

Chapter 999

“Well, hello there! We meet again!” said Haven Lovewell—one of the charming women—as she waved at the youth.

“We do, indeed...” replied Gerald with a subtle smile as he closed the door behind him. Placing his baggage down at a specially designated area for tourists, Gerald then headed over to an empty table that was coincidentally beside Haven’s.

As Gerald sat down, Haven added, “Do you remember our little conversation on the train earlier? It was so pleasant that I even wanted to ask you for your Line number at some point! Still, I never expected to meet you again so soon... I guess our meeting must have been written in the stars!”

“That’s quite enough, Haven. He came here to have his meal so don’t trouble him any more,” said Xareni—Haven’s elder sister—as she gently stepped on Haven’s foot, reminding her to be courteous.

“She’s right, Haven. Why did you even ask him for his Line number?” added Quintin.

Hearing that, Gerald simply shook his head before smiling wryly.

As Haven had said, Gerald had earlier bumped into the three Lovewell siblings while they were still on the train. At the time, the Lovewell siblings were sitting right across Gerald.

Quintin, however, had been dissatisfied with his window-side seat since the old man—who looked to be around eighty—sitting beside Gerald was an eyesore for him. The old man himself had been sleeping with his head leaned against the window throughout most of their journey, and Quintin couldn’t bear having to look at his sleeping face for any longer.

As a result, Quintin asked Gerald to switch seats with him. Though Gerald initially had no problem with that, Quintin had tossed a hundred dollars at Gerald while asking.

If he had been a bit nicer and more polite, Gerald would've switched seats with him anyway. However, from the moment the hundred dollars were tossed his way, Gerald completely ignored Quintin's request.

Had Haven not stepped in to advise Quintin, he would've definitely started a fight with Gerald.

Later on, Haven herself began chatting with Gerald. Since Gerald has traveled so much in the past year, he was no longer the same person who only knew about Serene County and Mayberry City.

Due to his extensive knowledge of many different places, Haven soon found herself getting fascinated by him.

Xareni, on the other hand, never said a word to Gerald. Being the eldest among the three people, she was slightly colder and more aloof in general.

That was the gist of their interaction back on the train.

"So, where are you headed to next? Did you come to the Logan Province to study or work?" asked Haven curiously.

"I'm just here to travel!" replied Gerald with a smile.

"Oh! If you're traveling around here, then I recommend that you go to a place called Balbrick Manor! There are lots of amusing things to do there, from golf to even horse racing!"

"Haven, not everyone can go there... You can't expect an ordinary person to just go there! Regardless, just hurry up and eat already," said Xareni who clearly didn't like Gerald one bit.

If it wasn't already obvious, all three of them shared a rather extraordinary background.

Being born with great pride and elegance, Xareni was the least realistic among the three of them despite being the eldest. She was simply too used to only meeting up with prestigious people. As a result, she looked down upon normal people like Gerald. To Xareni, such people didn't even have the right to befriend her!

"Alright..." replied Haven, saying nothing more.

With that, Gerald ordered a plate of fried rice with an egg on it. Once his meal arrived, he immediately began eating slowly.

As he ate, he realized that the Lovewells didn't really eat much based on what they ordered.

Sometime later, all three of them got up to get their baggage. Before they left, however, Haven sneakily returned to Gerald's side before whispering, "Hey, I live in the Lovewell Manor in the Logan Province! If you find the time, come over and have some fun with me! Also, just in case you've forgotten, my full name is Haven Lovewell!"

Before Gerald could even reply, Xareni was already dragging Haven by the arm out of the restaurant.

"...What a naïve girl she is..." muttered Gerald to himself as he smiled in resignation.

He, for one, was in no mood to have any sort of fun with her.

Now that he was finally getting a chance to ignore all his past resentments and grudges for a few days, Gerald wanted to take the opportunity to properly relax.

With that in mind, Gerald began touring around tourist spots in the Logan Province. Before he knew it, evening had come and night was swiftly approaching.

Realizing that he still needed to find someplace to stay, Gerald was just about to go hotel hunting when he heard a voice saying, "What do you plan on doing?"

The feminine voice had come from the entrance of an alleyway. Taking a few steps back to look down the darkened area, Gerald realized that a few drunk youths had dragged a woman into the alley which only led to a dead end.

“What do you think? We’re going to have some fun with you, of course! Now, come on!” said one of the three hooligans who instantly began dragging her further down the alley.

As she desperately struggled to escape, the corner of her eye caught a glimpse of another youth walking toward them. Seeing that someone was coming over to help, the woman used all of her strength to shove the hooligan—who was pulling her arm—away from her.

Thankfully, the hooligan was drunk enough to let go and the woman immediately ran over to the new youth’s side before clinging on to his arm and crying out, “They’re trying to take liberties on me, hubby!”

She made sure to pinch his arm as well, a clear indication for him to cooperate with her.

Chapter 1000

“Hubby?” said all three of the gangsters simultaneously as they turned to look at each other. However, their confusion quickly turned to hostility as they began glaring at the youth.

“Hold on now, I’m not her husband!” replied the youth as he began waving his hands quickly in fear.

Hearing that, the woman found herself rolling her eyes as she thought to herself, ‘D*mn it! How could anyone be this much of a coward?’

The hooligans themselves broke into roars of laughter as one of them said, “It appears you’re quite smart, little beauty! We’ll be sure to teach you a good lesson later!”

Just as they were about to lunge at the duo, the youth suddenly turned around and pointed at the entrance of the alleyway before shouting, “Police!”

As soon as they heard that, the three drunk gangsters immediately stopped in their tracks and turned their backs against the duo, squatting immediately after with their hands placed behind their heads!

“W-we won’t do it again so please let us off easy!”

Seeing that the gangsters were now distracted, the youth immediately began dragging the woman by her arm as he said, “Now’s our chance! Run!”

It was only a few steps later when he realized that the woman could no longer run. Thankfully, he noticed a manhole cover close by.

Pulling her over, he applied a slight force on his foot, tilting the manhole cover up. The moment the three gangsters stepped out of the alleyway, the youth immediately—and quite effortlessly—kicked the cover toward them!

Spinning at a high speed, the manhole cover whizzed across the air before finally striking all three of the gangsters who had been standing close to each other! As a result, the gangsters all fell to the ground.

With that, the youth turned around to catch up with the woman and continue aiding her in her escape. The woman herself had already been slowly jogging away from the scene by then, which meant that she wasn’t able to witness the youth’s amazing feat with the manhole cover.

Eventually, both of them arrived at a park, at which point the woman simply said, “Stop, I can’t run anymore...”

As the youth turned to look at her, he could see that the woman was breathing heavily, her hands on her knees as she slowly caught her breath again.

Naturally, the youth in question was Gerald.

Thankful that the only luggage he had to carry along was in the form of a satchel, Gerald took the chance to properly observe the beauty now that they were safe.

However, since the uniform-wearing woman had bent over to catch her breath, Gerald was able to catch a glimpse of her fair bosom. Averting his gaze since he had no idea where to even look, the woman soon caught on and quickly held on to her collar as she blushed deeply.

After a brief silence, the woman smiled rather awkwardly before saying, "...Thank you for saving me back there... If it wasn't for you, who knows what would've become of me by the end of tonight!"

"You're very welcome!" replied Gerald as he nodded to her before turning around to leave.

Unable to just accept that, the woman then said, "Hold on, sir. I haven't even finished talking! You know, earlier when I called you my husband, you could've just gone with it for a while! Why did you have to straight-out deny it?"

Her tone reflected her slight annoyance and it wasn't hard to guess why. After all, women were usually particularly sensitive to how others viewed them. Being an extremely beautiful woman herself, this stereotype definitely applied to her.

The way she saw it, Gerald almost seemed frightened to even pretend that he was her husband. It simply made her feel slightly unhappy about the entire situation.

"I have a girlfriend... Besides, I still managed to save you without having to impersonate as your husband!"

"Still! Don't you think that- Ow!"

As the woman pouted to release some of her dissatisfaction, she had taken a step toward Gerald which instantly resulted in a sharp pain in her ankle!

Yelping in pain, the woman then cried out, "I've sprained my ankle!"

Shaking his head, Gerald then squatted down before asking, "Where's the sprain? I'll have a quick look at it..."

"There's no need for that! You have a girlfriend, right? She could misunderstand!" replied the woman.

"Then this is where we'll part ways. Have a safe trip back!" said Gerald as he immediately carried his bag again and prepared to leave.

"Hey! Hold it! Don't you know how to take care of a woman? At least send me to a hospital!"

Closing his eyes, Gerald took in a deep breath before turning back to face the woman. Finding a park bench, he led her there and lifted her sprained ankle. The woman simply sat anxiously, wondering what he was trying to do as he felt around her foot.

The moment he found the spot he was looking for, he twisted it slightly and a 'crack' was heard.

And just like that, the woman's sprained ankle was healed!

"You should be good to go now. Anyway, since it's already getting dark, you'd better head home as soon as possible," said Gerald as he got up, finally ready to leave.

"Hold on a moment!" replied the woman, stopping Gerald from leaving again.

"What is it this time...?"

"Well, you've helped me a lot but I haven't even been able to thank you properly! At least let me treat you to dinner!"

Chapter 1001

Dinner? Coincidentally, Gerald himself was planning to go for a meal once he was finally able to get away from her.

“...I accept!” replied Gerald with a nod. Since he was being treated to a meal, he may as well just accept the offer to save up on money.

“You!”

Though Misty Zachary had simply proposed the idea out of courtesy, she hadn't really expected him to accept her offer. Her immediate response was proof of that.

Regardless, women tended to admire heroic figures and while Gerald was certainly no hero in the traditional sense, she had to admit that he had indeed helped her.

What more, he was quite handsome, and that alone made others—including Misty herself—rather susceptible to wanting to get to know him a bit better.

With that out of the way, Misty then led Gerald to a nearby restaurant where they ate and chatted throughout their supper. Naturally, they soon got to know each other better.

“Still, what a coincidence that you chose this place to travel to!” said Misty.

“And why is that?”

“Judging from your response, I'm sure you're unaware that starting from tomorrow, the Lovewell family will be hosting a treasure exchange event for the following three days! Since it's being held a month earlier than it usually is, it truly is a coincidence that you managed to be in time for it!”

“Many people from a multitude of places—some even from abroad—attend the yearly treasure exchange event, you know? With so many people participating in the event, you'll surely be dazzled if you attend!” added Misty.

"I see... I've only heard about antique exchange events... I don't think I've ever even heard of treasure exchange events..." replied Gerald with a bitter smile as he shook his head.

"What's the big deal about mere antique exchange events? Do understand that the Lovewell's exchange event this time around is all-inclusive! In other words, not only are antiques going to be displayed during the event, but also great treasures! Speaking of treasures, as long as you have a treasure of your own, you're allowed to display it at the event."

"While that may not sound like much, I'll give you an example of what that truly means. Say for example you currently have a jade bracelet that would normally sell for around fifteen thousand dollars. Now, if you're able to get it to pass the event's treasure identification procedures, you'll be allowed to raise the price of the bracelet up to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars or even more during the event!" explained Misty.

"I see. Regardless, the event strikes me as something that would only amuse rich people. After all, for someone like me, I'll only be able to look around and possibly enjoy the fun atmosphere a little. I don't really have that much knowledge on antiques and treasures in the first place," replied Gerald with a smile.

"...I can see that you're quite smart since you're able to say such things! Say, I'll let you in on a secret... It's about an incident only insiders know about, so you won't hear what you're about to find out from regular people!" whispered Misty all of a sudden.

Taking a bite of his fish, Gerald then gestured for Misty to go on as he took a sip of his drink.

"During the exchange event four years ago, a magic artifact was put up on display! Not only was it consecrated, but there were also carved inscriptions all over the ancient-looking object!"

Hearing that, Gerald nearly spat out his drink. Swallowing what he could, Gerald then asked, "Are you for real?"

Getting slightly annoyed by Gerald's attitude again, Misty then replied, "What reason would I have to lie to you? You're only a disbeliever because you lack knowledge of the actual artifact! See, the artifact in question was a horsetail whisk which was once used by a Taoist priest in ancient times. Back then, it was said that if one placed it in their home, they'd be able to ward off all forms of evil!"

"It was bought back then by a person from Japan who had spent a massive amount of money for it. Now here's where it gets interesting. See, the Japanese man who bought it had a seriously ill mother who was already at the age of ninety-eight, four years ago. Miraculously, all it took was less than half a year for his mother to be completely cured! What more, she's still alive and kicking now at the age of a hundred and two!"

"Regardless, that wasn't the only magic artifact that had been placed on display before. In the previous exchange event, one of the participants successfully bought an ancient sword that was rumored to be a magic artifact as well!"

"Essentially, what I'm trying to say is that several similar items have been placed on display throughout the years. While many of them simply appear to be regular antiques or treasures, their history—which contributes to the artifacts' magical properties—is what makes many foreigners come over to participate in the event on a yearly basis."

Placing his wine glass down, Gerald frowned slightly once she was done explaining.

With how serious she sounded, Gerald could tell that what she was saying wasn't likely to be a hoax.

While he hadn't said much during Misty's explanation, he was honestly thinking that if there were going to be more magic artifacts during this treasure exchange event, then he wanted her to tell him as much information about them as possible.

Gerald himself believed in the power of magic artifacts. After all, from ancient times, almost all large families relied on some form of mysterious power in order to suddenly rise above all their competitors. Even his grandfather owned an ancient magic artifact in the form of a picture of the sun with lines on it akin to veins.

Speaking of his grandfather, he had told Gerald some time ago that the Fendersons had once competed with the Crawfords for half a jade pendant many years back. The pendant itself was a magic artifact shared by both the Crawfords and the Fendersons that symbolized their families' fortune and fate.

With it being so invaluable, his uncle—Peter—had attempted to sneak into the Fenderson family mansion to seek out the other half of the jade pendant. In the end, however, all he managed to do was refuel the rage and feud between both families.

“...You seem to be a little too knowledgeable about magic artifacts... I'm sure they don't share all this out in public right?”

Chapter 1002

Gerald then continued acting like he was surprised by saying, “Are you some kind of salesperson? You really had me going for a while there! Haha!”

“...What? Hey now, I'm an accountant working for a company under the Lovewell family, you know? My company in particular is the main organizer for the yearly exchange event! And again, I have no reason to lie to you! Just know that I'm only sharing all this with you since you saved me. Don't go spreading the news around! Then again, it's not like anyone will believe you,” replied Misty as she took a sip of her own drink.

“Still, seeing that you're interested in the event, would you perhaps like to go over to have a look?” added Misty.

“The way you're saying it almost suggests that I could freely go to such a place. I'm pretty sure it won't be that easy to get an admission ticket, right?” replied Gerald with a smile.

“Bingo. But lucky for you, I'm a person who doesn't like owing favors to others. Since you've helped me so much, I can hand you an admission ticket under the condition that I'll essentially have repaid all your kindness. Deal?” said Misty as she carefully took an admission ticket out from her bag and slid it over to Gerald with a smile.

“While we're at it, consider this to be lifelong advice. Never ever look down on people again, especially beauties like me! Speaking of which, you don't seem like

you've seen much of the world, to be completely honest. You know, a few of my friends from out of town will be coming over to have some fun with me tomorrow. I could bring you along if you wanted to. How about it?"

"Deal! Thank you, and sure, why not? Also, regarding the Lovewell family you mentioned earlier... Just to be clear, is there more than one Lovewell family in the Logan Province?" asked Gerald as he politely took the admission ticket.

"Not at all! There's only one Lovewell family in the entire province!"

Hearing that, Gerald cleared his throat as he thought, 'The Lovewells in the Logan Province... Could it really be the same family Haven is from...? Then again, though those three siblings appeared to be wearing normal clothes back then, I've seen similar articles of clothing that cost over fifteen thousand dollars per piece!'

Gerald had long been aware that the three people were no ordinary folk. Still, he couldn't really be bothered about them. After all, his true interest lay in the exchange event.

If magic artifacts were truly going to be on sale, then he'd very much like to have a look at them for himself. After all, if someone bought them, there'd be less for him to potentially get his hands on.

After parting ways with Misty, Gerald stayed the night in a nearby hotel.

Early the next morning, Gerald rushed to the exchange event venue which just so happened to be at Balbrick Manor. Though he thought that he had arrived considerably early, to his surprise, the place was already crowded with people by then. As if that wasn't enough, the area was also filled with luxury cars.

Since he had agreed the night before to wait for Misty at the entrance today, he did just that.

As he waited, a few more luxury cars came to a halt at the entrance, and out stepped a group of men and women.

Standing at a corner, Gerald immediately recognized three people from the group when the surrounding bodyguards bowed while greeting the guests respectfully.

Of course, they were none other than the three Lovewell siblings. Just as he had thought, the three siblings definitely belonged to a rich and prestigious family.

Knowing that, Gerald slipped on a cap he had brought along and pulled down its brim.

While he definitely wasn't afraid of Haven, the other two siblings, Xareni and Quintin, were a different story. There was a chance of him getting kicked out if they recognized him, and since he was going to be walking around with Misty, he really didn't want to end up burdening her.

Thankfully, the group simply talked and laughed among each other as they entered Balbrick Manor. Just as Gerald was breathing a sigh of relief, he felt a gentle pat on his shoulder.

Turning to look at who had done so, Gerald saw Misty smiling behind him as she said, "Well you're early, Gerald!"

Smiling back, Gerald couldn't help but notice a few other young men and women who were standing behind her.

Chapter 1003

After returning the greeting, Misty then turned to look at her group before saying, "Let's get the introductions out of the way first. This is Gerald and I got acquainted with him only yesterday. He's quite a nice person and he even saved me, you know?"

"Humph! So this is the guy! If he was aware that we were attending a treasure exchange event, then why did he still choose to dress up the way he currently is?" said one of the other women rather contemptuously as she crossed her arms.

Her comment had stemmed from the fact that the exchange event was a sort of gathering mostly only reserved for prestigious people. Since only those who were

powerful and influential were expected to attend, suits and leather shoes were considered to be the norm at such an event.

Since Gerald was the only one dressed like a tourist, it was no wonder why Misty's friend found him to be rather humiliating.

She wasn't the only one either. Quite a few of her friends were thinking about the same thing as well.

"It's fine, isn't it? We'll just enjoy ourselves together!" replied Misty who hadn't seemed to have caught on to her friends' evident dislike toward Gerald.

With that, all of them entered Balbrick manor together. The manor itself was extremely spacious, and according to what Misty had told Gerald, the exchange event was divided into an outer and inner area.

While the outer area only displayed regular antiques and treasures, the inner area was reserved for the so-called, 'good stuff'.

As they were walking around, Lydia Jolly—one of Misty's friends—looked at one of the men in their group before saying, "Say Jamie, I've just noticed, but is that watch new?"

"I'm glad you noticed! It is, indeed!"

"Oh? How much was it?" asked Lydia.

"It wasn't that expensive, really. Just around three thousand dollars! I still bought it though, since the watch's style matches my suit so perfectly!" replied Jamie Warner.

"What a rich man you are!" said Misty, a hint of jealousy in her voice.

Though she said that, Misty didn't really think too much about it. She was pleased enough with the fact that everyone was enjoying themselves together.

"I see... Then what about the suit? How much was that?"

"A little over seven thousand dollars. I bought it in Italy when I previously traveled there"

"How nice!" replied Lydia as she and the other two men and women in the group continued discussing their attire and lifestyles.

It was evident that Lydia was proficient in getting others to do the dirty work for her. After all, she had deliberately started that particular topic of conversation just to embarrass Gerald.

She was trying her best to ostracize and make him leave since she felt that he was an embarrassment to her and her friends due to how poorly he was dressed for such a grand event.

What more, she was honestly slightly pissed with him since she had initially assumed that Gerald was some rich young man or at the very least, a prince charming after Misty told them about her rescuer.

Though she had to admit that he was quite good-looking, in the end, he was just a poorly-dressed loser!

Because of all that, Lydia felt the need to make him understand how truly different he was from them.

As her plan continued going smoothly, someone suddenly shouted, "How dare you even attempt to put that thing on display alongside our items? Are you trying to humiliate us? Get lost!"

Turning to look at who was causing the commotion, everyone saw an old man who seemed to have been trying to set up his own stall to display his treasure.

Since he was able to bring it in here in the first place, it was evident that he had managed to pass the treasure identification procedures.

Despite having every right to set his own stall up there, most of the others who had already set up their own stalls for the event came from major families, including the few people who were close to where the old man had attempted to set up his stall.

Nobody else within the inner area was a random person like the old man, which gave the stall owners—who had already set up stalls close to where the old man had planned to set up his—even more reason to get him to leave.

Sighing, the old man knew that this simply wouldn't do. Lifting his treasure—which seemed to be an iron plaque—in his arms he then began walking off in search of another spot to set up his stall.

As Gerald watched the old man leave, he felt his eyelids twitch slightly the moment he gave the iron plaque a good look.

Gerald could feel his heart palpitating as he continued staring at the iron plaque which had blotches all over its surface. It was a feeling that he rarely ever experienced since he became one of the champions.

Chapter 1004

'Something's definitely wrong with that iron plaque...' Gerald thought to himself.

"Come on, Gerald. Let's go. Is there something wrong?" asked Misty, wondering why he was still standing in place.

"...Ah, um, why don't you guys go on ahead first? I'd like to have a look around on my own!" replied Gerald with a smile before continuing to look at the direction that the old man had left in.

"Well... Fine! But I'll call you out again when it's near noon so that we can have lunch together!" said Misty who had also noticed by now that her friends had constantly been giving Gerald the cold shoulder.

After agreeing with the plan, Gerald immediately went after the old man.

The moment he was gone, women from Misty's group instantly began bad-mouthing him.

"Humph! Why did you have to get acquainted with such a person, Misty? He's so humiliating to be around with!"

"I know, right? What a loser! It's hard to even have any fun when he's around!"

"Yeah! Please don't bring him along with us for lunch later! I mean, just compare what we're wearing to what he wore! Since he helped you, surely you wouldn't want him to feel inferior in front of us, right?"

Hearing that, Misty could only reply in a saddened tone, "That's quite enough. Though I've only been acquainted with him for a short while, allow me to remind you that he's a nice person! I'll still call him over for lunch later but please be a little nicer to him later, alright?"

"Fine..." replied the others, forced to agree.

Meanwhile, Gerald finally caught up to the dejected-looking old man who had just set his stall up again in a rather secluded area.

Shaking his head, the old man knew that though the new spot was rather deserted, at the very least, nobody would attempt to ostracize a villager like him here.

Rushing over to the old man's store, Gerald smiled at him before saying, "Is this the only item you have for sale, sir?"

"Indeed it is. You know, I didn't really want to come here today... Whether you choose to believe me or not, it was actually the event's organizer who invited me over! After we talked for a bit, they told me that the iron plaque would sell for a high price so I should definitely attend the event! Yet look at what happened! To

think that I was shunned away before I could even set up my store there earlier! Humph! Do you have any cigarettes to spare, young man? If you do, I'm leaving once I've had a smoke! I need to cook lunch for my granddaughter anyway!" replied the old man with a sigh.

"I do, indeed! Just to confirm, the event's organizer invited you over the moment they found out that you owned the plaque, correct?" said Gerald as he looked at the iron plaque while handing the old man a cigarette.

The plaque itself didn't look particularly special. At most, Gerald could say that it had a simple but ancient aura surrounding it, not unlike an antique item.

"Yeah, the event's organizer found out that I owned it through a TV show, quite honestly. You know that show where they talk about selling antiques? Well, I was on one of that show's episodes since this plaque here definitely deserves to be an antique. It was handed down from my ancestors, you know? Even so, while the experts from that show definitely agreed that my antique wasn't bad, they also added that it didn't have much artistic or archaeological value! The nerve!"

"Regardless, the event's organizer soon met up with me. They told me that the item could be sold to foreigners at a high price, which led them to invite me over to this treasure exchange event."

"Back then, the organizer had told me to look for them the moment I arrived at the event venue. I was also told to hand the plaque over to them once we met up. I didn't really understand the request at the time—and I still don't—but since I heard I could gain a lot of money by selling it, I arrived first thing in the morning today. Even after wandering for quite a bit, however, I still couldn't find them. That was the reason why I attempted to set up my own stall in the inner area earlier."

"What more, businessmen like them can be quite untrustworthy, you know, young man? It wouldn't be out of the question for a scenario where I get paid half of what the businessmen earn from selling the antique to happen. With that in mind, it only gave me more reason to try selling the plaque on my own," detailed the old man as he finally finished his cigarette.

Seeing that, Gerald quickly handed him another cigarette before carefully lifting the iron plaque and weighing it. After a brief moment of consideration, a thought came to him.

Smiling, Gerald then turned to look at the old man before saying, "I'm interested in buying the iron plaque from you, sir. You can name any price you want!"

"Young man, I'll say it right now that this thing barely has any archaeological or artistic value to it... It's just a simple iron plaque used to fool foreigners!" replied the old man in a rather embarrassed tone—who must have felt bad after smoking two of Gerald's cigarettes—as he quickly dissuaded Gerald against it.

"I'm fine with that. This object will be useful to me, so don't worry!"

"...Are you really sure?"

"There's no reason for me to lie!"

"I'll be using the same price that I set for the foreigners, you know?"

"Just tell me the price already..."

"...Fine. Don't say I didn't warn you... I'm selling it for seventy-seven thousand dollars!" replied the old man as he blushed slightly. The only reason he had set the price so high was because he had heard that foreigners would pay literally anything for antique items.

Hearing that, Gerald simply smiled wryly before saying, "Forget seventy-seven thousand dollars... I'll pay you seven hundred and seventy thousand dollars instead! Once you receive the money, you'll be able to live a comfortable life! So how about it? It's not like you'll have any use for the plaque if you decide not to sell it anyway, plus—"

However, Gerald held his tongue just in time to prevent himself from saying something truly horrifying. Instead, he continued the sentence in his mind.

'...If you're truly unwilling to hand it over, you may just have to face the calamity of your total family's extermination...'

Chapter 1005

“Plus...? Also, hold on, young man. Are you being serious here?” replied the old man, his eyes widened in shock.

Gerald simply shook his head before asking the old man for his bank account number with a smile on his face. After a brief call, the old man was left utterly shocked five minutes later when he saw that seven hundred and seventy thousand dollars truly had been banked into his account.

“T-thank you, young man!” said the old man as he smiled broadly. His joy was no surprise. After all, he would never have dreamed that he would actually be able to sell that iron plaque for such a high amount.

Gerald himself had bought the item since though the plaque didn't look like anything special, there was simply something extraordinary about it. It gave Gerald a similar feeling to when he had first laid his eyes upon the picture of the sun half a year ago.

It may have only been a gut feeling, but Gerald chose to believe it.

At that moment, a group of people—consisting of both foreigners and locals who were dressed in luxurious attire—began walking toward Gerald and the old man.

When they were in front of the duo, another old man wearing traditional clothes smiled as he said, “I wonder if you'll allow me to have a look at that iron plaque in your hand, mister...”

Seeing this, the old man who had sold the iron plaque immediately began fearing that his money would be taken away from him. As a result, he quickly left the scene, not daring to linger for any longer.

Gerald, on the other hand, simply handed the iron plaque over to the other old man as he said, “Sure.”

Gently taking it from Gerald, the old man in traditional garb held the iron plaque in his hands before slowly caressing its surface. It didn't take long for his expression to suddenly change drastically.

"What is it, Mr. Snyder?" asked one of the foreigners who appeared to be the leader of the group.

"Well, for one, this iron plaque certainly isn't an ordinary object! I'll be frank and say that there's actually a holy spirit surrounding it!" replied Mr. Snyder as his hands quivered slightly.

The moment the foreigner heard that, his mood was instantly lifted as he turned to look at Gerald before saying, "How much did you pay for this? I'll pay fifty times that price for this iron plaque!"

Hearing that, Gerald turned to look at Mr. Snyder. So it turned out that this old man was equally as insightful as he was.

Regardless, even if the foreigner had upped the price to five thousand times more than what he had initially paid, Gerald wasn't letting go of the plaque.

"I appreciate the offer, but I'm not selling it," replied Gerald as he took the iron plaque back from Mr. Snyder.

Not hearing the response he wanted, the foreigner frowned before turning to look at a youth who was standing by his side. The youth himself looked to be around twenty-six and wore quite luxurious clothes, just like the rest of the people within the foreigner's group.

Sensing his cue, the youth shook his head and smiled before saying, "If you aren't aware, I go by the name of Zolton Lovewell, and I'm the main organizer of today's event, mister. I'm also the young master of the Lovewell family, so I truly suggest that you just sell it. Think about how you'll be able to lead a comfortable life without worries once you get the money!"

As Gerald looked at Zolton's subtle smile, he simply replied, "Again, I appreciate the offer, but I'm not selling it."

With that, Gerald nodded slightly at the group before attempting to leave with the iron plaque.

Before he could leave, however, an old man with white hair—who had also been standing close to Zolton this entire time—stepped in front of Gerald, preventing him from leaving.

Looking at him, Gerald could see that the rather extraordinarily imposing man's irises looked somewhat triangular. Squinting his eyes slightly, Gerald realized that the white-haired man had eyes similar to those of a poisonous snake.

It was evident to Gerald at that point that the man blocking his way truly had inner strength. So it seemed that the long history that the Lovewells had established within the Logan Province had allowed them to build up a truly extraordinary background.

"What could this possibly mean, Mr. Lovewell?" asked Gerald as he turned around to look at Zolton.

In response, however, Zolton simply turned to look away as the old, white-haired man grabbed Gerald's wrist firmly.

As he tightened his grip, he coldly said, "As mentioned before, he was willing to up the price by fifty times of what you paid. How could you still be dissatisfied with that, mister?"

Even before the old man's sentence had ended, he was already surging a secret strength toward Gerald's body!

'You're truly overestimating your capabilities!' Gerald thought to himself with a sneer before waving his hand in an indifferent manner. Just by making that simple gesture, Gerald was able to break off the old man's inner strength!

Realizing what had just happened, the old man stared at Gerald in panic as he staggered a few steps backward.

"I told you, I'm not selling it. Please don't continue pestering me," said Gerald as he walked off.

"...Are you truly sure that the plaque is a treasure, Mr. Snyder? I couldn't sense anything from it!" said the foreigner with a frown as he watched Gerald walk off.

Taking out a compass, Mr. Snyder then replied, "The compass was the one that led us here, so I'm positive that the iron plaque is what it was pointing at. In fact, the compass is now pointing in the direction where the young man had gone! There's no question about it!"

"I see. If you're that sure, Mr. Snyder, then we definitely have to get our hands on that plaque no matter what!" said Zolton as he rested his hands against his back.

It was then when he finally realized that the white-haired man had a flabbergasted expression on his face.

Chapter 1006

"What's wrong with you, Kaleb?"

"...H-how...?" muttered Kaleb as he looked at both of his hands, evidently still stupefied.

"Explain yourself, Kaleb. What do you mean, 'how'?"

"I-I used my inner strength earlier when I was grabbing on to that youth's wrist... However, my inner strength just ceased halfway through! How is that even possible?"

Kaleb remained silent for a while, utterly perplexed as he pondered on the odd feeling he had experienced earlier.

“Are you sure you aren’t just looking too much into it?” asked Zolton as he looked at the white-haired man. Since his father was the one who had invited the mysterious Kaleb over, Zolton respected him quite a lot.

“No... I’m positive that something’s wrong with that young man!” replied Kaleb as he turned to look coldly at the direction in which Gerald had left seconds earlier.

Gerald himself had already made it to a riverbank not too far off. Once he was sure that he was alone, he held on tight to the iron plaque before applying his inner strength on it, causing the plaque to shatter!

As the pieces of iron fell to the ground, an ancient-looking short blade revealed itself as well.

“As expected, there truly was something mysterious inside!” said Gerald to himself as he picked it up.

Observing it, the short blade was extremely sharp and a black glow seemed to emanate from it. What more, several strange, vein-like lines could also be seen engraved all over it. Holding the magic artifact alone made Gerald feel that the blade was spiritual in nature, and in a way, he felt slightly oddly moved by it. It was as though the blade was influencing him.

Turning to look around him, Gerald noticed a large stone around three hundred feet away from where he was standing. With a simple flick of his wrist, he swiftly threw the blade toward that rock!

Making a peculiar whistling sound as it whizzed through the air, debris flew all over the place the moment the short blade collided with the rock! As bits of broken-off stone flew all over the place, the black short blade itself immediately whizzed back into Gerald’s hands.

Checking the condition of the blade, Gerald found that there wasn’t even a single scratch on it.

Delighted, Gerald then said, “I’ve truly obtained a great treasure this time!”

Just as he was about to leave, however, Gerald's ears twitched as he heard rustling sounds coming from all around him.

It wasn't long before eight figures revealed themselves as they stepped out of the nearby bushes in unison. Encircling Gerald, all of them bore equally cold gazes as a bald man stepped out from the group of people and growled, "Hey, b*stard! Hand over the iron plaque if you don't want to die! Where is it?"

"As I've already repeated several times, I'm not selling it. Why are you still trying to force me to hand it over? After all, being polite and amiable should be prioritized when doing anything, no?" advised Gerald.

"Cut the cr*p already! Master Snyder's already confirmed that the item is extraordinary! Can't you see that just by owning such a great treasure, you'll be seen as someone guilty, even if you truly are innocent! The foreigner even attempted to pay for the plaque earlier, yet you refused! Humph! Tough luck now!" sneered the bald man.

"You'd better not try anything funny. I don't want to kill any more people during this period of time!" replied Gerald who knew he was now being placed in a difficult position.

Though it had only been a few days since Gerald returned to living a normal life, his temperament had been healing at an accelerated rate. After all, he had finally been given the chance to live the plain and worry-free life that he always yearned for. While he was well aware that all this was only temporary, he cherished the fact that he could still experience such bliss in the first place.

Sadly, the only response from the eight people were bursts of laughter.

"H-has he gone mad? To think that he actually claimed that he didn't want to kill people!"

"Man, at my age, I've seen several people wetting their pants once they knew they were going to die... This guy's on a whole new level! I guess the shock must have been too overwhelming for him to even be able to say such an insane thing!"

“Well, all eight of us may have accomplished several missions together, but I guess there’s always something new to experience!”

As the eight people continued laughing till their sides hurt, Gerald took in a deep breath before pleading, “I wasn’t kidding. Please, I’m being dead serious here. If you leave me be, then all of you will live. Isn’t that ideal?”

“Hahaha! Alright... That’s enough nonsense for one day. Just kill him and retrieve the iron plaque so that we’ll be able to complete our task!” said the bald man as he gestured for his comrades to attack, his expression turning hideous within a split second.

Hearing the order, the seven other men’s eyes grew murderous as well as they immediately began walking toward Gerald. From their eyes alone, Gerald could tell that these people were experienced killers.

Chapter 1007

“This is your own fault for courting death! Prepare to be killed!” roared the bald man as one of his men immediately revealed a short blade and aimed it at Gerald’s chest!

Lunging toward Gerald, it took the assailant a second to realize that though his short blade had struck, spot on, to where he was aiming for, for some ungodly reason, the blade had failed to penetrate Gerald’s chest!

“What?”

It was the only response the stupefied man could say as Gerald angrily replied, “Don’t say I didn’t warn any of you!”

After saying that, Gerald immediately retaliated by slapping the man hard on his cheek! Though it had only been a single slap, the man was sent flying into the air!

The last thing the man could register was his head deforming as blood gushed out his eyes. Upon landing in a puddle of mud a few dozen feet away, the man was already as good as gone.

“...He knows martial arts!” declared the bald man, shocked by the turn of events. However, he instantly recomposed himself as he gestured his large hand before saying, “Don’t hold back! Get rid of him, everyone!”

Obedying his order, the remaining six men rushed toward Gerald at the same time. As was expected, however, there was no way in hell that any of them could even come close to dealing with Gerald.

Before any of them could even inflict any wounds on him, Gerald had already efficiently landed fatal blows on all six of them. In just a few seconds, all six people were already lying dead on the ground, their agonized expressions suggesting that they had died in terrible pain.

“...H-huh?” muttered the bald man to himself as cold sweat began running down his forehead. He realized now that he was the only one left, and though he was terrified, his legs felt like stone. However, the worst had yet to come.

The moment Gerald—whose eyes had turned as red as a demon’s by now—began walking toward him, the bald man became fully petrified in fear.

Now standing before the bald man, Gerald said, “Everything could’ve ended nicely if everyone had just been amiable to each other, no? Why did you have to force me to do all this...?”

“Y-yes, you’re right... I swear on my life that I’ll always be amiable from now on! What happened earlier was just a big misunderstanding!”

“I even begged you to just leave, remember? Yet what did you do? You ordered your subordinates to make a move on me! Isn’t that taking it a bit too far?” replied Gerald as he flicked some grass off the trembling man’s shoulder.

“I-I sincerely apologize! I won’t do anything like this anymore! I won’t-”

Though the bald man had assumed that Gerald would let him off if he pleaded enough, he soon found out that he was dead wrong. Before his sentence could even

end, an agonizing scream filled the area as all four of his limbs simultaneously detached from his body.

Once the screaming finally ended, Gerald turned to look at a tree before roaring, "Stop hiding already! Show yourself!"

Immediately after, the slow rustling of grass could be heard as a white-haired old man revealed himself.

It was none other than Kaleb whose face was now completely drained of color.

"To think that you've already managed to reach your current state at such a young age... I, Kaleb Merrett, admit that I failed to recognize your great talent earlier. However, do note that I'm not on the same side with those people from earlier, mister."

Kaleb was now speaking to Gerald so respectfully since he had seen everything that had taken place from the moment Gerald had broken the iron plaque with his bare hands.

While it was true that he had initially stalked Gerald in order to retrieve the iron plaque for Zolton—while simultaneously investigating the reason for Gerald's great strength—he was left dumbstruck with amazement from the second he saw Gerald destroy that boulder with a single toss of the short blade.

From that point on, he no longer wondered how Gerald had ceased the flow of his inner strength so easily. As it turned out, Gerald's had trained far more than he could have ever imagined.

That was also the moment when he had started hiding behind the tree, though it had less to do with continuing to stalk Gerald and more so out of fear after witnessing Gerald's true strength.

His fear and respect for Gerald had only grown upon finding out that the youth had already noticed his presence long ago.

“Are you here for the iron plaque as well?” asked Gerald, coldly.

“I dare not lie to you, so I admit that that truly had been my intention at the start, mister. However, I no longer wish to do so after witnessing your strength.”

Chapter 1008

After saying that, the man who looked to be around ninety actually bowed before Gerald! Though after he witnessed all that, it was really no mystery why he did so.

Gerald himself could estimate that Kaleb’s current strength was similar to his own half a year ago. He could also tell that Kaleb had already achieved his inner strength.

While he was clearly still weaker than Gerald, with Kaleb’s current capabilities, the old man could very well be considered to be one of the champions.

With that, the bloodlust in Gerald’s eyes gradually returned to normal. His imposing demeanor slowly decreased as well, allowing Kaleb to finally heave a long sigh of relief.

“I can tell that you’ve spent many years training in order to achieve your inner strength. It mustn’t have been easy, so I won’t kill you. Just go warn the others not to ever try me again!” said Gerald as his temperament fully returned to normal.

“Thank you for sparing my life, and yes, I’ll definitely obey your orders, mister! However, there is one thing that I still don’t quite understand,” replied Kaleb with a spark of both excitement and anticipation in his eyes.

“Go on.”

“You see, after devoting my entire life to martial arts, I was finally able to become one of the champions about seven years ago. Even so, I still hope to one day be able to have my name written on the Weston Honor Roll in order to make a name for my family’s Ancient Martial Arts. However, as expected, it’s extremely difficult to get into the honor roll. I’m curious to know what your ranking in the honor roll is!”

“The Weston Honor Roll? I’ve never heard about such a thing...” replied Gerald rather placidly.

“Well, as long as one is a champion, he or she will naturally have their name added to the Weston Honor Roll. It’s a sort of ranking list that’s controlled by the four major secret societies in Weston. Still, even though it’s evident that you’ve trained a great deal, I find it odd that you aren’t aware of the honor roll! Could it be that you don’t belong to any of the four major societies?” asked Kaleb, astonished.

“There are four major secret societies?”

“Indeed, there are! The families who rule the secret societies are the Yallatons, the Naplocks, the Moldells, and the Fergusons! And here I thought that you were an expert from one of the four major secret societies!”

“I’ve only heard about the Moldells!” replied Gerald as he raised a brow slightly.

From what Gerald knew, secret societies truly were extremely mysterious, just as their title suggested. They rarely contacted ordinary people due to a general agreement that their bloodlines were different from the regular folk. As a result, they absolutely looked down on the common folk.

Though they hardly ever appeared before others, secret societies existed all over the world and consisted of members from all walks of life. They also tended to have histories spanning over a thousand years.

Gerald’s introduction to the Moldell family had allowed him to understand how much power and strength secret societies could hold.

“I see... Regardless, all the people on the honor roll are extremely powerful, and those from the four major secret societies occupy around eighty percent of the members on that list. I personally come from the Merrett family, and though I’d like to continue making a name for my family’s Ancient Martial Arts, I’m quite ashamed to admit that it isn’t as easy as I thought it’d be. Sadly, there aren’t any other existing champions within the Merrett family—to compete for a position within the honor roll—either since my ancestors up till my generation have all passed away,” replied Kaleb with a wry smile.

"I see. Regarding the four major societies, how strong is the most powerful person?" asked Gerald.

"I'm not too sure about that... However, according to rumors, there are great masters in the four major societies who are in charge of their respective families. As I said though, what I've heard is simply a rumor since even those from the four major secret societies can't discern the authenticity of that claim at all!"

"Now that you know more about the Weston Honor Roll, I wonder if your name is already on it... Judging from your strength, you should easily be within the top fifty people on the honor roll!" said Kaleb respectfully as he carefully retrieved an old scroll that had been hidden under his sleeve.

Rolling it open for Gerald to see, it seemed that only the top two hundred people would have their names recorded on it.

"I haven't even heard about the Weston Honor Roll before you told me about it... There's no chance that my name would be in there..."

As Gerald turned to skim through the scroll, he pointed where the first place was before asking, "...Hold it, why is the first place blank? It almost seems like someone had the name removed deliberately."

"Ah, well, let's just say that the person in first place is very mysterious. Based on what my father told me, the person who was given first place had been near-invincible, even from a young age. Once he was older, he even dealt with several experts from the four major secret societies on his own! In the end, however, none of them could even come close to defeating him!"

"While many have tried to investigate his background, their attempts always failed since nobody could locate where the person even was! As my father said back then, as long as that person remained alive, nobody could be deemed more powerful than he was. Apparently everyone thought so as well, so it's become a tradition for the first place to always remain blank," explained Kaleb who was clearly very interested in things regarding the honor roll.

“I appreciate the explanation,” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Speaking of which, since you spared my life and it’s almost noon, I wonder if I could have the liberty to treat you to a grand feast,” suggested Kaleb who was evidently trying to befriend Gerald.

Since Kaleb knew quite a lot, Gerald felt that he would be able to gather more information on certain things if he allowed the old man to treat him to lunch. As a result, he simply nodded before saying, “Sure. I’ll just call my friend first to update her on the situation. Give me a moment.”

Chapter 1009

Gerald then gave Misty a call to cancel their lunch plan. After all, getting more information from Kaleb was definitely his priority.

“Well? Is he coming along?” asked Lydia nervously the moment Misty hung up the call.

“He’s probably unwilling to join us since you scared him so much...” replied Misty with a slightly disappointed tone.

“That’s great to hear! Anyway, now that that’s out of the way, Jamie said that we’ll be having our lunch at Logan Grand Hotel! That way, we’ll simultaneously be able to have a look around the best hotel in the Logan Province!” cheered Lydia excitedly as Misty returned a bitter nod.

Upon arriving, however, they were immediately stopped by a waiter who was standing by the entrance.

“Apologies, but someone has booked the entire Logan Grand Hotel today. We’re afraid that you’ll have to choose another restaurant to have lunch in. Again, our sincerest apologies,” said the butler.

Hearing that, Lydia—who had earlier been quite eager to dine there—immediately became disappointed. Due to her earlier excitement, she had even prepared to snap photographs of the hotel’s interior through her cell phone! To think that they would end up getting prohibited from entering!

“For someone to book the entire hotel... How many people are attending? Being such a spacious hotel, there will definitely be seats to spare, right?” asked Lydia.

In response, however, the waiter simply shook his head.

Seeing that, she sighed before stomping her foot in anger as she said, “How annoying!”

“Let’s just go elsewhere... Lunch is lunch no matter where we eat it,” advised Misty.

Agreeing, the group then began leaving the place. However, Lydia herself kept turning back to look at the hotel, unwilling to just accept that someone had booked the entire place.

Soon after, several luxury cars could be seen stopping at the hotel’s entrance.

Widening her eyes in shock, Lydia immediately recognized all the rich and prestigious people from the Logan Province as they stepped out of the cars. Making sure that there were no creases on their suits, the group of prestigious people seemed to be waiting for someone.

“H-hey! Look there! Isn’t that Mr. Zander Lovewell? The president of the Lovewell family?” whispered Lydia in astonishment.

Following the direction of Lydia’s gaze, Misty soon nodded before replying, “Indeed he is. So it was Chairman Lovewell who had booked the entire hotel! That explains everything! Still, Chairman Lovewell never hosted such grand feasts before at the end of the previous treasure exchange events... This means that there’s a possibility that an extremely important guest is coming over!”

“An extremely important guest, you say?” said Lydia as she and the other members of their group curiously waited along to see who the distinguished guest could be.

They didn't have to wait long for the door of a car—that was parked in the middle—to be opened. Out stepped an old man before respectfully inviting what seemed to be a youth out of the car.

Chairman Lovewell himself took a step forward and respectfully shook hands with the youth.

Lydia, however, now looked extremely stupefied as she said, "...I-isn't that... Gerald?"

Misty found herself covering her mouth in shock as she replied, "Y-yes he is! He told me he was busy so he couldn't have lunch with us! To think that it was because he was coming over to Logan Grand Hotel!"

"Who cares about that? Look! Why are Chairman Lovewell and the others treating him so respectfully? Isn't he just a loser?" asked Lydia, feeling as flabbergasted as she was humiliated.

After all, she disliked him a lot. To think that he actually had such powerful connections! For a moment, she even wondered if all this was simply a hallucination. Sadly, the thought only lasted for a short moment as reality dragged her back down to earth.

Now that she knew he was so influential, Lydia bit her lower lip as she regretted treating him like that earlier.

Sure, his attire was certainly still lowly by her standards, but looking at him now, he looked quite handsome, especially when he was standing together with all those rich businessmen.

Gerald himself had now entered the grand hotel with both Zander and Kaleb, completely oblivious to the fact that Misty and her group of friends had been staring at him in astonishment just seconds earlier.

He had thought that he was only going to have a simple feast with Kaleb. To think that Zander had been invited as well.

“Are you truly sure that this person holds great strength...? No matter how much I look at him, he seems to only be a normal youth!” whispered Zander to Kaleb after pulling him to the back for a brief moment.

“And why would I ever lie to you, Zander? Please be careful not to look down upon Mr. Crawford. His strength is beyond our wildest imagination. Do you understand?” replied Kaleb.

“Well, if he’s truly as strong as you claim, then perhaps the Lovewells will finally be able to resolve our current crisis peacefully. Should that happen, then know that our family will honor you with the highest respect possible for the rest of our lives!”

“Humph! If you’re willing to go through so much trouble just to give me respect, then you’d be better off begging for Mr. Crawford’s help. Should he be willing to stand on our side, then all our problems will cease!”

With that said, both of them re-joined Gerald before entering further into the hotel.

Contrary to a simple lunch, a party had been hosted and after a simple exchange of pleasantries, everyone drank three rounds of wine.

Chapter 1010

Eventually, Kaleb tapped on his wine glass, indicating Zander to speak to Gerald.

However, Zander was fairly reluctant to do it. After all, no matter how much he looked at Gerald, the youth still looked like a regular person. Knowing that he had to beg an ordinary person for help definitely caused a fair amount of distress to Zander.

As he pondered on how to proceed, a loud sound was heard as a middle-aged man—who had been sitting beside Zander—slammed his wine glass on the table.

The man then said, “I truly don’t understand what’s the motive behind today’s feast, Chairman Lovewell. Who exactly are you trying to entertain?”

It was clear that the middle-aged man's question was indirectly referring to Gerald who had been sitting at the seat of honor this entire time.

While the person had already been annoyed by that fact, his annoyance ended up doubling since he knew that Zander had also been trying to please Gerald.

"Humph! The party today is being held since we've successfully invited Mr. Crawford over!" replied Kaleb with a faint smile.

"Forgive my insightfulness, but even after living for so long, I've never heard of a 'Mr. Crawford' before! Humph! Do understand that all of us who are present today have agreed to lend a helping hand to the Lovewells in their battle! We already have you, Master Merrett, the expert among experts! As if that wasn't enough, I, Theo Zabinski, am also part of this! Because of that, I really cannot fathom why the Lovewells invited this youth here in the first place!" sneered Theo.

"I implore you not to be so presumptuous, Theo!" scowled Kaleb who was now slightly nervous, knowing that Gerald had heard all that.

While Zander said nothing, it was evident that he slightly agreed with Theo's statement as well.

After hearing all that, Gerald himself was now looking at Kaleb. As was expected, there really was no such thing as a free lunch.

Noticing this, Kaleb simply lowered his head in an apologetic manner before saying, "...So, the situation is like this, Mister... See, I met up with Zander a few years ago, and back then, I promised him that I'd lend the Lovewells a hand if they were ever in danger. In fact, the only reason I'm here now is because I wish to fulfill that promise! Sadly I have to admit that the enemies are far too strong for me. I'm afraid that with our current power, we won't even stand a fighting chance! To put bluntly, would you be willing to aid us?"

After hearing Kaleb's direct request, Gerald simply replied with a rather cold tone, "I apologize, but I do not wish to meddle in your dispute."

Hearing that, Zander found himself frowning as he lowered his wine glass.

Theo, on the other hand, said, “While you say that you don’t wish to meddle, the truth is that you’re just not daring enough to help us, right? Come on, show us what tricks and skills you have up your sleeve! Better yet, fight me right now so that Chairman Lovewell will get to see what actual skills you have as well!”

“Not interested in a fight either,” replied Gerald rather bluntly.

By then, Zander had already crossed his legs. To think that he had even considered the fact that Gerald could actually be some powerful expert earlier!

“You know, I think that it’s meaningless for me to continue having my meal here, Master Merette. I’ll be taking my leave now. Thank you for treating me out for lunch,” said Gerald as he briefly scanned through the room before smiling at Kaleb.

“Hold on for a moment, mister!” replied Kaleb as he immediately held on to Gerald who had just gotten off his seat.

“I apologize for not telling you about all this beforehand... In order to properly express my apology, I’ve ordered someone to prepare something that you need. Since you mentioned earlier that you had come all the way here just to look for the holy fox...”

Before continuing on with his sentence, Kaleb clapped his hands, cueing a subordinate to enter the room with a map in hand.

“This here, is the map of the paths in Everdare Forest. Since ancient times, people have rarely ever been able to make it through this primeval forest. However, the ancestors of the Merrett family once trained in that forest. To ease their training, they made a map of the area. Though it may not help tremendously, I believe that it may still come in handy in your search for the holy fox. Do accept it, mister...”

“...Kaleb, isn’t that the map your family used to look for-”

Though the now wide-eyed Zander had attempted to ask something, Kaleb simply raised a hand, interrupting him. It was evident that Kaleb didn't want Zander to continue asking his question.

With that, Kaleb then turned to look at Gerald again before repeating, "Please accept it, mister!"

Since he was being offered the map, Gerald simply walked over to take it. After all, he wasn't about to turn down an item that was going to save him half the trouble once he actually traversed through the forest.

Before he was even able to get his hands on it, however, Theo immediately shouted, "Give that to me!"

He then stretched his hand out—from his seat—and snatched the map from the subordinate before turning to look at Gerald and saying, "So, you want this map, don't you, Mr. Crawford? It's mine now! If you want it, come snatch it back from me!"

Watching as Theo sneered, Gerald simply waved a hand at him before returning to his seat.

"...What do you mean by that?" asked Theo coldly.

Giving no reply, Gerald simply used his fork to casually lift a vegetable leaf off his plate. Holding onto the leaf, Gerald looked at it for a while before flicking his wrist extremely quickly.

As a result, the vegetable leaf flew directly toward the sturdy-looking wooden door of the private room...

And sent the entire door crumbling down as soon as the leaf hit it!

Chapter 1011

"...What?"

Theo was so shocked by what he had just witnessed that that was the only thing he was able to mutter as he immediately stood up.

Everyone else was equally as shocked, especially the poor waiter who had been standing right behind the door—ready to serve more dishes—when all that happened.

Zander himself had both his feet on the floor again at this point. While he had initially assured himself earlier that Gerald was definitely just an ordinary young man without any actual capabilities, he now knew how wrong he was.

To think that he would actually be able to smash a wooden door to pieces with just a single vegetable leaf! Just how much training did he have to go through to get that strong?!

The atmosphere in the room was getting increasingly stressful by the second.

Clearly feeling the pressure, Theo—who was currently drenched in cold sweat—mumbled to himself, “To think that one could actually inflict pain upon others simply by using a leaf!”

To attempt to ease the overwhelming awkwardness of the situation, one of the people from the Lovewell family—who had been standing at the side this entire time—smiled and asked, “M-master Zabinski, I couldn’t quite catch that... Could you repeat what you said...?”

Feeling more and more cold sweat dripping down his chin, the completely dazed Theo simply repeated, “I said, to think that one could actually inflict pain upon others simply by using a leaf!”

Now finally feeling the adrenaline of fear, Theo then added, “H-how eye-opening! To think that such a skill could even exist on this planet!”

Theo was now looking at Gerald in a completely different light. Realizing that the map was still with him, he immediately walked over to face Gerald and respectfully

held out the item before saying, “M-Mr. Crawford! I apologize for not being an insightful person! Please have your map back!”

Seeing that, Zander and his family members exchanged glances with each other. In the end, all of them took turns standing up.

“Please forgive me for my earlier imprudence, Mr. Crawford. For Kaleb’s sake, please consider helping the Lovewell family to rid us of our current crisis,” said Zander before bowing deeply before Gerald.

Putting the map away, Gerald casually replied, “What’s the big issue? Can’t Master Merrett resolve it?”

Gerald was only prompted to ask now since he had been given the map which, in all honesty, was something useful to him. He wasn’t really interested in meddling in the Lovewell family’s affairs just for Kaleb’s sake either. He just didn’t want to feel like he owed any of them any favors.

“Well, the thing is...”

With that, Zander then began detailing everything regarding the incident.

As it turned out, the Lovewells had made themselves an enemy a while back. The enemy in question left them alone for a period of time, seemingly to return to his homeland.

However, upon his return, the Lovewells found out that even their most powerful bodyguards weren’t able to take down the enemy. Though they had no idea how he had become so powerful during his absence, the more pressing issue was the fact that he had declared to kill a descendant of the Lovewell family every ten days until none of them were left.

Up till this point, two descendants of the Lovewells had already been both harmed and eventually killed despite Zander’s orders that prohibited any of the younger generations from ever leaving their homes.

For now, the remaining younger generations of the Lovewell family remained hiding in their homes.

The enemy himself went by the name of Damian Wake, and his goal was simple. The man simply wanted the Lovewells to be completely wiped off the face of the planet, but only after he had driven them insane in fear.

Knowing that, the only thing Zander could do was hire a large group of experts to protect his family. It was also the reason why they had hosted the treasure exchange event a month earlier this year.

Their plan was to attract large groups of rich and powerful people to the event. The greater the number of participants, the greater their strength. Besides, strength in numbers would also encourage the Lovewells to remain vigilant and not just give in.

Hearing that, Gerald now understood why Haven and her siblings had to sneak out just to have some fun.

“While Damian was once one of the Logan Province’s rich heirs, both he and his father were equally as wicked. Since they constantly behaved so viciously, all the rich businessmen in the Logan Province boycotted them back then, ultimately resulting in their family falling apart. However, being the extremely petty-minded person he is, we’re all aware that Damian won’t stop until he takes his revenge on all of the families that had boycotted them so many years ago, and I do mean all of them. Once his revenge on the Lovewell family has been sated, he’ll definitely start going after the other families as well!” said Kaleb.

“Speaking of which, we’ve previously made an appointment with him. Essentially, it’s a challenge to a duel due tomorrow night... It’s rather humiliating to admit it, but he’s so strong that I don’t think I’ll even be a match against him!” added the white-haired man as he shook his head with a sigh.

Looking at Gerald, Zander then respectfully said, “It would truly be a blessing to us should you decide to lend us a hand, Mr. Crawford...”

Since Gerald didn’t really have much of a good impression on Zander, he turned to face Kaleb before replying, “...Sure. I’ll go over to have a look.”

“How wonderful to hear!”

Chapter 1012

Once their meal was over, Gerald left the hotel together with Zander and the others. Upon arriving at the hotel’s entrance, they were promptly greeted by a butler who immediately said, “Some people from the Long family in Yanken wish to pay you a visit, Chairman Lovewell!”

“The Longs? Humph! For what reason have they come over to visit me? Who did they send over to be their representative?” replied Zander who was clearly much more confident now that Gerald had agreed to help him.

“They sent the second lady of the Long family! She’s currently waiting to meet you and she even brought along several great gifts to celebrate the success of the treasure exchange event!” explained the butler.

Upon hearing that, Gerald lifted his head slightly.

The second lady of the Long family? Could it really be...?

“Does the Long family’s representative bear the surname of Yorke, by any chance?” asked Gerald.

In response, the butler immediately smiled before saying, “She does, indeed!”

So it really was Xavia!

For some reason, Gerald felt rather peculiar the moment he heard that Xavia was here. After all, he hadn’t met her for over a year now and he had completely forgotten about her until today.

With the passing of time, it was natural for incidents of the past to slowly be forgotten. However, there was one incident that Gerald knew he wouldn’t ever be able to forget.

That incident being the time when he was being pursued by both the Longs and the Moldells almost an entire year ago. While both families had desperately tried to kill him back then, Xavia had let him off, essentially saving his life.

'It's been over a year now... I wonder how she's doing now... Regardless, she deserves to live a peaceful life... In other words, it's better if we don't meet at all,' Gerald thought to himself before laughing slightly bitterly.

"Mr. Crawford...? Mr. Crawford..." whispered Zander beside him.

"...Hmm?" replied Gerald as he snapped out of his daze.

"Haha! I was just wondering where you're currently staying. If it's convenient for you, why not move into the Lovewell family's manor for now? I'll tell the others to arrange the best room for you if you agree," suggested Zander.

"Sounds good," replied Gerald with a nod.

With things decided just like that, all of them then returned to the Lovewell family manor.

Upon arriving there, Zander and Gerald parted ways. While Gerald headed for his new room, Zander himself headed to the reception area of his home to meet up with Xavia.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Yorke. I've seen the list of gifts you presented to us, and I must say that all of them are extremely expensive and valuable! Our family would feel bad for accepting all of them!" said Zander cordially.

"You're being way too modest, Chairman Lovewell! You've made some time to meet me despite your packed schedule! That alone is already a blessing to the Long family!" replied Xavia.

Hearing that, Zander smiled as he looked at Xavia. Since the Longs were allowing such a young lady to deal with such important things, Zander was sure that she had all sorts of tricks and skills up her sleeves.

Even though he knew that, the gracefulness that she expressed through the prudent way she spoke—as they exchanged pleasantries—overshadowed any wariness that Zander initially had. He was well aware of it too, and that made him respect Xavia even more.

“Since you’re a busy man, Chairman Lovewell, I won’t beat around the bush. I’ve come here today in wonder if you’ve read the cooperation proposal that the Long family drafted. If possible, the Longs from Yanken truly wish to have a strong cooperation with the Lovewells. If you agree, then the Longs will instantly provide the Lovewell family with a project worth a billion and five hundred million dollars. Consider it our way of expressing our sincerity.

Upon hearing that, Zander felt his eyelids twitch slightly. Though he was clearly moved, he kept his cool. After all, he was in no hurry to reveal what he was truly feeling.

“We appreciate your trust in us. Regardless, putting talk about cooperation aside for the moment, I heard from your people that you seem to have some cousins here in the Logan Province. I’m not sure if you’ve already heard from them about how we do things here in the Logan Province...”

The good relationship between the Longs and Moldells was no secret among those working in the business field. However, the same couldn’t be said about the relationship between the Moldells and Lovewells.

Due to that, it was natural for Zander to want to know more details about the affair since a Long representative was now at his door.

“You’re quite well informed, Chairman Lovewell. I do indeed have a few cousins and relatives living here. It’s their hometown, after all. However, we haven’t been in touch with each other for many, many years. As a result, you may as well just treat it as if it’s my first time here in the Logan Province. In other words, I’m afraid I’m not quite familiar with the procedures here that you mentioned. ”

“Regardless, you can be assured of one thing. Once you gain the project, the Lovewells will definitely earn money. I feel that the bond between the Longs and the Lovewells will simultaneously also be strengthened, don’t you think?” replied Xavia with a smile.

In response, Zander simply nodded.

At that moment, the butler entered the reception area and said, “Everything has been appropriately arranged for Mr. Crawford, Chairman Lovewell. May I know if there’s anything else that you wish for me to do?”

“Nothing for the moment. Just be sure to tell the others to serve Mr. Crawford well. None of them are to slack off!”

Chapter 1013

“Ah, so it turns out that you have a rather distinguished guest here today! I apologize for taking quite a bit of your time... However, I do wonder who the guest could be for you to give him such high respect, Chairman Lovewell. After all, you’re an extremely powerful and influential person yourself!” said Xavia as she smiled while straightening her hair.

“Haha! Due to the undergoing treasure exchange event, there are currently plenty of other distinguished people in the Logan Province! However, the distinguished guest I have with me now is a little different from the others... Regardless, why don’t we discuss other things for the moment? Worry not, for I’ll definitely find the time to carefully read through your cooperation proposal. Actually, since the event won’t end until a few more days, why don’t you stay here for the meantime, Miss Yorke? Once the treasure exchange event is over, we’ll officially negotiate how things will go. What do you think?”

“It would be an honor, Chairman Lovewell,” replied Xavia with a smile.

The rest of the day was rather uneventful, and the next day soon came.

To start her day off, Xavia brought her subordinates along with her as she strolled around Lovewell Manor. The manor itself was huge and several villas and VIP areas existed within it.

Upon arriving at one of the VIP areas, however, Xavia's walk was halted by a few guards who said, "Apologies, Miss Yorke, but no one is allowed to enter this area aside from Chairman Lovewell."

"No, it was rude of me to attempt to enter this area in the first place. Still, I wonder how distinguished the guest staying here truly is... I happen to recall hearing about a 'Mr. Crawford' who seemed rather important to Chairman Lovewell... Could Mr. Crawford currently be residing within that room...?" asked Xavia as she flashed them a smile.

However, none of the bodyguards responded to her question.

Due to that, Xavia found herself frowning slightly as she then walked away.

"Please do not be saddened, miss. The Lovewells are known to have a lot of secrets," consoled one of her subordinates as they walked on.

"Well, I'm just worried that that Mr. Crawford ends up being our competitor. Should that truly be the case, then won't everything that the Long family has done so far come to no avail? That Zander truly is a cunning and secretive man... Even after talking to him for so long yesterday, I still can't make heads or tails of what he truly thinks! How could he have remained so calm when we're presenting him with a contract worth a billion and five hundred million dollars?" replied Xavia as she crossed her arms.

"Well, for now, let's just wait until the event is over. We'll see what he'll say about it then. Speaking of the event, why don't you head there and have a look around as well? This could be a chance for you to get in contact with businessmen from various other places. Should that happen, then you'll certainly end up helping the Long family by a great deal!"

"While that may be true, I'm honestly not all that interested in that event."

"Where do you propose we should go then?"

“Humph! Well, since Zander did mention my cousins and relatives yesterday, I may as well use the opportunity to pay them a visit. After all, it’s been a good... seven? Or maybe even eight years since I’ve last met them!” replied Xavia, a slight glint of contempt in her eyes as she said that.

Moments after she said that, a group of foreigners passed by her and her guards.

As Xavia nodded at them with a smile, she failed to notice the lascivious gaze of the other group’s leader when he looked at her.

It was a little later when the sound of a doorbell ringing could be heard within a small neighborhood.

As soon as the door opened, a woman who looked to be around forty instantly forced on a smile when she realized who had come to visit.

“Oh my, and here I was wondering who was at the door! So it’s you, Xavia! It’s been what? Eight years since we’ve last met? You’re all grown up now! Regardless, what business brings you to my door? We ceased contact years ago, didn’t we?” said the woman, her words filled with contempt as she blocked the door, preventing Xavia from entering.

Xavia herself could hear quite a bit of noise coming from inside. It was evident that the woman currently had several guests.

“Dear aunt, it’s exactly because it’s been so long that I came over to visit. Is it wrong for me to miss you?” replied Xavia with a cold smile as she gently pushed her aunt aside and invited herself in.

“...H-hey! You can’t just do that!” scowled her aunt furiously

Just as Xavia had guessed, there truly were several guests inside. With both men and women of all ages, all of them were still talking and laughing with each other—while sitting on couches—until they finally realized that Xavia was present.

From that moment onward, the atmosphere instantly turned tense.

“...Well now, if it isn’t Xavia! And here I was wondering who had come over! What a rare guest! What a fine woman you’ve grown into!”

Chapter 1014

The simultaneously surprised and delighted voice had come from a middle-aged man who stood up as soon as he saw her.

“It’s truly been a while, uncle!” replied Xavia with a slight nod.

“Humph! It’s just as they say. When you’re poor, nobody looks for you even if you’re living in a bustling city! When you get rich, however, even the most distant of relatives will come running to meet you, even if you’re living in the middle of a forest! I do wonder if that saying applies to a certain relative of mine who just so happened to hear that my family’s Zion just got promoted!” sneered a woman—seated on one of the couches—before flashing a cold smile as she continued peeling an orange.

Hearing that, several of the other young men and women in the room took turns staring at Xavia contemptuously.

“It’s been so long yet your way of talking never changes, does it, aunt? Now that I think about it, this was also the place where you mocked and embarrassed my mother so much back then, right?” replied Xavia with a smile.

Clearing his throat, the eldest uncle then asked in a concerned tone, “Let’s not talk about the past right now... Regardless, I remember your father falling sick that year... We haven’t contacted each other in so long... How is he doing now?”

“He was cured ages ago,” replied Xavia as she recalled the incident that had taken place around eight years ago.

Back then, Xavia’s father had fallen sick. Due to being cheated of his money in the years prior, he didn’t have the money to cure his illness. As a result, Xavia and her mother had gone to the Logan Province in an attempt to borrow some money from her uncle.

However, no matter how much her mother begged, none of them extended a helping hand.

As if that wasn't enough, in the end, her eldest aunt kicked both her and her mother out of their home! It was akin to them chasing away a few stray dogs. Her aunt even went so far as to throw out all the local mountain products which Xavia's mother had so carefully picked.

Upon seeing all her mother's hard efforts scattered on the ground, Xavia had kept that painful memory within her heart till this very day.

In fact, the pain from that incident had been her motivation to try her best at studying. Her goal was to earn her respect so that she wouldn't ever be looked down upon again. Due to that, she eventually managed to get admitted into Mayberry University!

After getting in, however, she soon realized that no matter how hard she worked, she could never truly rid herself of her poverty.

Even after finding a boyfriend whom she truly adored, both of them ended up being looked down upon by everyone else.

She just couldn't endure it anymore. She wanted to be prestigious, to be a person with high status.

Today, Xavia finally had all that, and she had come here to finally achieve a wish of hers which she had kept in her heart this entire time.

"Humph! Then why have you returned? If it's your mother's turn to be sick now, then I'll save us all the hassle, right this instant. We don't have any money!" scoffed Xavia's eldest aunt as she haughtily walked over to her.

"If you haven't noticed, she's wearing some pretty nice clothes now, mom! I'm assuming she's here to show off! By the looks of things, she may have found herself a rich husband!" said another woman in the room.

Ignoring both their statements, Xavia then continued, "Speaking of which, I remember that it was Second aunt who had thrown that ten-dollar note at my mother while all of you were chasing us out. You called it a 'compensation' for the local mountain products, if I recall correctly. Do you remember any of that, Second aunt?"

Taking in a deep breath, her second aunt then replied, "So what if I did? Are you here to take revenge on us?"

As her second aunt then stood up in anger, Xavia simply said, "Oh no, I would never! I honestly came here today to return the ten dollars to you! You know, I swore to myself back then that I'd repay the money by a hundred- no, by ten thousand times the amount one day!"

"Well today is that day! Do look out the window, Second and First aunt. The money I intend to return to you is all downstairs," added Xavia as she pointed toward the window.

Upon hearing that, both her aunts were instantly stunned. Looking out the window, both of them covered their mouths in shock as soon as they peered down.

"My god!"

Their eyes were practically bulging out from their sockets as they stared at all the luxury cars that had been parked outside. That, however, wasn't what shocked them most.

No, they were flabbergasted by the sight of several extremely full bags that had been placed in front of the cars. Even from afar, they could see the tips of green dollar bills peeking out of each bag.

It was nothing short of dazzling, and Xavia's second aunt ended up wobbling over to the couch before sitting down feebly with a loud gulp.

All of a sudden, the entrance door was opened and Xavia's team of black-suited bodyguards swiftly entered the house.

"Listen closely now. While the money downstairs is all yours, you won't receive it until you're able to tell my men the correct amount. Also, you aren't allowed to eat or drink until you get the exact amount right. Don't try anything funny either since my men will be keeping a close eye on you," said Xavia coldly as she glared at her second aunt whose legs had now gone weak.

Nobody in that house even dared to even say another word after seeing all that.

Chapter 1015

"...X-Xavia... W-we were wrong to treat you that way back then! Please, there's just so much money here! It would be near impossible for us to get the exact amount down!" stuttered her second aunt who was no fool.

Knowing full well that Xavia was finally back for her revenge, she begged to be released from her imminent torture.

"Count it. Don't make me repeat it a third time!" sneered Xavia as her second aunt instantly began crying out of fear.

Not knowing what else to do, she squatted down and began counting the dollar bills, one by one.

"Remember, I want the exact amount! No more and no less! Again, the money is yours once you get the final amount right. Get the amount wrong, however, then you can just keep on counting forever!" added Xavia with a smile before walking over to the side and drinking a glass of water that her subordinate had gotten for her.

At the same time, a youth wearing a cap frowned under his mask as he continued observing Xavia's actions from a far corner.

He had just gotten into earshot, yet to think that the first thing he would hear was Xavia's cruel order. For her to even think up of such a sadistic punishment, the youth wondered to himself how distorted her mind already was.

“How on earth did you end up like this...” muttered the youth to himself.

Of course, the youth in question was Gerald.

He had been stalking Xavia for a while now with two reasons in mind. Firstly, he wanted to see if the Longs were currently up to anything.

As for his second reason, Gerald had initially wanted to find out whether Xavia had any unfulfilled wishes. She had, after all, saved him back then. Before witnessing what had just taken place, Gerald had planned to repay that huge favor by granting a wish of hers.

To his disappointment, here she was using her money to take revenge on others again!

“Humph! Since she can have anything she wants now, she probably doesn’t even have any wishes that she can’t grant herself! Regardless, that won’t last for long once I’m done with the Long family. I’ll have my revenge on them sooner or later, so you best enjoy your power while you still can!” said Gerald as he shook his head.

Taking one final glance at her, he was just about to leave when he suddenly heard her say, “You know my family placed all their hope on you back then. Do you remember when my dad prepared the money for you back when you first came to the Logan Province? Despite that, you actually had the nerve to chase me and my mom away like we were stray dogs when we needed your help! You didn’t even allow us to enter the house! So how am I the cruel one now? After all, I’m only giving you this much money since you love it so much!”

As Xavia’s eldest uncle and the others present in the room began begging her for mercy again, Gerald himself was left stunned.

So that was why she was exacting her revenge... To think that Xavia had endured through so much humiliation and pain as a child...

“You there, stay here and keep an eye on them! Don’t let them leave until they give you the exact amount!” growled Xavia as she tossed the glass she had been holding to the floor, sending it shattering as the fuming woman left the house.

Xavia ended up standing alone by a riverbank, hoping to get some peace of mind.

Gerald himself had followed her there, and he was currently hiding behind a tree. Just as he was about to leave again, however, he suddenly caught a glimpse of a few tall, sunglasses-wearing foreigners walking toward Xavia.

“Greetings, Miss Yorke!” said one of the foreigners as he bowed slightly.

“What is it?” replied Xavia rather coldly since she was still in an extremely bad mood.

“Well, we couldn’t help but catch a glimpse of what you had earlier done to those people in that house! Since they’re obviously not nice people, we don’t mind offering you our services to get rid of them for good!” added another foreigner.

“And who was it that said that I wanted to get rid of them? There’s no need to meddle in my business. Regardless, who are all of you, and what do you want from me?” asked Xavia with a slight frown.

“We’re here because our master deeply admires you, Miss Yorke! He’s told us to personally invite you out to lunch”

“I appreciate it, but I’m not in the mood!” replied Xavia as she attempted to leave and reunite with her bodyguards.

After taking just a few steps, however, the foreigners stood in front of her, preventing Xavia from leaving.

“Miss Yorke, please don’t put us in a difficult position... If you don’t attend, our master will punish us terribly...”

“I beg your pardon? Are you going to force me to join him for lunch against my will?”

“We certainly don’t hope that it’ll come to that. To avoid such a scenario, please just cooperate with us...” said the same subordinate as the group of foreigners slowly began inching closer to her.

“Hold it! Don’t you know who I am? I’m one of the Longs from Yanken! You’re currently in Weston territory now, so you’d better not act rashly!” growled Xavia as she took a few steps back.

As she quickly fished her cell phone out to make a call, what seemed to be the leader of the group replied, “I hope you don’t blame us for being imprudent since you’re so adamant on making it difficult for us... It’s not all that bad, you know? After all, who’s to say that you won’t end up cooperating with my master in the future? Regardless, hurry up and bring her along!”

Waving his hand after his order, the other subordinates immediately grabbed on to Xavia’s arms.

Chapter 1016

Struggling with all she could, Xavia managed to momentarily break free. Immediately after, she pulled out a dagger from seemingly nowhere!

“Don’t move a step closer! My men are nearby! The way you said it, I’m assuming that you people have been following me for some time now!” warned Xavia as she waved the dagger around.

“Please trust us, Miss Xavia. Our boss is truly interested in working with you! Besides, you’ll also be getting something else in return!” said the foreigner maliciously as he casually began walking toward her.

As Xavia’s panic peaked, she heard a whisper of sorts saying, “Toss the dagger!”

Though nobody else seemed to have heard it, Xavia felt compelled to obey the order. As a result, she immediately tossed the dagger toward the foreigner!

The foreigner himself had been laughing while shaking his head before she tossed it. By the time the dagger left her hand, he was halfway through saying, “Miss Xavia, stop swinging that thing around! That’s rather rude of you, you know—”

His sentence was cut short when the dagger—that he was sure he could easily avoid given how far it still was from him as he was talking—suddenly accelerated and punctured through the side of his stomach!

It was such a clean puncture that the dagger continued moving until it collided with a tree!

Grunting loudly as he held back from releasing a scream, the foreigner’s eyes went cold as his side continued bleeding profusely.

As he knelt on the ground, pressing against his freshly inflicted wound, the other foreigners had finally caught on to what they had just witnessed. As a result, they were all now feeling increasingly nervous.

“R-retreat! Retreat immediately!” shouted their leader as his subordinates carried him away in a hurry.

Xavia herself was now panting heavily. Both frightened and confused, her eyes were glued onto the dagger she had just thrown.

“...Who... Who are you? I know someone helped me! Thank you for saving me!” shouted Xavia respectfully. She wasn’t able to recognize the voice from earlier since Gerald had used his voice-changing device.

However, even after scanning through the area, she couldn’t seem to find traces of anyone even helping her.

“...I’m sure someone helped me... But who could it have been...?” muttered Xavia to herself, curious.

She was so sure that someone had saved her since, for one, nobody else seemed to have been able to hear the voice. Secondly, there was no way in hell that she could have managed to toss the dagger that powerfully. Someone else had definitely been pulling the strings in secret.

But who could it have been? If it was someone from the Long family, then they had no reason not to reveal themselves...

As she pondered on, one of her bodyguards suddenly came running over before saying, "Here you are, miss! Master called just now and asked us whether there was any progress on our cooperation with the Lovewells..."

"I see. Let's head back first!" replied Xavia as she nodded her head somewhat unwillingly.

Soon after, evening came and by then, cars belonging to all the Lovewell family's family members could be seen parked outside the Lovewell Manor.

As Zander, Theo, and Kaleb waited respectfully within the manor, a girl—who had been staring at the three men from a distance—stopped a servant who was walking past her before asking, "What's the big occasion? Did my father do anything?"

"I'm not too sure about what's going on either, miss! All I know is that the master is waiting for some people!"

"Odd... He's been hiding quite a bit from us recently... How mysterious!"

The girl in question was none other than Haven Lovewell, and just as she was about to ask something else, a troop of her family's bodyguards made their appearance and began walking out the front door.

Since she was used to seeing scenes like these, she didn't say anything about it. Upon closer inspection, however, she noticed that one of the people within that group wasn't wearing the same clothes as the other bodyguards.

Squinting her eyes to get a better look, they immediately widened seconds later as she muttered, "...Huh? G-Gerald?"

Chapter 1017

Haven was utterly shocked to see him there. She naturally remembered him since he had been quite an interesting guy when they first met on the train.

In her disbelief, she opened the main door in her attempt to confirm whether she had really seen him. However, she could only catch a glimpse of 'Gerald's' back as he stepped into a car before her father closed the door behind him.

"Gerald!" shouted Haven as the cars swiftly drove off, unable to hear her cries.

Scratching the back of her head, she wondered if it really had just been her imagination. After all, why would he be in her house? What more, her father certainly wouldn't personally open a car door for someone like him!

"Is something wrong, Haven?" asked Xareni as she and Quentin walked over to her.

"You'll never guess who I saw, sis!"

"Who?"

"I saw Gerald!"

"And who is this, Gerald person?" asked Xareni with a slight frown.

"Have you already forgotten? He's the guy we met inside the train!"

"That disgusting guy? You're still talking to him? Why's he even here?" scorned Quintin.

“You probably saw wrong, Haven... After all, if even Quintin isn’t aware of this, then Gerald couldn’t have possibly entered our home all willy-nilly!” added Xareni as she shook her head.

Despite Xareni constantly advising Haven to be more aware of her identity, the girl simply never listened. Rather than getting along more with other rich heirs like the Warners and Scotts, Haven simply preferred talking to ordinary people.

“It’s fine if neither of you choose not to believe me... However, I know for a fact that father was holding the door for him, or at least someone that looked like him! I just have to know the truth! I’m going after them now to ask father how he got acquainted with Gerald!” declared Haven rather excitedly as she quickly ran off.

“Come back right this instant, Haven! We’re still undergoing a sensitive period!” shouted Xareni as she anxiously stomped her foot in place.

“...Huh? What sensitive period?”

“I asked father why we had to stay indoors all the time just now and he finally gave me the truth. It’s a long story but for now, just know that we can’t let Haven run off alone! We have to get her back before she runs into danger!” replied Xareni as she and Quentin immediately began chasing after Haven.

Meanwhile, darkness was slowly encroaching across the sky as night approached.

A group of people was standing before a single man in front of Benril Lake which was located in the outskirts of the Logan Province.

“You’re a true Lovewell, Zander! To think that you actually gathered a group of people to take me down! I’m the one and only Damian Wake! You’re ridiculous for thinking you even stand a chance!” said the lone man—standing opposite of Zander’s group—who was currently supporting the weight of his entire body with only a single hand.

Damian looked to be in his mid-thirties and his eyes reflected his immense bloodlust. A clear scar could also be seen on his unshaven face, and he looked generally unwelcoming as a person.

“I’ll make sure you’ll pay dearly for killing the two children of our family within the past month, Damian! You know very well why your family deserved to be banished! Don’t you remember all the dirty deeds all of you have done?” shouted Zander.

“Shut up! I don’t care about what you did and I don’t care who you brought along to fight me either! All I know is that everyone here except for you, Zander, will die by my hands today! Don’t worry, you’ll eventually get to die too once I make you witness the death of all the other Lovewell children!”

“You ignorant prick! Let’s see how you’ll even kill all of us!” roared Theo as he immediately charged at the arrogant man.

While Theo was both strong and fierce, he was nowhere near Damian’s level of skill.

Eventually, Damian got bored of blocking Theo’s attacks and launched a sudden punch at him! Caught off guard, Theo knew he was too late to block or avoid the incoming attack.

Before the hit could land, however, Theo heard someone shout, “Allow me to assist!”

Chapter 1018

The voice belonged to Kaleb and the old man managed to block Damian’s critical blow just in time.

“Would you look at that! He must’ve endlessly trained himself to launch such a perfected punch!” said Gerald as he continued observing the fight from the sidelines.

Gerald had arrived at that conclusion since Damian’s skills weren’t all that different from all the other people he had previously killed. However, Damian was different from them since his execution of each of those skills was extremely powerful!

If Gerald had to guess, Damian had probably become a champion much earlier than Kaleb. After all, a champion's inner strength naturally grew stronger the longer they had that title. In a way, it was just like wine. The longer it was left underground, the more exquisite the taste.

While both Kalen and Damian were akin to exquisite wine, Gerald knew that Kaleb wouldn't be able to take Damian down.

After all, Gerald's keen eyes had registered that though Kaleb was definitely more experienced in fighting, Damian's inner strength was much greater than the old man's.

By the time fifty rounds of non-stop battling had taken place, Kaleb was already stumbling slightly as he held a hand against his injured chest. He knew he wasn't going to be able to take much more.

Meanwhile, Haven herself had been hiding within the woods near Benril Lake as she continued watching the fight that had been taking place for quite a while now.

She soon got the shock of her life when she felt a hand being placed on her shoulder, followed by a familiar voice saying, "So here you are, Haven! What are you doing here?"

Covering her mouth as she turned around to see who had said that, she immediately replied, "...Sis? Quintin? What are both of you doing here?"

"We came over because we were worried about you! What are you even looking at...?" asked Xareni.

"Shh! Quieter! Look there! While I can't really see too clearly from here, isn't that dad and Gerald over there?" whispered Haven excitedly.

"Would you just quit it already with that Gerald person? Can't you see that a fight's going on now? Listen, dad told me earlier that our family has an enemy that goes by the name of Damian Wake. Since dad is here, one of the two fighting men must be Damian! Thank god we caught up to you in time! Otherwise, you could've ruined all

his plans!” replied Xareni, shocked to find out that they were currently standing so close to their family’s enemy.

Upon hearing that, all three of them exchanged glances before continuing to witness the fight. They didn’t dare to leave for fear that they may get caught in the process, consequently ruining their father’s plans.

“Master Theo doesn’t look like he can take much more, Mr. Crawford! You have to help him!” said Zander as he pointed at Damian.

Gerald simply took in a deep breath before resting his arms against his back.

“...M-Mr. Crawford? You can’t possibly be thinking about retreating now, right...? I’m betting my entire family’s life here tonight!” stuttered Zander who was getting increasingly nervous after noticing that Gerald didn’t look like he was going to make a move any time soon.

“C-could there be any other conditions that we could fulfill for you? Whatever they are, I’ll definitely do my best to get them done!” begged Zander.

“...I heard that the Lovewell ancestors used to be caretakers for beasts... Your family owns a manuscript called the Book of Beasts, correct?” asked Gerald.

Zander was momentarily stunned the second he heard that.

After looking briefly at Kaleb’s condition, Zander smiled at Gerald before saying, “Mr. Crawford, though my ancestors may have used that skill, it has unfortunately been lost to time. I mean just look at us, we clearly aren’t utilizing that skill anymore!”

Not hearing what he wanted to, Gerald simply slipped his hands into his pocket, refusing to move an inch.

Watching as Kaleb got thrown to the ground, Zander’s nervousness was now peaking.

Zander had initially thought that Gerald could easily be bought over by money and the Lovewell's high status. In fact, he had even assumed that Gerald would continue helping his family in the future since Kaleb was their ally.

Now, however, he realized just how wrong he had been.

To think that Gerald had only been motivated to help them since he had something that he wanted from their family! Now that he thought about it, Gerald must've only stayed for so long since Kaleb had told him about the Lovewell's ancestral history sometime before!

Regardless, it was true that the Book of Beasts was in his family's hands.

By using it, the ancestors of the Lovewell family could understand the language of beasts! In fact, that was how the Lovewells started their family business. While the manuscript was passed down generation after generation, in the late nineties, the Lovewells finally abandoned the skill. After all, being able to understand beasts wasn't exactly as useful to them as it was for their ancestors. Regardless, the Book of Beasts was still a treasure from their ancestors so the Lovewells had always kept it safe with them.

It currently resided in the Lovewell Manor and though it wasn't really in use, Zander was well aware of how precious the ancient manuscript was. He also now knew that Gerald had been waiting patiently this entire time to force him to hand the book over.

"...Fine! I'll give you the book as a token of appreciation if you zsave my family!"

Chapter 1019

"Deal!" replied Gerald with a smile.

Gerald himself was done with doing favors for others. In order to get what he wanted, he knew that he had to become a selfish person. After all, at this point, there really wasn't a reason for him to do things that didn't benefit him anymore.

The moment Gerald finally agreed to help, Kaleb and Theo were flung over to his direction and both of them landed at his feet.

“Hahaha! Did you really bring these idiots over to defend you, Zander? Who else is there? Come on, now!” roared Damian before laughing hysterically.

Upon hearing that, Gerald began walking calmly toward him.

“...Hmm? What’s this then? A little boy? Is there truly nobody else from the Lovewell family? Who the hell even is this?” said Damian as he shook his head while looking at Gerald.

“I’ve heard that you’ve been learning some skills that originated from Northeast Asia! Is that true?” asked Gerald as he looked back at Damian.

Hearing that, Damian was temporarily stunned. After all, he knew that he had concealed his identity extremely well. What more, he had been in hiding for the longest time. Despite that, this boy here almost sounded like he knew what he had been doing this entire time.

“...How do you know about that?” asked Damian as he raised a brow.

“Just a hunch. Speaking of which, could Sven Westmore be one of your disciples?” asked Gerald again.

Eyes now widened in shock, Damian instantly replied, “He is! Do you know him?”

“Well of course I know him. I was his killer,” replied Gerald.

“...What? You?” said Damian, more astonished than anything.

“...Humph! I guess looks can be deceiving! Still, know that Sven is just an outer disciple of the Tekken! Killing him is a piece of cake, so I hope you aren’t thinking that you’re anywhere near worthy in my eyes! However, the fact remains that

you've killed my disciple! I'll avenge his death by killing you!" roared Damian as he charged at Gerald.

In a flash, Gerald responded with his own punch, and both their fists met. As the sound of colliding fists was heard, the crunching of bones followed swiftly after as Damian found himself falling backward.

Roaring in pain, Damian held on to his arm as he turned to look at his elbow. Gerald's punch had been so powerful that Damian's arm bone was now protruding out of his skin! This was only from the force of a single punch! What kind of strength even was this?!

Kaleb and Theo themselves were now wide-eyed in disbelief as they stared at Damian's terror-stricken expression.

"...You... You're so young yet you're already at the level of a champion! Even your inner strength is overwhelming!" shouted the horrified Damian.

"Cease this nonsense and end your own life to spare yourself the misery!" replied Gerald as he shook his head.

Upon hearing that, Damian's gaze went dark as he clenched his teeth while enduring the pain. Nodding, he then said, "...Fine! I'll do it myself!"

With that, the man took a dagger out and aimed its sharpened end at his chest.

All was silent for a moment... Until Damian tossed the dagger aimed straight for Gerald's face! Grabbing a handful of sand, he then tossed it in Gerald's direction as well before making a wild dash away from all of them!

Gerald himself simply took a step to the side, avoiding everything that Damian had just thrown at him.

Zander, on the other hand, anxiously began shouting, "After him, Mr. Crawford! He's getting away!"

In response, Gerald simply flicked his hand slightly toward Damian's direction, a slight whistling sound following immediately after.

Chapter 1020

Following that sound, a glimpse of something flying extremely quickly could be seen, and barely a second later, Damian's screams of agony filled the air!

Not even questioning the self-returning dagger, the moment Zander saw Damian's body flop lifelessly to the ground, he immediately started excitedly shouting, "H-he's dead! He's finally dead!"

Turning to look at Gerald, he then said, "Mr. Crawford, you've done a massive favor for the Lovewells! I must repay you properly on behalf of my family!"

"As was promised, all I want is the Book of Beasts!" replied Gerald as he returned a subtle smile to Zander.

Immediately after hearing that, Zander froze in place.

As he began trying to change the topic, Haven herself—who had been hiding with her siblings in the forested area this entire time—covered her mouth as she said, "D-did you see that sis? That really is Gerald! And... And he's amazing?!"

Xareni herself had been focused on him for a while now.

'To think that Gerald came over to the Logan Province to help father... What an unpredictable man!' Xareni thought to herself, now extremely impressed with Gerald.

Midnight came shortly after and it was then when several of the Lovewells met up in the Lovewell manor's meeting hall.

While the Lovewells had initially been overjoyed to know that Damian—their biggest enemy—was finally dead, all of them became glum again as soon as Zander told them about Gerald's request.

“No matter how great he is, at his core, he’s still just some reckless peasant! How dare he even demand for the Book of Beasts!” shouted one of the family members as he slammed his fist against the table in anger.

Zander himself had been playing around a keychain for a while now, seemingly deep in thought. Closing his eyes momentarily, the moment he opened them again, his tone was serious as he said, “...Well, this is all my fault to begin with... I won’t deny that I had initially thought that no matter how great he was, he was essentially just a killing machine. I had assumed that he would be pleased as long as we gave him money or women. I even went so far as to think about chances for him to work for us in the future! However, I failed to realize that in the end, what he was truly after was the Book of Beasts! And here I thought he was helping us because of Kaleb’s status! To think that that man actually threatened me for the book during a life or death situation!”

“Master, the Book of Beasts is a treasure that belongs only to the Lovewells! We can’t just give it to him!” shouted another family member.

“I’m well aware of that. However, I had promised to hand him the book and if we don’t give it to him, he could grow upset! Unlike Kaleb, we can’t just dismiss him easily. After all, he’s even more dangerous than Damian! That itself is the biggest concern!”

“Hahaha! Have no worries, brother, for I have an idea! If all goes well, then not only will we be able to keep the Book of Beasts for ourselves, but we’ll also be able to rid ourselves of this Gerald person!” announced a middle-aged man as he squinted his eyes.

“What’s your plan, Zayn?” asked Zander.

“Heh, after hearing about Gerald, I ordered my men to investigate more about him. Granted, I didn’t get many results. I did, however, manage to find out that he’s currently carrying a very large secret!” replied Zayn.

“While we don’t really have any connections with the Moldells in Logan, did you know that those from their family had ordered all the wealthy businessmen down South to kill a youth by the name of Gerald about a year ago? If I’m not mistaken,

the Gerald who had taken Damian down also came from the south. He looks exactly like how the Moldells had described their Gerald back then as well! Do you think that he's the one they're looking for, brother?" added Zayn with a smile.

After hearing all that, Zander finally placed his keychain down, feeling that he had just learned a great deal.

"If everything you've said is true, then I can see where you're coming from, Zayn! With the Moldells being so powerful and having so many great people in their family, being able to use that to our advantage would be great!" replied Zander as he laughed.

"But Master, for what reason would the Moldells have to help us? After all, we have nothing of interest for them! If things go south, we may even end up getting on their bad side! Then again, it's no secret that the Moldells have always had plans to take over our family. They've only refrained from doing so since we have thousands of years' worth of history in the Logan Province. They're also well aware that challenging us here could very well affect the province's economy. Regardless, with all that in mind, do you really think that they'd even consider lending us a hand?" said another person from the group as they raised their concerns.

"Of course they would! Don't forget that we have the person they're hunting for! Even if they're not doing it for us, they'd still take Gerald away which is exactly what we want! The problem now is that we need to find someone to hold him back. If we manage to recruit him, then we'll spare his life. If he chooses not to join us, then his fate will be decided by the Modells!" declared Zander.

As the meeting continued on without any signs of ending soon, the lights in Gerald's room remained on as well.

He had been studying the map that Kaleb had given him, and from what he had learned, the map was definitely going to be very helpful for when Gerald actually traversed through the woods.

All of a sudden, a knock could be heard from the door.

Chapter 1021

"It's me, Gerald!"

Before Gerald could even say anything, the door to his room was pushed open and Haven popped her head in before entering.

“Didn’t you head back to your room to rest, Haven? Why are you here again?” asked Gerald with a resigned smile on his face.

Haven had immediately looked for him the moment he returned to the manor, intent on finding out how he was so powerful.

Not seeing any reason to hide anything from her, Gerald had earlier chatted with her for a while before sending her off.

He truly hadn’t expected to meet her again so soon.

“Well, the more I thought about it back in my room, the more I felt that something just wasn’t right! Humph! You’re not being a very good friend at all! Have you already forgotten that we had agreed to be friends back when we were still on the train? It took me a moment to realize, but you never came looking for me in the end! How do you plan on explaining yourself?” said Haven as she took a seat.

“Haha... Guilty as charged!” replied Gerald with a wry smile on his face.

Staring at him for a while, Haven then smiled sweetly before asking, “Then answer me honestly. Do you truly treat me as a friend?”

“Of course I do!”

“Great! So... Could you please teach me how to throw daggers? I want to learn how to do that too!”

“What kind of society are we even living in now? Why would you even want to learn a skill that could be used to kill?”

“Well, it’s because by this point, I’ve already encountered several powerful and skillful people who have abilities that easily surpass the limits of ordinary people! I want to be like them too!”

“You’ll have your chance in the future... Fine, why don’t we do this? I’ll teach you a trick or two tomorrow under the condition that you’re fully energetic to learn them. In order for you to achieve that, you’d better leave now and get some well-deserved rest!” replied Gerald as he smiled.

“Deal! Remember to keep to your word, or you can’t call yourself a man anymore! Well, I’ll be taking my leave first!” said Haven before skipping happily toward the door to leave.

As soon as she opened the door, however, she immediately said in a surprised tone, “Sister? Why are you here?”

“So you were as well, Haven! I’ve come to discuss some things with Mr. Crawford, so run along first!”

Hearing that, Gerald realized that it was Xareni’s turn to meet him. Haven herself was too busy daydreaming about learning new skills tomorrow so she simply left without thinking too much about her sister’s motive for being there.

“And here I was worrying that you’d already be asleep by now, Mr. Crawford! After all, it is pretty late now,” said Xareni as she walked in with a smile.

Looking at her briefly, Gerald then asked, “Is there anything else you’d like to say?”

Well aware that she was a person who enjoyed scheming, Gerald didn’t really have a good impression of Xareni.

“Indeed! You know, I heard from my father that you’re here in the Logan Province because you wish to look for holy blood within the Everdare Forest, Mr. Crawford. Perhaps our family could help you with the matter since we’re already well acquainted by this point. Also, while this may feel out of topic, what are your plans in the future, sir?” asked Xareni.

Since Gerald had already proved his strength, Xareni herself no longer had any traces of contempt in her eyes.

“I’d very much prefer if you stopped beating around the bush. If you haven’t noticed, I’m ready to retire for the night!” replied Gerald casually.

“Alright, so here’s the thing, Mr. Crawford. The Lovewell family is willing to treat you as an honorable guest, just as we treat Mr. Merrett. If you join us, then all your descendants will also receive the same benefits as you will! What do you think of that, sir?”

It was obvious by now that Xareni had been sent over by her father to pitch the idea to Gerald. Though she looked to only be around the age of twenty-five, she was extremely witty and smart, making her a master at negotiating. Even if she were to face the most experienced businessmen in the world of business, seven out of eight of them wouldn’t be able to outwit her.

Regardless, after seeing how casually Gerald dressed, she was certain that he wouldn’t be able to resist the temptation of money and women.

“Are you trying to hire me to work for the Lovewells?” asked Gerald.

“That’s right! I honestly see absolutely no reason for you to turn down our offer, Mr. Crawford. After all, you’ll be able to live a luxurious and extravagant life if you agree, and you’ll also be respected by everyone!” said Xareni as she squinted her eyes slightly, feeling that it was going to be a piece of cake to get Gerald to join them.

“Who even are the Lovewells to want to hire me?” replied Gerald casually.

Xareni was instantly startled upon hearing that statement.

“Look, I get where you’re coming from, but I’ll say right now that anything you try to say beyond this point will be useless. Just bring me the Book of Beasts tomorrow so I can have a look through it. I’ll return it to your family once I’m done reading it.

Now if there isn't anything else, I'd like to get some rest!" added Gerald rather unceremoniously.

'This man really doesn't know what's good or bad for himself!' Xareni thought to herself angrily.

"Well, while the Lovewells may not mean anything to you, I wonder if you've heard about the Moldells from the Logan Province...?"

As soon as she said that, Xareni took a peek at Gerald's face with her beautiful eyes. She wanted to see how horrified he was since she knew that the more frightened he was of the news, the easier it would be for her to talk to him.

To her dismay, Gerald retained his indifferent expression as he said, "The Moldells? Who even are they?"

Chapter 1022

Upon hearing Gerald say that, Xareni instantly retorted, "You!-"

Before she could say anything rash, however, she simply nodded before remaining silent for a while to calm herself.

A few seconds later, she smiled angrily before saying, "Well since you clearly look down on our small temple, then I guess the Lovewell family will just hand over the Book of Beasts to you tomorrow as our token of appreciation, sir!"

The moment she was done speaking, Xareni instantly turned around and left his room. Upon closing the door behind her, she took in a deep breath before glaring daggers at the room.

It was early the next morning when Haven pushed the door to Gerald's room open before shouting, "Good morning, master!"

"Master?" replied Gerald as he couldn't help but shake his head while looking at the girl who had brought a cup of ginseng tea along with her.

He didn't even have a chance this time to remind her to knock first before entering this time. Despite her intrusion, Gerald still ended up smiling.

"Yeah, master! Hahaha! You said you were going to teach me some skills, so of course I'd call you that! Anyway, I brought along some tea to formalize our master and disciple relationship!" said Haven with a grin.

"Now you're just exaggerating it... I'm just going to teach you some self-defense skills as a friend!"

Clearly ignoring what he had just said, Haven simply replied, "Please accept this tea as a form of respect from your disciple, master!"

Bowing before presenting the tea before Gerald, he simply shook his head before taking the cup from her.

After taking a sip, he gave her a wry smile before saying, "Will this do?"

"But of course! Now let's go! Teach me something already!" squealed Haven as she hopped excitedly in place.

Smiling, Gerald then stood up to leave with her...

However, the moment he did so, he immediately felt an excruciating pain in his stomach! Holding on to his belly, his pale face scrunched up in agony as he shouted, "The... the tea!"

Getting increasingly worried as she watched Gerald get drenched in cold sweat, Haven instantly replied, stuttering, "H-huh? What's going on? What's wrong?"

"T-the tea... It's been poisoned!" said Gerald in his extreme pain as he sat back on the bed before rolling back and forth, clenching tightly onto his stomach the entire time.

“P-poisoned? P-please don’t scare me, Gerald!” squeaked Haven whose anxiousness had peaked after seeing how much pain Gerald seemed to be in.

By the time her sentence ended, Gerald was already clapping onto his head with his hands.

“I-is your head not feeling well too? Please don’t scare me!” said Haven as she gently began shaking his shoulders.

It wasn’t long after before Gerald stopped struggling. His eyes were now closed as his hands had gone limp!

“G-Gerald...? Gerald! Oh god, please, wake up! Men! Men! Get in here!” cried out Haven.

Almost instantaneously, the door to Gerald’s room was flung open and the first person to enter was none other than Xareni.

“S-sister! Gerald seems to have been poiso-!”

Haven’s sentence ended prematurely for a reason. After all, she had noticed by then that right behind Xareni was her father, Second uncle, and many others as they slowly entered the room as well.

“I have to admit, Second, the Scatter Pill really works its magic! Even the incredibly strong Gerald wasn’t able to resist the pill’s effects!” said Zander as he nodded while laughing.

“Hahaha! Truth be told, I was skeptical as well when the Moldells handed me the pill. After seeing Gerald’s capabilities, I truly wasn’t sure whether he could even be poisoned! What more, the Moldells told me that I didn’t even need to use an entire pill to get him seriously poisoned! From what they said, as long as he takes a single sip of the tea, the poison would work its magic no matter how strong he was. Despite that, I slipped in the entire pill, just to be safe! Thankfully, he seems to have taken quite a big sip of the tea as well!”

“Based on what the Moldells said, Gerald will continue sleeping like this indefinitely, right, Second uncle?” asked Xareni while straightening her hair.

“Indeed!”

“Dad? Sister?! What are all of you talking about? Were you the ones who poisoned him?!” asked Haven in her disbelief.

“You have nothing to do with anything here anymore, Haven. Butler! Take Haven to her room so she can get some rest! And don’t let her leave without my permission!”

“Dad! Gerald’s our ally! He saved us!” cried out Haven as the butler quickly dragged her out of the room.

Seconds later, a subordinate walked in before whispering, “Old master, the Moldells are here!”

“Oh? Then hurry up and invite them in!” replied Zander excitedly.

Chapter 1023

“So I heard that you’ve successfully captured Gerald Crawford, Mr. Lovewell. On behalf of the Moldells, I really don’t know how to thank you enough,” said an elderly man—who was leading seven other members of the Moldell family—as he laughed out loud.

“You’re being far too modest, Mr. Yaster. After all, the Lovewells and the Moldells may as well be considered to be one big family in the Logan Province by this point. Gerald himself is a mere outsider. Why would we ever favor an outsider to someone from our side?” replied Zander with a subtle smile.

“Well I’ll be d*mned! That really is him! You have no idea how much effort we had to put in order to find him!” said Yaster, his voice overjoyed as he approached the unconscious Gerald.

Yaster himself was a senior figure within the Moldell family in Logan. In fact, his job was to manage the entire family in the province. Therefore, successfully capturing

Gerald would definitely be a great achievement on his part. He was already wondering how his second uncle, Kort, would reward him for his achievement.

"It's truly been a pain to track you down... Now that you're finally unconscious due to the potent poison of the Scatter Pill, let's see how you'll worm yourself out of this one!" scoffed Yaster coldly.

"Still, even though you described him to be all-powerful, I really don't see what's so great about him, Mr. Lovewell!" added Yaster who was clearly in a very good mood.

"I'll have to correct you there, Uncle Moldell... Most of the Lovewells have already witnessed his true strength and capabilities by this point, and just as my father had described, he truly is that strong. We were only able to subdue him today thanks to my younger sister's help and the wonderfully potent poison of the Scatter Pill you gave us! Otherwise, it would've definitely taken a lot more effort to get him to his current state!" replied Xareni as she straightened her hair while smiling.

"Ah, my niece seems to be an extremely eloquent speaker! You've truly made a great contribution in this matter, Xareni! The Moldell family will never forget what you've done for us! Regardless, it's true that anyone who consumes even a little of the Scatter Pill—regardless of how much they've previously trained—will end up falling unconscious with little chance of ever getting up again!" exclaimed Yaster.

Waving his hand, he then ordered, "Come over, men! It's high time we brought Gerald back to the Moldell Manor! Once he's there, we'll just wait for the second elder's instructions once he's returned from Northbay!"

"Right away, sir!"

Just as Yaster's men were about to carry Gerald away, a cold voice from behind them suddenly called out, "Hold it! What are you planning to do to Mr. Crawford?"

Turning back to see who had said that, everyone saw a white-haired old man standing behind the crowd.

“Oh? It’s you, Mr. Merrett! Here, we’ve retrieved the Everdare Forest map for you. Still, the map is an ancestral heritage from the Merrett family! I still can’t bring myself to believe that you actually gave it to that kid so casually! Gerald wasn’t even content with just having that! To think that he’d eye on the Lovewell family’s Book of Beasts as well! He really doesn’t know how to behave till we force him to!” replied Zander, evidently shocked to see Kaleb there.

In all honesty, Zander had secretly been observing Kaleb’s behavior for a while now. He had reason to since Kaleb seemed to be getting quite close to Gerald.

Still, he wasn’t really all that worried in the beginning since both he and Kaleb had already been friends for so many years by now. As a result, he had believed that if something were to truly happen, then Kaleb would definitely be on his side!

However, he realized just how wrong he was after the events of last night. After all, it was then when Zander realized that Kaleb had told Gerald about the Lovewell family’s Book of Beasts. From that point on, Zander found himself getting increasingly wary of Kaleb.

It was also the reason why he was trying to antagonize Gerald now in his embarrassment.

“Zander, do you honestly take me as nothing but a child? I’ve already heard everything that I needed to earlier. It’s clear as day that you’ve colluded with the Moldells to betray Mr. Crawford! He saved the lives of everyone in the Lovewell family, Zander! To think that you’d actually repay his kindness with acts of evil! Do you even still have a conscience?!” yelled Kaleb as he pointed at Zander.

Though momentarily stunned, Zander’s expression turned cold as he replied, “He tried to take the Book of Beasts from our family! He was certainly asking for all this to happen! Please, Mr. Merrett! Stay out of all this! I’m only saying this since we’ve been friends for so many years by now! Just go home and rest while the Moldells take care of the rest!”

Despite Zander’s persistence to send him back, Kaleb simply said, “Go home? As long as I’m around, none of you will even be able to touch a single strand of Gerald’s hair from here on out!”

Gulping, Zander then nodded with a heavy heart as he replied, "...Fine then, Mr. Merrett. Since you can't tell what's good for you, then don't blame me for being rude and ruthless!"

'Since the Moldells are here today, you won't be able to even touch me!' Zander thought to himself as he turned to look at Yaster.

Yaster could instantly tell what Zander was hinting at.

"If there's anyone to blame in all of this, it's yourself for meddling in other peoples' businesses!" shouted Yaster coldly as he immediately dispatched a few of his subordinates to fight Kaleb.

Kaleb, was a skillful man who had already achieved the title of champion. Due to that, he normally didn't have to take ordinary men seriously at all.

Chapter 1024

However, his current opponents were from the Moldell family.

Even so, he was ready to give it his all. After all, Gerald had saved his life during the decisive battle with Damian last night. His action alone had made Kaleb feel respected like never before.

It truly touched Kaleb, and from that moment onward, the old man felt as though he no longer had to suffer through any more humiliation.

As a result, Kaleb had pledged his loyalty and allegiance to Gerald back there and then.

It was the reason why he was fighting so hard now for Gerald's sake.

Even after fighting for a while, it seemed as though the Moldell family's subordinates weren't really Kaleb's opponents.

Seeing that, Yaster shook his head with a bitter smile on his face as he said, “He truly is worthy of the title of a champion! I guess this guest of the Lovewells isn’t as simple as he looks!”

“Well that’s probably because you haven’t made a move yet, Mr. Moldell. Who in the Logan Province doesn’t know that you’re the top master in the entirety of Weston?” replied Zander with a smile.

“Haha! Is there even a need to fight so many rounds when your opponent is only Kaleb Merrett? Fall back!” shouted Yaster.

After everyone quickly made way for him, Yaster stared at Kaleb for a moment... Before suddenly firing up an immense aura from his body as he dashed toward Kaleb!

From Yaster’s initial analysis on the old man, he could tell that Kaleb’s injuries—that Damian had inflicted on him last night—had yet to completely heal.

Using that knowledge to his advantage, Yaster acted swiftly and immediately struck Kaleb’s head with a potentially deadly blow!

Unable to block it in time, the moment Yaster’s attack connected, Kaleb ended up flying backward as blood spurted out of his mouth.

“Hah! And here I thought that an old man like you would be more skillful and capable! It turns out that you’re nothing more than a piece of trash! Since you were clearly courting death by opposing us, I’ll gladly oblige to ending you right now!” announced Yaster as he slowly walked over to Kaleb’s limp body.

“Zander Lovewell... You’ll definitely receive the retribution you deserve one day! To think that the Merretts have always been kind and benevolent toward your family... You’re even more despicable than a beast, Zander! I, Kaleb Merrett, hereby vow that I’ll return to haunt you as a ghost if I have to!” growled Kaleb as he gritted his teeth in anger.

“Hahaha! No matter what you say, you won’t be able to worm yourself out of this one! You only have your bad luck to blame this time around! To think that you had trained and developed your strength and abilities all this time for nothing!” sneered Yaster as he stood before Kaleb.

Just as he was about to deal the finishing blow to end the old man for good, a voice suddenly shouted, “Pipe down! I barely slept last night so at least allow me to sleep a little longer!”

The moment everyone heard that, the room instantly fell into complete silence. Turning around in utter shock, everyone now had their eyes on Gerald who was still laying on the bed.

Xareni herself had gone fully red in her extreme anxiety.

“...Who... Who said that?” said Zander who was so stunned that he took a step back.

“...Could it be that he didn’t truly pass out?”

“You’re sure that you poisoned him, right, Miss Xareni?”

“How frightening! Could he just be talking in his sleep?”

As everyone continued discussing the current situation—with their eyes still glued on Gerald—they all froze in place the moment they saw Gerald sitting up and yawning.

Stretching as though he had just woken from a nap, Gerald then rubbed his sleepy eyes as he looked at everyone in the room.

Straightening his neck, Gerald’s voice turned frigid as he asked, “I’m assuming everyone is already here.”

“...W-what? You... You weren't affected by the poison?!”

By this point, everyone was beyond horrified.

Chapter 1025

“You call that a poison? I used it as a sort of medicine to supplement my health over half a year ago! Did you truly just try to use that to poison me?”

After soaking his body so much in all sorts of medicinal herbs and other materials—that Finnley had provided him with—back then, Gerald was already immune to certain poisons. It was evident that the poison that they had tried to use on him was one of them.

In all honesty, Gerald could already tell that the tea—that Haven had served him earlier—was poisoned, long before he sipped on it. After all, he was an expert when it came to pharmacology.

He was also well aware back then that Haven would never try to harm him. With that in mind, he knew that it was definitely one of the Lovewells who wanted to harm him. But who?

Wanting to find out, Gerald pretended to pass out so that he could wait for the true culprits to show themselves.

“You brat! Have you any idea how hard the Moldells have been trying to find you this entire time? Though we failed to poison you, don't think you'll be able to escape easily!” sneered Yaster.

Kaleb, on the other hand, immediately stood up and smiled while holding onto his chest when he realized who had spoken.

“S-sir! You're fine! What absolutely great news!”

“I am, Mr. Merrett! Also, I appreciate that you stood up for me earlier!”

In truth, Gerald had been planning to test Kaleb on whether he was sincerely loyal to him sometime after all of this was over. Now that he had personally witnessed Kaleb risking his own life to save him, Gerald knew that no further testing was required.

Touched by his actions, Gerald immediately brought Yaster's attention to him when he saw how close Kaleb was to death.

"There's no need to talk any longer with this brat, Mr. Moldell! Allow me to take care of him once and for all!" said one of Yaster's young subordinates as he smiled contemptuously before rushing toward Gerald.

However, when he was only a step away from Gerald, Gerald swiftly stretched his hand out and grabbed him by the face! Immediately after, the man's limbs froze as his entire body began twitching uncontrollably.

All it took was a simple tilt of Gerald's wrist for a loud 'crack' to be heard from the subordinate's neck.

With that, Gerald tossed the lifeless body before the seven remaining Moldells who were now all wide-eyed in shock.

They were rightfully stunned since the younger generation of the Moldell family all had excellent strength and capabilities. Despite that, Gerald had ended that man's life so easily. It was almost as though that subordinate was nothing but a sheep to Gerald. A sheep incapable of defending itself that could only tremble when attacked.

"You... You brat! I would've never imagined that you'd become so powerful after just one year!" growled Yaster, his eyes still wide open.

Waving his hand immediately after, he then ordered, "Gang up and grab him!"

Hearing that, the remaining six Moldells obeyed and sprinted toward Gerald!

In response, however, Gerald simply raised his head brazenly as he glared intensely at all six of them.

All of a sudden, the air in the room suddenly felt much colder than it should have. Even the subordinates couldn't help but slow down slightly as they felt chills run down their spines.

Gerald was now ready to fight.

These people were part of the family that had pushed him into such desperate situations before. The family that had forced him out of his own home. The family that had utterly humiliated him as though he was nothing but a deprived dog that only deserved to be treated harshly.

What more, their family was still trying to rob the Crawfords of their assets and properties!

An immense bloodlust filled his heart as he made his first move!

With his great skill and his hunger for revenge, Gerald was now practically invincible. As a result, the six men currently trying to attack Gerald were naturally no match against him.

One by one, the men approached him and promptly died without even getting a single chance to land a hit against him.

As blood splattered across the room, Yaster's eyelids twitched violently as he said, "...S-so powerful..."

From the moment Gerald made his first attack, Yaster already knew that he was never going to survive a duel against Gerald. He needed to escape! And quickly!

The moment he turned around to flee, however, he felt a piercing feeling at the back of his neck.

It was a second later when he realized that a thrown dagger was now lodged there! Blood now flowing out of his mouth, Yaster turned around weakly and said, "...Y-you... you...!"

Those were the only two words he managed to mutter before falling to the ground, dead.

Seeing that, Xareni was now so terrified that she screamed while covering her mouth before rushing to a corner of the room to hide.

As for the other Lovewells, none of them even dared to breathe as they stared at Gerald, fully paralyzed in fear.

Zayn, however, was well aware that he was the one who had played the biggest part in the decision to call the Moldells over. As a result, he immediately stepped forward and, in an apologetic tone, he said, "...Hahaha... Ah... Um... So... Y-you see, Mr. Crawford, it was the Moldell family who forced us to do this..."

Hearing no reply, Zayn ended up touching Gerald's arm to see if he had heard his plea for forgiveness. The moment his hand came into contact with Gerald, however, Gerald revealed that the murderous intent hadn't left his eyes as he grabbed Zayn by his neck.

Snap.

As Zayn—who was now spurting blood all over the place—found himself being tossed out the window, he could only twitch a few more times after landing before finally moving no more.

Chapter 1026

"P-please spare our lives, Mr. Crawford!" cried out Zander as he immediately knelt in fright. Seeing that, all the other Lovewells did the same.

Taking in a deep breath, Gerald closed his eyes for a brief moment before opening them again. The rage in his eyes was no longer present.

Since Gerald was still enraged earlier, Zayn had made the fatal mistake of touching him while he was still in an extremely hostile state.

Now that he was much calmer, Gerald turned to face Zander and walked toward him before saying, "...Spare your lives? After you've gone against your promise to hand the Book of Beasts over to me? And don't even get me started on the fact that you colluded with the Moldells to harm me..."

Upon saying that, he gently grabbed onto the top of Zander's head. Zander himself already had a face filled with tears and snot as he stared at the demon of a man standing before him.

Just as Gerald was about to amplify the force of his grip, Haven suddenly rushed in while shouting, "G-Gerald! Don't!"

"H-Haven! You're here! P-please save me!" wailed the terrified Xareni as she instantly ran toward Haven and hid behind her.

As Xareni stared at Gerald with fearful eyes from behind Haven, Haven herself said, "G-Gerald... I know what my father did was wrong... But he wasn't in the right mind when he agreed with the plan! Here, I've brought the Book of Beasts along with me! You can have but please, please let my family go..."

Now already in tears, she then walked toward Gerald with the book in hand.

"D-don't, Haven! He'll kill you!" pleaded Xareni as she grabbed on to her sister's arm.

"It's fine, sister. Gerald already told me that we were friends, so I'm confident that he won't hurt me!"

With that, she loosened Xareni's grip on her arm before continuing to walk over to Gerald. Once she was standing before him, she held the Book of Beasts out before saying with teary ears, "...Gerald... If you really have to kill my father just to relieve all your hatred, then please kill me instead... Once you've done that, I hope you'll

be willing to let my father and everyone else go... Though you're not obligated to do so, please consider my wish as a friend, okay...?"

Upon hearing that and seeing Haven's trickling tears, Gerald felt a sudden pain in his heart. He had initially planned on killing off the rest of the Lovewells. After all, they were no better off than the Moldells at this point.

However, he could see that Haven truly regarded him as a friend. After all, the girl had been extremely nervous earlier when she found out that he had been poisoned. Knowing that, Gerald couldn't bear to break her heart any further.

"...I'll be taking the Book of Beasts for the time being. I'll return the book once I'm done reading it!"

With that, Gerald took the book from Haven's hands and immediately left. Seeing that, Haven jogged after him to see him out.

Zander himself remained in his kneeling position, still too terrified to even feel his legs. At that moment, a young man suddenly rushed in, shouting, "M-Mr. Lovewell! Something bad is happening! There are many people outsi-"

His sentence ended prematurely the moment he saw the carnage that Gerald had left behind in the room. After a brief moment of silence in his shock, the young man finally snapped out of it.

Gulping, he then continued, "...A... A lot of men in black suits are here..."

Haven herself—who was already at the door since she had seen Gerald out—was already staring at the many men standing in her family's courtyard.

They were Welson's subordinates.

"Let's head out!" said Gerald casually as he got into one of the cars and left.

Once the cars were gone, Haven found herself taking a few steps backward.

To think that she had once thought that Gerald was a restrained young man... She realized just how wrong she had been as she recalled all of Gerald's cruelty and ruthlessness today.

If she had looked down on Gerald just as her sister had done, then her entire family would've probably already been wiped out by this murderous demon by now.

'...So it turns out that this is who you truly are, Gerald... Now I finally know...' Haven thought to herself.

It was sometime after Gerald left that Xavia came along with her bodyguards. Seeing Haven standing at the door, she approached her before saying, "What a coincidence, Miss Haven! Your father should be rather free now, right? I plan to visit him..."

Xavia's sentence trailed off the moment she realized that Haven wasn't even listening to her. Instead, the girl was simply muttering what seemed to be the same word over and over again in a tiny voice. Seconds later, Haven turned around to leave without ever looking back.

"...W-what did you say...?" asked Xavia nervously, finally finding her voice as she watched the girl slowly walk off into the distance.

"The second young lady seems to be in a bad mood today, Miss. I propose that we go visit Mr. Zander directly," suggested the bodyguard standing beside Xavia.

Seemingly ignoring her guard's comment, Xavia then muttered under her breath, "...No... She couldn't have said his name... right? Haven... Were you truly muttering Gerald's name...?"

Chapter 1027

'But... There's just no way she would even know who Gerald is... Unless... Could he truly be in the Logan Province...? Hold on, she may not even be talking about the same Gerald!' Xavia thought to herself.

With so many questions swimming in her head, Xavia couldn't hold herself back from chasing after Haven. She desperately needed answers.

Fast forward to two days later, Gerald found himself in the hinterland of Everdare Forest which was located at the border of the Logan Province.

With a heritage that spanned over thousands of years, the trees within Everdare Forest grew extremely densely atop the many mountains that also grew particularly close to each other. Aside from the immense variety of flora that could be found there, several species of predators were also known to lurk within the forest.

"Careful when plugging the hole! We can't let the beast escape again with how cunning it is!" said one of the many men standing in front of a hole that the holy fox had been cornered in.

With Welson being in charge of the operation, it was evident that the group consisted of Gerald and his men.

Since Kaleb had given Gerald the map of Everdare Forest, they had made twice the progress with half the effort in their search for the holy fox. After all, the map was quite detailed and having it alone was akin to having a seasoned navigator of the forest.

While Gerald and the others were successful in locating the holy fox's tracks at dawn yesterday, to their dismay, the fox managed to slip away from them.

That marked the beginning of a series of confrontations they had with the extremely cunning fox. None of them could have ever anticipated how truly capable the holy fox was.

After all, even after working hard to catch it throughout the night, their restless endeavors seemed to be pointless. Though they had confronted the fox for well over a dozen times by then, the fox always seemed to be a step ahead of them!

Eventually, however, they were finally able to trap the holy fox within the hole it was currently in.

Finally getting some results, Welson was now extremely excited.

Gerald himself nervously said, “Don’t allow the beast to escape again! From what I’ve read in the Book of Beasts, not only is the holy fox extremely fast, but though its body is completely white, it’s an expert at concealing itself as well! However, the most worrying thing is the fact that it’s capable of quickly seeing through plans and routines. Once that happens, it’ll easily find a way to escape! The book specifically states that its IQ is even higher than most human geniuses!”

Since Gerald had thoroughly studied the Book of Beasts the night before they began their hunt for the fox, he had learned everything he needed to know about the holy fox alongside other beasts.

As a result, he knew that if they were to allow the fox to escape their grasps this time, tracking it down again would be near impossible

“The beast is about to show itself! Everyone, hush!” ordered Welson as he gestured for the rest to be silent.

Hearing that, everyone held their breath as they surrounded the hole’s entrance. Gerald himself could already see hints of a white tail squirming out from within the narrow hole.

From the moment the fox entered the hole, their plan had been to smoke it out from the other end. Due to the subordinate—who had been stationed on the other end—constantly fanning smoke into the hole, the fox was finally showing signs of exiting it!

However, when the fox was about half a meter away from the entrance, thick, suffocating, green smoke suddenly began pouring out of the hole!

Since Gerald and the others had been lying in wait right in front of the hole, only Gerald managed to retreat and cover his nose in time. Everyone else there, however, ended up getting smoked!

Squeaking could soon be heard as everyone turned to look at the fox. It was almost as though the fox was laughing at them!

With one final squeal, it dashed out of the hole with lightning speed, running past Gerald's men and making its escape!

"D*mn it! It escaped again!" shouted Welson in his frustration.

"After it!" ordered Gerald as he swiftly began chasing after the fox himself. Not wanting it to escape again, Gerald made sure to run as fast as he could.

Though Welson and the others were initially hot on their heels, eventually, they lost sight of both Gerald and the holy fox! They couldn't find any traces of him at all!

"What should we do, Mr. Welson? We've lost sight of him!" said one of the subordinates.

"We'll try our best to locate both of them first! If we still can't find them, then we'll just have to return to base and wait for him there!" instructed Welson.

Meanwhile, the holy fox was making mocking cries as it bolted to the top of the forest, not unlike an arrow that had just been fired.

Chapter 1028

Despite that, Gerald wasn't giving in that easily.

Utilizing a skill that allowed him to tread extremely lightly, his feet almost never touched the ground as he sprinted after the fox.

After running for quite some time, the holy fox came to realize that Gerald didn't seem to be slowing down. Understanding that it wouldn't be able to get rid of him easily by simply running around, the fox dived into a bush.

The moment it entered the bush, Gerald lost track of it almost instantaneously!

“D*mn it all! Did you really just escape again?!” said Gerald to himself as he stopped running, feeling slightly depressed.

However, he hadn’t given up yet. Holding his breath to remain silent, he quickly and carefully scanned through the area around him.

If he wasn’t careful to pay attention while he could, Gerald feared that the fox would end up entirely leaving the area.

He was surprised, however, to suddenly hear voices shouting, “D-don’t kill us! Please don’t kill us!”

Looking in the direction of the shouts, Gerald saw a few people running toward him, screaming in horror as though they were running for their lives.

Gerald could only frown as he thought, ‘Why at such a crucial time...? Why couldn’t you have come earlier or even later?!’

Seconds later, a few thuds could be heard as the screams of horror finally ended. Though it was evident that those screaming had already met their end, Gerald really couldn’t be bothered about that right now.

“Since the few of you followed me all the way out here, what other choice do I have but to kill you all?” sneered an old man as he approached the fresh corpses with his hands against his back.

While he was inspecting the bodies, however, the corner of the old man’s eyes caught a glimpse of Gerald who had been staring off into a distance for a while now.

The old man felt his eyelids twitch after realizing who the person standing there was.

‘So it’s you! It seems that you’re stupid enough to choose your own doom when there are obviously better alternatives!’ Thought the old man as he sneered.

“If it isn’t Gerald! Or should I say, Mr. Crawford! I believe you’ve been well since we last met?” said the old man with murderous intent in his eyes as he approached Gerald.

Gerald himself had been completely focused on detecting any sounds of movement he could register from the environment when he heard his name being called out. Turning around by reflex to see who had called out to him, Gerald was startled to see who it was.

“Oh, it’s you.”

Realizing that Gerald was no longer focused on it, the hidden holy fox—which had been lying silently in wait this entire time—knew it was high time to make its next move.

Sprinting off, it took one leap after another as it quickly disappeared into the valley.

The valley itself was constantly brimming with miasma, making any sight-based navigation attempts a nightmare. Adding that to the holy fox’s immense speed, Gerald couldn’t even see it anymore by the time he realized where the fox was escaping to.

“Don’t run!” shouted Gerald as he gritted his teeth with resentment before jumping into the valley as well.

‘...Oh? So it seems that he’s become pretty skillful now! Since the kid is a rich young master and I’ve already obtained most of the necessary ingredients I need to make the elixir, using his heart as the final ingredient will definitely make the elixir more potent compared to using the hearts of these small fries! It’s decided then. I’ll kill him!’

With his mind made up, the corners of the old man’s lips curled into a smile as he swiftly began following Gerald’s tracks.

Gerald himself was now anxiously pulling his hair as he sat atop a rock that he found in the valley.

'Should it successfully make a full escape, I don't even know when I'll be able to catch the beast again!'

As he tried recalling everything he had read in the Book of Beasts in hopes that something useful would come up, he suddenly came to a realization.

Blood essence. That's right, he could still use blood essence!

He had been so anxious and in a hurry that he had almost completely forgotten about the method.

Smiling as he stood up, Gerald remembered reading about how intelligent the holy fox was, even when compared to human geniuses. However, it had one fatal flaw, that being its greed.

According to the Book of Beasts, the holy fox loved drinking human blood, especially if it came from a person who had had incredible abilities and a well-trained body.

Regardless, as long as Gerald was able to get his hands on some human blood and refine it through blood essence, the beast would certainly be unable to withstand the temptation to drink it.

Blood essence, in this case, was an extraction method that also doubled as a way to purify blood.

While getting the idea had certainly excited him, soon after, Gerald became dejected again.

After all, he had already run quite a distance from where he had last stood. He now realized that he could've just used the blood of the people that the old man had killed earlier!

Since the distance from where he currently was to the corpses was anything but short, the idea of gathering blood from the bodies didn't seem too appealing to him. After all, by the time he got there, he wouldn't even know if the cunning fox would still be within the valley!

He couldn't injure himself just to draw the holy fox out either.

Could it truly be that he was fated to never get his hands on the holy fox? Was he doomed to end up becoming a bloodthirsty demon in the future?

As the depressing thoughts filled his head, Gerald suddenly heard faint rustling not too far away...

Chapter 1029

Turning to his side, Gerald noticed that the one making the sounds was a puppy that was slowly limping toward him! Upon closer inspection, the puppy seemed to have a broken leg. What more, there were visible scars all over its body as well.

When it finally reached Gerald's side, it lay at his feet before promptly starting to lick the tip of his shoe.

Gerald was more startled than anything. After all, he hadn't expected to bump into this little one so deep inside the forest. In a way, it was a miracle that this puppy was still alive with so many predatory beasts lurking within the forest.

"...Could you be asking me to save you?" asked Gerald.

Barking twice in response, it then continued licking Gerald's shoe.

While Gerald's first thought—upon seeing the puppy—was to extract its blood to make blood essence, after the puppy started licking his shoe, he realized two things. First of all, the puppy was simply too small to make a worthwhile blood essence extraction.

Secondly, he realized that the puppy had a somewhat spiritual nature. After all, it had managed to survive this long in the hinterlands of the forest. What more, it was now begging for his help! With all that in mind, Gerald now knew that killing it would be near unbearable for him. After all, he wasn't that cruel.

"How pitiful... I've no idea who abandoned you here, but you're fortunate that you happened to bump into me!" said Gerald as he shook his head while patting the puppy's head.

"Unfortunately, I can't spend too much time idling around here, though I will help to bandage your wounds up first. From there on out, however, we'll be parting ways. I simply don't have the time to help you escape the forest, understand?" added Gerald as he swiftly began patching the puppy's wounds up.

Not long after, he successfully managed to stop the puppy's bleeding and bandage any open wounds he could find.

"How nice it would be if Grandpa Welson and the others were able to catch up to me now... After all, since the fox prefers human blood anyway, each of us could just contribute a little of our blood! We'd then be able to lure the fox out again for sure! But who knows how long I may need to wait for them to arrive... If I wait any longer, the fox could very well escape the valley and I wouldn't even know it!" muttered Gerald to himself in a depressed tone as he did one final check on the puppy.

The now bandaged puppy, on the other hand, crawled in front of Gerald and simply rested its head again on Gerald's food.

"Hey now, I told you that I didn't have any further time to worry about you, right? I'm sorry, but there's just something important I have to do now..." said Gerald as he smiled bitterly while watching the little puppy latch onto him.

However, the puppy simply refused to leave Gerald alone.

At that moment, Gerald's ear twitched slightly. Someone was coming toward him. The puppy itself instantly got up and began barking in the direction the sound was coming from.

After a few barks, it began wagging its tail excitedly as it looked back at Gerald before blinking its eyes.

Turning to look at the puppy—whose tongue was now hanging out—Gerald simply asked with a wry smile on his face, “So you’re as alert as I am! Still, aren’t you afraid of the possibility that the person who comes over will kill you after you’ve attracted their attention?”

Oddly, the puppy simply raised its head a bit higher while continuing to look at Gerald, a strange clarity in its eyes.

“...Hmm? Could it be that you were listening to my mumbling earlier...? Do you know that I require human blood? Is that why you’re deliberately trying to attract that person over?”

Gerald was only making such a bold claim since after reading through the Book of Beasts, Gerald could now more or less tell what most animals meant by their actions.

Upon realizing that its message got across, the puppy instantly nodded before wagging its tail happily.

“Well I’ll be d*mned! You truly do have a spiritual nature!” said Gerald as he patted the puppy’s head.

It wasn’t long after when a figure could finally be seen from afar. Swiftly making their way toward Gerald, the person who finally emerged from the miasma snorted coldly before saying, “No wonder I couldn’t track you down no matter how hard I searched for you! So you had escaped here this entire time!”

Naturally, it was none other than the old man from earlier.

Gerald himself was extremely delighted to see the old man. Rubbing the puppy’s head gently to indicate that it did a great job, Gerald then replied, “Oh? You were hunting me down? I really hadn’t noticed!”

Chapter 1030

With that, he laughed. While he was excited to find a source of blood, he was also genuinely surprised by the old man's statement.

"Indeed! You've been a huge waste of time and effort, you know? Regardless, since I managed to bump into you while looking for one final essential ingredient for my medicine, I believe that both of us were destined to meet here. While it was a pity that I wasn't able to kill you back then in the Salford Province, it seems that you're just itching to die since you brought yourself right to my doorstep this time! It's high time we settled all our past grudges and grievances today, Mr. Crawford!" replied the old man, his gaze frigid.

"Ah, yes, you were still working for the Schuylers back then in the Salford Province if I remember correctly. We didn't even hate each other yet at the time. Sometime after that incident happened, however, I was surprised that you weren't even present when I returned to the province around six months ago. So it turns out that you had moved to the Northern region!" said Gerald as he stared back at the old man.

The old man quite literally had both halves of his face painted black and white respectively. It made his face look like the symbol of yin and yang.

Back when both of them had first met, the old man—who went by the name of Julian—had been under the guise of Yael's butler. From the moment they met, Gerald could already sense that Julian wasn't an ordinary person.

His gut feeling eventually turned out to be right, and Julian had left a deep impression on Gerald ever since that incident. Gerald had also found it odd that Julian wasn't present back when he destroyed the Schuyler family for good.

"Well, I was initially under the impression that the Schuylers would eventually be able to overtake the Fendersons. If all had gone according to plan, then the Schuylers would've easily and consequently used their newly acquired power to destroy the Crawfords! However, from the moment I realized that Noah had secretly tried to curry favor the Crawfords under the pretense that he was going to destroy the Fendersons, I knew from that point on that even if Noah managed to eventually take over the Fenderson family, he would never have the balls to actually go against the Crawfords! After all, I understood him far too well by that point. That was the main reason I left them!"

“Wanting to continue improving my strength, I ended up coming to Everdare Forest in search of ingredients for me to brew an elixir to grant me just that! After searching for so long, I’ve finally managed to gather all the necessary medicinal herbs that I need to brew it. However, there is still one last ingredient I need that is essential to perfecting the elixir. And that’s a heart! Since I actually managed to meet up with you here, I’ll definitely be using the heart of a Crawford to complete the elixir! What perfect timing for you to show yourself at this moment! Hahaha!” explained Julian with his hands still behind his back.

“What did the Crawfords even do to you for you to hate them so much? For you to resort to all sorts of trickery and make endlessly attempts to get me?”

“Heh, it’s simple really. Did you know that the Crawfords are far too powerful? Your family holds so much power that even a single order that they give is enough to wipe out an entire clan. Even though those from the Laker family only hurt one of the Yallemans’ young masters back then, your family retaliated by taking the lives of hundreds of the Laker’s family members! And just like that, my family was almost completely wiped out, despite the fact that we were one of the four major families in Yanken at the time!” growled Julian, his rage reflected in his eyes.

Upon hearing that, Gerald was finally able to see the bigger picture. Recalling what his grandmother had told him, there were once four major families in Yanken. Since his mother had eloped with his father back then instead of going through the arranged marriage that the Yallemans had promised with the Lakers, the Laker family had expressed their dissatisfaction by attacking his fifth uncle who was still in a vegetative state today because of them.

In retaliation, his father then exterminated most of the Laker family. It was now evident that the old man now standing before him was a descendant of the Lakers.

“Hahaha! God truly is on my side this time! I guess my trip to the Logan Province wasn’t a wasted decision after all!” added Julian with a booming laugh.

“...I’m sorry!” replied Gerald.

“Heh! How ridiculous! Do you think apologizing will help you evade death?” scoffed Julian as he pointed at Gerald while shaking his head.

“Well, it’s less to do with that and more to do with the complicated feelings I’m currently experiencing... After all, I don’t even know whether I should thank or sympathize with you!”

“...You want to thank me?”

“Indeed. After all, I’m in dire need of human blood now since I wish to lure the holy fox out. Not only are you human, but you’re also fairly capable and well-trained! You’re the perfect sacrificial candidate to get it to show itself! I don’t really know how else to express my gratitude since you’re going to be dead soon anyway, but I’ll promise to kill you quickly and painlessly! I’ll also be leaving your body fully intact so don’t worry about that!” said Gerald extremely sincerely.

Immediately frowning, Julian then retorted, “You... You brat! Did it only take a year for your mental state to regress that much? Do you honestly think you can even lay a finger on me?!”

“You’ll see in a second. Please understand that I have no better choice!” replied Gerald.

“That’s enough nonsense! You’ve clearly gone bonkers! Regardless, I’ll be taking your life now, Mr. Crawford! I really want to see the look of Dylan’s face once he receives your corpse! Hahaha!”

Upon ending his sentence, Dylan immediately made a mad dash toward Gerald, aiming a punch at him!

Gerald himself retaliated with his own punch, and as their fists collided, the sound of snapping bones could instantly be heard.

It took Julian a second to register the pain, but when it finally hit, he realized a second too late that he was already falling to the ground. Spurting blood in between screams of anguish, the old man had a terrified expression on his face.

It was as though he had come face to face with the most powerful force he had ever encountered in his entire life.

Not giving in that easily, Julian immediately got up again—albeit a bit wobbly—as he attempted to make another punch! However, the moment his fist collided with Gerald’s chest, it felt akin to him punching an immovable mountain. In fact, the impact of the blow probably hurt Julian even more!

“...Y-you... You...!” growled Julian, spurring blood the entire time as he looked at Gerald in utter disbelief.

All the paths to his vital energy flow had been severed by this point, just because of a single punch from Gerald. It had only been a year since they had last met.

How was he this strong now? It was simply impossible, right?

Chapter 1031

Whatever the case was, Julian now finally understood why Gerald had been so happy to see him rather than being frightened.

So Gerald was already this strong... Not only that, his moves were also highly unpredictable and his body was near invincible!

It was evident that Gerald already knew that Julian was never a match against him from the very beginning. Thinking back, Gerald had even thanked him for presenting himself!

Regret was now coursing through Julian as he wondered if things could’ve gone differently if he hadn’t decided to chase after Gerald earlier. If he had just gone home after murdering those few people, then he could’ve brewed the elixir and possibly gained the opportunity to enter the mysterious realm of inner strength.

However, it was much too late for regrets now.

“What... What are you planning to do with me...?” said Julian in between pants, already on his last legs.

“I’ll be drawing your blood now. Worry not, for I’ll keep your body intact just as I’ve promised! May you enter the afterlife with peace of mind!” said Gerald as he gently grabbed hold of Julian’s neck...

With a loud snap, Julian’s eyes widened before finally going vacant. The old man was dead.

After gathering sufficient blood, Gerald looked around for some herbs to use in order to further refine the old man’s blood essence.

Once he was done, Gerald placed the bait in clear view before bringing the puppy along with him and hiding, lying in wait for the fox to make its appearance.

Gerald held on to his black dagger tightly the entire time, an extremely tense expression on his face as he and the puppy continued lying in ambush.

He was sure that the fox would eventually make an appearance. It had to. After all, the fox was only facing extinction due to its inherently greedy nature.

As Gerald thought about that, the puppy’s eyes suddenly widened. Realizing that, Gerald held his breath as well as the holy fox slowly walked over to the bait! It was finally here!

Though the fox was clearly approaching the bait extremely cautiously, it was also evident that it was now already blinded by greed.

After scanning through the area multiple times, the holy fox finally decided to make a quick dash toward the blood, squeaking loudly in greed!

Now was his chance!

He wasn’t going to allow it to escape anymore!

Raising his dagger, Gerald swiftly tossed his dagger at the holy fox! A split second later, the blade connected with the fox's Achilles heel, sending it squealing loudly for one final time before flopping to the ground, dead.

The deed was done!

Rushing over to pick up the lifeless fox's body, Gerald was overjoyed as he said, "Hahaha! You've truly helped me a great deal today, Julian! Your blood was the perfect bait for the holy fox!"

Even the puppy was barking while wagging its tail happily.

"Don't worry, I haven't forgotten about you! To express my gratitude, I'll lead you out of the forest with me once I've drunk the blood. After that, you can eat whatever you want to your heart's content!" added Gerald as he smiled.

Following that, he hugged the puppy and carried it over to a nearby cave with the holy fox's corpse in his other hand.

Now that he had acquired the fox, he needed to drink its holy blood quickly.

After all, according to the Book of Beasts, the holy blood would only remain holy for a short amount of time after the fox passed away. If he continued dragging on for too long, the holy property would cease to exist, resulting in all his efforts being for naught.

As he prepared himself to drink the blood, Gerald remembered the properties of the holy blood based on what his grandfather had once told him. From what he remembered, the blood itself was holy since it had slowly accumulated holiness from both the heavens and the earth, thus filling the blood with an immense amount of energy.

Not only would the blood help nourish and supplement one's heart and temperament, but it would also greatly improve the drinker's inner strength. However, in order to fully utilize the blood, Gerald had to use a special breathing

method that, in accordance with how much he had trained and the extent of his current abilities, would take him about three days to complete the fusion.

“Alright puppy, listen here. I’ll be blocking the cave’s entrance for the next three days. During that period, I’ll be in a deep sleep. Your job will be to make sure no insects or small beasts come near me during my sleep. Do you understand?” said Gerald as he gently patted the puppy’s head.

Barking in agreement, the puppy then hung its tongue out as it happily followed Gerald into the cave.

Meanwhile, another group of people—which consisted of well over a hundred men—seemed to be searching around for someone within the dense Everdare Forest.

All of them were fully equipped with weapons, and among them, a young man in his twenties could be seen walking with the group, his hands behind his back as several elderly men walked by his side.

“Has he not been found yet?” asked the young man with a frown.

“We still don’t have any leads on him!” replied his subordinate.

Chapter 1032

“Bring the Lovewell over!” ordered the young man as his frown deepened.

Hearing that, the man’s subordinates brought a severely injured Zander and Kaleb over to face him.

“Are you absolutely sure that you didn’t lie when you said he was coming over to Everdare Forest?” asked the young man.

“Why would I even lie to you about such a thing, Mr. Moldell? He truly did say that he was headed to this place! Also, I do hope that you realize that it wasn’t the Lovewells who killed the eight Moldell family members! Please keep that in mind...!” replied Zander, a fearful expression on his face.

The young man who had been asking the questions went by the name of Yuvan Moldell, and he was the second son of the Moldell family's head. Zander himself had already heard tales about him long ago. Tales of how cold and ruthless that man's methods were.

Being a businessman, Zander knew that he couldn't afford to further offend either Gerald or the Moldells. However, when the Moldells sent people over to investigate once they caught wind of the eight Moldell family members' deaths within the Lovewell Manor, he had no other choice but to truthfully tell them where Gerald was.

It was the reason why Yuvan and his subordinates were currently conducting their search for Gerald here.

"The Moldells have always deeply resented Gerald, and it's already been over a year since the Moldells have actively gone against the Crawfords. Therefore, I truly hope that you're not lying to me for your sake. After all, it would be better for you not to get involved in our battle!" replied Yuvan casually.

"B-but of course, of course!" replied Zander hurriedly.

"Second young master, we may have found traces of him!" reported one of Yuvan's subordinates at that moment as he walked over to face the man.

Long story short, they had located a few corpses lying on the ground who were dressed like villagers from the foot of the mountain. What more, their corpses were still quite fresh and there were some signs of a struggle at the scene. They were also able to locate a faint trail of trampled greenery that led deeper into the forest.

All of a sudden, the search dogs that the Moldells had brought along with them suddenly began barking while facing a particular direction!

"...Hmm? ...There are people in the vicinity. If the dogs are barking, then he mustn't be too far off! Double your search efforts!" ordered Yuvan.

Hearing that, his subordinates immediately obeyed.

“Still, I recall going to the Crawford family’s mansion about a year ago... Back then, Gerald was still living there, and as far as I can remember, he was just a fragile young lad at the time! It truly makes one wonder what the boy had gone through during his year of absence.

After all, he managed to kill Yaster and the seven other Moldells! A group of people who could be considered to be masters in our family! How could he have grown so strong to be able to defeat them so easily? How incredible!” said an old man who was walking behind Yuvan as he frowned.

“So what if he managed to end Yaster’s life? After all, he has yet to face the true experts from our family...” replied Yuvan, a wry smile on his face.

It was a little while later when from within a valley that lay ahead, a person shouted, “We’ve found him!”

Upon hearing that, Yuvan hastened his steps as all of them arrived at a cave’s entrance. Beside it, was a large stone that must have been used to block anyone from entering.

Though one of Yuvan’s men was desperately holding onto his profusely bleeding neck as he lay on the ground, Yuvan’s full attention was on the pale and lifeless-looking man who was lying motionless inside the cave.

“I... I’ve finally found you, Gerald!” declared Yuvan as he knitted his brows before turning to look at his injured subordinate.

“What’s wrong with him?”

“He was attacked by that fierce dog over there, second young master! Seeing that the dog serves as Gerald’s protector, I’ll kill it immediately!” explained Yuvan.

With that, the subordinate began approaching the puppy with a rope in hand. Upon managing to lasso the puppy, it immediately growled before barking wildly, all the fur on its body standing upright as though it was ready to launch an attack!

Hearing the fearsome barks, several of the subordinates couldn't help but back away from it. The puppy was so intimidating that some of the men even ended up messing up their pants!

"...Hmm? Interesting... Don't kill it first. Bring it back to the Moldell Manor together with Gerald!" ordered Yuvan when he saw his subordinates' reactions toward the puppy.

Obedying his orders, a few of the subordinates then began transferring Gerald out of the cave. After bringing him out, an old man—who had been standing beside Yuvan—checked Gerald's pulse and upon realizing that it was very weak, he said, "Didn't everyone say that this lad was all-powerful and capable? He seems half-dead to me! Though that's honestly a good thing. Otherwise, he'd definitely try to escape again!"

His comment on Gerald's situation clearly wasn't anything crucial. The old man had simply stated it without giving it much thought.

However, upon hearing that, Yuvan turned to coldly look at him before replying, "Escape? He's already in my hands now. Even if he were to wake up, do you honestly think he would be able to escape under my supervision?"

"N-not at all, second young master!" said the old man hurriedly.

Knowing that he had just dodged a bullet, the old man then lowered his gaze to look at Gerald again. Though it only lasted for a split second, the old man was shocked when he saw a sudden flash of red on Gerald's pale face as the subordinates began carrying him away.

Chapter 1033

'...Was that my imagination?' Thought the old man to himself, feeling slightly suspicious.

While he wanted to warn Yuvan about it, the old man knew how arrogant he was. What more, Yuvan had already given him an angry glare of dissatisfaction earlier. If he were to say anything else, Yuvan's anger would most definitely grow.

'...I must've just seen wrongly!'

Regardless, the Moldells had finally been able to capture Gerald after an entire year of searching for him. In other words, they now had the ultimate bargaining chip to use against the Crawfords of Northbay.

With that in mind, it was natural for all the Moldells of the Logan Province to feel extremely excited.

"That kid really knows how to hide! We had to burn through so many financial resources and use endless connections but it all paid off. We've finally captured him today!"

"Hahaha! The Moldells of Logan will finally be able to rule over the region now! Since Gerald is the only heir to the Crawford family and he's also Dylan's most beloved son, it won't be long before we finally get our hands on the Crawford family's assets!"

As the Moldell family members continued discussing the matter, a guest bodyguard—who was mainly working for the Long family—happened to hear everything they said.

After hearing what they had to say for a while, he swiftly ran toward a room before opening the door and saying, "Miss, I bring important news!"

The 'miss' in question, was none other than Xavia who was carefully applying makeup at the time her guard entered.

Since something big had happened between the Lovewells and the Moldells, the Longs naturally had to cancel their negotiation plans with Zander. Due to that, Xavia had to leave Zander's manor which explained why she was temporarily staying in the Modell family's home for now.

"What's the news?" asked Xavia.

Gulping, the bodyguard then replied, "It's about Gerald from the Crawford family! I heard that the Moldells have finally been able to locate and capture him today after trying to find him for over a year!"

The moment she heard that, the powder box in Xavia's hand fell to the ground with a loud 'clang' as the trembling woman turned to look at her guard.

"...W-what did you say? Gerald? So... The Gerald who had been active in the Lovewell family in the past few days truly was the Gerald from the Crawford family?" stuttered Xavia as she abruptly stood up, completely stunned by the revelation.

"Undoubtedly so, miss! All the other Moldells are currently discussing the matter! What more, I heard they found Gerald in a terrible state! They described him as being, 'half-dead'!" replied the bodyguard.

Hearing that, Xavia found herself clenching her fists tightly. She was facing a cocktail of complicated emotions now.

Did she hate Gerald? She did. She hated him a lot. After all, if Gerald had simply been willing to stay together with her, then she wouldn't have needed to go to the Longs in the first place. What more, he had dumped her the moment he found out that he was rich!

No matter what happened, Xavia could never deny that she was filled with hatred for Gerald.

...Even so, Xavia couldn't help but feel distressed after hearing that Gerald had been caught and could very well already be dying.

Besides, no matter what had happened between them, she couldn't deny that he used to love her unconditionally once upon a time ago.

The exact same thoughts had run through her mind back when she had allowed Gerald to escape back then.

Pacing back and forth in her frustration, Xavia then muttered to herself, "What should I do... What should I do?! If I don't do something then the Moldells will definitely kill him!"

"Even if they don't, I personally feel that he won't survive for much longer anyway... From what I heard, he was already almost out of breath when they found him! Regardless, he's currently been thrown into the Moldell Manor's dungeon!" replied the bodyguard.

Upon hearing that, Xavia's anxiety only grew worse. It was a brief moment later when she closed her eyes and took in a deep breath. When she opened them again, there was a resolute look in her eyes.

"...Humph! I already told myself that I wouldn't have anything else to do with him once I let him off back then! Whether he lives or dies, that no longer has anything to do with me!" declared Xavia as she sat down again.

Hahaha... She couldn't believe that she had almost forgotten the reason she had been working this hard for the past few years. Was it all not for her to be able to live a better life than him?

Chapter 1034

Due to that reasoning, wasn't it a good thing that he was dying now?

"...If you truly wish to see him for one final time, I may have a solution for you, miss..."

"What's your plan?!" replied Xavia immediately upon hearing that.

However, she quickly realized her gaffe and said, "...W-who the hell would even want to see him? Actually, hold on, I'd really love to see the miserable state he's currently in before he dies! Hahaha!"

"...I see. Regardless, the key to the dungeon has always been in the hands of the Moldell family's butler. Since I'm acquainted with the butler's chance, there exists a chance that he may help us!" replied the bodyguard.

“Please help me contact him then!” said Xavia.

A little while later, the duo stood before the butler’s son that Xavia’s guard had mentioned. The lad himself had a crooked back and he immediately began shaking his head rapidly upon hearing Xavia’s request.

“Now hold on! Do remember that Gerald is currently the most wanted person by the Moldells! Even my father isn’t qualified to meet him at this point! What more, the security within the dungeon is extremely strict to the point where several of the Moldells themselves aren’t able to pay him a visit! Imagine what that would spell for a Long!”

“There must be a way for you to get me in! State your condition!” replied Xavia as she looked at him right in the eye.

Hearing that, the butler’s son momentarily stared at Xavia before a wretched expression formed on his face. Seeing that, Xavia couldn’t help but take a few steps back.

“...With all due respect, Miss Yorke, I’ve heard that your husband is a little slow in the head, correct? You must be lonely if that’s the case...” said the butler’s son as he slowly walked forward and gently held onto Xavia’s wrist.

“To be quite honest, from the moment I met you, I’ve been fascinated by your beauty... From that moment onward, I swore to myself that if I ever got the opportunity to get intimate with you, I’d be more than willing to die for your sake!” added the butler’s son.

“Please restrain yourself, Mr. Quillan! If you truly like me, then please be magnanimous with me and allow me to meet Gerald! If you do so, then I’ll be plenty grateful to you!” replied Xavia as she pulled her hand back.

Frowning, he then replied, “You seem rather reluctant to leave that Gerald... What is your relationship with him? Why do you insist so much on seeing him?”

"I won't lie that Gerald used to be my boyfriend back in university, Mr. Quillan. In short, I wish to meet up with him to exact my revenge one final time. After all, I won't ever be able to do such a thing again once he's dead!" said Xavia as a hint of resentment momentarily reflected in Xavia's eyes.

"Hahaha! I see... So you had such a past with Gerald... Alright then, Miss Yorke. I'm willing to risk my life to get your request done. However, I do hope that you'll eventually repay my favor once the matter is over, right?" said Quillan rather maliciously as Xavia turned around to leave as soon as she heard that he was agreeing to do it.

Not even looking back at him, she then replied, "The next few days will be highly inconvenient for me. I'll thank you sometime in the future, Mr. Quillan."

"That's completely understandable! After all, inconvenient days will always exist for girls!" replied Quillan with a wry smile after hearing that he would eventually get his way.

"Regardless, I'll retrieve the key from my father tonight. However, do note that you'll only have five minutes with him! Otherwise, I'll truly be as good as dead!" added Quillan.

"Five minutes is all I need! Thank you, Mr. Quillan!"

"Ah, speaking of which, Miss Yorke-"

Though Quillan had initially planned to take advantage of Xavia, his sentence ended up hanging since Xavia had already walked off in a hurry at that point.

Smiling coldly at himself, Quillan then thought, 'Ah, young lady... I've been interested in you for the longest time, you know? To think that I'll finally be able to get my hands on you in a few days... Hahaha!'

Soon enough, night fell and Xavia entered the dungeon sporting sportswear and a cap.

“Remember! Five minutes! I’ll stand guard over the door!” whispered Quillan as Xavia sneaked deeper into the dungeon.

Eventually, she caught sight of Gerald’s body that was sprawled on the dungeon’s floor.

“G-Gerald!” said Xavia, unable to hold herself back from calling out to him.

It had been an entire year since she had last met him. To think that they would meet again under such circumstances.

Seeing the terrible state he was in, all the hatred Xavia had in her heart simply melted away as she added, “G-Gerald, wake up! Are you truly going to die soon...?”

Getting no reply, she then ran over to him, gently shaking his weak body. No matter how much she shook, however, his pale face remained unresponsive.

Chapter 1035

Seeing him in such a state made Xavia feel extremely uncomfortable. After all, her feelings toward him were still quite vague. However, she knew for a fact that though she hated him, she still loved him even more.

“Please... Please wake up now...!” wept the distressed girl as she slowly slumped to the floor to sit beside Gerald.

This person had once given her the most beautiful thing in the world... He had given her selfless love. A love that meant that he didn’t mind losing everything just for her, and Xavia was well aware of that this entire time.

“Gerald... I know you hate me... After all, I, of all people, ended up bullying you like the others back then... I... I just couldn’t help it at the time... I didn’t want to continue living a life where I had to constantly be despised and belittled... You know, even as a child, my biggest fear had always been others looking down on me! I... I just want others to envy and adore me...! But none of that matters anymore because regardless of how much fame I gain, I’ve come to realize that you’ll always be the only one in my heart, Gerald... So please... Please don’t die, Gerald!” said Xavia as she laid her head against Gerald’s chest while sobbing her eyes out.

At that moment, the unconscious Gerald suddenly began scrunching his face into a slight frown.

Seconds later, Gerald's body suddenly began emitting a red glow!!

Lifting her head in surprise, Xavia watched in shock as a scorching surge of energy suddenly burst out of Gerald's body! Since her hand had still been on his chest when that happened, Xavia quickly retracted it in pain. It felt as though she had just touched a hot iron!

Yelping in surprise and pain, she immediately got up and took a few steps backward as she stared wide-eyed at Gerald.

'...W-what...? What the hell was that? Why was his body so hot?'

As Xavia tried to rationalize what had just happened, the red glow quickly faded and Gerald's face turned pale again.

Still extremely confused as to what had just taken place, Quillan walked over to her out of the blue before saying, "Time's up, Miss Yorke! Should the next person in shift arrive, it'll become increasingly difficult for you to leave then! It's high time you left!"

Not noticing Quillan's wretched smile as she continued staring worriedly at Gerald, she simply nodded before replying, "...Got it..."

"Heh, that person's as good as gone, Miss Yorke. There's nothing else you can do for him. Also, I hope you remember your promise with me. Once your business is over in the next few days, you'll have to give me what I deserve! Understand?" said Quillan, as he tried to take advantage of her again.

"Let's just leave this place first, Mr. Quillan!" replied Xavia as she quickly dodged his advances and left the area.

Scratching his chin, Quillan felt that the more he looked at Xavia, the more he wanted to get his hands on her.

“You’ll be mine for sure...! Heh!” muttered Quillan to himself as he failed to notice Gerald’s slowly intensifying frown.

Fast forward to the morning three days later, the Moldells seemed to be extremely busy.

Decades ago, Kort had secretly established his own power in the Logan Province, unbeknownst to the main Moldell family. He had done so due to his greed for worldly wealth and prosperity.

Slowly but surely, the Moldells continued growing and annexing till it became the largest family in Weston to date. While all appeared to be going well, their main goal had always been to take over the Crawford family in Northbay.

Once they acquired the Crawford family, then the Moldells would certainly have near-infinite strength. Now that they had finally gotten their hands on Gerald, they could use him as a bargaining chip to achieve their dreams! It definitely explained why the Moldells were all so excited now.

In relation to their plan, they were also busy preparing to relocate their family back to the south.

It was near noon when everyone finally relaxed for a bit to have a family luncheon.

“The head of the family will be arriving in the Logan Province around tomorrow night! I do wonder how he’s going to reward us! Hahaha!”

“How else could he reward us? Remember, the head once mentioned that Gerald could easily be traded in with at least half of the Crawford family’s assets! Once he achieves that, he can easily just hand us one of the many regions he’ll soon have full control over!”

“Hahaha! Just a region? I’m afraid that you’re seriously underestimating the true power of the Crawfords! Did you not know that the Crawford family’s industries are scattered throughout the world? A region to them could very well be equivalent to having power over an entire country!”

“How impressive!”

The Moldells were now discussing the matter among themselves rather excitedly.

Chapter 1036

“Second young master, I’ve no idea what’s wrong with your dogs today! They simply refuse to eat! As if that wasn’t odd enough, they keep biting onto their chains with panicked expressions on their faces! Could they possibly have encountered something when we brought them into the mountains three days ago?” said a housekeeper to Yuvan as the others were still enjoying their lunch.

“Encountered something? Nothing comes to mind. They could be ill, so call a vet in to have a look at them!” sneered Yuvan.

The moment his sentence ended, however, a servant came stumbling in next before saying, “S-second young master! Bad news! Two of your dogs have just died! I don’t even know what happened! One moment they suddenly started acting all crazy and the next, both of them were already foaming at their mouths!”

Since the servant was well aware of how much the second young master loved raising dogs, he had immediately told Yuvan about the discovery to avoid getting into any unnecessary trouble.

“What?! Take me to them!” replied Yuvan anxiously as all the other members of the Moldell family followed him into the backyard.

The backyard itself was home to nearly a hundred domesticated dogs. Unlike how they usually behaved, however, all of them seemed to have gone completely rabid today! Many of them were even struggling and gnawing onto their iron cages!

During the short period Yuvan was there, he witnessed the death of another three dogs to his dismay.

“Call a vet over immediately and have them have a look at what’s wrong with these dogs!” ordered Yuvan as many of the other Moldells started panicking.

What was the cause of all this? It was almost as though the dogs were sensing some sort of imminent disaster!

Since none of the dogs could be calmed down, the vet wasn’t even able to properly diagnose them since it was impossible to check on any of them without first getting severely injured.

By the time evening came, over half of the dogs there were barely alive.

Around that time, an acquaintance of Quillan’s saw him moving around rather sneakily. Raising a brow, he then called out, “Hey, have you heard of the dogs going crazy? The last place most of them went was Everdare forest so there must be a connection with that place! Regardless, nobody can even guess what could’ve triggered such a reaction among them!”

Despite him obviously talking to Quillan, Quillan himself simply ignored him, snickering as he continued walking down a hallway where the rooms were. Walking over to him, his acquaintance then patted him on the shoulder before adding, “Hey, I’m talking to you, Quillan!”

Jolting slightly, it was made evident that Quillan’s mind was so preoccupied that he hadn’t even noticed that he was the person his friend had been talking to.

“...Eh? They’re just dogs anyway! What’s the big deal even if they die? Speaking of which, where are you headed to, Luis?” replied Quillan quickly.

“Where else could I be going? I’m heading down the dungeon to see if that Gerald person is already dead! If he’s still alive, I’ve been ordered to force-feed some congee to him! The congee itself has been laced with Scatter Pills, so even if he miraculously remains alive, he’ll certainly still end up being demented!” explained Luis.

"I see. Well, then hurry up and get the job done! If there's nothing else, I'll talk to you later!"

"It's almost dark, though... And besides, where are you headed to...?" muttered Luis to himself as he scratched the back of his head while looking at Quillan who had bolted off as soon as his sentence ended.

After making sure that Luis was no longer there, Quillan rubbed his hands together as he knocked on Xavia's door.

"Who's there?" asked Xavia as she opened the door.

The moment she saw the wretched expression on Quillan's face, a hint of disgust was momentarily reflected in Xavia's eyes.

"...Ah, it's you, Mr. Quillan! What brings you here?" asked Xavia rather casually.

Quillan himself couldn't keep his eyes still at all. After all, Xavia was currently wearing a close-fitting short dress and her hair had been let loose.

Gulping as he continued looking at the alluring woman standing before him, Quillan then replied, "Since I've already done what you've wanted, I'm here to ask when you'll be fulfilling your half of the promise."

Hearing that, Xavia frowned slightly though she quickly hid her disgust behind a façade.

"Regarding that, Mr. Quillan, it's true that I've agreed to repay your kindness, and I definitely will. However, wouldn't it be best to let that discussion wait till morning? After all, it's already getting dark now and Mr. Yuvan is still very anxious because of his dogs. You should head over to console him!" said Xavia as she immediately tried to close the door behind her.

However, Quillan held onto the door with a chuckle before replying, "Now, now, I already knew you were going to say that... I'm well aware that you're not interested

in me... Hell, you probably look down on me! However, that doesn't change the fact that I've liked and admired you for the longest time. I even risked my life just to allow you to meet up with Gerald, you know? So no matter what you say, I'm getting what I want, Miss Yorke!"

Her disgust now apparent on her face, Xavia glared at him as she replied, "Please be more respectful, Mr. Quillan! I hope you remember that I'm here as a representative of the Long family! Not only that, but I'm also a guest of the Moldells!"

"Heh! Guest? Miss Yorke, the Longs are nothing more than pawns to the Moldell family! So as I've said before, you're going to be mine today!" sneered Quillan as he immediately rushed toward Xavia!

Chapter 1037

"What the hell are you doing?! Help! Help m-"

Before Xavia could shout any further, Quillan covered her mouth with a white towel! Though she squirmed hard to escape his grasp, Xavia slowly felt as her vision blurred. Soon enough, she struggled no more.

At the same time, Gerald's ears suddenly twitched in his deep slumber. Still within the dungeon, he slowly opened his eyes.

The moment he did so, his eyes briefly sparkled a fluorescent green before returning to normal a few seconds later.

It surprised Gerald, to say the least, to know that he was now able to see even the tiniest of details within the dungeon cell, despite the fact that it was almost pitch black in there.

His greatly improved hearing capability was a pleasant surprise as well. As long as he wanted to, he could now apparently hear things clearly, even if they were far away!

Sitting up, Gerald slowly got to his feet before hopping in place to get his muscles moving.

Upon looking at his skin, he realized that there were several trails of black stains oozing out of it. From what he could guess, they were impurities that had been cleansed from his body.

'I guess they don't call it holy blood for nothing... Not only did it stabilize my heart and temperament, but I now feel stronger than ever!' Gerald thought to himself, overjoyed.

It wasn't even a stretch at this point to assume that his inner strength had now doubled from what it had been three days ago.

'And here I was planning to pay the Moldells a visit and deal with them once and for all after drinking the holy blood... To think that they actually saved me the trouble by bringing me right into their home!' Gerald thought to himself as he sneered.

Oh right, he still needed to save Xavia!

Though Gerald was mostly immobile in the past three days, his mind was far from unconscious. In fact, he was well aware of everything that was happening around him throughout that period of time. It was the reason how he had heard Xavia's earlier scream for help.

Thinking about Xavia, he recalled everything that she had told him that night. Gerald knew he would only be lying to himself if he claimed that her words hadn't touched him at all.

Adding the fact that she had risked her life just to visit him in the dungeon with her actions a year ago that ended up saving his life, Gerald was well aware of how difficult it was now going to be for him to even come close to repaying her kindness.

Knitting his brows slightly, he knew those thoughts could wait. For now, he needed to save Xavia first!

Staring briefly at the iron gate before him, Gerald placed a hand on the gate and tugged on it.

A loud crumbling sound followed as the surrounding walls supporting the gate collapsed with it! Seemingly unfazed by his inhuman strength, Gerald walked out just in time to catch a person running down into the dungeon.

When their eyes met, the person immediately stuttered, "...G-Gerald...? You... You're awake?!"

The man holding the bowl of congee was naturally none other than Luis.

"M-Men! Men! Get in here!" shouted Luis as he immediately attempted to run out of the dungeon to get some help.

Luis had been one of the people who had seen the carnage that Gerald had left behind at the Lovewell manor. It was exactly because of that, that he now had an innate fear of him. Adding that to the fact that he was well aware of how weak he was, there was no way in hell that he was going to stay within Gerald's presence any longer than he needed to!

However, before he could even make it far from where he had once stood, the disgusting sound of flesh being ripped apart could be heard.

It took Luis a second to realize what had just happened. Thankfully, he was dead by the time his body split in two.

Climbing up the stairs, Gerald casually walked past the corpse as he slowly exited the dungeon. His ears were perked as he attempted to pinpoint which direction Xavia was in.

From what he could hear, a few members of the Moldell family were currently in the backyard. There were also quite a few people in the guestroom area.

Walking along as he continued trying to locate Xavia, he swiftly and efficiently dealt with anyone that ran into him.

When he finally found her not too long after, he stood by her door before kicking it open!

Gerald was immediately greeted to the sight of Quillan tearing Xavia's clothes apart.

Shocked to hear the door being flung open, Quillan immediately turned to look at the mud-covered visitor who looked like he had just crawled out from the earth.

"W-who are you?" asked Quillan, clearly at a loss of how to even register the situation.

Though Xavia was currently still extremely weak, she was easily able to tell who the person at the door was.

"...G-Gerald... hurry... Please hurry and save me...!" cried out Xavia.

Stunned, Quillan then said, "...Gerald? He... He's escaped?!"

Frightened beyond words, Quillan then ran toward the corner of the room, his eyes alternating between Gerald and the exit. Before Quillan could even start planning his escape, Gerald was already standing in front of him!

"Hmm...?" replied Gerald as he lifted the terrified man by his neck.

Chapter 1038

"P-please! Spare me! Don't kill me!"

"...Spare? You're a Moldell, aren't you? And all Moldells deserve to die!" growled Gerald as he tightened his grip until the—now familiar sound of—snapping bones could be heard.

As Gerald dropped Quillan's lifeless body to the ground, Xavia weakly sat up on the bed before asking, "G-Gerald... You're... You're fine?!"

“I am, indeed!” replied Gerald with a nod.

“Before anything else, I’ll need to borrow your room for a quick shower!”

It was sometime later when all the members of the Moldell family were gathered in their manor’s main hall.

“Trash! All of you! Can you not even take good care of a few dogs?!” roared Yuvan who had already lost his temper at this point.

Yuvan had spent a lot of time and effort to train each of his dogs, so they were all equally important to him. Due to that, everyone in the family understood where his immense anger was stemming from. However, it’s not like they could do anything about it.

“Get lost! All of you!” scowled Yuvan as the group of vets immediately fled in fright.

As Yuvan tried to keep his cool, an old man walked up to his side before saying, “Something seems to be very wrong!”

The old man went by the name of Yash, and he was the chief butler of the Moldell family. Not only that, but he was also one of the strongest and most experienced masters among the other members of the Moldell family in the Logan Province.

“What is this time...?” grumbled Yuvan in his bad mood.

“I’ll be frank and say that I’ve been feeling this unease ever since we returned from Everdare Forest. The feeling has only amplified with the fact that over half of our family’s dogs have already died of madness within the past three days. All of these are ominous signs... Would you mind if I expressed my thoughts on all this?” replied Yash quickly.

Waving his hand, Yuvan then said, “Hurry up and say it.”

“...Well, I just have this strong premonition that something terrible is going to befall the Moldells soon, and Gerald will be the cause of it! Whenever I end up thinking about him, I can neither eat nor sleep well at all... You know, I’ve been instructing the servants to add Scatter Pills into the congee they feed him just for extra measure-”

Before the old man could continue saying anything, Yuvan interrupted him by replying, “Butler Moldell, I believe that all this only stems from your fear of him... While it’s true that Mr. Yaster and the others have all suffered terrible deaths, we can’t just take the Lovewell family’s word by word description of the event as pure fact! Think about it! Mr. Yaster has been training for the longest time and he was already considered to be one of the Moldell family’s top masters from a young age! How could Gerald possibly have had the power and ability to kill him off so easily? The way I see it, the Lovewells must have colluded with Gerald to deceive Mr. Yaster! After all, that’s a much more plausible scenario, no?”

After saying that, Yuvan simply shook his head.

Yash himself sighed before saying, “I really hope that that’s the case... It would truly be for the best if everything remained as peaceful as it currently is before the family head arrives!”

The moment his sentence ended, a servant stumbled into the hall while shouting, “T-terrible... S-something terrible has happened!”

“What the hell is it this time? Did more dogs die?!” growled Yuvan as he slammed a hand against the table.

“N-no! It isn’t the dogs this time! It’s humans! I-I found Luis cleaved in half in the dungeon! What more, seven other members of our family have also been killed in the VIP guest area! All of them look like they were killed without any chance of retaliation at all! T-the most worrying thing is, the dungeon is now empty!”

“What?!”

By then, everyone who had heard the servant’s announcement was panicking.

Though Yash himself didn't say anything and was only quivering slightly, the fact that his forehead was now dripping with cold sweat signified that the calmness he expressed was merely a façade. All his worries and unease from the past few days were now mercilessly assaulting his mind.

"Who dares commit such a serious crime within the Moldell Manor no less?! And what of Gerald?" asked Yuvan, his anxiety evident in his tone.

"Gerald's gone missing!"

As everyone's panic peaked, a cold breeze blew the fallen leaves in the courtyard. Within the darkness of night, the leaves themselves fluttered aimlessly, unable to leave the actual yard. In a way, the same could be said for all the other members of the Moldell family who were now trapped in with Gerald.

Even the barks of the remaining dogs in the backyard seemed to intensify at that moment. The deafening barks were nothing short of unnerving for the Moldells who were still alive.

Throughout their thousand-year history, members of the Moldell family had always lived without fear for their lives. Though all of the family's members had been trained to not be unnerved by the corpses of others, the ones that were currently in their home were corpses of their family members! It didn't help that they had been killed in their very own manor!

As a result, it was really no question why the members of the Moldell family were all panicking now!

'Nothing like this has ever happened to our family before within our thousand-year history!' Thought one of the Moldells to themselves.

"I want everyone to be mobilized immediately! Use every means possible to locate the murderer and for the love of god, someone recapture Gerald for me!" ordered Yuvan furiously as he slammed his hand against the table again, this time splitting it in half!

Yash himself—who had been staring out the window at the dark of night for a while now—suddenly whispered, “S-second young master... it... it seems that he’s here!”

Chapter 1039

“...Huh?”

Startled by what they had heard, everyone immediately turned to look out the courtyard. In the darkness, the faint silhouettes of two figures could be seen approaching their home. One of them appeared to be a man while the other—that followed closely behind the man’s silhouette—seemed to belong to a puppy with somewhat glowing green eyes.

The moment moonlight shone upon the duo, everyone ended up taking a deep breath when they realized who it was.

“G-Gerald Crawford?!”

“How the hell did he get out there? Wasn’t he in a coma of sorts?!” said one of the Moldells.

“Who cares? Rather, isn’t it perfect that we already know where he is? We don’t have to waste any time locating him now!” added another member of the Moldell family in a cold tone.

As everyone continued discussing the situation, the main entrance’s door creaked open. Walking over casually, Gerald then asked with a smile on his face, “Well then, I assume everyone from the Moldell family is here today, no?”

Though he was smiling, everyone who saw him felt chills run down their spines. The Moldells knew the face of evil when they saw it.

“Aren’t you being a bit too arrogant, young lad? Tell you what, I don’t believe any of the rumors regarding your immense powers and abilities. Now stop acting so cocky as I show you the true power of the Moldell family’s bloodline!” shouted a young Moldell as he bolted toward Gerald to attack!

Before his fist could even reach Gerald's face, however, Gerald clasped his hands over the young man's hand. Frozen in place, the young man found that he couldn't move a muscle! It was a second later when a loud thud could be heard.

Gerald had used his palm to smack the man directly in his face! The immense force caused all the man's bones to simultaneously shatter as his body immediately flew backward.

Anything that lay in the falling body's path ended up getting knocked over until finally, the dead man stopped moving when his body slumped against the wall on the far end of the room.

"...W-what?!"

Their eyelids twitching frantically, everyone found themselves taking a few steps back.

So it seemed that the rumors had been true. Gerald truly had been the one who had killed all eight of the Moldells back in Lovewell Manor!

Taking in a deep breath, Yash then said, "...Impressive, Mr. Crawford... It seems that you've certainly experienced quite a bit in the past year... However, I have to advise you to calm yourself and tone it down a bit... Take it as advice from an elder... After all, I'm sure that you know the Moldell family's background extremely well by now. Since you're the only one the Crawfords can depend on, do you honestly think that you'll be able to take on the many other Moldells alone? You've already killed several of my men today. Aren't you afraid that that'll bring misfortune to the Crawford family?"

"Hahaha... Bring them misfortune, you say? The existence of the Moldells is, in itself, a disaster for my family! I'll say it right now that I've been waiting for the longest time to settle the score with the Modells! It's high time I did just that!" replied Gerald with a subtle smile as he turned to look at everyone in the room.

"Again, I must say that you're being way too arrogant, Mr. Crawford! While I do admit that you're certainly extremely skillful and powerful, I hope you don't forget

that there are hundreds of masters from the Moldell family standing before you today. It's impossible for you to defeat all of us on your own!" persuaded Yash.

Though he said that, Yash was well aware that they were completely helpless against Gerald. All he could do was try to delay and hopefully stop Gerald from causing more bloodshed among his other family members.

There were hundreds of Moldell masters gathered here today, and Yash wasn't going to allow all those years of being trained by the head of the family to go to waste. He had to deter Gerald some way or another!

"I don't care how many of you there are... I'm dealing with all of you once and for all! No Moldell is going to make it out alive tonight!" declared Gerald as his eyes turned scarlet and a violent aura began surging out of his body!

"Do you think you're that incredible?! I'll kill you right here and right now! Bring it on and show me what you're capable of!" roared Yuvan who was now beyond furious.

Yuvan had been a perfect inheritor of all his father's teachings and from the moment he had gained power in the Moldell family, he had been nearly invincible.

Despite that, to think that Gerald would actually claim that he would exterminate the entire Moldell family alone! The clearly insane Crawford had simultaneously humiliated his entire family as well!

Clenching both his fists, Yuvan channeled his anger into them as a gush of inner strength coursed through his body.

With a giant leap, he prepared to land a roundhouse kick aimed at Gerald! However, though he was extremely fast, Gerald was faster.

Raising his own leg, Gerald's kick clashed against Yuvan's!

As the sickening crunch of bones filled the room, everyone stared wide-eyed as Yuvan was kicked back to where he had leaped from. Crashing into a stone pillar, Yuvan's body had been flung back so hard that he ended up destroying it!

Amidst the debris, Yuvan was already breaking out in cold sweat as he said, "...W-what?!"

From the moment he sensed that he could no longer move one of his legs, he deduced that it was broken. That also told him that among everyone present today, none of them were even close to being capable enough of evading or even blocking any of Gerald's fearsome attacks.

Chapter 1040

"Everyone! Attack in unison!" ordered Yash aloud.

With many of the Moldells already seeing red now, they all obeyed Yash's order, rushing forward to besiege Gerald!

The truth was that the masters who were currently present weren't the true top masters within the Moldell family. They had simply mastered more skills and fighting abilities than the regular Moldell. As a result, it was evident that none of them were even close to being proper opponents to Gerald.

Gerald himself was now attacking and killing everyone in sight as easily as though he was simply cutting through vegetables.

Anyone who stood in his way instantly met a violent death.

"H-He's strong... He's simply too strong!" shouted Yash as he gulped down hard. Having more people meant nothing if none of them were even capable of dealing damage to Gerald!

Taking advantage of the chaos, Yash rushed over to Yuvan—who was still lying on the same spot he had landed in—before anxiously asking, "S-second young master! How are you feeling?!"

"T-they've been severed... All my meridians have been severed!" yelled Yuvan as he endured his pain.

Scream after scream followed as more of the Moldells were slaughtered.

Though some of the Moldells had experienced more ups and downs in life compared to the others, none of them had ever encountered such a large scale massacre. Knowing that they weren't going to survive the night, many of them simply continued screaming in horror as they held on dearly to their children.

"We can't hold on much longer! We simply aren't Gerald's opponents! He's too powerful! I need to lead you away from all this, second young master! My priority is to save your life!" declared Yash who was more anxious than ever as he continued watching as more members of his family flopped to the ground, lifelessly.

"N-No! I refuse to accept that!" growled Yuvan as he gritted his teeth in protest.

"There is simply no other way! The third young master is already gone so nothing should befall you as well! We'll decide our next move once the family head returns but until then, we should leave first, second young master! Everyone! Try your best to provide cover for the second young master!" shouted Yash as he immediately began making his move.

Hearing that, the Moldells deliberately made themselves blind with anger as they all roared, "We'll kill you!"

As they all rushed toward Gerald, Yash took the opportunity to carry Yuvan out to safety amidst the chaos.

"No! I can't leave like this! All the other Moldells are still inside! I refuse to leave without first killing Gerald!" yelled Yuvan as he held on to his pain.

Yash however, held on to the flailing man, ignoring everything he said until he knew they were in a relatively safe spot. A few other bodyguards were the only ones to follow, eager to escape with their lives intact.

Panic ran rampant within everyone as horrified screams and the cries of suffering children filled the air!

Not long after, Yash and the guards finally stopped running once they reached the top of a hill.

Turning back to look at the Moldell Manor, they found that it was already erupting in flames! What had happened to the rest of the Moldells was more than evident by this point.

“Butler Moldell, your concerns truly were spot on! Bringing him back to the Moldell Manor truly did spell the ruin of the Moldell family! We’ve brought this calamity and misfortune upon ourselves!” cried out the few guards that had followed them out.

While Yash was filled with regret for not trusting his gut more, he was also feeling extremely bitter. After all, while they had finally managed to capture Gerald after an entire year of searching for him, bringing him back with them was synonymous with bringing catastrophe to their door!

Gerald truly was a cruel and ruthless person! He didn’t even spare the young, old, or even women despite their inability to fight back!

“B-Butler Moldell! Look there!” said one of the bodyguards as he pointed at the Moldell Manor that was still ablaze.

Turning to look at the exact spot the bodyguard was pointing at, Yash saw a large group of at least three hundred people dressed in black approaching the manor.

The moment they stopped moving, it became evident that their task was to completely block all the entrances of the manor. By doing so, anyone still alive in there who tried to make it out of the flames would still end up meeting a terrible fate.

“...It’s over... It’s truly all over for our family!” wailed Yash as he watched as the remaining Moldells who tried to escape the fire get brutally murdered the moment they got out of the manor.

Kneeling on the ground as he grabbed a fistful of dirt, Yash then added, “...He came prepared... All his men are top masters as well! It’s all over for us! Wait, inform the family head about this immediately! Tell him that the Crawford family’s influence and power is no longer the same as it was before!”

As the veins on his forehead rose, one of the bodyguards cried out, “It’s no use! I’ve already tried calling but it seems that all methods of communication have been cut off! We can’t call anyone at all!”

Hearing that, Yash frowned as he racked his brains to think of their next step.

“...This isn’t good. We need to withdraw for now! Quickly!”