

Chapter 2101

By that point, though Endo and Izumi had been prepared to die, they couldn't help but breathe vigorously as beads of cold sweat drenched their foreheads when they realized that they were just inches away from death.

Regardless, after Takuya ran toward Gerald, he couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief when he saw that the two were still alive. After panting for a bit, Takuya eventually cleared his throat before saying, "They... can still be of use to us, Mr. Crawford... Let's keep them alive for now..."

Nodding in response, Gerald then closed his eyes for a while... and soon after, his immense murderous intent quickly dissipated. Now that he was calm, Gerald was prompted to ask, "Fair enough. However... how did you even find out about all this...?"

"With how loud you all were, how couldn't I have found out? Either way, the second I found out what was happening, I immediately rushed over to look!" replied Takuya as he patted his chest while shaking his head, a bitter smile on his face...

"... I apologize for that," said Gerald in a sheepish tone as he scratched the back of his head.

"No matter... Either way, since they had the balls to cause such a ruckus at my manor, I swear on my life that I'm getting information out of them! We won't let you die that easily!" growled Takuya as he pointed at the duo who were still on the ground.

"I've already tried interrogating them, but they're tough nuts to crack," replied Gerald as he shook his head.

"Oh, don't you worry. I've met my fair share of stubborn people, so I know how to make them talk. I can guarantee you that with my tactics, they'll be giving us honest answers before dawn!" declared Takuya as he gestured for his men who had earlier followed him over to carry Endo and Izumi up.

"Now that's what I like to hear," replied Gerald with a smile.

Nodding in response, Takuya couldn't help but frown when he saw all the blood on the ground. Shaking his head, he then turned to look at his men before ordering, "Bring them to the manor's clinic and keep them alive!"

With that, Endo and Izumi were promptly brought away. However, since Endo was still bleeding rather badly, his blood ended up dripping all the way to the clinic...

Now that that was dealt with, Takuya turned to face Gerald before saying, "... There's something I'd like to talk to you about..."

"What a coincidence. I have something to discuss as well," replied Gerald with a nod.

Realizing that Fujiko was still standing frozen in place, Gerald couldn't help but add, "Miss Futaba? The danger's over..."

"... H-huh? O-oh! Yeah, it is... T-thank you..." muttered Fujiko after snapping out of it. As Gerald and her father walked off, however, she couldn't help but give Gerald a curious gaze...

Regardless, after entering the main hall with Gerald and Fujiko, Takuya made sure to properly lock the doors up before brewing a pot of tea... Following that, Takuya handed Gerald a cigarette and even lit it for him. After all, he knew that it was thanks to Gerald's efforts and Vigilance today that he and Fujiko were able to live another day...

With that in mind, Takuya eventually bowed toward Gerald before saying, "I truly appreciate your help today, Mr. Crawford... With so many consecutive incidents happening, I really don't know how to thank you for every time you've helped!"

"There's no need to be so cordial, patriarch... Honestly, I have a feeling that these two came for me today," replied Gerald as he immediately helped Takuya up.

“... Come again? Did you offend some bigshot here?” asked Takuya, understandably stunned.

“I can’t say for sure either... My guess is that those men are either from the Kanagawa family, or they’re Hanyus. While my money is on the Hanyus, I can’t exactly rule out that there may be other people who want me dead...” replied Gerald as he puffed on his cigarette...

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After hearing Gerald’s reply, Takuya was momentarily at a loss for words. After all, he hadn’t considered the fact that Gerald was the real target here. As he pondered about it, Takuya couldn’t help but mutter, “They came for you, you said...”

“It’s only a guess, to be quite honest,” replied Gerald as he shook his head. After all, since he rarely ever came to Japan, he had almost no disputes with the forces and families here. He was only assuming that the duo were after him since he was their first target upon making themselves known.

“... Well, even if they were after your head, there’s no need to worry any longer since those two scoundrels are already locked up. Rest assured, I’ll definitely obtain more information from them by dawn! Also, in case you’re worried about affecting my family since you’re being targeted, don’t be. The Futabas owe you and we’ll always be by your side! While it’s true that my family isn’t as great as it used to be, know that nobody can freely take advantage of people I swear to protect!” declared Takuya as he clenched his fists.

Hearing that, Gerald couldn’t help but smile as he cupped his hands together to pay Takuya respect before saying, “I really appreciate that, patriarch... As for the interrogation tonight, I’ll be thanking you in advance!”

It was around then that Gerald realized that after helping the Futabas so much, he had completely earned that family’s trust. With that in mind, he felt that once the special forces competition began or possibly when it ended, depending on how things went it was high time he asked about Yearning Island. Hopefully, Takuya would no longer see any reason to hide anything from him...

Whatever the case was, after finishing his cup of tea, Takuya got to his feet before saying, "Alright, then... You and Fujiko should go get some rest first. I'll be heading over to pay our two 'guests' a visit..."

With that, Takuya left the room, leaving Gerald who promptly put his cigarette out and Fujiko inside...

Though Gerald stayed there for the following half hour to enjoy his tea, Fujiko, on the other hand, remained in the room to stare admiringly at Gerald, her hands cupping her cheeks the entire time...

Due to her ever growing feelings for Gerald, Fujiko couldn't help but say, "... I could sense how strong those two were... To think you'd be able to take them out so easily..."

"Strength is all I have. I don't really have any other capabilities. Besides, I'm not that strong," replied Gerald with a smile.

Honestly, he hadn't expected to expose that much of his strength earlier since Fujiko was there. However, had he not done so, he wouldn't have been able to take those two men out in such a short amount of time. That, to Gerald, would've been more worrying since trouble could've easily brewed in the manor had he not taken them out quickly. After all, who's to say that there weren't any other Kanagawas or Hanyu assassins waiting for a chance to strike the manor while Gerald was preoccupied with Endo and Izumi? If that had been the case, then things would've become exceedingly difficult for Gerald to resolve. All this explained why he used so much of his strength in the first place...

Regardless, upon hearing that, Fujiko couldn't help but raise a slight brow as she asked, "... Really now?"

"Do I have a reason to lie? Besides, if you're thinking I could secretly be rich, a good look at my attire is enough to debunk that!" replied Gerald as he got to his feet and slowly twirled around, just to prove his point.

Fujiko, for one, knew her famous brands since she was a rich young lady from a prestigious family, so she had to agree with that.

“... While it’s true that you certainly don’t look like one, you can definitely live a much better life with how strong you are... Honestly, if you apply to become a personal bodyguard, you could earn over a million dollars per year...” muttered Fujiko as she brushed some dust off his clothes.

“Life as a personal bodyguard is way too restrictive for me. It’s also a tad too dangerous for my taste. Honestly, the way I’m living now is good enough,” replied Gerald with a smile.

“... I-I know, right...?” muttered Fujiko as she blushed slightly, thinking that Gerald was hinting that he enjoyed spending his time with her.

Realizing that, Gerald who didn’t want to speak any further for fear that it would create more misunderstandings then cleared his throat before saying, “... Anyway, it’s getting quite late, so you should go get some rest. Hopefully, your father will have obtained some valuable information from those two men by morning...”

Chapter 2103

Still blushing slightly, Fujiko then nodded as she replied, “... R- right, right... You head to bed early too then...”

Though the night had been a dangerous one, she couldn’t help but feel pleased after hearing what Gerald had said. Regardless, she was then promptly accompanied back to her room’s entrance before she finally parted ways with Gerald...

Gerald himself removed his coat and poured himself a glass of cold water the second he returned to his room. Once he was seated on a chair, he began thinking about the two assassins.

Since his trip to Japan had been highly confidential, he doubted that they had been sent by his old enemies. However, those two were able to address him by name. With that in mind, whoever it was who had sent them, they had definitely done their homework before setting the assassination plan into motion...

'But who could it be...?' Gerald thought to himself as he puffed on his cigarette.

After thinking about it for a while, Gerald managed to come up with a few individuals who lived in Japan who possibly had old grudges against him. Even so, no matter how much he stretched it, all of them didn't really seem to have the balls to confront him. Besides, it's not like they would even know that he had come to Japan.

With that in mind, the assassins must've been sent by individuals whom he had offended in his most recent trip here... From what he could gather, that included the special forces soldiers from Yanam, the Kanagawas, and the Hanyus...

Though he included the soldiers from Yanam into the equation, they were the most improbable of the bunch. After all, none of them had managed to find any evidence that he was the one responsible for Adler's disappearance. Besides, he was pretty sure that the Yanam military had already been scared out of their wits by him.

Gerald, for one, believed that Carter who had acted so cowardly before him back then wouldn't dare to send assassins after him, unless, of course, that man didn't wish to be the acting leader of the military anymore...

Regardless, that boiled down the list to the Kanagawas and the Hanyus. Though Gerald's money was on the Kanagawas...

Shaking his head, Gerald decided not to think about it for the moment. After all, he believed in Takuya's interrogation skills, so all he needed to do now was to wait till morning to finally find out who had sent those two assassins. With his mind made up, he then took a cold bath before hitting the hay...

When he got up at dawn, Gerald quickly prepared himself for the day before heading out to see how Takuya's interrogation had gone. Upon opening the door, however, Gerald was startled to see two Futaba guards standing guard right outside his room.

“... What exactly is the meaning of this...?” asked Gerald as he scratched his cheek.

“Ah, good morning, Mr. Crawford... Well, since those two men attempted to assassinate you yesterday, the patriarch ordered us to guard over your room. With that in mind, you don’t have to worry about any sneak attacks!” replied one of the men.

From how tired they both looked, it was obvious that they had been standing there for the longest time. With that in mind, Gerald simply waved his hand before saying, “There’s no need to guard over me. Now hurry off and get some rest.”

Though he didn’t say it, Gerald had a feeling that if he relied on these two to protect him, he could’ve easily been killed over ten times before they noticed a thing!

Either way, upon hearing that, the other man yawned as he replied, “Unfortunately, we can’t just disobey the patriarch’s orders!”

Understanding that they could’ve gotten a good night’s rest had it not been for Takuya’s orders, Gerald simply shook his head while saying, “Look, just go. If the patriarch gets angry about you leaving, just tell him that I was the one who told you to leave.”

Since Gerald believed that these two wouldn’t be able to protect him anyway, the fact that they were wasting all their energy here made him feel slightly bad for them.

Regardless, upon hearing that, the duo immediately bowed while declaring, “T-thank you, Mr. Crawford!”

Following that, they swiftly left for their bedrooms...

Watching as the duo walked off, Gerald then stretched before taking in a deep breath of fresh air...

A short while later, Gerald began making his way to Takuya's room. On his way there, however, he bumped into one of Takuya's most trusted subordinates. Seeing that, he figured that he may as well ask if Takuya was in his room before actually getting there. Upon being told that Takuya was still interrogating the duo from the night before, Gerald asked for the interrogation room's location before promptly walking off...

Making his way to the back of the manor, Gerald eventually came across a stone entrance that led to an area that was clearly constructed differently from the rest of the main building.

While the front part of the manor including the villas there as well as the Futaba's magnificent garden looked absolutely lavish, anything past the stone entrance honestly looked desolate. With some of the weeds here growing as tall as humans and a few easily missed single story houses further back, it felt like nobody had lived in or even taken care of the area for over a decade...

Regardless, while walking along a beaten path, Gerald soon came across three of the Futaba family's subordinates who immediately greeted, "Mr. Crawford!"

Peeking past them, Gerald was prompted to ask, "Is the patriarch in one of those houses?"

"Indeed! He's been interrogating the two assassins throughout the night... Regardless, have you eaten, Mr. Crawford? We were just about to get some breakfast for the patriarch!" said one of the guards.

"I see. Get some for me, then," replied Gerald with a nod before walking past them...

After walking among the tall grass for a while, Gerald soon heard muffled screams coming from one of the houses. Easily figuring out where the noises were coming from, Gerald then entered the house before saying, "Patriarch?"

“Hmm? What are you doing here, Mr. Crawford?” asked Takuya who had been sitting before a table with a cigarette in hand as he immediately got to his feet.

“I just wanted to see how the interrogation was progressing,” replied Gerald who had noticed a cup of tea on Takuya’s table as he took a seat before looking around...

Though Takuya had said that he was doing an interrogation, the entire place honestly looked more like an execution room... The fact that there were instruments of torture everywhere and the two bloodied assassins had been tied to a cross only served to further contribute to that statement...

Frowning slightly, Gerald couldn’t help but ask, “... Aren’t you afraid that you’ll end up killing them...?”

“Oh, I’ve taken precautionary measures. After curing them at my clinic last night, my family’s doctor has been checking their vital signs every half an hour. I’ve been intensifying and reducing the torture according to what the doctor reported to me throughout the night.

Don’t worry, I’m not letting them die until they tell us the crucial details,” replied Takuya with a faint smile while gesturing at a middle aged man who was wearing a white coat.

Figuring that that was the doctor, Gerald chose to not say anything else. A brief silence later, Takuya slid a piece of paper before Gerald...

Raising a slight brow, Gerald began reading through it and quickly realized that it contained a log of all that the assassins had said that night. However, as it turned out, they had only revealed how they had managed to sneak into the manor as well as how long they had waited before striking. In other words, none of the extracted information was useful.

With that in mind, Gerald couldn’t help but frown as he asked, “... Is this all?”

“Unfortunately, these two are more stubborn than I had initially anticipated. Since they’ve been unwilling to provide any useful information up till this point, I’ll be using more dire tactics from now on. Even if they do end up dying, I’ll make sure they die extremely slowly!” growled Takuya as he gritted his teeth.

Under normal circumstances, anyone he interrogated would break down in just a few hours. These two, however, had kept their lips sealed tight, even though he had interrogated them throughout the night and had exhausted most of his torture devices! He simply couldn’t believe it! Still, Takuya wasn’t discouraged.

After all, he hadn’t used his cruelest tactics yet. Once he used those, he was sure that they would finally talk.

Turning to look at the duo, Gerald simply scoffed, “Just tell us the details already or you’ll surely die extremely painfully!”

“Dream on! You’ll never get anything from us so just kill us already!” snapped Endo as he gritted his teeth. While it was true that his wounds had been all stitched up, it had been done crudely with the intent of only allowing him to remain barely alive. After an entire night of getting tortured, the stitches had long been torn open again, causing Endo’s skin to inflame and be exposed to infection...

“There’s no use pitying them, Mr. Crawford. Either way, I believe that I’m close to cracking both of them. After all, nobody on this planet is truly unafraid of death. With that in mind, I just have to resort to more brutal psychological tactics to make them speak!” scowled Takuya as he slammed his fist onto the table.

“Hah! We’ll see about that!” scoffed Endo as he spat his blood at Takuya.

“... Give them the harshest treatment you can think of. I refuse to believe that we can’t get them to speak by the end of the day!” ordered Takuya as he walked up to Endo before glaring at him.

“Worry not, patriarch! We’ll use everything we’ve got to make them speak!” replied Takuya’s men as

they nodded.

“Well said. Now then, let’s leave for now, Mr. Crawford I’m a little tired after interrogating them the entire night. Speaking of which, I’ve ordered my subordinates to prepare breakfast for us, so let’s get to that first,” said Takuya as he turned to look at Gerald before starting to leave the interrogation room...

Naturally, Gerald followed him, and soon enough, they found themselves walking into the front part of the manor again. As they walked on, Takuya lit a cigarette and began smoking on it.

After a while, he was prompted to say, “You know, I never expected those two to be so stubborn. To think that I’d fail to get any relevant information from them after torturing them for an entire night! Still, I have a pretty good hunch that they’re both Hanyus. After all, that’s the only family who even dares to go against the Futabas in the entirety of Japan! Besides, you already stated that they were a bit too strong to be ordinary assassins. Still, I can’t help but wonder why they went after you instead of my daughter...?”

‘Indeed... Had the Hanyus come for Fujiko, they could’ve just attacked her straight off the bat. What more, aside from the fact that they clearly went after me, they even called out my name, which seals the deal that I was their target the entire time,’ replied Gerald as he continued pondering the topic.

“So it would seem. But why on earth would they suddenly wish to go after you...? Could it be that they’ve learned that you were the one who had saved Fujiko that day? Even so, as much as I hate to say it, knowing that shouldn’t have caused them to target you instead of my daughter...” muttered Takuya with a frown.

“... Could it be that they’re not actually Hanyus...?” asked Gerald.

“With how strong those two are? They’re most probably Hanyus. After all, there aren’t any other families or forces in Japan who would train such competent assassins. And again, nobody would dare to mess with the Futabas other than them. Then again, it may just be a biased assumption. Perhaps all this goes deeper...” replied Takuya with a shrug, still slightly bummed out that he hadn’t managed to crack the code after an entire night of interrogating...

Chapter 2106

Shortly after, they arrived at the dining room. By that point, Tanaka's men had already returned with breakfast, so after the two sat at opposite ends of the dining table, both of them began having their meals. Naturally, they continued discussing the matter in between bites...

While things had calmed down a little at the Futaba manor, the Hanyus were in complete disarray. Ryugu, for one, had been seated on his wooden chair in his room the entire night, constantly staring at his cell phone with his fist clenched.

The final message he had received from Endo was from last night, stating that he and Izumi had successfully managed to sneak into the manor and locate Gerald. Though Ryugu had expected them to update him on their situation right before they made their move, the message never came.

Now that ten hours had passed since their last message, Ryugu was understandably getting more and more worried. Even so, he refused to believe that the two capable team leaders had failed. After all, he of all people, knew how strong they were, especially when they paired up. If they were able to secretly assassinate the leader of a terrorist organization, finishing off

Gerald should naturally be a piece of cake for them! Hell, just sending one of them should've sufficed! However, Ryugu wanted everything to be perfect, so he had sent both of them together.

Still, now that so much time had passed without any news from them, Ryugu couldn't help but fear the worst. At this moment, he would've very much preferred receiving a message from them, stating that they had failed, rather than continue going through this agonizing wait...

At that moment, his door suddenly burst open, prompting Ryugu to leap from his seat and yell, "Any news from them?!"

"... U-unfortunately not, team leader..." replied Kanagawa Takeshi, one of the other team leaders.

Frowning slightly, Ryugu then gripped his phone tightly while muttering, "... It's impossible... Isn't there any way to find out what's happened to them?"

"Trust me when I say we've been doing our best, team leader... Regardless, according to our men keeping an eye on the manor, nobody's entered the Futaba residence ever since Endo and Izumi went in. As for the only person who had left throughout the past ten hours, he had apparently only gone out to get breakfast, and returned shortly after... If you're wondering why we haven't done any internal investigations, we're simply worried that we may unnecessarily increase our chances of being found out by the Futabas..." replied Takeshi in a resigned tone.

Though Takeshi really wanted to enter and find out what had happened to Endo and Izumi as well, his better judgment made him refrain from doing so. After all, if the duo had gotten into trouble, then there was a high chance that he'd get caught as well. Should that happen, then everything would surely begin to crumble.

...

Understanding where Takeshi was coming from, Ryugu then asked in resignation, "... Well, then did any of the men hear any peculiar sounds after Endo and Izumi got in...?"

"Not at all. After all, you told us to keep an eye out on the entrance. Since Izumi and Endo entered from the side, we weren't even aware when they had made their move. With that in mind, it was pretty much improbable for us to have heard anything..." replied Takeshi as he shook his head.

"God f*cking d*mn it...! How the hell did two of our family's best assassins just vanish into thin air after attempting to assassinate Gerald?! Even if they got found out or had to deal with the fighters of the Futaba family, they should've reported back by now!" roared Ryugu who was now so infuriated that his entire body was trembling. Unable to hold back his rage, he then tossed his phone to the floor with so much force that the phone smashed into a million pieces...!

Seeing that, the shocked Takeshi immediately took a few steps back before lowering his head, not daring to say a word...

After breathing heavily for a short while, the enraged Ryugu couldn't help but laugh coldly before sneering, "How... How absolutely weird... How the hell had such mighty assassins just disappeared upon entering the Futaba manor...?!"

Chapter 2107

Once Ryugu calmed down a bit, Takeshi gulped before replying, "... Do... you think the Futabas have other powerful men...?"

"... Negative. Even if there were powerful people within their family, our two assassins should've still been able to report back. Besides, we've already done a thorough background check on their family before we attempted to assassinate Fujiko. With that in mind, we know that there are only a few trained fighters in their family, though none of them should be able to handle Endo and Izumi," said Ryugu as he shook his head.

Though he said that, he knew that there was a high possibility that the two were already dead. However, that posed a question. Where the hell had the Futabas suddenly found such powerful men? No matter how much Ryugu racked his brain, he simply couldn't figure it out.

"Indeed... How truly odd... With how strong Endo and Izumi are, this mission should've been a cinch for them. I wonder if there are any underlying issues involved..." muttered Takeshi.

"I can't say for sure, but whatever the case is, we can't slack off for even a second! I can't just allow two of our family's top assassins to disappear off the grid like this! With that said, we're forced to head to their manor to investigate! Even if Endo and Izumi are truly dead, I have to see their corpses to believe it!" declared Ryugu after taking in a deep breath.

The now trembling Ryugu had honestly been keeping Endo and Izumi's lack of response a secret from most of the other Hanyus. After all, Endo and Izumi were two of the biggest powerhouses within the family, and if the patriarch found out that something had possibly happened to them, there would surely be hell to pay. It certainly didn't help that it would be extremely difficult to train more of their men to get to the duo's level...

Whatever the case was, Takeshi then asked, "So... Should we still keep an eye on their entrance...?"

"... In the meantime, yes. I'll be sending over another small team to take over that task in a bit. Once they arrive, try your best to locate Endo and Izumi. If you manage to rescue them, I'll allow you to be the assistant team leader of the main assassination team!" replied Ryugu after a brief pause.

"G-got it!" exclaimed Takeshi as he immediately smiled.

"Good. Now leave. I wish to be left alone...!" grumbled Ryugu as he sat on his chair again while looking blankly at the ceiling...

Moving back to Gerald, after having his breakfast, he went looking for Fujiko. Once he entered her room and they greeted each other good morning, Fujiko took the chance to say, "You know, the military just notified me that the special forces competition is a week away. With that in mind, they wish for me to head there."

"I agree with them there. Seven days isn't all that long," replied Gerald with a nod.

"Indeed... Still, I can't help but worry that if we leave the mansion, more assassins will try coming after your head... I really don't wish to burden you any more than I should... Call it a gut feeling, but I believe that the Kanagawas and the Hanyus will come after you at the same time..." muttered Fujiko as she grabbed onto the hem of her clothes.

"Don't worry about me. Regardless, I'll be sure to protect you," replied Gerald in a casual tone.

Understanding that Gerald was trying to avoid talking about her burdening him, Fujiko then said, "I know you will, but I-"

“So, when are we heading over?” interrupted Gerald.

“... According to the military notice, we’ll have to be there by this afternoon to register ourselves... Once we’ve done that, they’ll tell us more about the event as well as when the competition will be held... Also, we won’t be allowed to leave till the competition ends, so keep that in mind,” replied Fujiko with a serious tone.

“Then what are we waiting for? Let’s get packing and hit the road!” said Gerald without the slightest hesitation.

Simply nodding in response, Fujiko knew that Gerald was right. She needed to focus on the competition. After all, not only was she the youngest daughter of the Futaba family, but she also had to live up to her title of the ‘Queen of Soldiers’. With that in mind, she definitely had to score high in the competition...!

Chapter 2108

After having their lunch, Gerald and Fujiko left the mansion together in an SUV.

Earlier before they set off, Takuya had advised both of them, especially Gerald, to pay attention to their surroundings no matter where they went. After all, there was a high possibility that both the Kanagawas and Hanyus were actually working together. With that in mind, Takuya knew that his daughter was now in much more danger than she had ever been in. Gerald, of course, agreed with this, and he swore to protect Fujiko as best as he could.

Regardless, as the duo sped off to the location that the Japanese military had designated for them to get registered, the Hanyus who were keeping watch over the manor’s entrance whom Ryugu had stationed there immediately reported what they saw to their team leader...

“What? Gerald and Fujiko left at the same time?!” yelled the wide eyed Ryugu as he leaped off his chair, dropping his cigarette in the process.

“Apparently so. My subordinates informed me that they were driving southeast,” replied Takeshi

instantaneously, not daring to sound slack.

“Well, then what are you waiting for? Get your men to tail them! I’m warning you, if you lose them, you’ll have hell to pay!” roared Ryugu as he slammed his fist onto the table.

“D-don’t worry about that, team leader! My subordinates have already been doing that! We’d never let our targets escape!” declared Takeshi as he patted his chest.

Seconds later, however, Takeshi then added, “... However... Are we simply stalking them...? Should we take action or something...?”

“Did the obvious really need to be stated? Get your men’s coordinates right this instant! We’re joining them immediately! That Gerald Crawford... I don’t care how, but we’re definitely getting our hands on him, and once we do, we’ll eventually learn about what happened to Endo and Izumi! There’s just no way we could lose two of our family’s top assassins that easily...!” growled Ryugu as he stomped out of his room, Takeshi swiftly following after him...

Moving back to the SUV, Gerald could be seen steering with one hand and holding a cigarette in his other. With his cigarette hand leaned against the open car window, both of them were swiftly approaching the competition venue...

On their way, however, Fujiko who wasn’t called the Queen of Soldiers for nothing couldn’t help but say, “... Is it just me, or are the two cars behind the SUV tailing us...?”

Fujiko, for one, had noticed the cars from the moment they entered the highway. It was pretty hard to miss them since no matter how fast or slow the SUV went, the two cars simply maintained a constant distance from them...

Regardless, upon hearing that, Gerald couldn’t help but smile as he peeked at the rear-view mirror while replying, “What, did you just notice them?”

"I do know they've been tailing us for about ten minutes I just wanted to check with you," said Fujiko as she shook her head.

"Well, the truth is, those two cars have been following us ever since we left the manor," replied Gerald as he tossed the cigarette out the window... before stepping on the gas!

With that, the SUV lurched forward, prompting the two cars behind them to speed up as well!

"... What? Are you telling me that the people in those cars have been keeping watch over our manor this entire time?!" exclaimed Fujiko, stunned. After all, the idea of them being tailed from the moment they left the manor was something she had never even considered!

"I'm assuming so. After all, before we headed off earlier, I could already sense the presence of at least ten people lurking in the shadows. However, they weren't very strong, so I just remained silent about it. If it helps to know, they're weak enough that your father's men could easily take care of them."

Chapter 2109

Though the SUV was already speeding at a hundred and sixty, Gerald looked as cool as a cucumber as he casually drummed his fingers on the steering wheel...

Fujiko, on the other hand, couldn't help but stare wide eyed at Gerald before eventually asking, "... Who the hell are you...?"

"I'm just an ordinary man. I've told you that many times before, haven't I?" replied Gerald with a smile.

"No ordinary man would be able to say they 'sensed the presence of at least ten weak men lurking in the shadows'... How do you even gauge a person's strength without seeing them first?" muttered Fujiko.

"... It was just a gut feeling," replied Gerald, now realizing that he may have said a bit too much.

Naturally, there was no way he could tell her that he had sensed those men and how strong they were through the use of his Herculean Primordial Spirit. With the Herculean Primordial Spirit inside him, there was simply no hiding from Gerald, regardless of how stealthy one was or how good they were at acting...

Whatever the case was, Fujiko naturally didn't buy it, prompting her to say, "... The truth, please."

"... Again, it was just a gut feeling... Regardless, I feel we should focus on getting rid of those people first... After all, you wouldn't want to lead them all the way to the competition venue, right?" replied Gerald, clearly trying to change the topic.

"...Of course, I wouldn't. Those people will surely cause chaos if we lead them there! Should that happen, not only will I get punished, but the Japanese military will be humiliated as well!" declared Fujiko in a determined tone as she shook her head. She, for one, didn't want to bring her family's troubles to the military...

"Well said. Next question, do you want to lose them or just kill them?" asked Gerald as he placed his hand on the gear shift.

"End them!" exclaimed Fujiko without the slightest hesitation. After all, if they failed to lose them, then they'd surely make it to the competition venue, causing her reputation to plummet. Killing them right off the bat was the only way to prevent that!

"Kill them it is," replied Gerald with a slight nod.

"If it helps, there's a deserted, extinct volcano nearby that used to be active. In case you're worried, extinct volcanoes aren't expected to ever erupt again. Regardless, why don't we do the deed there?" asked Fujiko as she fished out a map of Japan from the storage area in the SUV before eventually pointing at a spot to Gerald.

After glancing at the map and looking at the mountain that was quite a distance away, Gerald couldn't

help but ask, "Is that it?"

Following Gerald's line of vision, Fujiko then nodded as she replied, "Yep, that's the one."

"Seems like the perfect place to murder someone," muttered Gerald as he slowed down the car... before swerving it off the highway and into a path that led to a village! Once he was on the path, he immediately sped up again, causing the SUV to disappear amongst the single story houses that were all over the place...

Meanwhile, the assassins that had been tailing the duo instantly noticed Gerald's sudden route change, prompting them to immediately change course as well. Naturally, they also reported this to Takeshi who was currently in Ryugu's car. However, since each of the Hanyu family's cars had a tracking system installed, Ryugu already knew where the assassins that were

Tailing Gerald were, even before they reported back.

What Ryugu found shocking, however, was the fact that Gerald was actually going off course. Immediately clicking on the car's central control panel twice prompting a map of the area to appear, Ryugu then grumbled, "This isn't right. Where the hell are they going?"

Chapter 2110

Watching as the two assassin groups continued pursuing Gerald and Fujiko on-screen, Ryugu couldn't help but wonder why the duo had suddenly chosen to deviate off the highway.

Due to all the research the Hanyus had done while planning their initial assassination of Fujiko, Ryugu knew for a fact that Fujiko was supposed to be heading to the location where the special forces competition was going to be held. After all, where else could they be going? With that in mind, why were they suddenly going off path...?

Sitting at the back, Takeshi realized that he wasn't the only one who found this odd since shortly after, one of the subordinates who was on loudspeaker asked, "Could we have made a wrong guess as to

where they were headed to...?”

After a brief pause, Ryugu simply laughed coldly before replying, “I don’t even care anymore! Just follow them till the end of hell!”

Who cared if they were heading to the special forces competition, some outing, or even someplace to pay respect to their ancestors? The location wasn’t what mattered. No, what mattered was that Ryugu killed Gerald while he could!

Ryugu knew that it was going to be much more difficult to pull off the assassination once the duo returned to the Futaba manor, so this was the prime opportunity to get the job done...! This could very well be his only chance of rescuing Endo and Izumi as well...!

Whatever the case was, upon hearing Ryugu’s order, Takeshi cleared his throat before yelling, “Didn’t you hear what the team leader said? Keep your eyes peeled and don’t you dare lose sight of that SUV! If you fail to do something simple like that, don’t return to the family!”

“U-understood!” replied the subordinates who were still hot on Gerald’s heels...

Moving back to Gerald, once he was about six miles from the dead volcano, he made sure to slow down a little. After all, he couldn’t kill them if they lost him.

As Gerald drove on, he couldn’t help but ask, “So... What kind of disputes did the Futabas have with the Hanyus in recent years?”

“I’m... not too sure about that, actually... After all, I’ve mostly spent my time in the military in the past few years... It certainly didn’t help that during the rare occasions I returned home, dad refused to tell me a single thing regarding our family’s affairs. However, I do remember him saying that our family had barely contacted the Hanyus ever since he became the patriarch... I, for one, see no reason why he would lie,” replied Fujiko as she shook her head, realizing just how out of touch she was with her family’s affairs. It seemed that she had been too focused on surviving and fighting for honor in the

military this entire time...

"I see... Do you think he refrained from saying anything due to some concerns of his?" asked Gerald who had witnessed other families doing the same things in the past. In the other family's situation, the party involved didn't detail the entire situation to him, which resulted in them facing even more trouble than necessary...

Regardless, Fujiko then shook her head while saying, "I don't think so..."

Fujiko, for one, knew her father's personality well. Takuya simply wasn't the kind of person who held grudges against other families. Even if a dispute came up, he would simply tolerate it for the sake of protecting everyone's interest...

"I wonder about that..." muttered Gerald to himself.

While Gerald was well aware of the family feud between the Futabas and the Hanyus, he didn't believe that the Hanyus would just send assassins over to kill Fujiko without good reason. The problem was, he couldn't tell what their motive was. Still, he was sure the Hanyus had their reasons. After all, why else would they be so persistent in causing trouble for both him and Fujiko?

"... Though you say that, I don't really see my dad having any reason to be in conflict with the Hanyus..." replied Fujiko who had heard Gerald's mutter.

"While that may be true, you haven't put the rest of the Futabas into consideration. Who knows whether any of them have any conflicts or exchanges of interests with the Hanyus?" said Gerald with a wry smile.

Upon hearing that, Fujiko instantly frowned as she asked, "... Could you perhaps be referring to Grandpa Masura and Suke...?"

Though Fujiko hadn't been home for the longest, she was still aware enough about things like these. The fact that Masura had told her father to step down from his post right in front of her that night certainly made him a prime suspect..

Chapter 2111

"Just to make it clear, I didn't say any names," replied Gerald as he shook his head. He, for one, knew better than to just casually point fingers at any of the Futabas. However, from his previous experiences, there was a pretty high probability that Fujiko's guess was right.

"... Whatever the case is, I really don't even dare to imagine such incidents taking place within my family..." muttered Fujiko as her expression darkened.

Even from when she was a child, Fujiko had been well taken care of by all the members of her family. With that in mind, it made it all the more difficult for her to imagine any of her kind family members standing against her father and doing harmful things to their family...

Gerald himself remained silent after hearing that, and simply concentrated on driving, making sure to keep a close eye on the two cars through his rear view mirror behind them at the same time...

In less than twenty minutes, the duo found themselves getting increasingly close to their destination. By this point, there were hardly any villages down the path. Hell, there weren't even any wild dogs around, and to a country with such little land like Japan, this was nothing short of unnatural...

Regardless, upon realizing that Gerald kept looking around, Fujiko was prompted to ask, "Do you know why this area is so sparsely populated...?"

Shrugging in response, Gerald simply replied, "Beats me."

"Well... This is the territory of the Yamashita family. With that in mind, apart from their family members, nobody else dares to live here..." explained Fujiko.

“... Hmm? What kind of people are the Yamashitas?” asked Gerald, his interest slightly piqued. Though he didn’t know much about Japan, he was informed when it came to the more influential and powerful families. With that said, he found it odd that he hadn’t heard of the Yamashitas before. After all, in order to obtain such a large piece of land, the Yamashita had to undoubtedly be powerful...

Seeing how curious Gerald looked, Fujiko quickly explained, “Well, they’re quite an obscure family in Japan... Their abilities simply aren’t good enough to obtain a ranking in Japan.”

“Then how did they buy such a massive piece of land?”

“Well... though the commoners see them as a regular family, to the insiders, we know that they have a rather ‘unique’ profession... They’re secretly a family of ninjas,” replied Fujiko in a lowered voice.

Similar to cultivators, ninjas weren’t individuals whom people from the secular world could learn about all willy-nilly. After all, exposing that such a profession actually existed could easily stir up a never ending storm!

“... Ninjas, you say?” said Gerald with a slight frown.

“Indeed. I’m sure you’ve heard of them before...” replied Fujiko with a nod.

“The way the media depicts them? Yes, though I had honestly no idea they really existed... After all, I’ve never encountered one before!” said Gerald as he shook his head.

“Well, they’re very real, and it’s an unspoken rule for those who know that ninjas are real that their existence should be kept a secret. I believe it’s similar to how Westoners keep the existence of cultivators a secret,” replied Fujiko while nodding.

“... Oh? You know about cultivators?” asked Gerald as he turned to look at her.

"Of course I do! I'm the young mistress of the Futaba family, after all. Besides, our family is—"

Chapter 2112

Though Fujiko's initial tone had been gleeful, halfway through her sentence, she seemed to realize that she had said something she shouldn't have, prompting her to shut up.

While Gerald found that suspicious, he maintained a calm façade as he asked, "What about your family?"

"I... Well, of course my family would know such things. The Futabas are quite powerful, after all," replied Fujiko before covering her mouth slightly.

"Makes sense," said Gerald as he went along with her. Still, after all this time they had spent together, Gerald had a feeling that Fujiko had accidentally just confirmed that her family was part of the Seadom tribe.

Feeling thankful that Gerald wasn't pressuring her to continue, after breathing a sigh of relief, Fujiko then added, "...Regardless, though I know there are ninjas in that family, I've never personally met any. After all, the other powerful families, ours included, don't really have a reason to contact them. With that in mind, they've just been living here, left mostly secluded from regular citizens."

After thinking about it for a while, Gerald further slowed the SUV down to ensure that the other two cars would be able to catch up before looking out the windows while asking, "... Speaking of which, now that we've entered their territory, do you think they'll come looking for trouble with us?"

"There's a low chance of that... After all, as far as I know, the Yamashitas don't really have any conflicts with other families. With that in mind, as long as we don't disturb or accidentally threaten them, we should be able to pass through their territory just fine," replied Fujiko.

“That’s good to know. Regardless, Endo and Izumi are probably with them. Since we’ve caught those two, once we take care of those people who’ve been tailing us, we may finally find out whether it’s the Kanagawas or Hanyus who are behind the assassination attempts,” sneered Gerald with a wry smile.

“Regardless of which family they belong to, we can’t let them off easily after all that they’ve done!” growled Fujiko who now cared about her family’s safety more than anything else.

Nodding in response, Gerald finally hit the brakes once they got to a flat, barren area...

Following that, he was prompted to ask, “Do you still remember what I told you?”

Confused, Fujiko replied, “... Um... Perhaps be a bit more specific...?”

Lighting a cigarette, Gerald then glanced at the rear view mirror and watched as the cars behind them got closer and closer... Pushing the car door open, he then stretched before saying, “I promised to protect you and your family... And I always keep my promises.”

Upon hearing that, Fujiko paused for a moment before asking, “... Why are you doing all this for us...?”

She really couldn’t imagine why Gerald was helping her and her family so much. Even if there was something from her family that he wanted which she had no idea what it could possibly be, with how strong he was, he could’ve easily gotten what he desired through brute force.

By this point, Fujiko was pretty sure that he wasn’t doing all this for her either. After all, back when they were still pretending to be a couple, Gerald had actively made it clear that it was just pretend. He wasn’t interested in her at all!

As she thought about it, she couldn’t help but smile. After all, to others, she and Gerald were still a couple. Though they were faking their relationship now, who was to say that it wouldn’t end up turning into a real one? The thought of it alone greatly improved Fujiko’s mood.

Either way, after Gerald stepped out of the SUV, the other two cars came to a halt not too far off. Even so, nobody stepped out. Instead, the men opted to update Ryugu about their current situation...

“... What? They’ve entered the Yamashita family’s territory?!” yelled Ryugu as he slammed the steering wheel before hitting the brakes, causing the car to come to a screeching halt by the roadside...

Chapter 2113

“Get the physical map out!” ordered Ryugu the second he hung up.

Immediately doing as Ryugu ordered, Takeshi then retrieved the map and unrolled it before him...

Alternating his gaze between the car navigation screen and the physical map, Ryugu traced the route that Gerald had taken... before his finger finally stopped atop the barren mountain. According to the GPS, the two cars truly had entered the Yamashita family’s territory!

“D*mn it! What the hell is Gerald doing in the Yamashita family’s territory?! What kind of relationship does he have with them?!” grumbled Ryugu as he slammed his fist into his seat.

“... Leader... Do you think... that the man who thwarted Saburo’s assassination plan could be a ninja from the Yamashita family...?” speculated Takeshi.

“... A possibility certainly exists... However, I’ve never really met any of the ninjas from that family... Hell, I’ve never even heard of any connections between the Futabas and the Yamashitas!” replied Ryugu as he scratched the back of his head, wondering how things had suddenly gotten so complicated...

Pretty much every powerful family in Japan knew about the Yamashita’s ninjas. However, since nobody had ever seen any of their ninjas, there were rumors that the ninjas were only the stuff of legends and weren’t actually real...

Regardless, after a brief pause, Takeshi then added, "So should we continue with our mission...? Or should I order our men to retreat...?"

"... We've already cornered them well. We shouldn't let an opportunity like this go to waste! Besides, it's not like we're targeting the Yamashitas. If we bump into them, we'll just make sure to explain things properly. With the Hanyu family's status in mind, the Yamashitas should be willing to give us face..." retorted Ryugu as he glared at Takeshi.

With that said, Ryugu then continued driving to where Gerald was. While he would've surely postponed the mission for fear of offending the Yamashitas in the past, the current Ryugu was in a desperate situation. After all, two of the Hanyu family's top assassins had gone missing while attempting to assassinate Gerald! With that in mind, he had to interrogate Gerald as soon as possible to learn about Endo and Izumi's situation. Otherwise, he'd be unable to explain himself to the patriarch...

Ryugu, for one, knew that if he failed to get any information out of Gerald, losing his position as leader was a small price to pay... After all, there was a much higher chance that he would have to pay with his life instead...!

Moving back to Fujiko, she could be seen obediently waiting in the car as Gerald who was standing right next to the SUV stared at the two cars that still hadn't budged.

After puffing most of the cigarette away, Gerald tossed the butt away before saying in a cold voice, "You know, with how long you've been tailing us, don't you find it to be a bit impolite to not even get out of your cars to talk?"

The second Gerald said that, eight men each wielding either a dagger or a steel pipe got out of the cars. However, they didn't rush forward. Instead, they simply glared at Gerald from afar...

Though they hadn't fought him before, they had all heard rumors that Gerald had defeated Endo and Izumi. With that in mind, they all knew there was a high possibility that they would die if they simply charged forward!

Adding that to the fact that Ryugu had only ordered them to tail Gerald rather than assassinate him, none of the eight men planned to make a move.

Seeing that they weren't budging from their spots, Gerald then added, "Since we're all already here, why don't you tell me which family you come from already!"

Chapter 2114

Despite hearing Gerald's question, none of them replied.

Realizing that they weren't keen on saying anything or even moving from their spots, Gerald who was already losing his patience got ready to make a move as she said, "Since you're so unwilling to talk, I'll make sure you never talk again!"

This wasn't Gerald's first time dealing with individuals like this. With that in mind, he knew that brute force was the only way to get them to talk! After all, most people were usually willing to talk when they were inches away from death. With that said, Gerald then bolted toward them!

Before any of Ryugu's men knew it, Gerald had already bolted past them and karate chopped their necks! In less than a few seconds, only one of them remained alive and standing...!

Quivering when he saw that all his allies had died from broken necks, the last man standing then heard Gerald growl, "Again, who do you work for?"

"W-who the hell are you...?!" stuttered the frightened Hanyu who still couldn't believe what he had witnessed just seconds earlier. What level of strength did Gerald even have...?!

"Didn't you send two of your men over to assassinate me? What more, all of you had been stationed right outside the Futaba manor to keep an eye on me, no? Shouldn't you know who I am by now?" replied Gerald with a laugh.

“P-please...! I don’ t know anything...!” pleaded the fearful man Whose mind had gone completely blank

Now.

“Either way, I’m asking one final time. Which family do you belong to?” asked Gerald as he puffed on another cigarette while shaking his head.

Naturally, the man was hesitant to reply. After all, while he was terrified that Gerald would kill him if he remained silent, he knew that he would still end up dead once Ryugu found out that he had told Gerald that he was a Hanyu.

As the terrified man continued pondering his options, another car suddenly came to a screeching halt not too far off. Upon noticing the vehicle, Gerald immediately walked past the quivering man. It was obvious that the people who had just arrived had higher statuses.

Shortly after, Ryugu stepped out and pointed at Gerald before yelling, “Gerald Crawford...!”

Upon seeing Ryugu, Fujiko quickly got out of the SUV and whispered, “Gerald...! Get back here... !”

Hearing that, Gerald simply nodded and walked over to stand by Fujiko’s side.

Leaning closer to him, Fujiko then whispered, “That man who just got out... he’s the leader of the Hanyu family’s assassination department...! He’s also one of the Hanyu’s top assassins...! Regardless, since he’s here, the two men we detained last night are most probably Hanyus as well!”

Though Fujiko didn’t recognize the other small fries, she definitely knew who Ryugu was. After all, he was quite famous in Japan.

“Oh? The Hanyus you say...?” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes at Ryugu...

Chapter 2115

Just by looking at the man, Gerald could already tell that Ryugu was slightly stronger than the duo from last night...

Whatever the case was, Fujiko then replied, “Indeed. It’s just as you had predicted... At the start, I wasn’t too sure if the Hanyus were really the ones responsible for all this. Now that I think about it, however, with how strong Endo and Izumi were, I should’ve known better. Either way, since the two were clearly stronger than the men you just killed, I’m assuming that they’re team leaders for some of the more minor assassination teams.”

“I see... If that’s the case, then I guess there’s no need for further interrogation. I’ll just finish these people off and be done for the day. After losing two team leaders and a department leader, I’m sure the Hanyus will lay low for a while,” replied Gerald as his hand reached out to get another cigarette... only to realize that the box was empty.

Watching as Gerald tossed the empty box of cigarettes to the ground, Fujiko who hardly ever saw Gerald without a cigarette in his mouth couldn’t help but frown as she said, “...You know, smoking this much is going to affect your health one day...”

Fujiko, for one, didn’t really mind the smell of cigarette smoke. After all, many of the men in the army smoked just as much as Gerald did. She was simply genuinely worried about Gerald’s health.

“...I’ll keep that in mind,” replied Gerald who was momentarily startled to hear that. After all, aside from Mila, Fujiko had been the only other person who cared about his smoking addiction.

The truth was, Gerald had only started smoking again after Mila went missing. It was the only way he could keep himself sedated enough to not think about her all the time.

Shaking his head, Gerald then slid his hands into his pockets before stepping forward and asking, “ So...

Ryugu, was it? You're not the first assassin I've come across from your family. Regardless, do you have anything you wish to talk to me about? I'm assuming so since you had your men tail us all the way here."

Upon hearing that, Ryugu immediately stomped forward, consistently pointing at Gerald as he yelled, "Where the hell are Endo and Izumi, Gerald...!"

"No idea who they are," replied Gerald as he casually shrugged.

"Don't you dare play dumb with me! What have you done to them?! I'm warning you, you'd best hand them back to us or I'll end you right here and now!" roared Ryugu.

Just as he was wondering how those two had lost to Gerald, he suddenly came to the realization that several of his men were sprawled on the ground...

After a short pause, Ryugu growled, "... What the hell is going on here...?!"

Though Ryugu's expression instantly went ugly, Takeshi's was uglier as he scowled, "They... They must have been murdered by Gerald...!"

Since all of them were his men, Takeshi was well aware that his team's overall capabilities had now been greatly reduced. Without them, he would simply be a general without an army!

"Naturally, I can't hand them to you. However, if you tell me why you made a move on the Futabas in the first place, I may consider sharing the duo's current situation with you. Hell, if I'm feeling generous, I may even return their bodies!" retorted Gerald with a cold laugh.

"You... You're courting death, Gerald...!" roared Ryugu, whose anger had peaked. Had Gerald not had the information he needed, he would've strangled that boy by now...!

Seeing how angered Ryugu was, Gerald then pointed at the corpses on the ground while saying, "I wouldn't rush forward if I were you. Come too close and you'll be dead, just like them!"

Unable to hold himself back anymore, Ryugu was just about to bolt toward Gerald when he suddenly felt Takeshi grabbing onto his arm.

"Leader, that man is obviously extremely powerful...! Remember, not only did he defeat Endo and Izumi, but he also took out most of my men in no time flat! With that in mind, we can't act impulsively...!" whispered Takeshi.

Chapter 2116

Upon hearing that, Ryugu paused for a moment before considerably calming down and saying, "... You're right."

Just as Takeshi had said, Gerald had easily murdered so many Hanyus in such a short amount of time. That was a feat so difficult to pull off that even Ryugu was unsure whether he'd be able to do the same. What more, Gerald didn't even have a single scratch on him. In other words, the battle had been extremely one-sided. The newfound realization of how powerful Gerald truly was immediately sent cold sweat running down Ryugu's forehead...

Though Ryugu had previously refused to believe that Endo and Izumi could get taken down by anyone from the Futaba manor, he now knew how wrong he was.

Seeing how silent the impulsive Ryugu had gotten all of a sudden, Gerald couldn't help but smile sinisterly as he asked, "Hmm? What happened to all that vigor?"

Upon hearing that, Ryugu took in a few deep breaths while wondering how to proceed. Eventually, he figured that it would be best not to further provoke Gerald, at least for the time being.

With that, Ryugu was prompted to say, "... Since you're a guest of the Futaba family, I'm willing to just let everything slide as long as you hand Endo and Izumi back to us!"

“Don’t even dream about getting them back. Regardless, listen closely. If you tell me the full details of why you made a move on the Futabas whether it’s due to the family feud or someone told you to go after them, I may consider sparing you,” replied Gerald in an indifferent tone while crossing his arms.

Though Gerald now knew that Ryugu was the leader of the Hanyu family’s Assassination department, he couldn’t help but look at the man with disdain. After all, Gerald knew that he could probably take Ryugu out without even using the Herculean Primordial Spirit’s powers.

Regardless, upon hearing what Gerald had to say, Ryugu’s anger immediately skyrocketed again. Glaring daggers at Gerald, Ryugu then clenched his fists as he roared, “How arrogant..! Since you’re unwilling to cooperate, have it your way! I’ll show you the true strength of the Hanyu family’s assassins...!”

“W-wait! Leader...! Calm down...!” cried out Takeshi as he immediately attempted to calm Ryugu down again.

Though Takeshi knew that Ryugu was capable of taking on hundreds of special forces soldiers at a time without breaking a sweat, he also knew that Ryugu wasn’t a match for Gerald. After all, Gerald had managed to subdue both Endo and Izumi...! While he didn’t dare tell Ryugu that he could very well end up like his dead men on the ground, Takeshi knew that the probability of that happening was exceedingly high!

Either way, Ryugu simply responded to that by slapping Takeshi!

“Out of my way!” roared Ryugu as he continued marching toward Gerald.

Takeshi himself simply covered his bruised cheek as he stepped to the side where the only surviving assassin from earlier was also standing, not daring to say another word. Knowing that neither of them would be able to stop their leader now, they wondered if he really stood a chance against Gerald...

As for Fujiko, she found herself tugging Gerald’s sleeve while whispering, “... Be careful... He’s a strong one...”

Smiling faintly as he got into a fighting stance, Gerald then replied, "Don't worry. I'm strong enough to deal with him."

Gerald, for one, knew that if he successfully solved the Futaba family's issue with the Hanyus, he would be able to fully gain Takuya's trust. In other words, he'd get closer than ever to solving the secrets of the Seadom tribe. With any luck, he'd be able to head to Yearning Island in the near future...

Whatever the case was, upon seeing how confident Gerald was, Fujiko took a few steps back to avoid getting in the way before saying, "... Alright. Good luck...!"

Chapter 2117

The second her sentence ended, the enraged Ryugu began charging toward Gerald!

As Ryugu was stomping forward earlier, he couldn't help but think about Endo and Izumi's fates. Just thinking about how they could already be dead angered him so much that to Ryugu, Gerald was already a dead man. Whatever the case was, he was the leader of the Hanyu family's assassins! If he couldn't even take Gerald out, what kind of failure was he?!

With that in mind, within a split second, he was already inches away from Gerald! Revealing a dagger that he had kept hidden up his sleeve this entire time, Ryugu's eyes glinted evilly as he yelled, "You should've died ages ago, Gerald...! Enjoy your stay in hell...!"

The dagger itself was emitting a dark glow, and upon seeing that, Gerald couldn't help but furrow his brows as he dodged the attack. From what Gerald could tell, the dagger was probably drenched in poison. With that said, a mere scratch from that thing could possibly be fatal...

Seeing that Gerald was actually dodging his attacks instead of countering, Ryugu immediately summarized that Gerald didn't dare to fight him head on. With that in mind, Ryugu smiled even brazenly than before as he quickly balanced himself again before launching another stab in Gerald's direction!

With how quickly Ryugu was swinging his dagger, he was able to slash over a dozen times in less than two seconds, with each attack aimed at fatal areas like Gerald's throat, chest, and abdomen!

To Ryugu's annoyance, however, Gerald managed to dodge each of his attacks!

'D*mn it...! Stand still already...!' Ryugu thought to himself, wondering why he still hadn't been able to hurt Gerald even after using all his strength. Though he didn't want to admit it, the fact that he kept missing Gerald by a hair strand clearly showed how much stronger Gerald was.

Gerald himself simply smiled, keeping his hands against his back as he said, "There's still quite a gap between us, kiddo."

"Kid?! How dare you call me that...?!" roared the already infuriated Ryugu. As the leader of the Hanyu family's assassination department, not only did he have a high status within the family, but also all over Japan! Wherever he went, people would address him as a leader for heaven's sake! With that in mind, how dare a petty b*stard like Gerald call him a 'kiddo'!

"Oh? Was what I said wrong?" asked Gerald while smiling cheekily.

"You're really asking for it, you know...?!" roared Ryugu who was now so angry that he almost looked maniacal as he clenched his fists!

Following that, Ryugu immediately launched another series of attacks! Now that he was more enraged than ever, his attacking speed and strength were instantly heightened, resulting in the assassin moving so quickly that only his afterimages could be seen!

Noticing how much faster and stronger Ryugu now was, Gerald was just about to release the power of his Herculean Primordial Spirit when suddenly, he couldn't help but frown.

As Ryugu attempted to stab Gerald again, Fujiko who had been watching the entire scene play out

couldn't help but drop her jaw when she saw Gerald suddenly choose to stand still before closing his eyes! Had he gone mad?!

A split second before the dagger landed on Gerald's chest, a loud 'clang' of colliding metal could suddenly be heard as something rapidly flew past...!

Chapter 2118

Caught completely by surprise, Ryugu almost toppled right next to Gerald, though he managed to balance himself in time. At that moment, the dagger that had been in his hand just seconds ago could be seen flipping in the air... and soon after, it lodged itself into the dirt...

Eyes widened, Ryugu immediately began looking for what had intercepted his attack... and soon enough, he saw what it was. It was a shuriken, of all things!

Annoyed that he had missed his chance to kill Gerald because of it, Ryugu immediately roared, "Who the hell did that!"

The second Ryugu said that, a hoarse voice could be heard saying, "A bit hold of you to be fighting in the Yamashita family's territory, don't you think?"

Following that, a hunchbacked old man seemed to appear out of thin air, instantly startling everyone! How had he concealed his presence so perfectly...?

Quickly snapping out of it, Fujiko then leaned closer to Gerald while whispering, "That's most probably an elder of the Yamashita family..."

Though she didn't know much about the Yamashitas, from how the person acted and dressed, it was pretty evident that the old man was the real deal.

Nodding in response, Gerald couldn't help but feel slightly wary of the old man. After all, under normal circumstances, his Herculean Primordial Spirit would warn him whenever cultivators or strong men were around. However, he had only sensed the old man's presence from the moment the shuriken was thrown...

Gerald, for one, knew that the old man must have been watching for a while before he took action. With that in mind, Gerald was rightly vigilant around the elder. To make him feel so worried... How strong was this old man really...?

Still, Gerald couldn't help but shake his head with a smile as he muttered, "So this is a real ninja... Now that's a first..."

Moving back to Ryugu, the second he realized that it was a Yamashita that had stepped in, he immediately calmed himself. After all, he was well aware that he was already in trouble for trespassing. If he offended them any further, then he'd truly be in hot water...

With that, Ryugu quickly retrieved and kept his dagger before heading over to face the old man. Momentarily ignoring Gerald, he then bowed while placing his fist against his palm before declaring, "Good day, senior. I go by Hanyu Ryugu, and I'm the leader of the Hanyu family's assassination department! What should I call you?"

"I've heard about you before..." replied the old man who didn't seem interested in introducing himself.

"... Regardless, I'm only here because I was on my way to settle some grudges with that person. I never thought he'd enter your territory! Either way, I'd like to make it clear that I'm not here to cause you any trouble! With that said, once I take care of him, I'll leave immediately!" declared Ryugu as he glared at Gerald.

Waving his hand rather nonchalantly, the old man then replied, "Before any of that... Since you've entered my family's territory, do come over to my place as guests. We'll peacefully talk about your grudges, and by the end of it all, we can hopefully settle this dispute without any bloodshed... How does that sound?"

Naturally, Ryugu was startled to hear that. After hesitating slightly, he eventually shook his head before saying, "... I'm fine with that! Besides, I've been meaning to visit your family for quite some time now, so this is the perfect opportunity for me to do so!"

Though the Yamashitas were known for their ninjas, Ryugu wasn't all that afraid of them. After all, despite how mysterious ninjas were, Ryugu was pretty sure that the Hanyu's assassins weren't any weaker in comparison...

Chapter 2119

With that in mind, Ryugu then turned to look at Gerald again. Quite honestly, he was feeling immensely anxious to the point of finding it hard to breathe since he still had no idea where Endo and Izumi were. Whatever the case was, Ryugu knew that the only cure for his anxiety was by saving his two men and murdering Gerald...

Regardless, Ryugu had accepted the old man's invitation for a reason. While they were driving over earlier, Ryugu had been thinking about Saburo's failure to assassinate Fujiko. Were the Yamashitas truly the ones who had intercepted Saburo's assassination attempt the other day? Why else would Gerald and Fujiko suddenly decide to head here?

Either way, if the Yamashitas really were the masterminds behind all this, then it would definitely explain why he hadn't been able to locate Saburo's assailant even after sending out so many men to investigate...

Since the old man had initiated the invitation, this was a n optimal opportunity for him to dig deeper into this! He wasn't the leader of the Hanyu's assassination team for nothing!

Whatever the case was, since Ryugu agreed to it, the old man then smiled as he turned to face Gerald while asking, "And how about you, young brother?"

"I'd be glad to. I've heard about the Yamashita ninjas for a while now, and it's an honor to finally be able

to meet one," replied Gerald as he smiled back.

Chuckling in response, the old man then said in his hoarse voice, "My boy, ninjas aren't real! We're just a small family on the verge of collapse! There aren't any ninjas to be found here!"

Before Gerald could reply, however, the old man slowly extended his hand... and with a slight gesture, the shuriken that had earlier been tossed flew right back into his hand! It was almost as though it was being pulled back by an invisible thread of sorts...

With the shuriken now in his hand, the old man then slipped it into his pocket before turning around and walking further down the barren mountain, his arms against his back... Though one would've expected him to move slowly, the old man was quite fast.

Seeing that, Ryugu then glared at Gerald, and was just about to follow suit when Takeshi suddenly walked up to him before asking, "Um... What about us, leader...?"

Pausing for a moment, Ryugu then turned to look at all his possibly dead men. Gritting his teeth, Ryugu simply replied, "... You two wait here. Also, try to see if the others can be saved."

Following that, Gerald, Fujiko, and Ryugu quickly caught up with the old man.

The Yamashitas lived at the foot of the barren mountain. Though the village itself seemed rather ancient, there were still a number of modern looking villas and manors around...

Eventually stopping before a small manor, the old man then pushed the wooden door open while saying, "Please, come in."

Nodding in response, all three of them then entered and began looking around. Honestly, the entire area felt rather.... Weston like, at least in a traditional sense. Before them, was a wooden-paved path, with ponds and plants on both sides. At the end of the courtyard, the trio were greeted by the sight of a

row of houses that each looked to be at least a few decades old.

As they were walking on, the old man placed his wrinkled hands together while asking, "... Correct me if I'm wrong, but you're the young mistress of the Futaba family, right?"

Nodding in response, she simply replied, "I am. I go by Futaba Fujiko!"

Chuckling in response, the old man then cheerfully said, "So it really is you! You know, when your father last brought you here, you were just this tall... You really have grown to be a beauty!"

Watching as the old man gestured to the height of a child, the surprised Fujiko who had never heard of her father contacting the Yamashitas before couldn't help but ask, "You've... met my father before...?"

"Of course, I have! Though that was quite a long time ago..." replied the old man as he nodded while smiling, clearly reminiscing about the past...

Chapter 2120

Though Ryugu who had heard the entire conversation didn't say anything, he was now surer than ever that the one who had saved Fujiko the other day was a Yamashita ninja...

Regardless, it wasn't long after before all four of them were seated around a table.

As the old man began serving them some tea, Ryugu who was sitting opposite of Gerald and Fujiko couldn't help but glare at the oddly relaxed duo. After all, with how close Gerald now was to him, he could've easily killed him by now! However, since there was a Yamashita involved, Ryugu knew better than to act recklessly...

Either way, once all of them were served, the old man sat cross-legged and sipped some tea before asking, "Now then... What grudges do both your families have that resulted in you coming here to settle

things...?”

The second he heard that, Ryugu immediately said, “Two of my family’s small team leaders have gone missing and are most probably being locked up in the Futaba manor! With that in mind, I chased them all the way here to demand an explanation!”

“Before that, why don’t you tell us why your assassins sneaked into the manor with the intent of killing me?” replied Gerald with a smile.

“You have no proof that they were trying to assassinate you! I’m warning you, Endo and Izumi are highly reputable figures in my family! With that said, if you dare lay a finger on them, you’ll be facing the full wrath of the Hanyus! Not even the Futabas will be able to protect you then! Now hand them back to me if you don’t wish for a calamity to befall you!” growled Ryugu.

“Speaking of the Futabas, why exactly did your family attempt to assassinate Miss Fujiko back then? While I’m aware of the feud between your families that’s lasted for a few centuries by now, I also know that the Hanyus and Futabas haven’t contacted each other for quite a while. With that said, don’t you think all this stemmed from the fact that you tried assassinating Miss Fujiko in the first place?” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes.

“Gentlemen, are you turning my home into a courtroom now?” said the old man out of the blue as he chuckled heartily.

“... Is that not why you called us over? To settle this dispute for us...?” asked the puzzled Ryugu who would’ve killed Gerald by now had the old man not intervened.

“I never said that. Look, if the Futabas and Hanyus fight within my territory, then there’ll definitely be casualties that I’ll be unable to explain to both your families!” replied the old man as he shook his head with a smile.

Momentarily left speechless, Ryugu quickly snapped out of it before asking, “... That’s it? Then... Why did

you tell us to elaborate on our conflicts in the first place?”

“I was just curious. I never expected all this to stem from such trivial things!” replied the old man as he waved his hand.

“There’s nothing trivial about all this, old man! Two assassins from my family have gone off the radar because of him! With that said, I demand that he hand them back to me, unharmed!” yelled Ryugu as he pointed at Gerald.

Gerald himself remained calm, quietly staring at Ryugu as he pondered the old man’s words.

Had the old man really not wanted there to be any casualties, then he should’ve stepped in before Gerald killed those other assassins earlier. With that in mind, why had he only stepped in once Ryugu began attacking?

Chapter 2121

Though Gerald felt that the old man’s reasoning clearly had holes in it, he chose not to say a word first. After all, even if things did go south, he knew he would still be able to protect Fujiko.

“Look, I’m just an outsider in all this, so I can’t settle your issues. With that said, if you still wish to fight, do it outside the Yamashita family’s territory. While I won’t meddle once you’re no longer here, as long as you remain, I forbid you from continuing to brawl. Do I have myself clear?” replied the old man rather threateningly before alternating his gaze between Gerald and Ryugu...

“... Got it,” muttered Ryugu who knew that he didn’t really have a choice but to agree.

“Good. Now that that’s out of the way, why don’t all of you accompany this old man for a few cups of

tea? Since we rarely leave this place and we hardly ever get any visitors, I'd like to know what's been happening in the outside world... Of course, if you'd like to leave first, I have no issue with that either," replied the old man as he refilled their cups.

Upon hearing that, Gerald turned to look at Fujiko before asking, "Are you in any hurry?"

"Not at all... After all that's happened, I'd like to rest here for a bit..." replied Fujiko who had a feeling that Gerald had something in mind, as she played along.

Nodding in satisfaction, the old man then turned to face Ryugu and added, "And what about you?"

"I... I'm... in no hurry either..." growled Ryugu as he desperately tried to maintain a calm façade.

Naturally, he understood that if he left now, Gerald could easily escape later on! What more, since Gerald already knew that he was being targeted, cornering him again would surely be difficult... Waiting at the fringes of the Yamashita's territory wasn't a viable option either since who knows how long those two would stall for time in here...

With that in mind, all he could do was wait here till Gerald finally decided to leave... Once that b*stard left, he would simply follow after and immediately make his move once they were beyond the Yamashita family's territory...

Laughing heartily, the old man then said, "Well, then! How pleasing to hear! It truly has been too long since we've last had visitors from the outside!"

While he was annoyed to hear that, Ryugu made sure to force a smile...

Following that, time passed rather slowly... By the time they were done with their fifth pot of tea, the sky was already darkening outside...

To Ryugu's annoyance, however, Gerald didn't seem like he was keen on leaving at all! With that in mind, he knew he had no choice but to call Takeshi and update him on the situation...

The second Ryugu excused himself and left the room, the old man immediately gestured for Gerald to come over to him.

Seeing that, Gerald inched a bit closer before asking with a smile, "Is there anything I can help you with?"

"Indeed... Both of you can leave through the back door now... Shortly after, you should bump into someone who'll then lead you to a car that I've prepared in advance..." whispered the old man in a somewhat rustic Weston dialect.

Slightly widening his eyes, Gerald couldn't help but say, "You're... from Weston...?"

Patting Gerald on the shoulder, the old man simply replied, "This isn't the time to be talking about this. Regardless, once you're done with your business, return to this place and I'll give you a further explanation. Now leave..."

Nodding in response, Gerald then said, "...Noted. Thank you, elder..."

Though Gerald wasn't particularly afraid of Ryugu, Fujiko still had a competition to attend...

Chapter 2122

Still, to think that the old man was actually a Westoner! While Gerald had no idea what was going on in the old man's mind, he had a feeling that the elder didn't have any bad intentions toward them...

With that, Gerald and Fujiko then left through the back and true enough, someone was there waiting for

them.

After a quick bow, the man then began walking along the barren mountain, prompting Gerald and Fujiko to follow after. Not too long later, the trio came across a car, just as the old man had said.

Handing Gerald the car keys, the man then respectfully said, "Do take this car, Mr. Crawford. After driving forward for a bit, you'll see the main road again."

"Thank you," replied Gerald without saying anything else. After all, it was already nearing dusk and they needed at least four hours to get to the competition venue. If they were unlucky, Fujiko's tardiness could very well affect her final results...

With that in mind, upon entering the car, Gerald immediately stepped on the gas...

After driving for a bit, Fujiko could no longer hold her curiosity back. Looking at Gerald, she was prompted to ask, "So... What exactly is your relationship with the Yamashitas...?"

Chuckling in response, Gerald who had no idea who the old man from Weston was or why he decided to help them simply shook his head as he replied, "Truth be told, this is the first time I've met him."

"... Come again? You don't know each other?" muttered the confused Fujiko.

"Not at all. With that in mind, I'm coming back here once the competition is over, just to get a few things sorted out," replied Gerald as he habitually attempted to get a cigarette. However, remembering Fujiko's advice, he managed to refrain from doing so.

"... I see... Still, I didn't think that there'd be a Westoner within the Yamashita family... What more, he's apparently met my father before... Though he sounded like he was quite familiar with dad, I was never told anything about this before..." muttered Fujiko as the questions continued piling up.

“Then let’s find out more about all this together once the competition is over,” replied Gerald who was just as curious as to why the old man had decided to help them.

...

Moving back to Ryugu, after ending the call that took approximately ten minutes, he reentered the house only to momentarily freeze when he realized that Gerald and Fujiko were no longer there!

Upon hearing that, the old man took a long sip of tea... And once the cup was empty, he turned to face Ryugu before replying, “Hmm? They just left.”

“They... What...?!” growled Ryugu who’s expression instantly turned ugly. Had it not been for the fact that he didn’t wish to offend the Yamashitas, he would’ve already beaten up this old man...!

“Indeed. Is there a problem with that? After all, they aren’t exactly bound to my family. I can’t stop them from leaving,” replied the old man rather nonchalantly.

“... That...” muttered Ryugu as his voice trailed off. After all, the old man’s words made sense. In the end, he was the one to blame for making that phone call earlier. Because of that, Gerald and Fujiko found their chance to flee...

Now understanding that this was his own doing, Ryugu took a few deep breaths before calmly asking, “... Then tell me, how exactly did they leave and where are they headed to?”

When Ryugu had been making his call in the courtyard, he hadn’t seen anyone walk out the front door. The house wasn’t exactly large either, so the two of them hiding inside till he left was out of the question...

Chapter 2123

“They left through the back door, though they didn’t tell me where they were headed to,” replied the old man as he shook his head.

Now understanding that he wouldn’t find out where they had gone to no matter how much he asked, Ryugu immediately said, “Pardon me, but I’ll be taking my leave now!”

As he left the house, he figured that in the end, Gerald and Fujiko would still end up participating in the special forces competition. With that in mind, he knew that his best bet was to put them aside for now... After all, though he was the leader of the Hanyu’s assassination department, he wasn’t too keen on disrupting the activities of the war department. What more, since the competition was international, special forces from all over the globe would be present. Because of that, if he created a mess there, it’d surely cause his family a great deal of trouble...

Still, though he failed to capture Gerald this time, the trip wasn’t a complete disappointment. After all, he now knew that Endo and Izumi really were in the Futaba manor.

What more, since the old man had allowed Gerald and Fujiko to leave, he was now pretty sure that the Yamashitas had a special relationship with the Futabas. The fact that Takuya and a much younger Fujiko had met the old man before certainly solidified that theory.

Putting all this into consideration, Ryugu now believed that the one who had intercepted Saburo’s assassination attempt must have been one of the Yamashita’s ninjas...

With that in mind, Ryugu found himself feeling much better. After all, if all this was true, then he was sure that Gerald and the others wouldn’t dare to kill Endo and Izumi. Their deaths would be equivalent to declaring war on the Hanyus, after all, and Ryugu was pretty sure that the current Futabas wouldn’t dare to do something that drastic.

Whatever the case was, he soon found himself returning to the spot where he had first fought Gerald. Upon seeing Gerald’s SUV and all his dead men who were still lying on the ground, Ryugu couldn’t help but sigh.

Realizing that Ryugu had returned, Takeshi then ran toward him before asking, "Huh? Weren't you planning to wait there, leader? Why have you left so soon after? Could it be that you've already killed Gerald?"

"...They've escaped," replied Ryugu as he shook his head. Though he had initially planned on taking his anger out on Takeshi, he changed his mind at the last second.

Regardless, Takeshi's eyes immediately widened as he said, "... H-huh...?"

"...Let's not talk about this first. Either way, did none of them survive...?" replied Ryugu as he waved his hand. He already had a plan to deal with all this, so he really didn't want to bring down his mood again by talking about all this.

"Unfortunately, none of them survived... Well, except for the one who was still standing when we came over earlier. You! Explain all that happened to the leader!" called out Takeshi as he looked at the assassin who survived.

"Leader! My name is Kenshiro, and as for Gerald... he's monstrously strong...! In barely a few seconds, he had killed all of these man...! All of them died in a single strike, and it all happened so quickly that none of us could even fight back! Had both of you arrived a few seconds later, there's a high chance that I would've been killed too...!" reported the shivering man after walking up to Ryugu.

"... What? In just a few seconds? And none of you were even able to fight back...?" muttered the flabbergasted Ryugu. Though he knew that Gerald had probably killed them quickly, a few seconds was simply too much...!

Still, this man wouldn't lie to him, and Ryugu knew that for a fact With that in mind, Gerald's capabilities were more terrifying than he could ever imagine... Hell, now that he knew all this, Ryugu wondered if he was even a match for Gerald anymore...

Chapter 2124

“... That’s... How on earth could he be that fast...?” muttered Takeshi who was also in disbelief.

“I wouldn’t lie about such things to you, captain...! I swear on my life that Gerald really is that strong...!” vowed the frightened Kenshiro as he patted his chest reassuringly.

“... I believe you,” replied Ryugu, who knew that Kenshiro had no reason to lie. Besides, after battling Gerald earlier, Kenshiro’s words didn’t feel all that far fetched anymore...

“... Still, to think that there’d be someone so monstrously strong...” muttered Takeshi as he took a deep breath. Gerald’s capabilities were simply too world shattering...

Though Ryugu was thinking the same thing, he didn’t show it. After all, as leader, he had to remain calm before his men. With that, he was prompted to say, “... Regardless, let’s put all this aside first and head back.”

Nodding in agreement, the other two then got into the cars and began returning to the Hanyu manor, leaving the corpses behind...

It was about three hours later when Gerald finally stopped the car in front of the competition venue. The second they got out of the car, Master Ghost and Aiden immediately ran over to greet them.

Upon seeing Fujiko, Aiden smiled brightly as he said, “A pleasure to meet you, sister-in-law!”

“Don’t just call her that! ” grumbled Gerald as he smacked the back of Aiden’s head.

Fujiko herself immediately blushed as she said, “I-I’m not in such a relationship with Gerald!”

While she was actually flattered to hear that, she was well aware that Gerald didn't like that, so she simply went along with Gerald.

Shaking his head, Gerald then looked around for a few seconds before saying, "... You go ahead and get some rest first. I have some things to talk to them about Speaking of which, keep in mind that we're living quite close to you, so if anything happens, I'll be there in a jiffy. Then again, I don't really think they'll come looking for trouble here."

Nodding in response, Fujiko then replied, "Alright... You guys go on ahead too, then."

With that out of the way, Gerald placed his hands around Master Ghost and Aiden's shoulders while saying, "Let's head to our place, then!"

Unlike last time, the training grounds this time were much better and more formal. Within the massive open space, was a field that took up a third of the area and several other designated areas. Right in front of the open space, on the other hand, were rows of six story buildings. Since most of the rooms were lit up, it was evident that the majority of the participants had arrived Whatever the case was, now that they were finally together again, Gerald took the chance to ask, "So... what's the situation like?"

Though he had called them frequently, he knew better than to talk about such sensitive details over the phone.

"Well, things have pretty much remained the same... The people who kept trying to investigate the case eventually stopped trying and ever since Adler died, none of the other Yanam participants dared to come looking for trouble," whispered Aiden.

"Indeed... Speaking of which, have you found out which family the assassins come from? I tried snooping around but got nothing in the end," asked Master Ghost.

"There's no need to further investigate. We now know that the assassins belong to the Hanyu family," replied Gerald.

Nodding in response, Master Ghost then said, "I see... Also, have you confirmed whether they're descendants of the Seadom tribe?"

Chapter 2125

"I'm pretty sure they are, though I haven't been able to bring it up with them since their family has been plagued with troubles lately. Still, once I settle all their problems, I have a feeling they won't attempt to hide it anymore when I ask," replied Gerald with a sigh, wondering when he would be able to solve all the Futaba family's issues. Still, for the sake of his parents who were still stuck on Yearning Island, Gerald knew better than to complain.

"Well, I'm honestly just pleased that it's confirmed. After all, this means that our trip to Japan has been worth it," said Master Ghost as he sighed with relief.

Soon enough, they arrived at their building and began walking upstairs. Naturally, Aiden had made sure to apply for a room that had three rooms from the war department, and once they entered, he immediately closed the door behind them.

Since there were so many special forces in the training ground, the trio knew that they had to be extremely careful with their words to avoid getting themselves into trouble. With that in mind, it was no wonder why they immediately found themselves more relaxed now that they had entered a private area.

Regardless, after pouring himself a glass of water to quench his thirst, Gerald was prompted to say, "You know, once the competition is over, I plan to let you two stay in the Futaba manor."

"Are... you saying it could be dangerous to live elsewhere...?" asked Aiden who as a special forces agent saw where Gerald was coming from.

"Pretty much. Now that the Futabas have offended both the Kanagawas and Hanyus, I'm sure trouble will be imminent. I'm particularly worried about that assassin family making a move on both of you once they find out about our relationship. I really don't want what happened back in Yanam to repeat again,

so it's best that you just stay with me in the Futaba manor. By doing so, even if the enemies attempt to attack, I'll at least be close enough to protect you in time," replied Gerald with a nod.

Hearing that, Master Ghost immediately replied, "We'll go. Don't worry, Gerald, we won't hold you back more than we need to!"

Master Ghost, for one, knew how important it was for everything to go perfectly in order for Gerald's parents to eventually be saved...

Chuckling as he shook his head, Gerald who didn't want the atmosphere to become solemn right off the bat then said, "It's not that serious... But yes, I'd really appreciate it if you stay at the Futaba manor for the time being."

"Got it!" replied Aiden as he nodded repeatedly.

With that out of the way, Gerald decided not to share anything else at the moment. After all, he didn't really want to add more pressure onto them if he knew that he was going to be able to solve the issues alone. Besides, he had already told them what the main issues were. Now that they knew what to expect, hopefully they wouldn't panic too much if things went awry...

Shortly after, Aiden headed to the canteen to get some food for them. In no time flat, the trio found themselves having their dinner in the living room.

While eating, Gerald felt that it was as good a time as any to start detailing what had happened while he was staying at the Futaba manor. He also told them what he was planning to do after all this...

Moving back to Ryugu, he, Takeshi, and Kenshiro soon arrived at the Hanyu manor. Upon arriving, they immediately headed to the patriarch's room...

Suijin himself was having his dinner when Ryugu suddenly burst into his room. Raising a slight brow, he

then watched as Ryugu walked closer to him before lowering his head and whispering, "Something huge has happened, patriarch...!"

"Go on..." replied Suijin as he frowned.

After listening to Ryugu's report of the current situation, Suijin's face ended up getting so gloomy that in the end, he couldn't help but toss his chopsticks to the floor while yelling, "God d*mn it...! You're telling me we lost a dozen assassins?!"

Gritting his teeth, Suijin knew that there would be losses, though he never imagined there to be this many. Each assassin in his family had been cultivated with great effort. Now that he had lost so many of them so quickly, even Suijin as the family patriarch was unable to bear it...Invisible Rich Man

Chapter 2126-2130

Chapter 2126

"It's my fault...! I'm so sorry, patriarch!" declared Ryugu as he lowered his head.

Shaking his head, Suijin simply replied, "It's not your fault. We've just underestimated Gerald's capabilities. Still, that man really has monstrous capabilities... How on earth did the Futabas get to know such a strong individual...? And who exactly is he? All we know is that he's a Westoner. However, that doesn't explain why he's so willing to help the Futabas..."

"While we still aren't clear about his identity, I have a feeling that Gerald's only doing all this because he has a special relationship with Futaba... Other than that, I really can't think of anything else..." replied Ryugu who was honestly feeling relieved that Suijin wasn't placing the blame on him.

"... That doesn't seem right. Didn't Futaba sign a marriage contract with Kai?" replied Suijin with a frown. The complicated relationships among these people were giving him a headache.

"... Could Kai have found out about Gerald and Fujiko's relationship? It does explain why he ordered us

to assassinate Gerald..." muttered Ryugu who knew that such incidents happened all the time among the larger families.

"Then that has nothing to do with us. Moving back to Gerald, aside from the fact that he's capable enough to kill dozens of our assassins, have you found anything else that's wrong with him?" asked Suijin, seemingly only interested in Gerald.

"... Now that you mention it, there is one thing that comes to mind!" replied Ryugu.

"Good. But before that, get some seats for heaven's sake! The three of you just standing there are giving me a headache!" grumbled Suijin as he gestured for his servants to clear his table before pointing at a few chairs that had been placed near the wall.

Hearing that, Kenshiro immediately nodded as he said, "Thank you, patriarch!"

Following that, he brought three chairs over and only dared to sit once Ryugu and Takeshi had done so...

Regardless, now that they were seated, Ryugu cleared his throat before saying, "... You see, I have a feeling that Gerald... Well, he and all the Futabas are secretly related to the Yamashitas."

"... Are you talking about the ones living near the extinct volcano?" replied Suijin who was frowning once more.

"Indeed. You see, after tailing Gerald and Futaba into the Yamashita territory, the old man that I previously mentioned invited us to his home to have some tea. After Gerald stalled for quite some time, I eventually had to call Takeshi to update him on the situation. However, by the time I returned, the two had already left! Since they left using the back door, I have a feeling

That the old man was secretly helping them while I was preoccupied!" grumbled Ryugu as he slammed his fist on the table, knowing that his carelessness had resulted in Gerald escaping his grasp again...

“What on earth is even happening anymore... Why do they even have connections with the Yamashitas? And who exactly is this old man you keep talking about?” muttered the confused Suijin.

“Well, we don’t know much about him, though he does appear to be a Yamashita in his eighties... Regardless, as far as I know, he had apparently been watching me and Gerald fight for quite a while. Had he not disarmed me with his shuriken back then, I could’ve surely ended Gerald right there and them...!” growled Ryugu, angry with himself that he hadn’t attacked Gerald again immediately after.

Rubbing his forehead, Yamashita couldn’t help but say, “How truly odd... As far as I know, the Yamashitas have never had any connections with other families...”

“... Speaking of which, there is one thing that he said that I find interesting... Back when we first entered his home, the old man told Futaba that he had once met her when she was still a child,” replied Ryugu as he recalled that scene...

Chapter 2127

“...You’re saying the Futabas have been in contact with the Yamashitas for that long...?” replied Suijin who was rightfully surprised. After all, though the two families hadn’t had any conflict in decades, all the patriarchs of the Hanyu family Suijin included had made sure to secretly and consistently keep tabs on the Futaba. With that in mind, how had all the previous patriarchs failed to find out about this?

“... With that said, should we still make a move on the Futabas...? After all, now that we know that they have a good relationship with the Yamashitas, we can’t just cause the Futabas all willy-nilly anymore...” muttered Ryugu who was honestly getting a little worried.

After all, the Yamashitas were exceedingly strong. Truth be told, he wondered whether he would even be a match for that shuriken throwing old man if they got into a serious battle...

Either way, after thinking about it for a while, Suijin eventually said, “... For the time being, let’s not make any further moves on the Futabas.”

“Very well! However, about Gerald... Kai’s been pushing me to kill him, stating that he’ll personally call you if Gerald isn’t dead within a week. Four days have passed since then...” replied Ryugu.

“Don’t bother about him. A second generation kid like him could never threaten us,” sneered Suijin who had never really highly regarded the Kanagawas despite their immense status in Japan.

“Understood!” replied Ryugu, feeling much more relaxed now. With what Suijin had just said, Ryugu knew that he could finally handle Kai the next time that brat called him again.

“Now that all that is out of the way, let’s put everything aside for the time being. I’m a bit tired... Before you leave, I emphasize that until we learn more about the Futaba and Yamashita’s relationship, nobody is allowed to make a move on that family! This includes making a move against Gerald!” said Suijin as he looked at all three of them.

Hearing that, the trio immediately nodded without saying another word...

Fast forward to the next morning, Gerald and Master Ghost could be seen accompanying Aiden to the training ground after having their breakfast for one last practice session before the competition.

Not too far from them, was Japan’s own special forces team, which meant that Fujiko was there.

Looking at the uniform Fujiko was wearing, though it made her look less enchanting compared to the other outfits he had seen her in, the girl now appeared extremely smart and valiant, which was quite a good look on her.

Realizing that Gerald was staring at Fujiko, Aiden couldn’t help but smile smugly as he asked, “Say... who are you looking at so intently, brother Gerald?”

Smacking the back of Aiden's head, Gerald simply replied, "Stop playing around and go train already..."

Chuckling in response Aiden then rubbed the back of his head as he said, "While I haven't interacted much with Miss Fujiko, she clearly likes you, brother Gerald. Since she's a member of the Seadom tribe, you'll surely get to learn about the secrets of Yearning Island in no time!"

"Spout any more nonsense and Master Ghost and I are leaving," grumbled Gerald with a slight frown...

Chapter 2128

Chuckling as he scratched the back of his head, Aiden quickly replied, "Alright, alright, I'll stop..."

Shaking his head, Gerald then looked at Master Ghost before saying, "That kid really likes to make fun of me"

Gerald, for one, had known Aiden for the longest time, so he didn't mind joking around with him. Even when smacking the back of Aiden's head, Gerald made sure not to use any force.

"You're telling me! He's been making fun of me the entire time in your absence, you know?" replied Master Ghost with a laugh. True enough, throughout the past ten days, he had gotten to know Aiden so well that they could now pretty much freely talk about anything.

As they continued talking, a few individuals wearing the Japanese army's uniform quickly began walking over to Gerald. Noticing them, Gerald saw that one of them was holding onto a document folder and the others were carrying video recording equipment.

Once they were close enough, one of the men immediately said, "Pardon me, but are you Gerald Crawford? I'm Noda Ichiro, and I'm an investigator for the Japanese army. With that said, I'm here to investigate the disappearance of Adler Light body that took place about eight days ago. I hope you'll cooperate with us in this investigation!"

“Sure,” replied Gerald as he narrowed his eyes slightly while nodding.

“Again...? What’s wrong with you people? I’ve told you time and again that Adler’s disappearance has nothing to do with us! Do you think we Westoners are pushovers or something?” grumbled Aiden as he angrily marched over.

“Not at all, sir! Still, everyone keeps saying that Adler had an argument with you before he went missing! We’re simply investigating the best we can in hopes of finding him! With that said, if we eventually find out that none of you were involved, not only will we cease to bother you, but we’ll also issue a formal apology!” replied the investigators who knew for a fact that these Westoners weren’t easy to mess with.

However, since a foreign special forces agent had gone missing on their land, the army couldn’t just pretend as if nothing had happened. Even if they couldn’t find anything, they knew they were pretty much forced to continue investigating in order to finally be able to give a proper explanation to Yanam...

“Now, now, Aiden, they’re just asking us to cooperate with their investigation. Regardless, since we didn’t do anything, I believe that these brothers of the Japanese army won’t just slander me, right?” said Gerald as he patted Aiden on the shoulder.

Though this kid was slightly impulsive and didn’t always think before he spoke, he could tell that Aiden was sincerely worried for him. He was a rare, good friend...

Hearing that, Ichiro quickly nodded before adding, “He’s right! We’re just investigating in accordance with our procedures. Vifith that said, please have a cigarette as we head to the interrogation room for a while, Mr. Crawford.”

“Lead the way,” replied Gerald as he accepted the cigarette before lighting it.

After watching Gerald leave with the investigators, Aiden leaned closer to Master Ghost before asking, “... Do you think anything bad is going to happen to brother Gerald...?”

“Please, you’re severely underestimating him! Forget these investigators, even if the entire Japanese army comes at him, he won’t be afraid in the slightest! Now spend less time worrying about him and start focusing on getting a better rank for Weston!” replied Master Ghost in a cheerful tone.

Chapter 2129

After all, he knew for a fact that Gerald could easily handle those people.

“Even if you say that... All the countries have sent their best men over to participate, despite the fact that this isn’t even an overly formal competition. With that in mind, I’m not really sure how well I’ll do... Getting an above average rank is good enough for me...” muttered Aiden who was well aware that among his teammates, he wasn’t really all that strong.

Though he bore the title of ‘King of Soldiers’, he had earned it from the many battles he had been in. However, now that he had to abide by the event’s rules and regulations, he wasn’t quite sure how well he’d fare.

...

Moving back to Gerald, he was currently seated in the interrogation room, his legs crossed and a cigarette in his hand. With even a cup of tea placed before him, anyone who didn’t know that this was an interrogation room would’ve surely thought that Gerald was here as a guest...

Regardless, after clearing his throat, Ichiro turned to look at Gerald before asking, “Now then... Could you elaborate a little about your conflict with Mr. Adler, Mr. Crawford?”

“It’s nothing serious, really... Back when I was in Yanam some time ago, I got into ‘a bit of trouble’. I’m assuming that Adler came looking for me to get revenge,” replied Gerald as he puffed on his cigarette.

“I see... Did you meet him before he disappeared...?” asked Ichiro as he jotted everything down. As for what Gerald had done in Yanam, his actions were so impactful that even Ichiro could more or less guess what Gerald had done there.

“Of course I did. After all, he came looking for trouble with us with so many other special forces agents,” replied Gerald in a casual tone.

“I’m talking about the night he went missing,” specified Ichiro.

“Ah, well that’s a no. While he did yell profanities at us from outside our door, we paid him no notice. I, for one, was sleeping at the time, though I heard from Aiden that he eventually kicked out door before leaving. It was the next morning when I actually learned that he had disappeared,” explained Gerald while shaking his head.

“You really didn’t go outside...?” asked Ichiro as he stared intently at Gerald.

As an investigator, he was an expert at studying body language and facial expressions. With that in mind, he was pretty much a living lie detector. However, up till this point, Gerald had been acting so normally that he really couldn’t find anything wrong with the individual.

“I didn’t. After all, I knew that if I went out, I’d surely get into a fight with him. The last thing I wanted was to cause an unnecessary ruckus, you see. Honestly, while I’m curious about his disappearance, I won’t lie that I’m grateful for that. After all, he won’t be troubling me again anytime soon,” replied Gerald as he shrugged.

“You say that, but we still need to carefully investigate this! After all, he’s a foreign participant and we’ll have to take responsibility for his disappearance! How else are we going to explain all this to the Yanam army? It doesn’t help that Yanam’s already elected Carter Lucab to be their army’s new leader! Though they usually say a new broom sweeps clean, I’m afraid that this incident isn’t going to end that easily!” said Ichiro in dismay as he placed his hands together.

Throughout his many years investigating missing people cases, there would always be clues left behind to solve the mysteries. Unfortunately, Adler truly seemed to have vanished into thin air... Hell, had it not been reported that Adler had gone missing, nobody would’ve even known that the man existed in the first place!

Regardless, the fact that they still hadn't been able to find a single clue after all this time irritated Ichiro to the point where he wasn't able to eat or sleep properly in the past few days...

Chapter 2130

Though he initially had hope that Gerald could provide him with some useful information, as it turned out, this session had simply been a complete waste of time...

Sighing as he stood up, Ichiro then said, "...Well, since it's come to this, could you leave your contact number with us, Mr. Crawford? We may still need to talk to you some other time, though rest assured, we won't make things difficult for you!"

"No problem," replied Gerald as he flicked his cigarette with a smile.

Once that was done, Gerald got up to leave the interrogation room... However, the second he stepped out, he momentarily paused. There was a familiar scent nearby...

Gerald, for one, knew that the individual was a cultivator, though he couldn't really tell who the scent belonged to specifically... Still, he knew he knew that this was the scent of a familiar person... But who?

Shaking his head, Gerald eventually chose not to bother too much about it. After all, even if the person was a cultivator, they weren't exactly a threat to him.

Besides, after meeting so many cultivators, Gerald knew for a fact that not all cultivators would be hostile toward him. Perhaps this cultivator was just here by coincidence.

Whatever the case was, upon realizing that Gerald was still standing there, Ichiro was prompted to ask, "Is something wrong, Mr. Crawford?"

Waving his hand, Gerald then replied, "...It's nothing. Just a dizzy spell."

"I see... Would you like me to get some medicine?" asked Ichiro.

"There's no need for that. A rest should fix this. Either way, you can go ahead with your work," replied Gerald while shaking his head.

By this point, the scent was already gone, so Gerald simply ignored it for now...

Once he reunited with Aiden, however, Gerald attempted to detect the scent of the cultivator again using his basic senses. He refrained from using his Herculean Primordial Spirit since he didn't want to expose his cultivation level before finding out who the other person was. Doing so could very well bring more unnecessary trouble to him. Besides, he still had no idea whether the stranger was simply passing by or was here for his head...

Still, since a cultivator suddenly appeared out of nowhere in Japan, no less, Gerald knew he had to be a bit more cautious, even though he wasn't really afraid of them.

Either way, after a short while, Master Ghost walked over to him before whispering, "Gerald, follow me for a bit. There's something I need to tell you..."

Knowing that Master Ghost wouldn't use that tone unless things were absolutely serious, the now vigilant Gerald was prompted to ask, "What is it?"

Seeing that there were quite a few special forces agents around, Master Ghost gently grabbed onto Gerald's wrist before saying, "Let's talk about this someplace else."

Nodding in response, Gerald then followed Master Ghost to a secluded corner. Once they were there, Gerald couldn't help but frown as he waited for Master Ghost to share what he had to say...

Chapter 2131

“I just received a warning from my compass that someone is close to you. I was worried that there might be some danger, so I did a fortune telling for you. If I’m not mistaken, it should be someone from Yearning Island, which means a member of the Crawford family has come.” Even though there was no one around, Master Ghost still lowered his voice and spoke using a voice that only the two of them could hear.

“You knew about this as well?” Gerald raised his head.

“What do you mean?” Master Ghost asked in surprise.

“To be honest, when I walked out of the interrogation room, I could clearly feel that a cultivator has appeared near me. However, it was just a brief moment, and I didn’t use the power of my Herculean Primordial Spirit to sense his presence.” Gerald sighed deeply.

He had previously thought that it was just a coincidence and maybe the cultivator had come here just by chance without having anything to do with him.

But now, with Master Ghost’s words, he was totally alerted.

It was a member of the Crawfords from Yearning Island!

Gerald trusted Master Ghost’s skills in fortune telling. Since the day Gerald had come to know him, he had never made a mistake, not even a slight deviation. If he said that the man was a Crawford, then a Crawford he was.

“So, you have sensed him as well.” Master Ghost nodded. “I have been predicting your future for you all this time, fearing that you might encounter any danger. But I didn’t expect that the Crawford family would be so fast in catching up with you. I really don’t know what kind of method they used to find out

about you coming to Japan and even pinpointing your exact location.”

“A cultivation family has many chances to investigate my whereabouts. It’s just that we don’t know the reason that person came here, whether he just wants to find out my whereabouts and report to the family, or he is like Will’s men, wanting to kill me.”

Recalling Will’s action on Gong Island, Gerald couldn’t help but laugh and shake his head. He had never been interested in or wanted to get the position as the patriarch of the Crawford family whatsoever.

He didn’t expect that Will would take it so seriously to the extent that he had defied Daryl’s order and sent his men to kill him. This was out of Gerald’s expectation.

“Anyway, we should be careful. They didn’t manage to harm you after sending men out twice when we were on Gong Island. This time, they might send a very strong cultivator in the family. Although your ability is very strong, you still have to be careful, otherwise, you might be hit. If anything happens to you, it will be difficult to save your parents. Besides, the Futaba family has gotten into so much trouble lately, and they need your help.”

Master Ghost let out a long sigh. He could feel that Gerald was in a very difficult situation. It could really be said that he was in hot water.

“Don’t worry. I have a plan in mind.” Gerald nodded his head gently.

Although he had said so to Master Ghost, he was still a bit worried. After all, the Crawford family was not a common family. If Will were to find out about his situation, he might send out the strongest cultivator of the family, or even come here in person.

Although it was not fatal, it would cause him a lot of trouble.

Meanwhile, on the path outside the training ground, a seemingly ordinary looking person was walking

along the path, wearing a hat with a long brim. If he wasn't standing in front of you, you couldn't see his face clearly.

He was the one who had come from Yearning Island.

Amare Crawford, the third-strongest cultivator in the Crawford family. He was stout, and his height was nearly two meters. Even with his clothes on, the outline of his muscles was still visible.

He had originally been ordered by Daryl to go outside on an errand. Will had seized this opportunity and asked him to take a detour to Japan to finish off Gerald, and in order to please the future patriarch, he did not refuse.

To him, it was the same to kill anyone.

Chapter 2132

With his strength, he didn't even have to delay anything. Once he found the man, he would just kill him with one blow.

However, the information he received from Will only showed that Gerald was in Japan. He had found this place because he knew that Gerald had come here with another Westoner special forces agent to participate in the special forces competition. However, he didn't dare to use his essential qi to sense Gerald's location, fearing that once he was exposed, he would fail in the mission Will had given him.

So, he could only search around this place bit by bit. Daryl had given him half a month for the errand, so he could only stay in Japan for about a week.

After one week, regardless of whether he could kill Gerald or not, he would have to return to Yearning Island. If Daryl found out that he had used the time he was given for his mission to settle the matter for Will, he would surely be punished most severely by the family.

This was not just a rumor, but it was a proven fact.

Anyone who disobeyed the order of the patriarch would be thrown into the Pit of Thousand Snakes.

It was a three meter wide and more than ten meters deep pit that was used to keep hundreds of poisonous snakes. Any ordinary man would be killed once he was bitten.

Those who disobeyed the patriarch would be thrown into the pit and forced to stay there for an entire night. If he survived the next day, it would be considered that he had received his punishment, and his mistake would be forgiven. If he did not, he would become food for the snakes.

Living in the family for so many years, Amare had never seen anyone get out of the pit alive. Usually, when they opened it, there were only poisonous snakes and a pile of white bones left.

Thinking of this, Amare broke out in a cold sweat. At the same time, he decided in his heart that he had to get back to the family in time. Although his strength was immense, he might still not be an opponent of those poisonous snakes.

An afternoon passed quietly.

In the evening, when the sky had turned dark, Gerald and the two returned to their residence.

Fujiko followed them.

“Miss Fujiko, what would you like to eat? I can go outside and buy it for you.” Aiden went to the bathroom to wash his face. After a whole day of training, not only were his clothes soaked with sweat, even his face was dirty.

“Thank you.” Fujiko smiled faintly.

“Aren’t you worried that people might misunderstand you if you come here?” Gerald asked as he served Fujiko a cup of tea. He had planned to smoke a cigarette, but he put it down in the end.

“Of course not.” Fujiko’s eyes were full of smiles when she looked at Gerald. “Don’t forget, we are a couple to the outsiders!”

“When did this happen?” Hearing this, even Master Ghost couldn’t help but start gossiping. He knew that Gerald had a girlfriend, and he knew that Gerald had made great efforts to save her, to the extent that he could give up his life at any time.

How come after only about a week out, he suddenly had a new girlfriend?

“Ahem, don’t misunderstand. Miss Fujiko needs to get married because of the problems within her family, and a little accident happened. So, we temporarily pretended to be a couple to deal with her family. In truth, our relationship is very pure!”

Seeing that Master Ghost seemed to be misunderstanding things, Gerald hurriedly explained. If this was not explained clearly in time, he was worried that he would not be able to in the future.

“So that’s how it is.” Once Gerald had said that, Master Ghost understood.

Chapter 2133

“Gerald is telling the truth. We are only pretending to be a couple in order to solve the troublesome things we’re facing now. So, when I come here to look for you, it’s nothing to be worried about and will make it even more believable.” Although Fujiko was a little hurt, Gerald was speaking the truth, so she could not say much about it and simply went along with it.

“But is there anything you wanted to talk about seeing as you’ve come over at this time?” Gerald glanced at his cigarette. Although he could not smoke right now, he still had the urge to do so.

“It’s nothing. It’s just that I am not very familiar with my team members. Besides, I’m the only woman on the team. I’m afraid of staying alone.” Fujiko said in embarrassment.

“But you cannot stay here as well.” Gerald scratched his head.

“I will go back to my room to sleep. I just wanted to have dinner and chat with you,” Fujiko replied as she picked up her cup and looked at Gerald.

“Wait for a while, then Aiden has gone out to buy some food. We will have dinner soon.” Seeing that Fujiko had said that, Gerald could only let her stay. Luckily he had explained the matter clearly in advance. Besides, it was safer to have Fujiko here with him.

Although the Kanagawa and Hanyu families should not dare to come here to cause trouble, there was a new problem. No one could guarantee what that cultivator from the Crawford family would do.

Shortly after, Aiden returned with a bag of food.

“There really isn’t much good food in Japan. This is what I picked up from a Westoner restaurant far away. I was worried that you might be hungry, so I ran all the way back.” Aiden served the food on the table and said as he panted.

However, once he had said that, he saw Fujiko sitting next to him. Thinking of what he had just said, he slapped a hand over his mouth and added, “I don’t mean any harm, Miss Fujiko. I don’t mean that Japanese food is not delicious. It’s just that we are all Westoners, so we are not very used to eating your food.”

“It’s okay. You don’t have to explain anything. Although I am Japanese, I like Westoner food the best. I also think that Westoner food is better than Japanese food.” Fujiko smiled. No dissatisfaction could be seen from her expression.

“If you have the chance, you must come to Weston and try our authentic Westoner food.” Although Fujiko hadn’t said anything, Aiden still felt very awkward.

“I always go to this restaurant, and I have tried authentic Westoner food. It is really good!” Fujiko was busy serving the food on the plates that Master Ghost had brought out.

Aiden stopped talking. He felt that it would be awkward for him to say anything more, so he figured it would be better to stop talking and just eat his food.

The four sat around the table and started eating.

“By the way, Fujiko, I need to tell you something. When this competition is over, the two of them should stay with your family as well. I’m worried that the situation will become more complicated. If anything happens while we are staying together, we can back each other up.”

After eating for a while, Gerald said to Fujiko.

“Sure. I am very pleased to welcome you two to come and stay in Futaba Mansion. This will make my place merrier. Let’s get to know each other formally, King of Soldier, Aiden Baker.” Fujiko agreed with a smile. Then, she put down her chopsticks and stretched her slender hand out to Aiden.

“You know me?” Hearing Fujiko calling his name, Aiden was a bit surprised.

“Of course I know you. I am the Queen of Soldier in Japan. How can I not know about you, the King of Soldier of Weston. You know, your picture is hung on the wall of our war department and listed as a dangerous person of Weston.”

Fujiko smiled.

“So, I’m famous, apparently! Even the Japanese army put my picture on the wall.” Aiden’s pupils contracted, but he still smiled in response.

Chapter 2134

“We bear no malice toward you. You are a very famous soldier in Weston, so naturally, our army should get to know you fully. However, now that the relationship between Weston and Japan is improving, I think that even when we meet on the battlefield, we will not attack each other but fight side by side instead!”

With a glance, Fujiko could already see that something was wrong with Aiden, so she explained quickly.

“For the sake of Brother Gerald, even though there might be a day when we are in opposition, I will still let you off the hook.” Aiden smiled faintly. He knew that the relationship between the two countries was superficial. In truth, it still depended on whether there was a conflict of interest.

After all, in this modern era, there was no absolute friend, but only eternal interests. It could even be said that if something was not right, Weston and Japan would go to war both overtly and covertly.

“I will not mess with the matters between you two, but based on the current situation alone, we still have to be on the same side,” Gerald interjected.

“I very much welcome you to stay in Futaba Mansion. I think with the King of Soldier of West on with us, it will be a great help to face the Kanagawa and Hanyu families!” Fujiko said in agreement with Gerald.

After dinner, Gerald sent Fujiko back to the hostel of the Japanese special forces and returned to the guest room.

Just as he entered the room, Aiden and Master Ghost were cleaning up.

“Since when did the princess of the Seadom tribe become the Queen of Soldier of Japan?” Once Aiden saw Gerald, Aiden threw the bag with the leftovers into the trash can and asked in confusion.

“The Seadom tribe is already a thousand years old. If they want to survive, they are bound to assimilate into modern society. Becoming the Queen of Soldier is nothing. Even becoming a high ranking official in Japan would not be strange,” Master Ghost explained.

Since the day Master Ghost had come to know Aiden, he felt as if he was becoming an encyclopedia. Other than having to do fortune telling for Gerald, most of his time was spent explaining all sorts of things to Aiden.

“It’s true. A thousand years is too long. Long enough to transform the Seadom tribe into a brand new family. Still, as long as they still know the way to Yearning Island, it’s fine.” Gerald nodded.

He was not interested in the Futaba family at all. Whether it was a large family or just a common family in Japan, he had to investigate it.

Time flew, and five days passed in the blink of an eye. There was only one day left before the special forces competition. All the special forces were ready. Aiden also went to the competition site while Gerald was sitting in his room.

Since that night, Gerald did not feel a cultivator appearing near him anymore. However, this did not mean that he had let his guard down.

Since Master Ghost had told him that it was a Crawford from Yearning Island, it had to be true. However, Gerald did not know whether he was sent by Daryl to test him, or by Will to kill him.

“Something on your mind?” Master Ghost walked to the window. He could see the field below from that position. A dozen special force agents were training for the competition tomorrow. Seeing Gerald leaning on the window and looking at the sky in a daze, he opened his mouth and asked.

"I was thinking about where that cultivating Crawford could be hiding." Gerald didn't hide anything and told Master Ghost what was on his mind.

Chapter 2135

"I think you don't have to worry much about this. Although I have predicted that someone will approach you, I didn't read any sign of danger. This means that the power of this person must be weaker than you. Even if he finds you, he won't be able to hurt you," Master Ghost spoke in a deep voice.

"I know. I'm just worried that he might harm you guys. You don't have any power, and you need my protection. Although Aiden is the King of Soldier of Weston, he might not be an opponent of the cultivator."

"I wonder if he will make a move during the competition tomorrow."

Gerald took a deep breath. He was not afraid that this person would make a move on himself. Not to mention this cultivator, even when Will came here in person, he would not be scared. However, the people around him were different. Although Aiden was strong and good at all sorts of modern weapons and fighting skills, it was still uncertain when he faced a cultivator.

"Can the Futaba family provide us with protection?" Master Ghost knew that he did not have any power. If he was with Gerald, he would become a burden.

"There are bodyguards, but they are not very strong." Gerald shook his head and said, "Anyway, the Futaba family has a certain social status in Japan. No matter who wants to make a move there, they will have to consider."

"Don't worry, I will never hold you back." Master Ghost took a deep breath as he spoke.

"I will protect you." Gerald didn't take what Master Ghost had said seriously. Even though he would be

very careful, once he was caught, he would surely die.

“Okay.” Master Ghost did not insist.

“We’ll see how it goes. I hope that we can settle these matters quickly and go to Yearning Island sooner so that I can save my parents. As for Mila, I’m still clueless.” Gerald laughed bitterly.

He couldn’t even understand why it would become like this. His parents and sister had been caught, and his girlfriend was in the hands of the Sun League. Now, even after so much time had passed, he still didn’t know if they were safe and sound.

Maybe they had been killed long ago, and what they were doing now was useless.

Either way, Gerald wanted to see them whether dead or alive. He had considered every worst possibility. If none of them had survived, Gerald would choose to kill himself after burying them.

When his most loved ones were no longer alive, it would be pointless to be alive alone.

“It will happen soon. As long as we can get to Yearning Island, we will be able to find out the location of Sun League. I don’t think they will do anything to your family, but they just want to draw you over.” Master Ghost could feel the sorrow in Gerald’s heart.

“Let’s hope so.” Gerald nodded, lit a cigarette, and looked outside.

On the training ground, the special forces of each country were gathered there. They were undergoing intensive training for the competition tomorrow. Although it was not a very formal competition, it was still a competition between countries. Every special forces agent wanted to win glory for his country and to earn credit for himself.

However, after training for a while, a man wearing a special uniform came, and everyone looked at him in unison.

“Let me introduce you. He is a special forces agent from Yanam who just arrived in Japan an hour ago.”

Chapter 2136

“From now on, he will be replacing Alder Lightbody and participate in events with all of you here!” The Japanese war department official introduced the man beside him.

“A special forces agent from Yanam?”

Everyone was astonished. They were all clear regarding the news of the disappearance of Alder, one of the Yanam special forces. Now that they were suddenly being introduced to another Yanam special forces agent, they couldn't help but feel shocked.

“I'm replacing Alder Lightbody to participate in the war contest,” The man with a slightly dangerous look scanned across the room with his unfriendly gaze before speaking up.

Although everyone's eyes were attracted to him, no one spoke a word. After all, with what had happened in Yanam, no one wanted to seek trouble for themselves.

Plus, no one could really deduce whether or not this special forces agent was replacing Alder to actually join the competition or to investigate this matter.

One thing that was certain, however, was that there would be big trouble once anybody was misunderstood as having something to do with Alder's disappearance.

“Special forces agent from Yanam.” Gerald, who was leaning against the window, heard the voices from below him. Looking at the man, Gerald couldn't help but shake his head and chuckle.

“As long as you’re doing it right, they won’t be able to find us.” Master Ghost nodded.

“Don’t worry about this kind of matter. The new replacement leader of Yanam, Carter Lucab, is a coward. Last time before we left Yanam, when he made a call to me, he was being all respectful, fearing that I wouldn’t leave and would continue staying in Yanam.”

“I’m guessing that this man only wants that position. As long as he has the position of the leader as well as the power, other issues don’t really matter to him at all.” Gerald lit a cigarette.

Recalling the times in Yanam, Gerald decided that after he had found his way to Yearning Island, he would return to the ancient ruins first.

Last time, it had been a rush, going and leaving there, and all he did was take the sea map with him. Based on the current situation, he himself didn’t know the secret of the sea map at all, and Gerald believed that the ancient ruins weren’t as simple as they seemed.

Maybe he would get to solve the mystery of the sea map as well by going back this time.

“It seems that it’s still not a threat to us.” Gerald’s words made Master Ghost sigh in relief. He was not afraid of matters like this. He was just worried that if they bumped into this situation, he wouldn’t be able to be of much help and might even hold Gerald and Aiden back, which was something he wouldn’t want to risk.

“There won’t be any threat. It’s hard enough to bring any trouble to us.” Hearing that, Gerald laughed and made a joke.

The two continued chatting for a while before going back to the room.

They had nothing to do with the special forces training, and Gerald didn't detect any danger around him. This meant that Aiden and Fujiko were safe here.

With a cigarette between his fingers, Gerald thought about what had happened during his time here as he lay on the bed.

The Crawfords in Yearning Island.

The Sun League.

The Funagawa and Hanyu families that he had come in contact with in Japan.

There was even the mysterious Yamashita family which had ninjas. Till now, Gerald still didn't understand why the elderly man had helped him out back then. He even sounded like a man from Weston, judging from his accent.

Chapter 2137

There was actually a Weston man in a ninja family.

Plus, Gerald didn't even know the reason as to why he had helped Gerald. Maybe there was something he wanted to know from Gerald.

Nevertheless, after the war contest ended, Gerald would head back there to at least find out the secrets of the elderly man. If he could be of help to Gerald, it would be much easier when he faced the Kanagawa and Hanyu families.

Without him realizing it, Gerald felt a wave of tiredness. Due to not detecting any danger, he lay back down on the bed and fell asleep. His cigarette fell to the ground after it had finished burning.

In the morning, Gerald was woken up by a call.

The one who woke Gerald up was none other than Noda Ichiro.

“Mr. Gerald, may I know where you are now?” Gerald opened his sleepy eyes and picked up the call after briefly looking at the caller ID. Noda’s slightly rushed voice was heard over the phone as soon as it was picked up.

“I’m resting in a room in your training ground.” Gerald knitted his brows together slightly. Just as he could finally have a good sleep with no worries, he was woken up by someone, and this obviously made him a bit unhappy.

“Don’t go anywhere and wait for me right there, I’ll be there immediately!” He could hear that Noda’s tone had apparently relaxed. After saying that, he hung up the call right then.

Gerald scratched his head, not understanding what this man wanted, but he nonetheless got up and cleaned himself up. The man was, after all, the Japanese army investigator, and there must be a reason as to why he was coming over. Therefore, Gerald couldn’t refuse to see him.

As soon as he had come out of the bathroom, he heard someone knocking on the door.

Noda entered in a panic after the door was opened for him. He first looked at Gerald up and down, only to find that Gerald looked as though he had just woken up, and his worry then went away.

“Mr. Noda, it’s not the first time we’ve met. You can just tell me anything right away,” Seeing his reaction, Gerald said with a chuckle.

“I’ll be frank, then.” Noda swallowed and continued, “The Yanam special forces agent has bizarrely disappeared, and it’s most likely a murder case based on our investigation.”

“Oh?” Gerald was taken aback, but he still asked casually, “Did you find Alder Lightbody’s body or any information?”

“It’s not him. We haven’t stopped investigating Alder’s disappearance, but we have found nothing about it until now. It’s as if this man just vanished out of thin air, I haven’t seen anything as bizarre as this for so many years!” Noda shook his head and said.

He paused for a while before continuing, “However, I’m not talking about him. It’s the Yanam special forces agent who just arrived last night to replace Alder in the war contest. He too has disappeared, but he might have been murdered based on what we saw on the surveillance camera and the scene.”

“He died too?!”

Hearing his words, Gerald felt that it was unbelievable. It was true that he had killed Alder, but Gerald hadn’t paid any attention to that new special forces agent at all as he had no reason to kill him.

This was somebody else’s work.

Gerald grew a bit curious as to who would do this at this time when they all knew that the war contest was about to start and that there was tight surveillance around the area. It would have been better to do it on his way back to Yanam after the contest was over.

“That’s right! He didn’t attend this morning’s training, so we went to search for him in his room and only got to know about this after tracking him with the surveillance system.” Noda nodded.

He felt like he was still in a dream. Alder’s disappearance still hadn’t been figured out and yet, this had happened as well!

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Now that the second Yanam special forces agent had been killed too, he would lose his position as an investigator if it still wasn't solved.

"Did you see who killed him? I have a feeling that it might be the same person who killed the two of them." Although Gerald was slightly curious as well, this matter had nothing to do with him after all, so he appeared to be very relaxed.

"This can't be certain for now. I feel that the possibility is small. The one who did it before this is much stronger than the current one. For the current matter, we've found his height and body size, and have released a wanted notice for this. The only thing is that we don't know when he will be caught."

"Hopefully after we catch this person, we can find out about the previous killer as well, and this would save a lot of trouble."

Noda sighed and spoke in a deep voice. After receiving this news in the morning, he had been stunned on the bed for half an hour before finally thinking of coming over to see Gerald.

For one, it was to make sure whether it was Gerald's actions or not. Although he hadn't been able to find any clues on Gerald, he had always thought that Gerald held the greatest possibility of committing the crime. Secondly, he didn't know who to release his grudge on.

The conversation in the trial room yesterday had made him feel like Gerald was a good listener.

"Hopefully." Gerald nodded lightly.

"Seeing how you've been sleeping all along last night, I won't disturb you anymore. I'd advise you all to stay safe. If that man was able to attack someone from Yanam, he might target someone else too."

“However, don’t worry. We, the Japanese army, will do our best to protect everyone.”

Noda stood up and stretched a hand toward Gerald.

“No problem.” Gerald smiled and reached out to shake his hand.

After seeing Noda off, Gerald sat down on the sofa and thought about this matter, and about who would have attacked the Yanam special forces agent especially at an important time like this.

“Was it Aiden who came back just now?” Not long after, Master Ghost, who had been woken up by the noise, came out of his room.

“No, it was Noda Ichiko from the Japanese investigation team. He told me that the new special forces agent from Yanam who just came over yesterday was killed,” Gerald shook his head and told him honestly.

“Huh? You killed someone again last night?!” Master Ghost was fully alert now as he rushed to sit beside Gerald on the sofa. He asked anxiously, “How could you do this again at a time like this?! Japan must have been alerted already when you killed Alder last time, plus, there are surveillance cameras everywhere here.”

“I didn’t say I was the one who did it” Gerald laughed out loud.

“If it wasn’t you, who would do this? Isn’t murdering special forces agents of Yanam at the present moment practically finding trouble for oneself?” Master Ghost became relieved, but he was curious as well.

“I’m thinking about this too.” Gerald passed a cigarette over to Master Ghost.

“It’s good that it has nothing to do with you. I thought that you did it again. It’s best to do nothing out of the ordinary now as the Japanese must be closely investigating this matter. Although they won’t be able to find out anything about us, we had some conflict with Alder before after all, so we’re the most suspected ones,” Accepting the cigarette, Master Ghost replied after inhaling the cigarette twice.

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“I understand this too. Let’s see what happens. I’m curious about who would dare to kill Yanam’s special forces agent at the current moment. It won’t be easy for Japan to explain themselves now seeing how two men were killed. Once the news is out, Carter Lucab has to give the Yanam special forces and citizens a good explanation as to whether or not he wants to handle this matter.”

Gerald rested one leg over the other and spoke.

At the same time, the whole training ground was in a commotion.

Although everyone here was either workers for the army or special forces from around the world, the two consecutive murder cases made them feel unsafe here. The killer could even set his target on the special forces, and it was a murder where the victim was unable to defend himself at all, which meant that this man was stronger than anyone on the scene.

No one could ascertain as to whether or not the killer was targeting only Yanam special forces agents. Maybe killing the two was just the beginning, and the rest would be the next victims.

No one dared to guarantee that none of these things wouldn’t happen again.

Once it did, they would have lost their lives.

“This can’t go on anymore!” In the office of the training ground, a Japanese army colonel couldn’t help but yell as he slammed the table.

“I’m telling you, it’s just Yanam for now, but what if it happens next to men from Weston, Western Union, or the European countries?!”

“We can’t afford to offend them at all! If their special forces agents die on our land, all of you, including me, will have to bear very serious consequences!”

The colonel scanned everyone’s faces, and everyone whom he stared at would lower their heads automatically without a word, not knowing what to say. After the disappearance of Alder Lightbody, a tight investigation had been going on, but it had already been half a month, yet they couldn’t find even a single clue about it, not to mention finding out who the killer was.

“Colonel, we have been investigating it, but Alder’s disappearance is too bizarre, almost as if he just vanished from the planet! Even after we checked all the surveillance cameras from the surroundings and searched through all possible spots around there, we couldn’t seem to find any clues.”

“However, we haven’t given up yet, and we will still carry out the investigation diligently!”

Noda, who stood at the most upfront, reported the situation. He wasn’t the one with the highest post here, but he was responsible for this matter.

“I know about this. I can allow you to search on this slowly, and Yanam’s side also feels that this matter is too abnormal, so they have given us more time to figure this out.”

“But this time, we now actually have another agent of Yanam special forces getting murdered in our training grounds of Japan! We let him die right under our care and hundreds of surveillance cameras!”

The colonel slammed the table hard again, and he was so shaken up that spit came out when he talked.

“We just got the news that the body of the new special forces agent was found. It was in the drain a few hundred meters away from our training ground,” Noda was afraid that the colonel would get even more

enraged, so he quickly reported the latest situation to him. “Also, Mr. Colonel, the height and body size of the killer were all captured by the surveillance cameras, so I believe that we’ll find him very soon!”

“This news is not too bad!” The colonel nodded in satisfaction. This was something he could inform the Yanam forces about if they asked him for updates.

“Colonel, I have another idea. Why don’t we pick a few soldiers from the army to stand guard at the training ground? The killer must be so strong that he could even kill the king of special forces from other countries easily. If he carries on doing that, others might not be able to handle him.”

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Noda looked more relaxed.

“Does anyone have any opinions on this?” The colonel lifted his head and scanned across the people who were standing behind Noda, staying quiet all this while.

“No.” They all shook their heads, and no one was willing to speak further at a time like this for fear of getting into trouble.

“You have a point I’ll tell the army’s leader right now to have them send over some people to check all the hotels and any suspicious places closely, as well as to increase surveillance around the training grounds. We won’t allow the same thing to happen again!”

The colonel stood up and paced back and forth in the room as he informed the authorities of this contest. He knew better than anyone that if anything similar happened again, Japan’s global status would be greatly impacted.

They might even face criticisms and reprimands from other countries.

He, as the colonel who was responsible for the war contest and the safety of the training ground, would hit rock bottom for sure. Not only would he lose his position, but he would also have to bear the consequences.

This was something he was not willing to see.

“What Colonel says is right!”

“Yeah, I believe that under Colonel’s brilliant guidance, there won’t be any similar problems happening at the training ground!”

“We’ll cooperate with the colonel for sure!”

“Don’t worry, Colonel. I will quickly catch the culprit based on the clues we have. We might get all the answers we need after catching him!”

Seeing how everyone was flattering him non-stop, Noda followed suit and spoke up as well.

“Alright, I don’t want to listen to any nonsense from all of you anymore. I’ve already said how we should tackle the issue. But keep this in mind. If anything like this happens again, every one of us will be punished, and not just me, do you understand?!”

The colonel waved them down and said with a frown. The bitter truth was that these men only knew about flattery and weren’t capable of solving anything at all.

“Understood!” Everyone promised.

Although two murders of special forces agents had happened consecutively, the war contest was conducted on the expected date.

Around six in the morning, when the day was just starting to brighten up, all the kings of soldiers from different countries gathered on the training ground. The contest would be conducted for two days, and there would be events as easy as target shooting and wrestling, as well as tasks such as hostage rescue as an imitation to the actual battlefield.

Gerald, who had followed Aiden along here, stood not far from the authorities of the Japanese army.

It could be clearly seen that the two consecutive murders had led them to increase more soldiers around the training ground. Every one of them was geared up with actual bullets and guns as their eyes constantly scanned around the scene on alert and surrounded the whole training ground.

“Seems like the army is terrified,” Seeing this situation, Gerald chuckled and said to Master Ghost in a low voice.

“This is Japan, which has limited armed forces. If it’s in other countries, the security would be even tighter as no one knows whether the killer will attack again. The man has to be an idiot or is extremely confident with his ability to have killed a Yanam special forces agent before the war contest for special forces began,” Master Ghost replied quietly after checking where the men from the Japanese army were and making sure that they couldn’t be heard.

“It’s most likely the latter.” Gerald nodded. What Master Ghost had said was exactly the same as what he himself thought.

“To be able to kill a member of the special forces in such a short time means he has extraordinary ability. I’ve seen this man from Yanam’s special forces before, and he seems to be quite strong himself.” Taking a deep breath, Gerald continued, “Do you think it could be the cultivator from the Crawford family?”

“You’re saying that a man with this level of strength could be him?” Master Ghost opened his eyes wide. He had never thought in this way before.

“Who knows. I’m just guessing.” Gerald waved his arms.