realize how serious this was. Dunn wouldn't have started a war over nothing. "What makes you so sure we took him? Do you have proof?" Lyons asked. "See for yourself!" Dunn immediately sent Lyons the video his men had taken. Lyons opened it and saw that the people and the vehicle were indeed from his compound. "I don't know anything about this. Let me look into it!" Lyons hung up and immediately ordered an investigation. The results came back quickly, and Lyons was livid. He called Dunn again. "Stop shooting! Cease fire! Sullivan has him!" Dunn was surprised. "What's going on?" Lyons was even angrier than Dunn. "That bastard Sullivan! To hell with him and everyone he stands for! He has no respect for me, daring to impersonate my men to pull a heist! The car and uniforms in the video are ours, but the men inside are Sullivan's! My people have already confirmed it—the kid is in his hands!" Dunn was dumbfounded. "Sullivan snatched my guy? Are you sure? Do you have proof?" "I just sent you a photo," Lyons said. "See if this is the kid." Dunn looked at the picture. Men from the CC Compound were pointing a gun at Evan, seemingly warning him to behave. Evan's lower lip was trembling, and he looked both aggrieved and terrified, as if he was about to cry. "That looks like him," Dunn said. "Hold your fire for now. I need to call Pana." With that, both sides ceased fire. Dunn called Pana. "I just sent you a photo. Take a good look and confirm if it's him." Pana replied in seconds. "Yes! That's the kid! Get him back here immediately! We're about to buckle under the pressure over here!"

Chapter 1710

Dunn said, "Tell them we've found the kid. We'll definitely send him back tonight!" After hanging up, Dunn immediately tried to contact Sullivan, but his calls went unanswered. He tried for a while but couldn't get through. Fuming, Dunn quickly contacted Lyons. "Let's go! We'll confront Sullivan together and get some answers!" And so, the men from the AA and BB Compounds joined forces. Together, they descended upon the CC Compound. It was late at night, and Sullivan was in his room, fooling around with a beautiful woman. He had just gotten her clothes off and was getting down to business when... *CRASH!* The door was kicked open. The naked woman screamed in terror, and Sullivan's desire evaporated instantly. He turned, enraged, and roared at his right-hand man, "Are you trying to get yourself killed?!" His subordinate ignored Sullivan's fury and said urgently, "We have a huge problem, Boss! Dunn and Lyons are here with a massive crew! They're fully armed, and it looks like they want to wipe us out completely!" Sullivan frowned, got off the woman, and started dressing. As he put on his clothes, he asked, "What happened? Why are they coming after us out of the blue?" "It's because of a kid!" his man explained. "Dunn took on a small job from Thyania to kill a boy, but our men impersonated Lyons's crew and snatched him! Dunn and Lyons had a massive firefight before they figured out the kid was in our custody!" The subordinate showed Sullivan the photo. Sullivan first looked confused, then his face darkened. "Jett did this?!" Jett was the man in the photo pointing a gun at Evan. He was one of the CC Compound's top enforcers and one of Sullivan's most trusted men. "We can't figure out what's going on," the subordinate said. "We can't reach Jett. He's gone missing!" Sullivan's face grew grim. "Find him, now!" After giving the order, he picked up his phone and called Dunn to explain. "You and Mr. Lyons, hold on, don't do anything rash. Something's not right here. Jett probably did snatch the kid, but I didn't give that order. I'm looking for him right now too!" Dunn didn't believe him. "Jett is your right-hand man, loyal as a dog. You think he'd pull a stunt like this without your orders?!" "That's why I'm saying something's not right!" Sullivan insisted. "Just give me some time. We're already searching for him!" Dunn glanced at the time. "We can sort out our internal problems later. First, find the kid! Mr. Lyons and I will be waiting right outside your territory. If we don't see that boy in one hour, we're coming in to find him ourselves!" Dunn hung up. Listening to the dial tone, Sullivan gritted his teeth and roared at his subordinate, "Find them now! Focus on finding that kid!" Meanwhile, back in Thyania. Elliot and Elijah were in their hotel room, monitoring the situation. Seeing that the fighting had stopped, Elliot called the female bodyguard. "Rose, I just sent you a video. I need you to do a little acting for me." "Received." The female bodyguard, Rose, was currently with Tarquin. Also with them were representatives from the Zhinorian Martial Arts Association, leaders of the Zhinorian community in Thyania, and representatives from the Thyanian Martial Arts Association, as well as officials from the Thyanian government and military. They were all gathered to discuss Evan's situation. The husband-and-wife bodyguards were there in their roles as Evan's parents. After hanging up, Rose glanced at the video. She took a moment to silently compose herself, then let out a loud wail and burst into tears...