

Invisible Rich man chapter 1713-1750

Naturally, Gerald wasn't commenting on the attack itself. While her attack style was definitely powerful, what he meant was that before attacking, she often left herself wide open to be countered. Adding that to the fact that she never changed her attack style, any opponent stronger than her could most definitely be able to see through her attack patterns in time. It explained why Gerald was able to defeat her so easily.

The only reason why she had been able to win all the previous times was because the enemies she bumped into were far weaker than her. With that in mind, they probably didn't have the chance or experience to analyze Juno's attack patterns.

Gerald, however, was much stronger than her. What more, he had been personally trained by Leit, and he even had unique opinions and analysis on martial arts skills and attack tactics.

Regardless, after hearing Juno's question, Gerald replied in a serious tone, "Think about it. From what I've seen, you tend to only focus on attacking, and more often than not, that leaves you open to getting countered! As proof of that, I was able to easily defeat you since you barely ever focus on defense!"

Upon hearing that, Juno paused for a moment. Rather than getting angry for being criticized, Juno instead admitted that that was a pretty huge flaw of hers. How had she not noticed that before?

A brief moment later, Juno then looked at Gerald before saying, "...I see! Thank you for the advice, Gerald!"

This was definitely going to help Juno greatly in the long run. No wonder she had always felt that her martial arts journey was extremely dull. As it turned out, she had been limiting herself to only a single attack style!

Either way, she now understood that she needed to focus on learning new attack styles. In doing so, she would surely be able to eventually improve both her strength and martial arts skills.

Still, she couldn't help but think that listening to the advice of wise men brought about much more favorable effects compared to her reading up techniques alone.

Whatever the case was, though her mind was set on changing her attack style, old habits died hard, and Juno was well aware that it was going to take a lot of time and effort to get out of that habit.

However, she wasn't disheartened by that fact. Instead, she simply continued to spar against Gerald, slowly trying to change her attack style.

While it made her movements slightly awkward and clunky, at the very least, she was no longer getting defeated in just a single move. By the two-hour mark, she was already able to make up to three moves before getting shut down.

Since that took quite a bit out of her, both of them decided to take a rest at the training court's sitting area.

Sweating profusely, Juno—who could see how much she had improved just from sparring against Gerald for those two hours—sincerely said, “Thank you very much for today, Gerald! If you hadn't tutored me, I wouldn't have been able to make this much progress in such a short amount of time!”

Though she said that, she understood that there was still a vast difference between their capabilities...

Either way, it wasn't long before Nori and Ray suddenly rushed into the training court. Upon seeing Gerald, the anxious Nori quickly ran toward him while saying, “G-Gerald! This is bad! Something terrible has happened...!”

Puzzled, Gerald then frowned slightly as he asked, “What's wrong?”

“W-well, Zelig and Cyril were captured by those from the Hulkeroic Union! Though we did our best to get them back, in the end, there were simply too many of them! We failed to save them!” explained

Nori.

“What?!” growled Gerald, his anger suddenly spiking. To think that they would do something like this to his friends! The Hulkerioic Union truly was getting out of hand!

“That settles it! We’re going after the Hulkerioic Union now!” After declaring that, Gerald was ready to leave together with Nori and Ray. No matter the risks, he definitely had to save both Zelig and Cyril!

Before he could leave, however, he suddenly heard Juno call out, “Wait a minute, Gerald!”

“Yes, Young Lady Zorn? If it isn’t anything important, I’d very much prefer it if you saved it for later! I need to focus on saving my friends now!” replied Gerald.

“Calm yourself, Gerald! Listen, if you weren’t already aware, the master of the Hulkerioic Union has already entered the Third rank of the Avatar Realm! With that in mind, simply charging there is no different from going on a suicide mission!” explained Juno.

Aside from Gerald who had already entered the Avatar Realm, the others—who were still in the Sage Realm—wouldn’t stand a chance against the stronger members of the Hulkerioic Union. With that in mind, Juno didn’t want them to just throw their lives away like that.

“Even if you say that, I can’t just leave them there!” replied Gerald. While he understood Juno’s point, he was adamant about saving Zelig and Cyril.

After all, both of them had selflessly agreed to go on this perilous journey with him despite not knowing much about it. Now that they had gotten into trouble, it would be inhumane of Gerald to not at least try getting them back.

“Still... How about this, I’ll send some people over to scout the situation. Once we get a clearer picture of what the Hulkerioic Union has up their sleeves, we can then formulate a plan to save them!” said Juno.

Upon hearing that, Gerald paused for a moment before eventually nodding slightly.

She was right. It was definitely going to be better for them if they got someone to scout ahead first. Her suggestion was way better than simply charging into the enemy's base anyway. Besides, those from the Hulkerioic Union were probably going to be on the lookout for them, expecting Gerald to come save his friends.

Regardless, seeing that Gerald had agreed with her plan, the group then left the training court for Juno to send some of her men to scout the Hulkerioic Union's base...

...

Meanwhile, Zelig and Cyril could be seen being tied up in the Hulkerioic Union base's hall.

Appearing superior as he sat on his high throne, Tiger—the master of the union—simply glared at the duo as Xuio and his men stood by their leader's side.

Revealing a sinister smile, Xuio then said, "These are that guy's companions, master! Now that we've captured them, that guy will surely come over to save them! It's high time we had our revenge!"

Sneering contemptuously, Tiger then growled, "Anyone who dares lay a finger on the people of the Hulkerioic Union must die! Regardless, lock both of them up in the dungeon, and have them guarded strictly! Aside from that, order everyone to remain vigilant at all times! I'm sure he'll be coming over soon enough, and once he does, he won't be leaving our base alive!"

Following that, Zelig and Cyril were quickly dragged away and locked in the base's dungeon...

"It seems that we truly are done for this time, Mr. Gabrio!" muttered Zelig with a sigh as he looked

around the dungeon.

“Don’t get too anxious just yet! I believe that Gerald cares enough for us to eventually come to our rescue!” consoled Cyril who greatly believed in Gerald. After all, Gerald was the kind of person who would never abandon his allies.

Of course, Cyril was right. Gerald and the others were currently seated at a restaurant not too far from the Hulkerioic Union’s base. Since they were seated by the window, they could keep an eye on the Hulkerioic Union’s activities while discussing their next step.

“My men have managed to gather that your friends are currently locked up in the Hulkerioic Union base’s dungeon. The dungeon itself is at the end of their base’s main hall. In other words, we’ll have to somehow make it through their main hall to even get to your two friends!” explained Juno. “While it’s great that we know all that, how on earth are we going to get past the Hulkerioic Union’s tight security? Even from here, we can already see how heavily guarded they now are! Hell, they’ve even set up patrol teams! With that in mind, we’ll definitely get caught if we head in rashly!” muttered Ray in response.

Hearing that, Gerald and the others knew that Ray was right. With how strict the Hulkerioic Union’s security currently was, it was evident that those from that union were expecting Gerald to come save the duo. It was certainly a death trap like no other...

“...Anyone have any ideas on how we should tackle this? What about you, Young Lady Zorn?” asked Gerald as he looked at Juno.

Upon hearing his question, Juno began pondering as well. While they already knew where the hostages were, saving them was going to prove extremely difficult...

“...The only thing I can think of is to lure them away from the base... Aside from that, I have no other idea how we’ll even make it into their base to save your two friends!” replied Juno.

“I see... I was thinking the same thing. After all, simply barging in is definitely out of the question.

Regardless, once we've lured them away, we'll just sneak into their base to save Cyril and Zelig!" muttered Gerald as he looked seriously at everyone.

"We're fine with that, Gerald! Detail us on how you want the plan to go! We'll follow all your orders to a T!" replied Nori.

"Well said. Anyway, about the details... I say we split into two groups till the mission is over. Nori, Ray. You two follow me into their base to save Cyril and Zelig. I'll be counting on you two to cover for me. As for you, Young Lady Zorn... I know this is a lot to ask from you, but could you be our distraction?" replied Gerald as he alternated his gaze from Nori to Juno.

"No problem! Since we're going with that, all of you should await my signal before taking any action. Once we're done with everything, let's reunite in the forest right outside Dragonblood City! How's that sound?" replied Juno as she looked at Gerald.

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded slightly. With any luck, their plan would succeed...

Regardless, now that the plan was finalized, Juno quickly ran off to cause havoc within the Hulkerioic Union base. She was going to make sure that everyone there was going to be too distracted to even notice Gerald...

Gerald, Ray, and Nori themselves quickly began making their way across the base's grounds. Thankfully, the Hulkerioic Union had plenty of high walls, and that granted all three of them pretty good cover

Once they got to a blind spot, the trio quietly awaited Juno's signal...

Not long after, all three of them watched as a ray of light shot into the sky... before falling right into the Hulkerioic Union's base! The base had several small houses within it, and with that in mind, one of the unfortunate houses inside went up in flames the second the light hit it!

Naturally, this caused the union's people to panic, and all of them quickly began trying to put the fire out.

Seeing that, the trio knew that this was their cue to make their way inside. With that, Gerald and his party swiftly made their way into the base...Once they were over the wall, all three of them quickly scanned the area. After confirming that all the union's men were still distracted by the fire, Gerald and his party quickly snuck past the union's main hall before heading straight for the dungeon...

Nearing the corner that would lead to the dungeon, Gerald and the two others peeked to see if anyone was guarding the dungeon's entrance. Thankfully, there only appeared to be two people standing guard there.

With that in mind, after making sure that they hadn't been noticed yet, Gerald then retrieved his Astrabyss Sword before unsheathing it...

Following that, Gerald bolted toward one of the guards before expertly slicing his throat!

Barely even able to react, blood instantly gushed out of the guard's now exposed throat... And just like that, he flopped to the ground, dead.

Upon realizing that his companion was no longer among the living, the other man instantly drew his own sword and attempted to decapitate Gerald!

Of course, Gerald was able to easily dodge the attack. Following that, he kicked away the man's sword before landing another kick right in the man's stomach!

As the man held onto his now aching stomach, Gerald took the chance to punch him in the head, finishing the man off for good...

With how fast and skillful Gerald was, it was no wonder why he was able to so swiftly finish both of

them off unscathed...

Regardless, now that they had been dealt with, Gerald immediately slashed at the dungeon's chains with his sword... and seconds later, the heavy 'clunk' of chains could be heard as the chains fell to the ground.

Due to how sharp the Astrabyss Sword was, slicing through chains like these was child's play for it.

Either way, now that the entrance was no longer locked, Gerald pulled the dungeon's doors open before entering to look for his friends...

Shortly after, an extremely infuriated Tiger could be seen bursting into the hall with several men behind him. Upon seeing the two dead guards, he knew for a fact that their hostages had been saved.

Dashing outside, he was just in time to see Gerald and his friends climbing over their base's wall and escaping!

"That... That god d*mned kid succeeded in saving his friends! After him! Hurry!" roared Tiger as he instantly bolted for Gerald together with his men.

Since all of them were now over the base's wall, Gerald—who had heard Tiger's furious shout—quickly turned to look at Ray and Nori before instructing, "I want you two to lead Cyril and Zelig away from this place. I'll be distracting them while you do so!"

"...But what about you-"

"Cut the cr*p and get a move on already! Otherwise, none of us are leaving this place alive!" retorted Gerald, knowing full well what Nori was going to say.

Upon hearing that, Nori and Ray could only silently agree as they did as he instructed.

Once they were out of sight, Gerald instantly began running in the other direction. He was going to lure the union's men away from his friends if it was the last thing he did...

Just as he had hoped, Tiger and his men were able to spot him as he bolted off in the distance...

"There he is! Capture that brat and finish him off for good!" ordered the furious Tiger as he gritted his teeth.

Since Tiger and his dozen men were rather fast, they quickly managed to gain on him. To make matters worse, Gerald soon found himself sandwiched between the Hulkeroic Union and a cliff that had a bottom that couldn't even be seen...

"Give it up, kid! There's nowhere else to run!" scoffed Tiger before snorting.

Gerald honestly hadn't expected Tiger to be able to catch up to him so quickly.

Frowning slightly, Gerald then glared at Tiger before revealing a sly smile as he taunted, "Give up? What, you think you can actually kill me?"

Upon hearing that, Tiger was slightly surprised. After all, there was no way Gerald was going to be able to escape his current situation.

"Big talk coming from someone who's trapped between being beaten to death and falling to your doom! You're free to try making a leap of faith, but only death in the abyss awaits you!" snarled Tiger.

"Oh? Well allow me to try then!" retorted Gerald as he leaped down the cliff!

Staring wide-eyed, the stupefied Tiger was momentarily shocked silent that Gerald would actually choose to end his own life rather than fall into his hands.

Eventually, his frown returned and he simply snorted before leaving with his men, not even bothering to look down the abyss. After all, there was no way Gerald was going to survive that fall.

...Or at least that was what Tiger assumed.

Contrary to what Tiger had thought, Gerald was very much still alive. A large tree had broken his fall, and he was now in the embrace of several branches... Even so, the impact from falling had been a bit too much, even for him.

With that in mind, Gerald was now unconscious, suspended above a fast-flowing river with the support of the tree's strong branches...

While the blacked-out Gerald wasn't even aware that he had survived yet, Ray, Nori, Zelig, and Cyril had just made it to the forest right outside Dragonblood City...

Seeing the party of four running over, Juno—who had been waiting there for them for quite a while now—quickly told her men to support Zelig and Cyril as she rushed over as well before saying, “Ray! Nori! You’re finally here! I was starting to get worried that something bad had happened to you! Speaking of which... Where’s Gerald?”

Upon hearing that, Ray pursed his lips slightly before replying, “...He... Told us to run the opposite way so that he could bait the rest of the Hulkerioic Union away from us...!”

“...What? How dangerous!” replied Juno, shocked that Gerald had done such a thing.

Knowing that he wouldn't be a match against so many of the Hulkerioic Union's members at a time, Juno was well aware that his life was now in grave danger.

"Don't worry, Miss Zorn. You can just wait here for us as Nori and I go back to look for Gerald!" replied Ray.

"You can't! It's too dangerous! Do remember that the Hulkerioic Union is actively searching for us now! With that in mind, you'll surely get caught in no time if you go back to look for him!" replied Juno almost instantaneously.

"With all due respect, Miss Zorn, if he's dead, then we won't have the will to continue living anyway!" said Ray with a firm tone.

Before Juno could even reply, Ray and Nori had already bolted back, retracing their steps...

Seeing that, Juno could only sigh helplessly. Even so, she couldn't deny that she was feeling slightly touched. Gerald truly had good and loyal friends...

Regardless, after searching for Gerald for a while, Ray and Nori eventually arrived at the cliff where Gerald leaped off from... And to their horror, they caught a glimpse of Gerald's jade pendant lying on a stone nearby...!

Feeling her heart skip a beat, Nori remained silent for a moment before eventually feeling tears run down her cheeks...

"...No... It... It can't be...!" mumbled Nori to herself as she quickly picked the jade pendant up before staring in disbelief at the abyss beneath them...

However, since the jade pendant was so close to the cliff, then Gerald...

Patting her on the shoulder, Ray then said, "Calm yourself, Nori. Gerald will be fine. Believe in him..."

It was difficult, but both of them managed to momentarily convince themselves that Gerald was still alive. With that, they waited patiently for him by the cliff...

However, as the hours passed by, it grew increasingly difficult to bear. Eventually, the duo shook their heads before finally leaving the cliffside, feeling utterly dejected...

When Juno saw how depressed they looked when the duo finally got back to the forest, she knew that something terrible must have happened to Gerald. Her worries were further confirmed when she noticed that his jade pendant was in Ray's hand.

"...Miss Zorn... Gerald... he... he's most probably fallen down a cliff...! We say that since we were only able to find his pendant near a cliffside..." muttered Ray in a gloomy voice as he showed her the pendant.

Upon hearing that, Juno's heart sank. Reaching out to take the pendant from his hand, she paused for a moment before saying, "...Let's return to my home first. We can't just give up like this! After all, just because we haven't found him yet, it doesn't automatically mean that he's dead!"

"...You're right, Miss Zorn! We believe that he won't die that easily either! He's definitely still alive! Cheer up, Nori! Remember, we have to believe in him!" declared Ray as he attempted to cheer Nori up as well.

Hearing that, Nori slowly raised her head and nodded firmly.

Seeing that Nori was feeling a little better now, Juno took the chance to order, "That's the spirit! Regardless, we really should leave this place while we can. We aren't exactly in a safe location, so we'd best return to base before the Hulkerioic Union catches us!"

Following that, Juno then quickly led the others back to her home...

Sometime later, an unconscious Gerald could be seen lying beside a black-robed and mysterious-looking old man... Protected from the elements by stone walls all around them, their faces were illuminated by a fire that the old man had started.

Not long after, Gerald slowly opened his eyes...

Upon realizing that he was still alive, he breathed a sigh of relief. However, he quickly realized that he wasn't alone.

Frowning slightly as he looked at the person sitting by the fire, he wondered who the old man was. Was he the one who had saved him...?

"...Who... are you...? Did you save me...?"

"Also... where are we...?" asked Gerald when he realized that they were inside some kind of cave.

Though the old man appeared ragged and sloppy, he knew for a fact that he wasn't an ordinary person.

After a brief silence, the old man replied in a raspy voice, "...I'm just someone who lives in seclusion on this mountain."

Upon hearing that, Gerald was slightly surprised. To think that someone would actually live in such a place!

"...May I know your name...?"

“You can just call me Old Hughes...” replied the man.

Shortly after, Old Hughes led Gerald out of the cave they were in...

Looking at the sky, Gerald was greeted by the soothing sight of a crescent moon...

Despite how calm the night was making him feel, upon realizing that they were about to enter a dense forest, Gerald was prompted to ask, “...Mind telling me where we’re going, Old Hughes...?”

After all, with how dense the foliage was, they would surely be engulfed by darkness in there, and being in an unlit forest at night was a very unwise thing to do.

The more he tried to figure the old man out, the more mysterious Old Hughes felt to Gerald.

Regardless, Old Hughes simply ignored Gerald’s question and continued walking on...

About ten minutes later, they arrived at what seemed to be a miniature waterfall...

Despite being rather small, the quietness of the night made the sound of splashing water extremely clear.

“...What is this place...?” asked Gerald as he curiously looked around.

Ignoring Gerald’s question once more, Old Hughes simply stared indifferently at Gerald before saying, “Follow me!”

With that said, the old man then walked right into the waterfall and disappeared behind it!

Momentarily stunned, Gerald quickly shook his shock off and cautiously stuck his hand into the waterfall... before feeling the water yank him right in! The next thing he knew, the waterfall was already behind him!

Now that he knew that there was a hidden area behind the waterfall, Gerald was promptly reminded about the class tale, 'Journey to the West'. After all, there was a similar area in the tale known as the Water Curtain Cave of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

Snapping out of it, Gerald quickly began looking around before asking, "...Again, what even is this place, Old Hughes...?"

They were now in a massive space surrounded by stone walls that glittered like stars... It was honestly one of the most beautiful sights Gerald had ever witnessed, and he truly hadn't expected all this to be hidden here, of all places...

In response, however, Old Hughes—who was standing not too far away—simply gestured for Gerald to come over as he said, "Get over here! There's something I want to show you!"

Raising a slight brow, Gerald then hurried over to the old man's side...

Now standing beside Old Hughes, Gerald could only stare in amazement as he realized that there was a towering and somewhat translucent stone pillar before him... Stranger still was the fact that there seemed to be something within the pillar...

"What on earth is this...?" asked Gerald curiously.

"...First off, this place is called Fishgut Cave, and sealed within this stone pillar, is an ancient longsword known as the Fishgut Sword," explained Old Hughes as he looked at Gerald.

“...The... Fishgut Sword?” asked Gerald, puzzled to hear such an odd name for a longsword.

Following that, Old Hughes retrieved a rolled-up parchment from under his coat. Unrolling it before Gerald, the first image the youth saw was of a handsome, strong man as well as an elderly-looking one standing together in a place that looked strikingly similar to where they currently were... Needless to say, it was depicting both of them in Fishgut Cave!

“...That’s... us?” asked Gerald, fully confused now.

Slowly revealing a wry smile, Hughes then replied “Bingo. It shows both of us standing at this exact spot... You know, when I first found this parchment here and saw its contents, I knew I was destined to lead someone here... And here you are, at long last!”

Naturally, Gerald was surprised by all this. However, given how serious Old Hughes was looking at him, Gerald could tell that all this wasn’t a mere bluff. How surreal that the parchment would show such an accurate representation of their current situation!

“...What exactly is all this about, Old Hughes?” asked the puzzled Gerald, not wanting to be left in the dark anymore.

How did the drawing come to be? What was this place? And why was the longsword before him so important?

“Simply put, you’re the fated one, Gerald! Since the drawing depicts me bringing you to this place, I’m sure that you’re the one who’s destined to draw the sword out from the stone pillar!” explained Old Hughes.

“...Me? Are you sure...? Can’t it be someone else...?” replied Gerald, still slightly in disbelief by Old Hughes’s claim.

“My boy, I’ve been waiting here for you ever since I obtained this drawing. If you aren’t the one, then explain our meeting here today. We were simply destined to cross paths!” said Old Hughes in response.

“...I see. Well... what’s so special about the Fishgut Sword?” asked Gerald, finally giving in as he curiously looked at the sword within the stone pillar...

Upon hearing that question, Old Hughes then looked seriously at the youth before replying, “The Fishgut Sword is an ancient longsword, said to grant its wielder waterbending skills. Since you’re the person depicted in the map, I’m sure you’re the only one qualified to wield it in the first place!”

Looking at the old man’s serious gaze, Gerald could sense that he wasn’t lying. Come to think of it, Old Hughes didn’t really have a reason to lie about such things in the first place.

“...Alright then... Well, since I’m destined to pull the sword out, how should I go about it?” asked Gerald.

Hearing that, the old man then held onto Gerald’s arm before pulling him toward a stone...

On it, Gerald saw that a palm print had been carved right into it...

“Place your hand onto it!” ordered Old Hughes.

Slightly surprised by the sudden shout, Gerald simply did as he was told before looking back at the old man and asking, “...Like this?”

“Hush!” replied Old Hughes, prompting Gerald to zip his mouth.

Now that both of them were silent, they were able to hear the gurgling of water flowing into the cave...

Moments later, both of them watched as streams of water began flowing up the stone Gerald's hand was on, all of them reaching out for the palm-shaped indent on it...

It didn't take long before the streams of water wrapped themselves around Gerald's hand. With the water itself being translucent, Gerald was only able to make out the vague outline of his hand by this point...

Without warning, the duo was then greeted by an explosive sound from behind them!

Following that, both of them were just in time to witness the Fishgut Sword flying out from the pillar! It was also then when Gerald realized that the streams of water had already retracted...

Regardless, his train of thought was cut short when he heard Old Hughes calling out, "Get the sword, Gerald!"

Upon hearing that, Gerald turned to look at the old man before heading over to retrieve the sword...

The second he grabbed onto it, a surge of power rushed from the sword and into his body. As the immense power spread from his palm before spreading throughout his body, Gerald could feel a slightly familiar unease in his elixir-of-life field...

With so much power overflowing within his elixir-of-life field, Gerald knew that he was about to undergo another breakthrough!

"I... I can feel another breakthrough coming!" exclaimed the surprised and delighted Gerald. It appeared that the Fishgut Sword was just as powerful as the Astrabyss Sword. After all, wielding the swords alone had allowed him to make breakthroughs!

Already used to similar situations, Gerald then quickly sat down before retrieving a Heaven's apple from his storage ring and eating it.

Shortly after—when the Heaven's apple took effect—Gerald successfully entered the Second rank of the Avatar Realm!

“How are you feeling now, Gerald?” asked Old Hughes in a slightly concerned tone.

Smiling subtly, Gerald then chuckled before replying, “I'm feeling great! The sword was so powerful that I was instantly able to break through another rank in my strength!”

While he was pleased by all this, he was also slightly surprised that he would be able to make a breakthrough like this. With that said, he knew he had to properly thank Old Hughes after this. After all, had it not been for the old man leading him here, Gerald wouldn't have been able to acquire the Fishgut Sword, nor would he have managed to increase his strength by this much in such a short amount of time.

With all that in mind, Gerald then bowed before the old man before saying, “Thank you for bringing me here, Old Hughes! While I'm grateful to have acquired the Fishgut Sword, I'm still rather curious about its name...”

Laughing when he heard Gerald's question, Old Hughes then explained, “Well, in actuality, its true name is the Sword of Courage! It's one of the ten ancient holy swords, you know? That power you inherited earlier... It's the power of courage that the sword bestowed upon you! You should know that only very brave people get acknowledged by the sword, and those who do are granted immense power!”

While that didn't explain why the sword was named that way, Gerald at least understood why he had been able to make a breakthrough just by holding the sword. After all, had he not been a courageous person, he wouldn't have dared to take on the task of saving the world...

So that's why the Fishgut Sword acknowledged him...

“Speaking of which... Do you know the names of the nine other ancient holy swords? Do you know where they are? I’d like to obtain them!” said Gerald, clearly interested in the swords. After all, now that he already had one of them, there was no reason for him not to get the other nine.

“Hmm? Well, if you’re interested, the first sword goes by Xyan, the Sword of Divinity. As for the second and third ones, they’re Xyan, the Sword of Benevolence, and Xenith, the Sword of Sovereignty... Empyrean was the fourth sword, I believe, and it’s the Sword of Might. The Sword of Nobility, on the other hand, is Titan, which is also the fifth sword.”

“As for swords six and seven, both of them are the Swords of Love, Gwaine and Morgen. The eighth sword is the one you’re currently wielding, Fishgut, the Sword of Courage. If I remember correctly, the ninth one is called Jochem, the Sword of Solitary, and as for the final sword, it goes by the name of Charmella, the Sword of Elegance!”

“Each of the swords bear unique powers, and anyone who manages to collect all ten of them will have powers beyond human comprehension! With that said, the wielder of those swords will surely become the strongest person in the world!” explained Old Hughes with a serious tone.

After hearing that information dump, Gerald found himself slightly overwhelmed but also very excited. After all, if he managed to collect all ten of the ancient holy swords, he would surely obtain enough power to even his battle with the demonic god!

“...I see! Then, about the location of the nine other swords...”

Shaking his head, Old Hughes then said, “I’m afraid I only know where two of the swords are, Gerald, and one of them is already in your hands! While I do know where the Titan Sword—the Sword of Might—is, you’re on your own when it comes to finding the eight other swords!”

Delighted to know that he was possibly going to obtain another sword so quickly, Gerald then exclaimed, “You know where the Titan Sword is? Could you lead me to it?”

“There’s no rush to obtain that! After all, you just got the Fishgut Sword! Regardless, don’t worry too much about the other swords! Since the Fishgut Sword already acknowledged you, I truly believe that you’re the fated one! With that in mind, you’ll surely obtain the other swords one day!” replied Old Hughes with a smile.

“...I suppose you’re right! Still, I truly appreciate you bringing me over today! Without your help, I’d surely be unable to obtain this sword! Worry not, I’ll surely repay your kindness one day!” declared Gerald in a grateful tone.

Laughing again, Old Hughes then waved his hand rather nonchalantly before saying, “That’s not necessary! After all, you’re fated to obtain the sword! My purpose is simply to be your guide to it! Regardless, I hope you use the sword wisely!”

Truth be told, had Gerald not been the fated master of the sword, he would’ve surely taken the sword for himself instead of waiting for the youth to come. Sadly, some things were simply predestined, and Old Hughes, of all people, understood that.

Either way, the duo soon went through the small waterfall again to leave the area. By the time they got outside, however, Gerald was surprised to see that the sun was already about to rise.

They hadn’t been in there for that long, had they? Time sure had flown...

All of a sudden, both of them heard rustling sounds swiftly coming toward them from the forest!

With both of them now vigilant of their surroundings, Gerald held the Fishgut Sword tightly in hand, fully prepared to fight...

That is, until he suddenly heard a familiar voice call out, “...Is... Is that you, Gerald...?”

The voice... It definitely belonged to Juno! “...Miss Zorn? Is that you?” asked Gerald as he faced the trees.

“...Gerald? So, it really is you!” exclaimed Juno in excitement as she quickly walked out from the trees together with her servants.

“What brings you here, Miss Zorn?” asked the surprised Gerald as he looked at her.

“What do you mean what brings us here? You’ve been gone for two days! Still, I knew you were still alive! I’m just glad I finally managed to locate you! Regardless, what are you doing all the way out here?”

Upon hearing Juno’s question, Gerald momentarily turned to look at Old Hughes before awkwardly replying, “...About that... Let’s just talk about it once we get back. Speaking of which, how are the rest doing?”

“Don’t worry, all of them are doing fine. They’re currently resting up in the Zorn family’s residence!” replied Juno with a smile as Gerald heaved a sigh of relief.

“Now then... Who is he again...?” asked Juno as she raised a slight brow while looking at Old Hughes.

Looking at the old man for a while, Gerald then turned back to face Juno as he replied, “This is Old Hughes, and he’s the one who saved me!”

“...Oh? I see! Well, then it’s a pleasure to meet you, Old Hughes! My name is Juno Zorn, and I’m the eldest young lady of the Zorn family! Thank you very much for saving Gerald!” said Juno with a gratuitous tone.

Smiling in response, Old Hughes then said, “There’s no need to thank me! Anyone would’ve done the same! After all, as the saying goes, ‘Saving a life brings more merit than building a seven-floored pagoda’! Also, the pleasure is mine, eldest young lady of the Zorn family!”

While he naturally knew about the Zorns, this was Old Hughes first time actually meeting someone from that family.

“Well, now that you’re safe, let’s go back to my place, Gerald!” said Juno. After all, it still wasn’t all that safe staying out here for long periods of time.

Hearing that, Gerald then turned to face the old man before asking, “Agreed! Speaking of which, why don’t you come along with us, Old Hughes? Regardless of what you say, I’d still like to properly thank you for all that you’ve done!”

“Gerald’s right! With that in mind, please come along with us, Old Hughes!” seconded Juno.

In response, however, Old Hughes simply smiled as he shook his head before saying, “What that sounds lovely, I’ll have to refuse...”

Seeing that the old man was really unwilling to come along, Gerald could only helplessly say, “...Well, alright then... Since that’s the case, I’ll thank you one final time then! Worry not, I’ll surely find a chance to repay your kindness!”

Chuckling in response, Old Hughes simply replied, “Alright, alright, off you go! Be careful out there, and remember! Use it wisely!”

Upon hearing that, Gerald nodded firmly. Even if the old man hadn’t reminded him, Gerald would’ve used the sword properly anyway.

Following that, Gerald, Juno, and her men then slowly disappeared into the forest...

However, not long after that group left, a shadowy figure leaped out from the forest, followed by a dozen more men in black garb...

Stopping right in front of Old Hughes, the shadowy figure then revealed a sinister expression as he asked, "How did it go, Master Hughes?"

Staring back at the shadowy person, Old Hughes simply replied, "The sword is now in Gerald's hands. With that said, it's now your turn to do your job!" "Heh! But of course! Still, you really do have immense foresight, Master Hughes... Everything happened just as you've predicted!"

"Hah! It was Tiger who first betrayed me, so he only has himself to blame for me being unkind! I'll definitely take over the Hulkerioic Union by the end of all this!" sneered Old Hughes as he smiled smugly, his eyes filled with determination.

"Indeed! Speaking of which, what about Gerald and the others? Do you need me to finish them off?" asked the shadowy figure.

Raising his palm, Old Hughes then said, "Leave them be for now. After all, Gerald and his party are still useful to us. Besides, since the Fishgut Sword is now in his hands, we should at least wait for him to kill Tiger for us first before anything else."

"As you wish, Master Hughes!" replied the shadowy figure with a respectful nod...

Naturally, Gerald had no idea that the shadowy figure and Old Hughes were in cahoots...

Regardless, both Gerald and Juno soon arrived at the Zorn family's residence. By that point, the sun was already high in the sky...

Upon stepping into Nori's home, Gerald instantly called out for his friends.

Though all four of them had been sleeping in the same room—in sitting positions—at that moment,

upon hearing Gerald's voice, the group instantly jolted awake and dashed toward his voice.

The second they saw him, Nori and Ray were so ecstatic that they immediately ran over to him. Before Gerald could even react, the two were already hugging onto him tightly!

"You... You really scared me half to death, Gerald...! I thought I wasn't going to be able to see you again...!" cried out Nori as she patted Gerald's back in her excitement and joy.

"Indeed! We were worried to death about you, brother Gerald! I... I'm just glad that you're okay...!" added Ray, his entire body trembling from how relieved he was.

Laughing as he patted both their shoulders to comfort them, Gerald then replied, "There, there... I'm fine now! Still, I'll surely be showered with blessings now that I've managed to get through this disaster!"

At that moment, Zelig—who had been standing together with Cyril from afar for a while now—couldn't help but smile as he called out, "Brother Gerald...!"

Upon hearing that, Gerald got Nori and Ray off him before walking over to Zelig...

Only to see Nori rushing forward and standing right before him, staring intently straight into his eyes...

Momentarily frozen in place, unsure of what Nori was even planning to do, the confused Gerald then asked, "...Is... something the matter?"

Instead of returning a verbal reply, Nori simply held the back of his neck before pulling him close to her face... and kissing him right on his lips!

Naturally, Gerald was left utterly flabbergasted. To think that Nori would be this proactive!

Even the others were shocked, but they soon found themselves giggling like schoolchildren.

Whatever the case was, now that Gerald was finally back, Juno could finally breathe easy. Everything was going to be fine as long as Gerald was safe...

“...Humph! So, you still know how to return, huh? And here I thought you had died somewhere alone!” grumbled Nori as she glared at Gerald.

Scratching the back of his head slightly awkwardly, Gerald simply smiled back at her before replying, “...Well... I guess I’m just a lucky guy!” Meanwhile, Old Hughes could be seen leading the shadowy figure and a few men across a mountain range that was surrounded by flames. With lava and fire everywhere, it made the mountain not only feel hot, but also rather intimidating...

The group was here to help the shadowy figure obtain the Sword of Might, which—just like the Fishgut Sword which was also born in the same generation—was an ancient weapon. While such swords had restrictions as to who was able to wield them, if the sword deemed the user worthy, then the wielder would be granted the sword’s powers, and each sword naturally had different powers.

Regardless, now that the Fishgut Sword was in Gerald’s hands, it was the shadowy figure’s turn to obtain his own sword. Upon obtaining the Sword of Might, he would undoubtedly be strong and confident enough to overtake Dragonblood City...

Soon enough, they arrived at a cave... and upon entering, everyone was able to see vein-like streams of lava creeping all over the cave’s walls.

After walking for a bit, Old Hughes turned to face the shadowy figure before looking at a stone pillar while saying, “The cave we’re in is called the Titan Cave, and the Sword of Might is within the stone pillar in front of us!”

Frankly speaking, the layout of this cave wasn’t all that different compared to Fishgut Cave, the only

major—and obvious—difference being all the lava streams as well as the immense heat.

“I see! So that’s the ancient Sword of Might that possesses the power of fire!” declared the shadowy figure.

“Indeed it is... See that stone over there? The one with the palmprint carved into it? Place your hand on it and it’ll transfer the power of fire into your body! Following that, you’ll be able to unlock the stone pillar to obtain the sword!” explained Old Hughes.

Upon hearing that, the shadowy figure did as he was told... and the second his palm fitted into the carving, the stone instantly reacted by summoning red-hot flames that quickly engulfed the shadowy figure’s hand!

Clenching his teeth, the shadowy figure resisted the urge to shout as his hand burned within the flames.

“Endure it. This is the only way you’ll be able to obtain the sword,” said Old Hughes when he saw how pale the shadowy figure’s face was getting.

Understanding that if he retracted his hand now, all his previous pain would’ve been for nothing, the shadowy figure simply continued tolerating the pain as best as he could...

With blue veins already bulging horribly on his arm, the shadowy figure couldn’t help but scream in agony when his entire body suddenly ignited!

Barely a second later, an explosive sound that resounded throughout the cave could be heard coming from behind them.

Looking back, it appeared that the stone pillar had cracked open due to the immense flames...

With the Sword of Might now free from its confines, everyone was able to see how beautiful the blade was. With the handle decorated with fiery red lines and the blade carved with draconic patterns, the Sword of Might truly looked majestic...

By this point, the shadowy figure himself had already recovered from his pain. Quickly walking over to the stone pillar, he instantly grabbed the sword's handle before forcefully yanking it out!

The second the sword was pulled out, dragon-like flames instantly surged out from the sword's blade...

A sinister smile on his face, the shadowy figure then lifted the sword high as he laughed arrogantly before declaring, "The Sword of Might... It's finally mine! The world is going to be mine soon!"

To the shadowy figure, owning the Titan Sword essentially meant that he had just obtained immeasurable power.

Due to the Sword of Might's ability to completely melt anyone it killed, not only would the shadowy figure now be able to kill in the blink of an eye, but no bones or blood of his victims would even remain! It truly was a terrifying item...

Seeing that the shadowy figure had successfully wielded the sword, Old Hughes then walked up to him before saying, "Now that you've obtained the Sword of Might, you must remember to keep your promise of letting me be in charge of Dragonblood city after you've conquered it."

Naturally, Old Hughes hadn't led the shadowy figure here with the goodness in his heart. The truth was, he had only done so just so that he could end up becoming the supreme leader of Dragonblood city once the shadowy figure obtained the sword's power.

As for why he had allowed Gerald to obtain the Fishgut Sword first, it was essentially so that the Titan Sword could be retrieved in the first place. Putting it bluntly, the Fishgut Sword acted as a sort of seal that prevented the Titan Sword from being obtained. This meant that the Titan Sword could only be taken once the Fishgut Sword was retrieved. In layman's terms, it was basically like how water and fire

contradicted each other.

Regardless, after hearing what Old Hughes had to say, the shadowy figure revealed a sly smile before staring wickedly at the old man as he said, "You know, I still don't know for sure how powerful this sword is, Master Hughes. How can I be sure that I'll be able to conquer Dragonblood City without testing it first...?"

"You don't have to worry about that! Now that the Fishgut Sword is no longer sealing the Titan Sword's power, its strength has been greatly enhanced! A simple swing of the sword is sufficient in dealing massive damage to your surroundings! As for what happens when you slash someone with it, I'm sure you already know that the person will instantly melt!" replied Old Hughes with a smile, not realizing that his final moments were near.

"How powerful! Though again, I believe that I really should test it on someone to see the effects for myself..." sneered the smirking shadowy figure as he looked at Old Hughes with an evil glint in his eyes.

Now feeling rather uneasy from the shadowy figure's expression, Old Hughes couldn't help but stutter, "...You... W-what are you planning to do?"

"Oh, nothing much... I'm just using you as my test subject!" yelled the shadowy figure as he instantly stabbed Old Hughes head with a malicious smile on his face!

With his head instantly catching fire, Old Hughes could only scream in agony as the fire spread to the rest of his body!

Watching as fiery-red lines began coursing throughout the old man's dying body, the shadowy figure was now able to confirm the true power of the Sword of Might. As the old man had said, a single slash really was sufficient to completely melt a person!

Old Hughes himself hadn't expected such a terrible fate to befall himself, but there was little that he could do now...

Soon enough, all that remained of the old man was a slowly diminishing flame...

“As if I’d still have a use for you after obtaining the Titan Sword... Planning on taking over Dragonblood City on my watch? Dream on!” scoffed the shadowy figure as he glared at the dying flame.

Old Hughes was merely a pawn to him. A pawn to help him obtain the sword...

Now that the pawn had fulfilled its purpose, it no longer had any use to him...That night, chaos ensued within Dragonblood City.

The Hulkerioic Union was completely wiped out, and Tiger himself—the leader of the union—met a grisly end with all his limbs butchered right off his body...

Naturally, news of that struck fear in not only the people of the city, but also all the major clans there...

Regardless, when morning came, Gerald and the others were resting in the Zorn family’s home when all of a sudden, they were alerted by the presence of several people swiftly approaching them.

The second they got their weapons ready, they were just in time to witness a shadowy figure descending from the sky, followed shortly after by several more men dressed fully in black.

“...They’re strong and have malicious intent, Gerald. Please, be careful...!” whispered Juno.

Gerald himself was well aware of this, though he simply nodded in response. From what he could see, the shadowy figure—who was releasing an immense murderous intent—had at least entered the Third Rank of the Avatar Realm...

After a short pause, Gerald cleared his throat before asking, "...Who are you? And why are you here?"

Truth be told, Gerald felt that he had never come across this person before. With that in mind, he was wondering why the shadowy figure was here to cause trouble for him and his friends.

"Look, just hand the Fishgut Sword over and I'll spare your life!" sneered the shadowy figure without beating around the bush.

Upon hearing that, Gerald's expression darkened almost instantaneously. To think that the shadowy figure not only knew about the Fishgut sword, but he also knew that it was in Gerald's possession!

"What kind of sword even is that? I don't know what you're talking about!" bluffed Gerald.

"Cut the cr*p and stop playing dumb! I'm well aware that Old Hughes led you to that sword! Now hand it over or you'll soon be meeting him in the afterlife!" threatened the shadowy figure.

Upon hearing that, Gerald instantly knew that something must've happened to Old Hughes.

"...You... What have you done to him?!" growled Gerald, a frown on his face as he glared at the shadowy figure.

Laughing hysterically in response, the shadowy figure then retorted, "Gerald, Gerald, Gerald... You truly are too innocent for your own good! Do you really respect that old buffoon? He was simply using you! Just so you know, he only let you get the Fishgut Sword first so that I could obtain the Titan Sword! The Sword of Might! The deal was for me to wipe out the Hulkerioic Union and make him the supreme leader of Dragonblood City after I obtained the sword! Of course, things didn't go as he planned... But why am I telling you all this, you'll soon be meeting him in hell anyway!"

After hearing all that, Gerald found himself momentarily flabbergasted. To think that Old Hughes was actually such a person...

“...What do you mean you were only able to obtain the Titan Sword after I got the Fishgut Sword? How are those two things even related?” asked Gerald.

“Hah! You see, the Fishgut Sword was sealing the Titan Sword! Thanks to you taking it away, I was able to obtain the Titan Sword!” explained the shadowy figure.

So that’s why... It appeared that he truly had been used.

Following that, the shadowy figure even lifted the Titan Sword for Gerald to see, the sword constantly emitting strong, crimson flames and an overwhelming aura...“Regardless, don’t make me repeat myself! Hand over the Fishgut Sword and I’ll spare your lives! Otherwise, you’ll all get a taste of the Titan Sword!” threatened the shadowy figure.

Naturally, Gerald wasn’t going to hand it over that easily. After all, the Fishgut Sword was one of the ten ancient holy swords. It wasn’t easy for him to obtain it, so he sure as hell wasn’t going to just give it away so simply.

Truth be told, Gerald also felt that the shadowy figure wasn’t strong enough to defeat him. With that in mind, Gerald wondered if he could obtain the Titan Sword as well after defeating him...

As an idea came to him, Gerald paused for a moment before yelling, “All of you, seek shelter first! I’ll deal with him!”

Whatever the case was, Juno and the others weren’t the shadowy figure’s match. With that in mind, them staying here for any longer would only result in them getting killed.

Understanding that they would only be a burden to him in this situation, Gerald’s party simply exchanged glances before nodding and rushing off.

Once Gerald was sure that they were gone, he then turned to face the shadowy figure before declaring, "I propose that we have a duel to the death! Just the two of us! If I lose, you can have my life as well as the Fishgut Sword! However, you'll also have to promise that you'll spare my friends' lives. Deal?"

Without even the slightest hesitation, the shadowy figure then replied, "Deal! As if I'd ever lose with the Sword of Might in my hands!"

To the shadowy figure, Gerald wasn't ever going to be his match. After all, possessing the Titan Sword was akin to him holding all the power in the world, and that definitely served to amplify his arrogance...

Even so, since both of them had already entered the Third rank of the Avatar Realm, it wasn't clear who would be the victor of this battle...

Either way, after wielding their swords and getting into their attack stances, both of them simply glared at each other, remaining motionless as they awaited the other party to strike...

Without the slightest warning, the shadowy figure then let out a mighty roar before swinging his sword and sending a surge of flames flying toward Gerald! With how fast the solidified flames were flying toward Gerald, any regular person getting hit by that attack would surely end up getting sliced in half!

Of course, Gerald wasn't afraid at all. Instead, he simply swung the Fishgut Sword, sending his own surge of sparkling water flying toward the shadowy figure's attack!

It was clear that the shadowy figure had forgotten that water triumphed over fire. As proof of that, the Titan Sword was only able to be obtained after the Fishgut Sword was pulled out. With that in mind, just like how water could put fire out, the Fishgut Sword could easily cancel out any of the Titan Sword's attacks.

With that in mind, Gerald's surge of water easily put out the shadowy figure's fiery attack!

Naturally, this stunned the shadowy figure. He hadn't taken this into account!

Seeing that the shadowy figure was momentarily flabbergasted, Gerald quickly took the chance to fish out a talisman—from his storage ring—before tossing it into the sky!

The next thing the shadowy figure knew, the talisman had burned up in the air, summoning several prickly liana vines that quickly wrapped themselves around him!

Following that, Gerald quickly summoned the Astrabyss Sword before pointing its blade toward the sky and yelling, "By the Power of the Astrabyss!"

Immediately after, a purple vortex with flickering lightning began forming in the sky... and seconds later, a beam of light bolted out of the vortex and right into the Astrabyss Sword!

With that done, Gerald then swung his sword down hard, sending a surge of blinding white light flying toward the shadowy figure!

The shadowy figure could only scream in agony as the light sliced through his body...! Until no further screaming followed.

Now nothing but ashes, the shadowy figure was no more. Till his dying breath, he hadn't expected to be killed off by Gerald so easily...With the shadowy figure now dead, his men instantly turned to face each other before fleeing the area! After all, now that their boss was dead, there was no point in them staying there for any longer.

Realizing that there was a token of sorts within the shadowy figure's ashes, Gerald picked it up to see what was written on it...

The words 'Ghost Sect' had been carved intricately onto the token, and Gerald could only raise a slight brow when he saw that. What kind of mysterious organization could the Ghost Sect be...?

His train of thought was cut short when he suddenly heard Nori calling out, "Gerald!"

Turning around, he watched as his friends quickly ran toward him.

Stopping right before Gerald, Nori then asked in a concerned tone, "Are you alright, Gerald? Are you hurt anywhere?"

Smiling in response, Gerald simply said, "Don't worry, I'm fine!"

Upon hearing that, Nori and the others were instantly relieved. To them, as long as Gerald was fine, all was well in the world...

Now that things had calmed down, Gerald turned to look at the Titan Sword that was hovering menacingly in the air...

Walking over to it, he then grabbed onto the hilt... and the second he did, hot and powerful energy surged right through his palm and into his elixir-of-life field!

With how burning-hot his elixir-of-life field was now feeling, Gerald could tell that all the pain he was currently experiencing was due to the sword's power!

"G-Gerald? What's wrong?" asked Nori when she saw his pained expression.

"Stay back!" yelled Gerald as he quickly sat at the side.

Hearing that, Nori and the others didn't dare go close to him. They could only stare at him from afar, hoping that he would turn out fine...

Regardless, Gerald quickly took out a Heaven's apple before devouring it. Once that was done, he instantly began meditating.

To his shock, eating the holy fruit didn't lessen the fiery sensation in his body at all. In fact, it only made it more intense!

Yelling in agony, Gerald's forehead was now drenched in sweat, showing just how much pain the sword's power was inflicting onto him.

It wasn't long after before Gerald eventually collapsed from the excruciating pain!

Upon seeing that, Nori immediately shouted, "Gerald...!"

As she ran over to check on him, Juno herself quickly ordered her servants to carry him over into a room to rest.

Unbeknownst to the others, the Titan and Fishgut Sword had both morphed into a single beam of light that then entered Gerald's body...

It would take an entire day before Gerald regained consciousness again...

When the dazed youth finally awoke, the first thing he saw was Nori lying by the side of his bed. He couldn't help but think how lovely she looked, even when she was asleep...

Her ears twitching as his bedsheets rustled, Nori woke with a start before looking at Gerald and joyously exclaiming, "G-Gerald! You're finally awake...!"

After Gerald fainted the day before, all his friends had been scared half to death, thinking that something terrible had befallen him...

Now that he was awake, Nori could finally breathe a little easier...

Nodding slowly in response, Gerald quickly found that he barely had any energy to even move.

Still, while he was now feeling extremely weak, Gerald could tell that he had surprisingly already breached into yet another rank! With that said, he was now in the Fourth rank of the Avatar Realm...

While that was the case, why was he feeling so weak after advancing? It truly was puzzling...

As he thought about it, he figured that it had something to do with the Sword of Might. After all, before fainting, he vaguely remembered that not only had the fiery power of the Titan Sword surged into his body, but his own power had also been continuously sapped by something.

Whatever the case was, the Sword of Might truly was a powerful weapon... Even more powerful than the Fishgut Sword, in fact.

Though that was the case, why was the shadowy figure not Gerald's match when he wielded it? From what Gerald could tell, it was because he wasn't the fated one. With that in mind, the shadowy figure probably wasn't able to inherit and use the sword's power at its fullest potential.

With that in mind, Gerald—being the fated one—probably experienced the full brunt of the sword's power due to the Titan Sword acknowledging him, which led to him eventually fainting...

After thinking about it for a while, Gerald felt that his thought process made sense, and that all that pain was necessary so that he could possess the full power of the Titan Sword...

Now that his questions had been answered, Gerald retrieved a Heaven's apple from his storage ring before slowly munching on it...

Not only was the holy fruit able to help him undergo breakthroughs, but it was also capable of healing injuries and restoring his energy. It truly was a treasured special medicine...

True enough, after finishing the fruit, Gerald promptly regained his strength, and the aura in his body finally stabilized...

Now that he had recovered, Gerald got out of bed before leaving the room together with Nori...

As they passed by the courtyard, the duo saw Ray and the other two from his party chatting there.

Upon realizing that Gerald had regained consciousness, the surprised Ray quickly ran over to him while shouting, "Brother Gerald! You're awake!"

Cyril ran over as well, and he quickly added in a concerned tone, "How are you feeling? Are you alright? You scared us half to death yesterday, you know?"

Smiling as he shook his head, Gerald then replied, "I'm feeling fine now! The power of the Titan Sword was simply too immense, which was why I ended up fainting yesterday!"

"I see! Speaking of which, Brother Gerald, I can't help but notice that your power's increased again... Have you broken through?" asked Ray observantly as he looked at Gerald.

"You're right! I was surprised to find out about that too, but I guess I've now entered the Fourth rank in the Avatar Realm!" replied Gerald.

Being able to rise up two ranks in less than a week... Gerald truly was enviable...

“You really are a god for being able to break through so fast, Brother Gerald! To think that you’ve already entered the Fourth rank of the Avatar Realm... You simply are too powerful!” praised Cyril with a smile.

After all, regular people couldn’t even break through a single rank after cultivating for decades and even centuries! Yet here Gerald was, rising the ranks so easily! If those who had trained for so long knew about this, they’d surely be irritated to death!

Chuckling in response, Gerald simply said in a humble tone, “It’s nothing, really. I’m just really lucky!”

Shaking his head, Ray paused for a moment before taking out a black token and handing it to Gerald as he said, “Speaking of which, Brother Gerald, you dropped this black token the day before... Where exactly did you get this?”

“Ah, that token was all that remained after he died. Why? Do you know about the token?” asked Gerald.

Nodding in response, Ray then explained, “It’s an exclusive item of the Ghost Sect!”

“Ray, what exactly is this Ghost Sect?” Gerald asked curiously.

Then, Ray started explaining in detail.

After listening to the explanation, Gerald and the rest understood it now. Apparently, Ghost Sect was a place where the ghosts lived, and the black shadow should be a member of Ghost Sect.

“Then, how can I go there?”

After a pause, Gerald asked boldly.

Ray opened his eyes wide and stared at him in surprise upon hearing him. He didn't expect that Gerald would have this idea.

Ghost Sect was not a place that anyone could go to. It was in the territory of Ghost Realm, a place for lonely souls and wild ghosts which were ruled by the Ghost King.

"Brother Gerald, Ghost Sect is not a good place. It is better not to go there!"

Ray reminded Gerald seriously.

"Ray, don't worry. Since this matter is related to Ghost Sect, I think I should go there and investigate!" Gerald patted on his shoulder and said.

Why did the people of Ghost Sect come to Dragonblood City and try to snatch this ancient holy sword away? This mystery made Gerald very puzzled. He had to solve it.

"Alright. Since you insist on going, I will go with you!"

Ray knew that he could not persuade Gerald not to go, so he could only choose to accompany him.

After that, Ray told Gerald the time when Ghost Sect was opened and its location.

Two days later, at midnight.

This was the day when the entrance of Ghost Sect would open.

On this day, all the ghosts would gather here to enter Ghost Sect.

Gerald and Ray went to the entrance of Ghost Sect. As for the other three, Gerald did not let them come along to avoid being noticed.

There were a lot of ghosts at the entrance.

It was the first time Gerald had seen so many ghosts, and this amazed him.

“Ray, will these ghosts hurt people?”

Gerald leaned closer to Ray and whispered into his ear.

Ray shook his head slightly and replied, “Don’t worry, they won’t. Today is the day of peace. No ghost can hurt other ghosts.”

Hearing this, Gerald felt relieved.

However, they only had twelve hours, or to be precise, it was Gerald who only had twelve hours.

When the time was up, he had to leave Ghost Sect immediately, or he would not be able to get out forever and remain there as a ghost.

Soon, it was time. The door of the spiritual world opened, and all the ghosts flocked in.

Ray led Gerald into the spiritual world through the door.

Once inside, they saw a huge ghost city where many ghosts had set up stalls to sell things just like a town in the olden days.

Today was the most enjoyable day for the ghost because they could come to Ghost Sect to buy things for themselves. The only thing was that they did not trade with ordinary coins, but coins specially used in Ghost Sect. So, they had to go to exchange for some.

“Ray, are all these things around here edible? They’re making me hungry!”

Walking along the street, Gerald saw a lot of food around him which made him hungry, so he asked.

“Hehe, you can eat them, but you will lose a lot of masculine aura once you do so because these are food for ghosts, not humans.”

Ray smiled and replied to Gerald.

Gerald was discouraged immediately upon hearing this. He did not dare to think about it anymore as he did not want to lose his masculine aura.

“Let’s go. I’ll bring you to a place!”

Ray told Gerald and brought him to a building not far away with big steps.

Once inside, Gerald realized that it was a huge casino.

This was a casino in Ghost Sect. It was different from the casinos in the human world.

“Ray, why do I have a feeling that the ghosts can’t feel me?”

Suddenly, Gerald discovered something and asked Ray.

He had a feeling that he was being totally ignored, and the ghosts around didn’t notice him at all. What made him feel even stranger was that some ghosts even passed right through his body.

“Because you are not a real ghost, they won’t discover you. Moreover, no humans are allowed in here!”

Ray explained to Gerald immediately.

When Gerald heard him, he was very excited. That would mean that he was invisible right now.

“Gerald, it’s up to you now. You can use your invisibility to help me gamble so that we can win some money to buy some good things.”

Ray suggested to Gerald.

“Alright, Ray. No problem, just watch me!”

Gerald agreed without reservation. It was great that he had finally found his advantage here.

Later, Ray got Gerald to stand in the innermost position so that he could get a good peep to see everything.

As for Ray, he sat in front of the table. Just a moment ago, when he was squeezing through the crowd,

he had stolen a ghost coin from a ghost to make the coin his startup capital.

Soon after, the ghost standing in the middle of the table started to roll the dice.

After rolling for a while, the ghost covered the dice with a lid, and Ray looked at Gerald who was behind the ghost.

After a quick peek, Gerald gave Ray a hand signal.

“I bet low!”

After seeing Gerald’s hand signal, Ray shouted loudly.

Then, he put the money on the low slot.

After making his bet, the ghost revealed the dice.

When he opened it, it was indeed a low number.

This made the ghosts around them applaud. They didn’t expect Ray to be so good at gambling so much so that he had made profits in just one go.

However, Ray did not plan to stop there.

Since they were already there, he wanted to make a fortune.

Soon after, the second round started.

Just like before, the ghost in the middle rolled the dice.

Then, he covered the dice again.

Meanwhile, Gerald, who was behind the ghost, told Ray the number using hand signals.

After looking at the hand signal, Ray put all his money on the low slot once more.

“I still want to bet low!”

Ray shouted and put all the money on the low slot.

Later, the ghost revealed the dice.

Sure enough, it was a low number.

Ray won again. But this time, he won much more than the first time.

“Alright, I have had enough, so I’ll stop playing!”

He had made enough to afford a feast. Therefore, Ray didn’t want to continue gambling.

However, there was an unspoken rule in casinos in the human world, and that was, those who won should not leave. Of course, this applied to casinos in the spiritual world as well.

“Wait!”

Before Ray could take another step, a few ghosts stopped him.

The ghost standing in the middle walked toward Ray and stared at him. “There is no such thing as leaving after winning.”

“Why? Do you guys have the guts to play the game? Or is it that you can’t afford to lose?”

Ray stared at the ghost coldly. He didn’t expect that the ghost here would be just like humans in the real world, playing rogue when they couldn’t afford to lose. They still wanted to be rascals when they were already ghosts. This irritated Ray a lot.

“Huh! You can either continue to gamble until you lose all the money, or you can hand over the money before you leave. There are two options, you choose!”

The ghost standing in the middle sneered and warned Ray, staring at him with threatening eyes.

It seemed that the ghost did not plan to let him leave.

Since that was the case, Ray would not let them have their way.

“Is that so? What if I don’t choose either of them?”

Ray looked at them and asked again.

“Then, don’t blame us for not showing mercy!”

The ghost in the middle snorted and signaled the ghosts around him.

Right after, the surrounding ghosts charged toward Ray and Gerald.

Since they had made their moves, Gerald was definitely not going to spare them.

He summoned his Fishgut Sword immediately and slashed them.

Swish!

At once, the Fishgut Sword wiped out a few ghosts effortlessly.

Seeing this, the ghost standing in the middle showed fear on his face. He didn’t know that Gerald would be this powerful and possess such a powerful weapon.

“You are not a ghost, but a human!”

The ghost shouted in surprise.

“Hehe. Good that you know now. So, are you still going to stop me?”

Gerald smirked and asked the ghost.

Now, the ghost did not dare to be arrogant anymore. He lowered his head and said, “No, I won’t dare to.

Please, you may leave!”

Hearing this, Gerald smiled in satisfaction. Then, he left the casino with Ray.

After they had left, Gerald and Ray found a spot to sit down.

“Wow, that’s so much money!”

Gerald’s eyes glowed as he looked at the bag full of money in Ray’s arms.

“Hehe. This is not real money, but the money of ghosts.”

Ray chuckled and explained to Gerald.

The money could only be used in Ghost Sect. It couldn’t be used in the real world, so, it was kind of useless even if they had a lot.

“Ray, I’m very hungry. What should I do?”

As Gerald was talking to Ray, his stomach was already rumbling loudly.

“Okay. Let me see if there’s a place where you can eat. We should find a place to spend the money!”

Once he heard that, Ray suggested to Gerald.

Then, Ray started scouring Ghost Sect with Gerald.

Soon, Ray saw a big restaurant that looked similar to a restaurant in the real world.

He led Gerald into the restaurant.

“Boss!”

Ray shouted loudly once he went in, only to see a man in white come out from inside and greet them with a bright smile.

“Hehe. What would you like to eat?”

The restaurateur asked both Ray and Gerald.

Hearing this, Ray and Gerald were shocked. They didn’t expect that the restaurateur could see Gerald.

“You can see me?” Gerald looked at the restaurateur in surprise and asked.

“Of course!”

The restaurateur smiled and answered.

Hearing this, Gerald looked at Ray immediately and started worrying.

“Ray, it can’t be that the effect of my medicine has passed, right?”

Gerald asked Ray in surprise, then, he quickly took out his mobile phone to check the time.

Looking at the time, twelve hours were not up yet. He had only been here for two hours.

But why could this restaurateur see him? This made Gerald wonder in astonishment.

“Boss, why can you see him?”

Ray asked the restaurateur curiously.

“Ha! Ha! Because I’m a human, just like you!”

The restaurateur smiled and explained.

Ray and Gerald finally understood the situation. So, that was why.

“Are you also a half-phantom?”

Ray asked suspiciously.

The restaurateur nodded and said, “Yes, I am. Let me introduce myself. My name is Garren Henry. I’m the owner of this restaurant, and I am specifically responsible for receiving people from the real world here!”

“Nice to meet you, Garren. I am Ray Leighton, and this is my friend, Gerald Crawford. We were hungry, so we came to get some food. Since we are not half-phantom, we can’t eat the food in Ghost Sect!”

Then, Ray introduced himself to Garren and explained the reason for coming to this place.

“No problem. Don’t worry. The food I serve here is safe for humans!”

Garren said immediately.

Then, he seated Ray and Gerald at a table

“Garren, do humans come here often?”

Once seated, Ray asked Garren.

“Not really. Most of the guests who come here are ghosts. Humans rarely come. Besides, I only come here for business when the entrance of the spiritual world is open. You are the first two humans from the real world I’ve met,” Garren explained.

“Right, you don’t look like ordinary people. You must be cultivators, right?”

After that, Garren looked at Ray again and asked.

Ray was startled when he heard Garren’s words. He didn’t expect that Garren would know.

“How did you know?”

Ray asked in surprise.

“Hehe. People who come to my place are all cultivators. There wouldn’t be any other people!”

Garren chuckled and explained.

“Then, you must be one as well!”

Ray stared at Garren. Since he was a half-phantom, he had to also be a cultivator.

“Hehe, I’m not really a cultivator. It’s just that I became like this because of an accident.”

Garren laughed bitterly and explained.

In truth, there were very few people who could become half-phantoms. Some by accident, and some by experiment.

However, Ray and Juno had become half-phantoms due to accidents.

Soon after, Garren served a lot of food on their table. All the food was from the real world.

Looking at the food, their eyes glowed.

“Come on, dig in. There’s more if this is not enough!”

Garren told them.

After that, Gerald and Ray started feasting.

“By the way, did you guys come here for the Ghostly Pearl?”

“Ghostly Pearl?”

Gerald was puzzled when he heard that.

It was his first time hearing about this Ghostly Pearl.

“What? You don’t know about it?”

Garren saw Gerald’s puzzled look and asked in surprise.

Gerald and Ray shook their heads.

“The Ghostly Pearl is the treasure of Ghost Sect. It is said that it can increase one’s cultivation level manyfold. That’s why many soul cultivators wanted to steal it. And yet, you actually don’t know about it?”

Garren stared at Gerald in surprise as he explained, his face expressing his disbelief.

“Then, where can I get this Ghostly Pearl?”

Gerald asked directly.

Since the Ghostly Pearl was so precious, it triggered Gerald’s interest greatly. Now, he was thinking of getting it.

“It’s not that easy. The Ghostly Pearl is in the hand of Ghost King. It’s the treasure of Ghost King, so getting the Ghostly Pearl would not be a simple task. Many soul cultivators died at his hands!”

Later, Garren told them with a doubtful look.

From Garren’s words, they knew that the Ghostly Pearl must be a very extraordinary thing. Besides, the Ghost King that he mentioned was the leader of Ghost Sect. He wasn’t someone who could be defeated by simply anyone.

“Where is Ghost King?”

Gerald continued to ask curiously.

“Ghost King is in the deepest ghost cave. That is his territory. Besides, many ghost soldiers and ghost generals are guarding the place, so it’s very difficult to get inside. Even if you do get into the cave, it’s very difficult to find the Ghostly Pearl.”

Garren told Gerald the location of Ghost King immediately.

“How long will the Ghost Sect remain open?”

After a pause, Gerald asked Garren.

Frankly speaking, this was also Gerald’s first time coming to Ghost Sect.

Although he heard about it from Old Flint, it was his first time actually coming here, and it was indeed a very different experience.

“One month. However, the entrance will be closed during the day and only open at night!” Garren replied immediately.

Upon hearing that, Gerald nodded with a serious face.

Since Ghost Sect would remain open for a month, it would mean that he had enough time to plan how to get the Ghostly Pearl.

If Gerald did not know about the Ghostly Pearl, he would not have bothered.

But now that he knew about it, he would not let go of such a great opportunity.

“Good. Garren, we need your help. I want to get this Ghostly Pearl!”

After that, Gerald told Garren definitively.

When Garren heard that, he was shocked. He didn’t expect Gerald to actually have the idea of getting the Ghostly Pearl.

“But as I told you, Gerald, the Ghostly Pearl is not that easy to obtain!”

Garren reminded Gerald worryingly.

“Yes, I know that. And that is the reason why I’m interested in it. The more difficult it is, the more I want to try. And maybe, I will succeed!”

Gerald looked at Garren with a determined face and said.

After hearing this, Garren couldn't help but agree to help.

"Alright. Tell me what I can help you with." Garren asked directly.

"I haven't thought of a plan yet. Wait until I have a plan, and I will tell you what to do!"

Gerald didn't reply to Garren's question, but he simply reminded him.

"Okay, no problem. Once you have formulated a plan, tell me, and I will do my best to help you!"

Garren agreed readily without any objection.

Right then, Garren completely treated Gerald and Ray as his friends.

Since they were friends, it was only natural for them to help each other.

"Right, I have a good thing here that I can give to your disciple!"

Just then, Garren suddenly remembered something, and he hurriedly stood up. Then, he walked into the house. After a short while, Garren walked out with a tag and handed it to Ray directly.

"What's this?"

Ray received the tag, and he asked in doubt all of a sudden.

“This...”

“This is the token of Ghost King, right?”

Without waiting for an explanation from Garren, Gerald directly revealed the name of the tag in Ray’s hand.

“That’s right. It’s the token of Ghost King, and it’s also the thing on a ghost’s body. With this, your disciple can have free access to Ghost Sect. It’s fine even if the effect of the medicine has subsided!”

Garren looked at Ray and Gerald as he explained.

Hearing that, both Gerald and Ray were very joyful. Unexpectedly, Garren actually owned such an item!

“Thank you, Boss Henry!”

Ray immediately expressed his gratitude toward Garren.

“Alright, it should be dawn soon. The large entrance of the spiritual world is about to be closed. I also need to pack up and leave this place!”

Garren looked at the time immediately after that. He found that it was almost early morning, so he immediately reminded both Gerald and Ray.

“Hmm, fine. Boss Henry, we’ll leave first, then!”

Gerald also stood up and said to Garren.

After bidding each other goodbye, Gerald brought Ray along and left the Ghost Sect directly.

By the time they went out of the large entrance of the Ghost Sect, the sky outside had turned white, just like the belly of a fish. It meant that it would soon be morning. The large entrance of the Ghost Sect was about to be closed.

“Huh!

“The fresh air is so good. It’s indeed very comfortable!”

The moment he came out, Ray looked up at the sky and sighed emotionally in a loud voice.

At that moment, the waterfall behind them was restored, and there were countless splashes of water, symbolizing that the large entrance of Ghost Sect had been officially closed.

“Gerald, I have a classmate party tonight. Can you come with me?”

In that instant, Juno suggested to Gerald.

“What time is it?”

“Seven o’clock!”

“Fine, no problem!”

Gerald chatted with Juno casually before he agreed to do so.

Since it was Juno's classmate party, Gerald certainly needed to keep her company and go with her.

Hearing that Gerald had promised to go, Juno also revealed a delighted smile.

At night.

Gerald drove a car and went to her classmate's party with her.

In Treka City. In Royal Grand Hotel.

"Juno, it seems like your classmates are quite rich."

Gerald smiled and looked at Juno, teasing her.

Juno also smiled lightly and responded, "It's been a long time since I've met them. They sent me an invitation card this time around, and that's why I know of such a classmate party!"

After she had said that, Gerald parked the car promptly. Then, he brought Juno into the hotel.

"Juno!"

At that moment, they heard a call from behind them.

Both of them immediately turned around and took a look. It was a woman in a long purple dress. She

was walking toward them with a gentle smile.

“Ruth!”

Juno suddenly squealed.

After simply exchanging pleasantries with each other, the three of them immediately went upstairs.

The classmate party was held in a large banquet hall.

“I heard that this classmate party is organized by the class monitor alone. It seems like a lot of money was spent!”

As Juno and Ruth Gurveil were walking, they chatted with each other. The three of them opened the door of the banquet hall and walked into the hall.

As soon as Juno and Ruth had entered the venue, they soon attracted all of the people’s attention in the hall.

“Miss Zorn, the beauty is here!”

Suddenly, a man’s excited voice was heard.

A man in a blue suit walked over hurriedly immediately after that. He came to stand before Gerald and the two ladies.

“Juno, finally you’re here. I’ve been waiting for you!”

The man in the blue suit was full of smiles as he looked at Juno and greeted her. His eyes were filled with fervent joy.

That person was Juno's class monitor in university, and his name was Xanry Quirke.

"Ha! Ha! Monitor, you've exaggerated it. The classmate party would still be lively even without me."

Juno smiled faintly and said.

Looking at Xanry before her made Juno feel that he was just as annoying as he used to be in the past.

The main thing was Xanry always addressed her as Juno, and it made her uncomfortable when she heard that. After all, she did not have a very close relationship with Xanry, and they were not considered particularly familiar with each other.

However, since there were so many people there, Juno had no way to say much. They were classmates, and it was unnecessary to humiliate others.

"Alas! Juno, you're wrong. If you didn't come, what's the fun of our classmate party?"

Xanry immediately grabbed the chance to say this to Juno.

Standing at the side, Gerald observed Xanry. He felt that Xanry was extremely good at pretending.

In truth, Gerald had already seen through Xanry's inner thoughts. Xanry just wanted to obtain Juno.

Unfortunately for him, Gerald was not about to give him that chance.

“Juno, is he the class monitor you mentioned before?”

Gerald deliberately walked forward and hugged Juno, asking her with a faint smile. He just wanted to do that purposely in front of Xanry to let the latter know that Juno belonged to him.

Seeing Gerald putting on such an act, Juno was not surprised. On the contrary, she felt warm inwardly with a deep sense of security.

“Hmm. That’s right. He’s my class monitor—Xanry Quirke!”

Juno looked obedient and charming, leaning close to Gerald’s shoulder as she replied to him.

Seeing this, Xanry was stunned all of a sudden. He totally did not expect that there would be such a scene.

“Juno... This is?”

After a pause, Xanry asked Juno slightly awkwardly.

Without waiting for Juno to say anything, Gerald looked at Xanry with a smile as he greeted him, “Monitor, nice to meet you. Let me introduce myself. I’m Juno’s boyfriend, and my name is Gerald Crawford!”

Hearing that, Xanry’s heart skipped a beat instantly.

It had never occurred to him that Juno had a boyfriend. It was even beyond his expectation that Juno would actually bring her boyfriend along to join the classmate party.

Putting Xanry aside, the other classmates who were around also revealed shocked expressions one after another.

They knew for a fact how madly Xanry had tried to gain Juno's affections in the past. However, he was always rejected by Juno.

Yet now, Juno actually had a boyfriend. That would indeed make them feel shocked and incredulous. They wondered what kind of person Gerald was since he was actually able to gain Juno's affections.

At that moment, Xanry was very annoyed inwardly, but he could not express that. Therefore, he could only pretend to be fine.

"Hello, nice to meet you!"

Xanry revealed a smile as he greeted Gerald.

The classmate party officially started immediately after that. Everyone took their seats one after another, sitting at the dining table as they ate and chatted among themselves.

Naturally, both Gerald and Juno sat at the same dining table with Ruth. Of course Xanry was there too.

"Come, Mr. Crawford! Let me toast to you!"

At that moment, Xanry took the initiative to stand up, holding the wine glass. He then smiled faintly at Gerald, toasted to him, and said.

Seeing that, Gerald also cordially stood up as he toasted Xanry, “Ha! Ha! Thank you, monitor!”

After he had said that, both of them gulped down the entire glass of wine at the same time.

“Ha! Ha! Mr. Crawford, you’re quite good at drinking. It seems that you must have always drunk a lot!”

When Xanry saw Gerald gulp down the glass of wine in such a frank and straightforward manner, he smiled and teased Gerald.

“There’s no such thing. I don’t drink wine usually. I only have a glass or two. Honestly, I’m not good at drinking!”

Gerald responded to Xanry in a very humble manner.

Gerald could discern that Xanry was sounding him out. However, since Xanry wanted to sound him out, he certainly had to put on an act to conform to Xanry’s action. He wanted to see what exactly Xanry wanted to do.

“If that’s the case, Mr. Crawford, you need to drink more today. After all, you’re Juno’s boyfriend. You must be extraordinary since you were able to become Juno’s boyfriend. I wonder what kind of high post you have now.”

Xanry then started asking Gerald.

Hearing that, one soon knew that Xanry had certainly started to compare himself with Gerald in an offensive manner. It seemed as though Xanry wanted to retrieve a little bit of confidence and advantage in other aspects of Gerald.

Still, no matter what Xanry wanted to do, it was to no avail. It was because Gerald felt that Xanry could never be compared with him. Xanry was entirely not on par with him.

“Ha! Ha! Monitor, you’re joking. I’m not worthy of a high post, and I’m just doing a small business myself.”

Gerald smiled very calmly as he looked at Xanry and responded.

Hearing that, Xanry was deeply happy inwardly. He was wondering what kind of job Gerald had, but Gerald had absolutely no way to be compared to him.

“Mr. Crawford, you’re very humble. Come, Mr. Crawford. Let’s have another glass of wine!”

Xanry lifted his wine glass again and toasted Gerald, saying such words. He wanted to make Gerald drunk.

Gerald certainly would not let Xanry have his way. It was because Xanry could never imagine how good at drinking Gerald was.

Soon, the first stage of the classmate party was over.

After the meal, the subsequent activity was certainly the amusement activities.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I’ve booked the entertainment hall upstairs. Do go upstairs and have fun. I’ll pay for all expenses tonight!”

Xanry then shouted at the surrounding classmates in a loud voice.

Hearing that, the surrounding classmates cheered and whooped loudly one after another. It made Xanry

feel very good, and he felt that he had everyone's attention at that moment.

After that, they went to the entertainment hall upstairs.

Meanwhile, Gerald sat on the sofa at the side with Juno and Ruth.

"Juno, your class monitor is very generous."

After they had sat down, Gerald inevitably made a sarcastic joke and said to Juno.

Quite frankly, Gerald's words were filled with ridicule. In truth, he knew that Xanry just wanted to show himself off by doing so, making himself the center of attraction. Xanry wanted everyone to think that he was very successful.

After Juno heard that, she said nothing. She was uninterested in anything related to Xanry.

Just then, they saw Xanry walking toward them.

"Mr. Crawford, it turns out that you're here. Why are you sitting here? Do you want to go and play bowling with me?"

Xanry walked over to Gerald and suggested, full of smiles. "Bowling? Alas! I truly have never played it before."

After Gerald heard that, he pretended to reply in doubt.

Since he wanted to put on an act, he certainly needed to go through with it. He wanted to have fun with Xanry properly.

“It’s fine. Let me teach you. Come! Let’s go and have fun!”

After Xanry heard that, he was not doubtful at all. He cheerfully said this to Gerald.

“Alright, then. I’ll go and have fun with you!”

Gerald directly agreed to do so. After that, he looked toward Juno.

“Juno, I’ll go and play bowling for a while. Just have a chat here!”

After Juno heard that, she naturally had no objection. She knew that Gerald certainly had his own thoughts. Naturally, she would not stop him. She could only remark that it was not a good choice for Xanry to look for trouble with Gerald. Till then, Xanry would definitely regret it.

Soon Gerald had arrived at the bowling alley with Xanry.

Both Xanry and Gerald occupied a lane respectively.

“Come, Mr. Crawford. I’ll teach you how to play this game. Just observe me!”

Xanry smiled and said to Gerald. After that, he picked up a bowling ball and held it in his hand.

Xanry walked forward and then exerted himself, pulling the bowling ball in his hand backward before throwing it forward.

The bowling ball soon started rolling in the lane.

Bang!

With that one shot, the pins were hit directly. Xanry's shot directly knocked down all of the pins.

Seeing that, Gerald knew that Xanry clearly had considerable experience with bowling. Besides, he was also a person with very powerful strength.

It seemed like Xanry had deliberately asked him to play bowling together just for the sake of bullying him.

But Xanry had assumed that Gerald was too weak.

Unbeknownst to him, Gerald had played bowling before. Not only that, but he also had a lot of experience.

Gerald had deliberately claimed that he did not know how to play bowling just so Xanry would not see through his act. It was all for the sake of exposing Xanry's true colors.

Since Xanry wanted to play this game, Gerald would play with him properly.

"Come, Mr. Crawford. Give it a try!"

At that moment, Xanry picked up a bowling ball and handed it to Gerald before saying that.

Gerald received the bowling ball and walked forward, pretending to be unfamiliar with it. He did the same action as Xanry had done before. He then threw the bowling ball in his hand forward.

However, Gerald purposely threw it in an askew manner, and he did not hit a single pin.

“Ha! Ha! Ha!”

When Xanry saw that Gerald had failed to hit the pins, he soon burst into a roar of loud laughter all of a sudden.

“Mr. Crawford, it seems like you need to practice more. It’ll be fine after you practice a few times!”

Xanry pretended to be kind and reminded Gerald.

Gerald also did not bother about him. Instead, he continued to pick up another bowling ball and purposely practiced his skills.

Xanry was indeed stupid, for he had not seen through anything. He had absolutely not found out that Gerald was actually pretending.

If it was someone else who was professional, Gerald was afraid that they would have long seen through it and found that he definitely knew how to play bowling.

After a short while, Xanry looked toward Gerald again.

“Mr. Crawford, I see that you’ve practiced for so long. Why don’t we have a competition? Let’s have a round, shall we?”

Xanry suggested to Gerald.

Gerald knew that Xanry was about to start, and his true colors were about to be exposed.

As expected, that was Xanry's purpose. Xanry wanted to compete with Gerald and bully him fiercely in order to humiliate him.

Gerald had seen through everything, but he was unwilling to point that out.

Certainly, Gerald was not the kind of person who would not conform to that.

"Sure!"

Gerald directly agreed to do so. "How about this? We definitely need something at stake for a competition, right? What do you think about 150 dollars for a round?"

At that moment, Xanry looked toward Gerald and suggested to him. He had long planned a small scheme in his heart.

Gerald sneered inwardly. It seemed like Xanry was mad about money. He actually wanted 150 dollars for one round of bowling.

"Sure, no problem!"

After a pause, Gerald directly agreed to do so.

After all, money was nothing to Gerald. Besides, it was uncertain that he would lose terribly.

Everything was in his control.

“Monitor, don’t bully Juno’s boyfriend in such a terrible manner. If not, Juno will get angry!”

In that instant, a male classmate who was sitting at the side watching another’s misfortune teased Xanry. His tone was filled with ridicule for Gerald.

Gerald also did not care about those people. After all, everything would be known later.

Gerald would humiliate them vehemently, giving every one of them a soundless slap.

They wanted to bully him, but they did not cut the coat according to their clothes. Was it that easy to bully him?

“Come on! Mr. Crawford, we’ll take turns. Let’s see who has the highest score at the end!”

Xanry immediately described the rules to Gerald. He was rather impatient to bully Gerald vigorously.

Gerald nodded slightly without saying anything.

Soon, the machine had placed the pins nicely, and the competition started.

Xanry was the first to begin. He took a bowling ball, directly making a perfect arc in the air before the ball fell on the floor and rolled out.

After he threw the ball, he did not even spare it a glance. He was filled with confidence.

There was the crisp sound of a crash.

During the first round, Xanry had hit all of the pins, gaining ten points.

There were a total of ten pins, and one point would be rewarded for knocking down a pin.

“Wow!”

“Monitor, you’re so awesome!”

“That’s right! Monitor is just too handsome!”

Seeing that Xanry had knocked down all of the pins, the surrounding classmates cheered one after another, all of them praising him.

For a moment, Xanry was wallowing in the enjoyment of pleasure.

Next, it was Gerald’s turn. He got up and picked up a bowling ball. Gerald certainly would not directly show his true strength during that round. It was because the time had not come.

Hence, Gerald had to purposely fail to hit the pins no matter what.

After he had thought it over, he threw the ball out randomly. The bowling ball rolled in the lane swiftly before rolling out of the lane. The result was invalid, and he gained no points for that round.

“Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!”

That scene soon made everyone around that place burst into roars of laughter, and they thought that Gerald was just too weak.

However, Gerald did not bother about those people.

Gerald had done that on purpose, so he let them mock him all they wanted.

The more they mocked him now, the deeper the humiliation they would suffer later.

“Hmm... Mr. Crawford, it’s fine. Everyone makes mistakes!”

Xanry purposely endured it and refrained from laughing. He looked at Gerald and consoled him.

After that, as he was talking, he picked up the bowling ball. He started to throw the ball for the second round of the game.

The machine had just reset the pins nicely. The second round of the game had begun.

It was the same as before, and Xanry decisively threw out the bowling ball in his hand.

The bowling ball rolled on the lane, rolling toward the pins quickly.

Bang!

It hit the pins successfully.

However, the second round was not as smooth as the first round, and Xanry only knocked down seven pins, gaining seven points.

Actually, Xanry had done that purposely. He deliberately went easy on Gerald. If not, he would be deemed too cruel. Besides, Gerald was Juno’s boyfriend no matter what. He did not want Juno to get

angry at him later, thinking that he was entirely bullying Gerald.

“Your move, Mr. Crawford!” said Xanry as he turned to look at Gerald once he was done.

It was now the start of the second round, and Gerald knew that he couldn’t afford to obtain zero marks again or the gap between his score and Xanry’s would become too large for him to turn the game around later.

With that, Gerald picked a bowling ball up before slowly walking toward the lane.

The second he got into position, however, Gerald heard Xanry yell out from behind him, “Just make some bold toss, Mr. Crawford! It’s fine if you don’t hit anything, just take it as practice! After all, you need a lot more of it to even be able to take on me!”

As roars of laughter ensued, Gerald simply closed his eyes... Before slowly opening them again.

Taking a step forward, Gerald then tossed the bowling ball!

Rather than swerving to the side this time, the ball instead rolled straight for the pins, momentarily surprising Xanry and the others.

While the sound of bowling pins getting knocked over could be heard, Gerald only managed to hit five pins. With that in mind, he was now twelve marks behind Xanry.

Since there were six more rounds before the game ended—with the game consisting of eight rounds in total—Gerald felt that being twelve marks behind Xanry wasn’t really a particularly large difference. After all, he simply needed to get a higher final score than him to win.

“...Not bad, Mr. Crawford! I guess you really do have some talent to be able to hit five pins!” said Xanry

as he insincerely praised Gerald. Truth be told, the fact that Gerald had managed to hit five pins in the first place was truly vexing him. How lucky!

While that hit was certainly surprising, Xanry quickly summarized that Gerald still wasn't a threat to him. He'd definitely still be able to win and obtain that hundred and fifty dollars!

With that, their little contest resumed and the third round began.

Using his usual tactic, Xanry tossed the ball as easily as the first two rounds... and following the clattering of falling pins, only a single pin remained standing!

Since he had managed to gain nine points, Xanry now had a total of twenty-six points and this led those surrounding him to instantly cheer.

Even before Gerald made his move, however, he could already tell that that same crowd was going to jeer at him no matter what score he got. Still, it was clear to him that those spectators were simply fools fawning over Xanry. With that in mind, their jeers meant little to Gerald. Gerald hadn't even displayed his true capabilities yet.

Whatever the case was, Gerald then retrieved his third ball and tossed it skillfully without the slightest hesitation, a clear contrast to how he tossed his ball in the previous two rounds.

This was all according to plan, of course. Gerald had applied perfect amounts of force to his throws to display increasing amounts of strength and skill in each passing round. That way, not only would Xanry not be too quick to be suspicious of him, but he would also be able to ensure that he was making progress in the game.

If everything went smoothly, everyone would surely have a vastly different opinion of him by the end of the bowling match.

Regardless, as the ball rolled seamlessly on the lane, the familiar clatter of bowling pins could be heard... Gerald had managed to hit seven pins this time, and he now had twelve points, which meant that he was now only fourteen marks behind Xanry!

Seeing that Gerald had managed to hit even more pins this time, Xanry's expression turned even more unpleasant. To think that Gerald would be able to progress so quickly! He knew he couldn't afford to go easy on the youth anymore or their scores would just keep getting closer!

"...It appears that you're getting the hang of the game extremely quickly, Mr. Crawford! I guess I can't go easy on you anymore!" declared Xanry, making sure to make it obvious that he had been going easy on Gerald this entire time.

Upon hearing that, Gerald couldn't help but chuckle in his mind as he thought, 'I wonder who's truly going easy on who now...'

Whatever the case was, the fourth round soon began...

Since Xanry was up first, he got his ball before concentrating hard on the pins before him...

Once he was ready, he tossed the bowling ball toward the pins extremely swiftly! Xanry realized that he had made a miscalculation the second the ball hit the lane with a loud 'thud' before swerving right into the gutter! With that in mind, Xanry ended up getting no points for that round.

Seeing that, Xanry couldn't help but frown. To think that he would actually make such a mistake at the worst possible time! How dissatisfactory!

Gerald himself wasn't about to miss the chance to ridicule Xanry. Laughing aloud, Gerald then scoffed, "I guess you made a mistake just in time for me to catch up to you, Monitor! You have my thanks!"

Hearing that, Xanry grew immensely annoyed, though he didn't really have anything to retort. After all,

he was the one who had been careless.

Laughing bitterly in response, Xanry then replied, "...That's right! I guess you do have a chance now!"

While Gerald didn't say it out, in his mind, he was thinking, 'Go on pretending! You're still trying hard to put up an act even after I've given you a platform, huh?'

Now that it was Gerald's turn again, he figured that it was high time he started closing the gap between their scores even more. As long as he remained a few points behind Xanry, he wouldn't make his capabilities too obvious, and Xanry would surely continue being smug about it till the very last moment.

With that in mind, Gerald then got up and took yet another ball. Tossing it in one fluid motion, the ball rolled so steadily that by the time it got to the bowling pins, all ten of them ended up falling!

While gasps could be heard from the audience, Xanry's frown only deepened. Now that Gerald had twenty-two points, he was only four marks behind Xanry. If he wasn't careful, Gerald was surely going to surpass his score in the next round!

"Looks like I'm about to catch up to you, monitor!" said Gerald with a chuckle.

Forcing a laugh, the awkward Xanry then moved to take his fifth ball.

He now understood that due to him wanting to win so much in the previous round, he had gotten impatient, which led to his terrible performance. As the saying went, 'slow and steady wins the race'. With that in mind, Xanry made sure to calm himself before tossing his next shot.

Naturally, now that he was much more focused, Xanry was able to get a strike as well!

Seeing that, his classmates instantly began cheering once more!

“Hell yeah!”

“Awesome, monitor! You got a strike again!”

Now that he had returned to his normal performance, Xanry couldn't help but flash a smile. He was going to triumph over Gerald if it was the last thing he did!

Gerald, on the other hand, simply retained his poker face. Standing there calmly, it almost seemed like he didn't even care about Xanry's performance...

The truth was, however, that Gerald was cooking up a plan in his head. In his mind, he was thinking that instead of simply winning the competition by a landslide, wouldn't it annoy Xanry even more if he won with only a single point higher than Xanry?

Just as Gerald was thinking how interesting that outcome would be, his train of thought was cut short when Xanry scoffed, “It's your turn now, Mr. Crawford! Could it be that you're getting frightened of me?”

The fact that Gerald still hadn't made his move made Xanry delighted to no end. His humiliation earlier was definitely being redeemed now! Nodding slightly, Gerald then picked up another bowling ball before tossing it almost nonchalantly. Even so, he ended up getting yet another strike! How astonishing!

“I'm sorry, monitor! It appears that I've hit all of them again! I guess I've already mastered bowling!” replied Gerald as he smiled while looking at Xanry.

Currently, while Xanry was still ahead with thirty-six points, Gerald was only four points behind him. With only three rounds left, the competition was going to end soon. Who was going to be the victor?

“...A bit too early to celebrate, wouldn’t you say, Mr. Crawford? After all, we still have three rounds to decide the victor!” scoffed Xanry as he picked yet another bowling ball to start the fifth round.

After positioning himself, Xanry then aimed for the pins before swiftly tossing the ball toward them!

When tossing a bowling ball, the route the ball ended up landing in would alter the ball’s strength as well as the number of pins it could hit. With that in mind, not everyone could just hit a strike as they pleased. If they were really unlucky, then the bowling ball would even end up rolling into the gutter!

Even so, Xanry had made use of this knowledge—as well as his aiming skills—to perfectly calculate the direction and strength of the ball. With how straight the ball was now rolling, Xanry was more than certain that he had secured himself another strike!

As the ball crashed into the pins, everyone held their breath as they watched the ones at the sides wobble to and fro... Until eventually, only one pin remained standing! With nine pins knocked over, Xanry now had forty-five points in the bag!

Even so, Xanry felt that the results weren’t ideal. After all, now that he had missed one pin, Gerald was one point closer to catching up to him!

Regardless, it was now Gerald’s turn. As long as he managed to hit all the pins, there would only be a three-point difference between their scores!

Picking the ball up before Xanry even had a chance to taunt him, Gerald then casually tossed it down the lane... only to end up getting another strike! How stupefying!

Due to that, there was now only a three-point difference between the two. With only two rounds left in the game, the winner of the competition was soon to be announced...

Looking dead serious now, Xanry was worried out of his mind. After all, if he didn’t perform well in the

final two rounds, missing a single pin would result in Gerald winning the competition!

“Ah... Sorry monitor, but it seems that I got another strike! Lucky me!” said Gerald in an apologetic tone as he put on an innocent façade.

Hearing that, Xanry was so infuriated that he wanted to pummel Gerald to bits! However, he knew better than to do that. After all, that would surely make him look like a sore loser!

With that, the sixth round then began...

Picking the ball up, the worried Xanry couldn't help but quiver slightly. He knew that being defeated by Gerald would surely bring him immense humiliation, and understanding that only served to amplify his nervousness...

After slightly hesitating, Xanry then tossed the ball forward... However, it instantly rolled askew!

Seeing that, Xanry instantly knew that the results wouldn't look pretty. Fortunately, he still ended up hitting four pins. With that, he now had a total of forty-nine points.

“Oh no, it appears that you've made another mistake, monitor!” said Gerald who wasn't going to miss the chance to humiliate him.

Fuming mad, Xanry thought to himself, 'Like I'm blind... I can see that...! You don't have to rub it in!'

Whatever the case was, Xanry could now only hope that Gerald would also make a mistake. If that happened, then Xanry would still have one final chance to turn things around...

Unfortunately for him, Gerald wasn't about to grant him such a chance.

Immediately picking the bowling ball up, Gerald then walked toward the lane... Without even having to look where he was throwing, Gerald then confidently tossed it toward the pins.

Every dog had its day, and it was now Gerald's turn to do the mocking. After all, he was simply doing the same thing that Xanry had done to him in the first round.

Whatever the case was, as expected, no pins remained standing, signifying yet another strike from Gerald. With the scores being fifty-two against forty-nine now, Gerald's score had finally surpassed Xanry's...

With Gerald's turn over, the start of the seventh and final round began...

By this point, Xanry knew that he couldn't afford to mess up anymore. If he didn't land a strike, then he would surely lose to Gerald!

He was also worried that Gerald would get yet another strike... If that happened, then Xanry would still lose the competition, regardless of whether he managed to get that final strike or not... With that in mind, he could only pray that Gerald made a mistake in his final throw.

Shaking the thought off, Xanry then picked his final bowling ball before walking toward the lane...

As he took in a deep breath, Xanry heard as his classmates began cheering for him.

"Monitor, come on, you can do it!"

"Yeah! You'll definitely win, monitor!"

Upon hearing that, Xanry felt his confidence slowly return to him.

Now that he had recovered his strength, he glared at the pins before tossing the ball forward in a fluid motion!

Rolling in a straight line, the ball never swerved, and in the end, all ten pins were hit with a loud clatter!

“Strike!” yelled Xanry as he instantly jumped in joy and excitement. At the very least his final throw wasn’t a disappointment.

However, now that that was over, it was now Gerald’s turn...

Gerald’s performance in this final round would decide who won the battle. If Gerald got another strike, then it would officially be Xanry’s loss. However, if Gerald flubbed his roll, then it would be Xanry’s win...

Looking at Xanry’s score of fifty-nine, Gerald knew that he only had to hit eight pins in order to surpass Xanry by a single point. Of course, with how easily he had been getting strikes, hitting eight pins was nothing to Gerald.

With that, Gerald then picked his final bowling ball and adjusted the strength in his hands... before tossing the ball forward!

Swiftly rolling along the lane, the clattering of pins could soon be heard as the bowling ball’s strike left only two pins standing...

Just as Gerald had hoped for, he had managed to hit exactly eight pins, and with his score being sixty, he had managed to win against Xanry by exactly one point!

Xanry himself could only stand there, completely flabbergasted. To think that he would be defeated by

someone who hadn't even played bowling before!

Of course, Gerald was no stranger to bowling, but Xanry didn't know that, nor did he need to.

Regardless, despite winning, Gerald didn't want Xanry to get too embarrassed. After all, in the end, he was still Juno's monitor. With that said, Gerald knew he had to give Xanry at least some respect.

With that in mind, Gerald then smiled faintly before saying in a humble tone, "I guess I won, monitor! Sorry for that! However, I know how much of a pro you are in this game, so I'm pretty sure you deliberately lost to me, right?"

Upon hearing that, Xanry instantly caught on to what Gerald was trying to do. Since Gerald was granting him a chance to lessen his shame, Xanry was certainly not going to say no to that.

With that, Xanry then got his wallet before fishing a hundred and fifty dollars out to hand to Gerald.

Naturally, Gerald wasn't about to say no to that money. After all, he deserved it, and he wasn't embarrassed to take it.

Now that the game was over, Gerald then waved farewell to Xanry before heading back to Juno's side.

Seeing that he was finally back, Juno was prompted to ask, "What took you so long?"

"Well, I just played around for a while. Regardless, I got a bit tired so I'm back now!" explained Gerald with a faint smile.

Naturally, she believed Gerald's words. After all, there was no way she could've known about the incident between Gerald and Xanry. Then again, even if she was aware of it, she probably wouldn't have thought much about it. Hell, she would probably feel that Gerald had done well in teaching Xanry a

lesson.

Regardless, after a short while, both of them watched as Xanry walked over to them with a few bottles of wine and what appeared to be some dice in hand.

Sitting right before Gerald, Xanry then smiled before saying, "I'd say we didn't have that much of a good time earlier, Mr. Crawford. With that in mind, what say you and me play something new?"

Hearing that, Juno couldn't help but frown slightly as she looked at Xanry, wondering what he was up to.

Gerald himself could only contemptuously think, 'So, come back to look for more trouble after I defeated you earlier? How reluctant to lose are you? I guess the only way to drill it into you is by showing you the grim reality of things!'

Since Xanry was still pestering him, Gerald was no longer against hiding his true strength. If it was a game Xanry wanted, then Gerald was going to play properly to show Xanry just how powerless he truly was against him. Xanry was about to learn the hard way that Gerald wasn't someone who could be trifled with.

"Not a problem, monitor! Though I wonder what you're planning to play?" asked Gerald with a subtle smile after a slight pause.

Hearing Gerald's agreement, Xanry then placed the dice before Gerald before saying, "We're playing a game of dice. Have you played before?"

Nodding slightly, Gerald then replied, "Just a little!"

"That's great to hear! I won't be telling you the rules then. Regardless, what say we spice up the game by betting seventy-five dollars per round? I'm sure that that small amount won't be an issue for you. Besides, you already gained a hundred and fifty dollars from me earlier!" suggested Xanry, a hint of

annoyance in his tone. Since he had been humiliated so much earlier, he was surely going to get Gerald back for it this time.

He admitted that he had been a bit too careless earlier. Whatever the case was, he was a veteran when it came to dice. With that in mind, he definitely had a major advantage over Gerald this time around.

“No problem! I accept!” replied Gerald.

Upon hearing that, Juno—who had been sitting at the side—couldn’t help but look at Gerald with slight bewilderment.

Tugging on his sleeve, Juno then whispered, “Hey, don’t go acting all recklessly now, Gerald!”

“Don’t worry, I’m sensible enough to know my capabilities!” replied Gerald as he looked back at Juno.

“That’s right, Juno! You should believe in Mr. Crawford, you know?” added Xanry.

Hearing that, Juno chose to remain silent. After all, she, of all people, trusted that Gerald wasn’t one to act recklessly.

With that settled, Xanry then pushed the dice toward Gerald.

Picking them up, Gerald then began shaking the dice.

He was no stranger to the game, which explained his current confidence against Xanry. What more, he had a secret weapon that the others were unaware of, that being the fact that he could differentiate the points of the dice just by listening!

Naturally, this was a pretty exclusive skill that ordinary people could never hope to achieve. Gerald, however, was no ordinary person.

With all that in mind, it was pretty much set in stone that Gerald was going to be the victor before the game even began...With that, the duo then began shaking their dice around for a few seconds...

Once both of them stopped, Xanry immediately smiled as he said, "After you, Mr. Crawford! Make your guess!"

Hearing that, Gerald then declared, "Three sixes!"

"I see! Four sixes then!" shouted Xanry in response.

From what Gerald had been able to hear, he knew that Xanry definitely had two sixes. Gerald had two sixes himself, which was why he definitely couldn't open it.

Regardless, the only way to properly deal with Xanry would be to deliberately lose to him for a few rounds. Allowing Xanry to be smug the first few rounds would definitely make Gerald's eventual victory much sweeter.

With that in mind, Gerald then shouted, "Five fives!"

Upon hearing that, Xanry couldn't help but smile as he declared, "Open!"

Since Xanry had chosen to open Gerald's dice, Gerald naturally had to do so.

Looking at the results, the points of the dice didn't add up to five fives. Instead, there were only three fives, which meant that Gerald had lost this round.

Of course, the loss was calculated, and Gerald was still perfectly under control of the situation.

“Alas, it seems you’ve lost, Mr. Crawford!” said Xanry as he looked at the indifferent Gerald.

Gerald himself didn’t really care about the loss. After all, it was only seventy-five dollars. In a way, he was simply returning Xanry’s own money to him, and it was a detail that Gerald honestly found both hilarious and pathetic.

Regardless, after being handed the money, Xanry quickly took it from Gerald. It was almost as though he was worried that the money would disappear or something, and it clearly showed just how much Xanry cared about money.

Either way, now that he had finally won some cash, Xanry immediately said, “Shall we continue, Mr. Crawford?”

“Fine by me!” replied Gerald as both of them began shaking their dice again...

The second they stopped shaking, Xanry instantly said, “Since you lost in the previous round, you’ll start first, Mr. Crawford!”

Nodding and knowing for a fact—with the aid of his keen hearing—that Xanry had two threes and three fives, Gerald deliberately answered wrongly to let Xanry win again by declaring, “Three fives!”

Gerald himself had the exact opposite digits, with him having two fives and three threes.

Whatever the case was, Xanry then shouted, “Four fours!”

Naturally, it was a number that neither of them had.

To be quite frank, Gerald really wanted to open Xanry's dice now, but he refrained. After all, he didn't want Xanry to lose that quickly. In order to make Xanry's defeat really sting, Gerald was going to allow Xanry to wallow in victory for a few rounds first...With that in mind, after a brief pause, Gerald then declared, "Five fours!"

"Open!" yelled Xanry almost instantaneously.

Rather than feeling surprised that Xanry would choose to open now, Gerald instead felt delighted. After all, he had been waiting for Xanry to do so. Everything was simply going to plan...

Regardless, Gerald then revealed his dice for Xanry to see.

Upon seeing that he had won again, the clearly sarcastic Xanry said in an apologetic tone, "Apologies, Mr. Crawford, but it appears that you've lost again! Looks like you'll be forking out more money to me!"

It didn't take a genius to know that Xanry was already drunk with power. Xanry clearly thought that Gerald was no match against him in this game.

"You win some, you lose some!" replied Gerald in a casual tone as he handed another seventy-five dollars to the overjoyed Xanry.

Seeing that Gerald had already lost a hundred and fifty dollars, Juno quickly looked at Gerald before muttering slightly worriedly, "Gerald, just forget about the game and let's leave already...!"

While seventy-five dollars was nothing to them, if Gerald continued losing, his monetary losses would surely stack up to dangerous amounts...

Chuckling in response, Gerald then said, "Don't worry, Juno! The show has only begun! Besides, I haven't lost a single cent! I won a hundred and fifty dollars from him earlier, so all I've done is return his own money!"

Hearing that, Juno simply chose to remain silent as the competition between Gerald and Xanry resumed.

Now that he had returned all of Xanry's money to him, it was high time Gerald revealed his true strength. It was finally time to go all out!

With that, both of them began shaking their dice again.

The second he saw Gerald stop shaking his dice, Xanry immediately said, "After you, Mr. Crawford!"

From what Gerald was able to hear, Xanry's dice showed four fours and one three. As for his own dice, Gerald had four twos and one five.

With that in mind, Gerald then declared, "Three twos!"

Hearing that, Xanry yelled, "Three fives!"

"Open!" shouted Gerald, no longer planning to allow Xanry to win.

Upon hearing that, Xanry was momentarily stunned. To think that Gerald would choose to open his dice!

Unable to do anything about it, Xanry then opened his dice at the same time Gerald did...

"Oh my... It appears that I only have one five! Sorry monitor, but it seems you've lost!" said Gerald in a

calm tone as he looked at Xanry.

Finding it hard to believe that he had lost, the unwilling Xanry then fished out seventy-five dollars and handed it to Gerald while saying, "...Fine! You win some, you lose some! Here's the money!"

To think that he had to return the money to Gerald so quickly!

Either way, Gerald was naturally not done with Xanry yet. He wasn't going to let Xanry off with a mere seventy-five-dollar loss!

With that, Gerald then asked, "So, how about it, monitor? Do you still wish to continue?"

Now that he wasn't holding back anymore, Gerald naturally wanted to continue the game.

Not finding it odd that Gerald suddenly looked much more interested in the game, Xanry simply replied, "Of course we'll continue! After all, we've only played a few rounds! I won't be going easy on you after this, Mr. Crawford!"

Hearing that same sentence again, Gerald found himself getting increasingly fed up with those words. Xanry was way too confident for his own good. However, the more confident he was, the more arrogant he became, and when that happened, Gerald knew for a fact that things wouldn't end well for him.

With that, both of them quickly began shaking their dice again.

While Gerald only shook his dice for around two seconds, Xanry continued shaking his own dice for quite a while. Even so, Gerald was still able to easily discern what Xanry's dice were. After all, no matter how long he shook his dice, Xanry wouldn't be able to escape Gerald's keen hearing. Still, the fact that Xanry thought that shaking his dice longer could confuse Gerald was honestly laughable.

When Xanry finally stopped rolling, he then declared, "It's finally my turn to start first, Mr. Crawford!"

Though it had been a while since Gerald had last played, he clearly remembered that the one who had lost had the right to shout first. Then again, so what if Xanry could shout first? It was impossible for him to win in the end. Shaking the dice longer was pretty much only a waste of energy.

Regardless, Gerald was quickly able to tell that Xanry's dice showed three sixes, one five, and one four. Since his dice rolls this round wasn't all that great, his chances of winning had become even slimmer than before.

Following that, Xanry then shouted, "Three twos!"

Momentarily caught by surprise, Gerald hadn't expected Xanry to actually shout a number that he didn't even have in his roll. It almost seemed like he was trying to trap him... Of course, Gerald wasn't about to let Xanry have his way.

With that, he chose not to open Xanry's dice just yet. If he did, it would just be too obvious.

Instead, Gerald shouted out the numbers of his own dice, that being, "Three fives!"

Hearing that, Xanry was definitely not going to open Gerald's dice. After all, the possibility of having three fives was simply too low.

After that, Xanry then yelled, "Four fours!"

"Open!" declared Gerald. Since Gerald didn't have a single four, if he didn't open now, how much longer would he have to wait?

While Xanry found himself stunned, he quickly snapped out of it before opening his dice...

Due to Gerald not having any fours and Xanry having one, it was evident that Xanry had lost this round as well.

To think that such results would turn up... He truly had brought ruin upon himself again...

Watching as Xanry's expression soured, Gerald apologetically said, "Sorry monitor, guess I win again!"

Though Xanry was vexed out of his mind when he heard that, there was nothing he could do. After all, both Juno and Ruth had been watching them play this entire time. It was impossible for him to go back on his own bet.

With that, the resigned Xanry could only return the remaining seventy-five dollars that he had just won back to Gerald.

As the saying went, 'things would always return to their rightful owners'.

With the hundred and fifty dollars back, Gerald smiled as he turned to face Xanry while saying, "I think we shouldn't play any longer, monitor! It's not good to gamble this much!"

While his words were kind, Gerald was well aware that saying that would only further provoke Xanry into playing more.

"...Of course we'll continue playing! I've only lost a hundred and fifty dollars, you know? I'll definitely win that amount back later!" replied Xanry in a confident tone.

Hearing that, Gerald was instantly delighted as he thought, 'To think that he's still trying to intimidate me! Since it's come to this, don't blame me for taking more of your money!'

Some people just needed to be persistently and mercilessly dealt with for the point to finally get across their thick skulls.

Regardless, the two of them then promptly started their next round.

Throughout the process of shaking their dice, Xanry kept a close eye on Gerald. To his annoyance, Gerald didn't appear to have any tricks up his sleeve. Still, Xanry simply had a feeling that Gerald was different, though he couldn't pinpoint what made Gerald so special...

Whatever the case was, after a while, the two of them stopped shaking their dice at the same time.

This time, Gerald had four twos and a single one. In the game's terms, such results were known as 'leopard' since so many of the dice yielded the same value. Xanry, on the other hand, had four threes and a single two.

Looking at the value of his own dice, Xanry couldn't help but smile confidently.

Seeing that, Gerald then said, "Come on, monitor! After you!"

"Four twos!" declared Xanry, evidently still trying to frame Gerald. Unfortunately, the only way he could succeed with his plan was by getting defeated by Gerald again this round.

Naturally, Gerald was no fool so he simply yelled out Xanry's points, that being, "Four threes!"

Upon hearing that, Xanry couldn't help but frown slightly. How could Gerald have known his exact points?

Quickly shaking the thought off—figuring that Gerald had just yelled out some random numbers—Xanry then shouted, "Five twos!"

“Oh? I’ll add one more then! Six twos!” yelled Gerald in return.

Upon hearing that, Xanry was stunned. To think that Gerald would be this quick to act!

Regardless, now that Gerald had called for six, the situation was getting more and more dangerous. If he continued shouting, he was afraid that Gerald would eventually open his dice. With that in mind, Xanry could only choose to open Gerald’s dice first.

“...Fine! I’m opening yours! I don’t believe that you could have six twos!” grumbled Xanry as he revealed his dice before staring at Gerald confidently.

Unfortunately for him, nothing went according to Xanry’s plans.

“Oh my, I’m truly sorry, monitor! It appears that I really have six twos! What more, not only do I have six of them, but I also have a ‘leopard’!” declared Gerald as he smugly looked at Xanry.

How... How was this possible?! It was truly stupefying to Xanry.

Who would’ve guessed that Gerald would get a leopard! No wonder Gerald had shouted that out so confidently! He had calculated all the odds extremely carefully!

Whatever the case was, this fact truly made Xanry suffer a great loss.

“...Fine! You win some, you lose some!” grumbled Xanry as he took another seventy-five dollars out from his wallet, unable to play any tricks.

Taking the money, Gerald then handed it to Juno before saying with a smile, “Hold on to it for me, will

you, Juno? After all, it's probably rare that monitor is this generous!"

Upon hearing that, Xanry was instantly infuriated. While he was filled with resentment, the truth remained that he had lost, so he couldn't just burst into anger. What more, if he flew into a rage now, Xanry was worried that the others would start claiming that he wasn't wealthy enough to play the game, and that was a form of humiliation he never wanted to experience.

He had just lost two hundred and twenty-five dollars. It wasn't much to him, so he could surely still go on...!

Believing that Xanry wouldn't want to continue playing after suffering so many losses, Gerald then looked at him before asking, "Are you going to play more, monitor?"

"But of course! Let's resume!" declared Xanry. At his current state, it was clear that Xanry had the temperament typical of a gambler. Unless he won against Gerald, he wouldn't be able to rest easy.

Not that Gerald was complaining, of course. He wanted to see how much more Xanry could take.

"Very well then, monitor! However, since you suggested the previous game, I think it's high time I suggested my own. What do you say we switch it up a little?" asked Gerald.

Upon hearing that, Xanry—who was sure that he would be able to defeat Gerald no matter what game he wanted to play—then said, "I accept! Do share the details of the game!"

"It's quite simple, really. We'll both have five dice each, and we'll have to guess the points of our opponent's dice. For example, if you guess close to the number of points I have, then you'll win. With my loss, I'll have to pay you the difference in points between the actual points and the amount you guessed, with each point symbolizing fifteen dollars. What do you think?" explained Gerald.

Finding Gerald's game intriguing, Xanry quickly replied, "Agreed! Let's go with this then!"

For a person who enjoyed gambling, they'd surely end up getting addicted extremely quickly with such high-risk high-reward games. If it wasn't already obvious enough, Xanry was such a person, and he was truly unfortunate that Gerald was his opponent.

Regardless, both of them quickly picked their dice up and began shaking...

The second they stopped, Gerald turned to face Xanry before saying, "After you!"

Hearing that, Xanry instantly went with a high value, stating, "Twenty-five points!"

Gerald himself replied, "A high guess! Well, I guess that you have nineteen!"

Though Gerald knew the exact points Xanry currently had, he couldn't just reveal that number. While Gerald had to always make sure he was a few points above or below Xanry's score, he was certain that he'd still be able to take Xanry down.

Whatever the case was, now that the values had been shouted out, both of them displayed their dice for each other to see... revealing twenty points on Gerald's side and sixteen on Xanry's side.

This meant that Gerald had won this round since Gerald's guess was only three points short of what Xanry had rolled whereas Xanry was five points short.

Smiling, Gerald then looked at Xanry before saying, "Well, guess I've won! Time to pay up, monitor!"

Now feeling gloomier than before, Xanry realized that Gerald must be experienced in the game. It certainly explained why Gerald had chosen this specific game to play with him.

Still, now that they were already in the middle of the game, there was no way he was going to suddenly ask for it to stop. Doing so would only end up humiliating him, and for Xanry, his dignity and pride were above all else. With that in mind, he handed yet another seventy-five dollars to Gerald.

While it was true that he was rich, his heart still ached to have to hand Gerald that money. After all, though the money he had lost was nothing particularly noteworthy to him, the fact remained that he hadn't won a single cent from Gerald. Xanry had simply been losing money this entire time!

Gerald himself couldn't really be blamed. After all, Xanry was the one who had wanted to continue playing this entire time. Xanry was simply reaping what he had sown for continually trying to offend Gerald.

Regardless, now that this round was over, Gerald then looked at Xanry before asking, "So, one more round, monitor?"

After suffering so many losses, Xanry certainly didn't want to stick around anymore.

By this point, he knew that Gerald had some hidden ability that had been allowing him to win so many times in a row. Xanry had also become aware that Gerald had simply been pretending to be weak this entire time. With that in mind, it made sense that him constantly looking down on Gerald would lead to such an outcome!