

## Chapter 1191

The loud voice had come from a woman, and it sounded like she was having a fight with someone outside.

With such a commotion, everyone couldn't help but turn to look at the door. Standing right at the entrance, was a woman in heavy makeup who was blocking a youth and scolding him ferociously.

"I haven't forgotten about you beating me up back then! Do you honestly think that I'd just let that incident slide? You know, I had initially thought that you had escaped, so I racked my brains for the longest time, wondering how to find you! To think that you'd actually come to me instead! Come to think of it, you're even daring enough to attend a grand ceremony like this invitation party! Regardless, you won't be dying in one piece once I'm done with you!" shouted the woman as she continued glaring daggers at the youth.

Meanwhile, Riley—who had been in the house—displayed an odd expression when she saw the youth. While everything had initially been going as planned, a sudden side issue had suddenly arisen!

Naturally, the youth in question was none other than Gerald. Gerald himself had come to hand the invitation card to Cundrie. After all, as Riley had instructed, the card should be given to Cundrie before Mr. Snyder confessed his love to her.

Not daring to delay the request, he had taken the invitation card and rushed over first thing in the morning. To his annoyance, he found himself bumping into the woman he had beaten up on the street—who was also Mr. Gross's girlfriend—the day before.

"I'm saying this now... Stay away from me or you'll come to regret it..." replied Gerald as he glared frigidly at the woman.

Though she had been scolding him just seconds ago, after seeing how piercing his glare was, the woman found herself taking a few steps back as chills ran down her spine. She couldn't really explain the feeling either, she was just... scared.

Even so, that wasn't enough to dampen her arrogance. Turning to look behind her, she saw that her boyfriend's parents were present. That alone was enough to fill her with confidence again.

"Mom! Dad! That's him! He's the one who beat me up yesterday! He nearly beat Abner up as well! You can ask him about it if you don't believe me!" said the woman.

"She speaks the truth! In fact, Brice's friends were seriously hurt by this guy as well! His skills are top-notch, dad!" added Abner in a stern but slightly fearful voice.

"Oh? They say that enemies are bound to meet each other, but to think that it'd happen so quickly!" sneered Abner's father.

Powerful? He had already seen many powerful people during his lifetime, but for as long as he's lived, he's relied on strategy rather than bravery.

"I heard from Abner that you're from some foreign land, sir! As a result, I wouldn't blame you for not understanding the rules here in Lugaw City. Essentially, you only have to remember to be careful not to cross the line when you're here. Otherwise, you'll find that while it's easy to enter the city, leaving may prove difficult," added Abner's father as he smiled in a friendly manner.

It was evident that this was his own way of warning Gerald.

"Indeed! Don't come to a state where you don't even know how you'll die! How dare you offend my son! Also, why did you come here dressing like a beggar? If a person didn't know any better, they'd surely think that you came here begging for food! To make matters worse, you're actually attending such a grand ceremony in those clothes! Have a bit more self-awareness!" growled Abner's mother next as she shot a contemptuous gaze at Gerald.

At that moment, the Synder family's butler walked out while asking, "What's all the fuss about?"

'Don't any of you realize what sort of occasion this is? How dare you make such a commotion here!' The butler thought to himself, an extremely ugly expression on his face.

Though Abner's mother looked like she was about to say something, her husband stopped her in time.

"Oh, it's you, Albert! The situation's under control! We just bumped into a friend here and we're simply exchanging pleasantries with him! We're really sorry!" replied Abner's father.

Hearing that, Albert didn't buy the explanation one bit. What exchange of pleasantries would involve so much shouting?

Despite it obviously being a lie, Albert decided not to say too much about it. After all, Xyon Gross was still one of Lugaw City's big shots.

"...Regardless of what issues you have, I hope you remember that the Snyder family's prestige is the most important thing today! I'm certain that you're also aware of the old and young master's intentions behind hosting this ceremony. With that in mind, please resolve your issues only after today! I'll say it now that anyone who dares ruin the Snyder family's prestige will definitely face the appropriate consequences!" declared Albert coldly.

"That's for sure!"

"As for you there... Do you have an invitation card?"

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Albert had a hint of contempt in his tone as he asked the question while looking at Gerald.

The butler's disdain was warranted since unlike him and the other upper-class people at the ceremony, Gerald stood out like a sore thumb in his commoner clothing.

“No, I do not. Regardless, I’m from Mayberry, and I’ve come here today to meet the young lady of the Smith family and hand her an invitation card.”

“An invitation card? From whom?”

“I apologize, but I can’t tell you the details!” replied Gerald.

Gerald was only saying this according to how Riley had instructed him to. Even so, Gerald truly didn’t know who the owner of the invitation card was. After all, not only was it unnecessary for him to pry, but he wasn’t interested in finding out in the first place.

At that moment, Riley ran out before saying, “Let him in, Albert! As he’s said, he’s come all the way from Mayberry so he must be here on a mission!”

Riley leading Gerald into the place was also naturally part of the plan.

“...Oh? Well, since you’re a friend of the Smith family, I suppose it’s fine. Let him in!” ordered Albert who naturally needed to show respect due to the relationship between Cundrie and the young master.

With that said, Riley walked over to Gerald—making sure to make a face at him while sticking her tongue out—before dragging him in.

Not long after, the scene slowly returned to its initial atmosphere.

Even so, Abner found himself looking at Gerald before grumbling, “Are we just supposed to let him off that lightly? I find that difficult to bear!”

“Don’t be impatient! Worry not, for I’ve just made a call with some simple preparations in mind. Now that he’s entered this place, I guarantee that he won’t be able to leave this hall alive!” replied Xyon, his ruthlessness reflected in his eyes.

Hearing that, both Abner and the woman exchanged glances before looking at Xyon once more in admiration. After all, both of them were well aware of how strategic he was.

True to Abner's words, just as Mr. Snyder took in a deep breath—ready to begin the event—he was interrupted by a group of over twenty people rushing into the hall from outside as they shouted, "Let us in! We must capture that thief!"

While the group appeared to only consist of mere vendors, all of them had indignant expressions on their faces.

"What is the meaning of this!" shouted the bodyguards who were still trying to push the group back after failing to deny them entry.

"What are you b\*stards up to!" roared Mr. Snyder as his expression stiffened. His anger was warranted since something like this was happening while several international big shots were present!

"We wish to meet Mr. Snyder! We want him to seek justice for us!" shouted the vendors as they continued trying to barge further inside.

Upon hearing that, Mr. Snyder signaled for his subordinates to allow them in before sliding one hand in his pocket and asking, "Justice? What sort of justice are you seeking? What's the full story behind this ruckus?"

"You see, Mr. Snyder, we were just doing our businesses as usual when this person suddenly stopped by to steal our things! As if that wasn't enough, he even seriously hurt a few students from the kindergarten! After finding out that he came all the way here to hide, we'd like to ask why you took such a thief in, Mr. Snyder!" replied one of the vendors as all of the others—who had come with him—instantly began pointing angrily at Gerald.

Several of the big shots were now exchanging glances with each other after hearing all that.

“To think that a thief actually managed to get into this place... Why are the Snyders even doing?”

“Yeah! Also, hurting kindergarten kids? How brutal and inhumane!”

Whispers discussing the situation soon filled the place as the crowd slowly grew more and more dissatisfied.

There was no need to doubt how genuine their claims were either. After all, over twenty people had rushed into this place just to capture a single person! Everyone was now keen on finding out what Mr. Snyder—who was infamous for having a bad temper—would do.

Knowing that his next action would make others judge his morality, Mr. Snyder was well aware that he needed to perform well. With that in mind, he then glared daggers at Gerald before saying, “To think that you came over to my family’s ceremony to hide after committing so many sins... Coming here after causing such a scene, I’ll have you know that you’re definitely courting death!”

“He wasn’t the one who did it!” persuaded Riley who truly hadn’t expected the situation to get so fired up.

After so many people had stepped forward—claiming that Gerald was the perpetrator—Mr. Snyder’s slowly growing murderous intent was only making her initial plans go more and more off course!

Gerald himself was now casually looking at the people who had called him out. Though they were all dressed up in common clothes, all of them were a little too energetic to be simple vendors.

It was evident that all of them were proficient in martial arts. Taking a look at the father and son of the Gross family—who were standing at the side—Gerald easily put two and two together.

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However, Gerald chose not to defend himself, at least not yet.

After all, since both the father and son of the Gross family had openly made a false charge against him during such an important occasion, Gerald had reason to believe that the injured children were currently under their control as well.

With how quickly and efficiently they had managed to slander and frame him, Gerald could already tell that the father and son were no strangers to using such vile tactics. The fact that they were able to manipulate the Snyders to get rid of him for them only served to prove his point.

“Someone, drag him away and make sure to break all his limbs while you’re at it!” ordered Mr. Snyder in a frigid tone.

Seconds later, over ten Snyder bodyguards stepped forward, prepared to deal with Gerald.

However, Riley quickly said, “Now, hold on a minute! There must be some sort of misunderstanding here! He’s not one to do such things!”

Riley was so sure about this since both she and Cundrie had seen how heroic Gerald had been yesterday when he tried to attain justice. With that in mind, it just didn’t seem possible that he would actually steal or even hurt children!

What more, in order to make things more convenient for them, Riley and Gerald had been sharing their locations with each other from the previous day. As far as she knew, Gerald had been sitting in a Dominoes not too far away from the large hotel for most of the time.

So how could their claims be true? The puzzled Riley was pretty sure that the vendors had gotten things wrong.

“...Hmm? You sound pretty certain about that, Miss Smith. Why is that?” asked Xyonn as he turned to look at her.

“Indeed, Riley. If you aren’t certain about your statement, you’d best not spout nonsense here!” added Snyder as he, too, turned to look at the girl.

“What on earth are you doing, Riley?” asked Mrs. Smith anxiously.

She had already been asking Riley why she had allowed that loser to enter the hall earlier. While that was already embarrassing enough, the humiliation she was now suffering was way worse.

Regardless, though Riley wanted to claim that she knew where Gerald had been the entire morning, she knew she couldn't just tell the others about the incident. Racking her brains, she then thought, and thought, until suddenly, an idea dawned upon her.

“...Now who said I wasn't certain? He definitely wouldn't ever steal! Then again, I guess you have your doubts because you still don't know who he is or where he comes from. In fact, I'm pretty sure none of you even know why he's here today!” declared Riley.

Upon hearing that, everyone fell silent as they turned to face Riley.

“You see, he came all the way here today to deliver a unique invitation card to my elder sister. The card itself is from a rich heir from Mayberry!” added Riley.

There was now dead silence among the crowd. After all, everyone there was well aware that they couldn't offend any rich heirs from Mayberry.

At that moment, Noel Snyder, the master of the Snyder family, took a step forward before saying in his deep voice, “Haha! You said he came over to send a letter on behalf of a rich heir from Mayberry? He certainly doesn't look like a subordinate of any rich heir! I mean just look at his clothes! Even if we choose to believe that he's truly here to send a unique invitation card, who's the rich heir who ordered him to send it?”

“Humph! His attire is ordinary since the rich heir who sent the invitation card over is an extremely mysterious person from Mayberry who prefers keeping a low profile!”

After saying that, Riley placed both her hands on her waist before adding, “And the rich heir in question is Mr. Crawford from Mayberry!”



The moment Riley was done dropping her bombshell, the crowd instantly burst into an uproar! Even the international big shots—who were standing atop the high platform—couldn't help but stare wide-eyed at Riley in their sheer disbelief.

According to legends, Mr. Crawford owned about half of the world's properties and fortune, making him a truly mysterious and prestigious rich heir.

Since everyone from the business field had heard that name before, nobody even dared to slouch now.

A rich heir with the surname of Crawford who enjoyed keeping a low profile... There was no doubt about it. She truly was referring to Mr. Crawford that everyone was thinking about.

With that in mind, nobody was able to maintain a cool head anymore...

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Cundrie herself felt her heartbeat quicken, utterly shocked by what Riley had just said.

She was well aware that Riley was just doing all this in her attempt to dissuade Mr. Snyder from continuing to go after her. With the inclusion of a powerful and influential 'rival', they had hoped that Mr. Snyder would retreat after realizing that his competitor was much stronger than he was.

However, Cundrie hadn't expected her sister to actually exaggerate the facts this much! To think that she had even gotten Mr. Crawford from Mayberry involved!

Meanwhile, Xyon and those from his family were all silent, not daring to say a word as their legs quivered in their stupefied state.

After all, the family knew that Mr. Crawford's subordinates were all very proficient in martial arts. Since—as Abner had said—Gerald was so strong, that meant that there was a high chance that he truly was Mr. Crawford's subordinate!

'Does... does that mean that we've offended Mr. Crawford...? Are we going to perpetually be doomed then? Never to succeed again?!

These were the thoughts of those from Xyon's family, who had all gone pale by this point.

As for Mrs. Smith, while she had initially been against her daughter's decision of allowing Gerald in, the moment she heard Riley's explanation, she felt like she had arrived at the pinnacle of her life.

'What?!'

No wonder her two daughters had been acting so mysteriously all morning! As it turned out, Mr. Crawford apparently had interest in Cundrie! He had even specifically sent someone over to invite her eldest daughter to some occasion!

'This... Compared to Mr. Crawford, Mr. Snyder is nothing but dirt! D\*mn it all! How dare you even wish to gain my daughter's affection when you're inferior to Mr. Crawford in all aspects!' Mrs. Smith thought to herself in excitement.

The Snyder father and son themselves—who were still on stage—were now exchanging glances with each other rather agitatedly.

Mr. Snyder in particular looked like he was just struck by lightning, immense feelings of jealousy and helplessness swirling within him. After all, not only had his hopes and plans been ruined, but everything he owned could potentially be taken away from him now!

However, he simultaneously appreciated that electrifying feeling. With it, he was frightened enough not to show any signs of resistance, and he knew that it was for the best—at least for now—so that he wouldn't end up digging a deeper grave for himself.

Regardless, they weren't the only ones flabbergasted by the revelation. Gerald himself was wide-eyed in shock as he thought to himself, '...The hell? So the master of the invitation card is supposed to be me?!'

Attempting to calm himself down, Noel then asked, "...M-miss Smith, did that person over there truly come over to send the invitation card on behalf of Mr. Crawford...?"

"Is there even a reason for me to lie?" replied Riley as she lifted the exquisite-looking invitation card for everyone to see.

"Look, it's written right there that he's inviting my sister over to meet him at Mountain Top Villa in Mayberry! I'm sure none of you need any further explanation with the mention of that location!" added Riley.

"Mr. Crawford bid a whopping hundred and twenty million dollars for Mountain Top Villa two years ago! It's the most expensive villa in the entire country! Built atop a mountain and constantly shrouded in cloud-like mist, being able to stay there allows people to experience what it's like to be a deity!" said one of the local big shots rather longingly at that moment.

"Indeed! That villa's also particularly well-guarded, and normal people aren't even allowed to head up there to take photographs! I know since I went to Mayberry for some amusement last month. As you may already have guessed, despite my status, I apparently still didn't have the right to head up to Mountain Top Villa!" said another big shot as he cleared his throat before shaking his head with a bitter smile.

On the other hand, several of the present ladies were now looking at Gerald in admiration.

"Now that I look at him a bit more carefully, Mr. Crawford's subordinate honestly looks quite handsome!"

"I know right? Well, he's Mr. Crawford's subordinate, after all! Any woman would fall for him after giving him a good, long look!"

As the ladies squealed excitedly among themselves, Noel felt the need to get some confirmation on the legitimacy of Riley's claims.

With that, he then asked, "I apologize, for my doubts, but just to be sure, may I ask how many rooms there are in Mountain Top Villa, sir?"

"...H-huh? Are you actually doubting Mr. Crawford's subordinate, Mr. Snyder? Aren't you afraid that you'll offend Mr. Crawford?" asked Riley as she instantly began blushing. After all, even she wasn't aware of how many rooms there were in the villa.

Cundrie herself began clenching her fists tightly, feeling extremely nervous. If they managed to see through Riley's lie, then Cundrie would definitely be the most embarrassed person that day!

Brimming with anxiety, sweat began falling down Cundrie's forehead as she thought, 'I've already told you how smart and slick Noel was! He's not someone who gets cheated easily!'

"...There are a total of thirty-six rooms that are divided into upper, middle, and lower floors. Since Mr. Crawford was born in a family that appreciates literature and art, the middle floor is used to display masterpieces that include ancient paintings, famous western oil paintings, and many other works of art from all over the world. Behind the mountain top is a large hot spring pool built high above the clouds that can accommodate over two hundred people!"

"The villa is even equipped with workspaces for staff from the medical, catering, entertainment, and several other relevant fields. There's even a helipad for helicopters to land and take off from!"

Despite Cundrie's worries just seconds ago, Gerald didn't even hesitate to explain everything there was to know about the villa. In fact, he did so in a way that suggested that he was quite familiar with it.

After Gerald was done explaining, both Riley and Cundrie could only look at Gerald in utter disbelief.

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After all, Gerald had described Mountain Top Villa in such great detail that it truly seemed like he had lived there before, and not for a short time either. How else could he be so familiar with that place?

While Cundrie and Riley were most definitely shocked, the Snyders—and everyone else present—barely had any color left on their faces.

Noel's countenance had changed as well by this point, and he was now looking at Gerald much more respectfully. After all, Gerald had just successfully described everything—in an extraordinarily detailed way—there was to know about Mountain Top Villa.

It was evident that nobody else dared to doubt the legitimacy of Gerald's identity anymore.

Now certain that Gerald was the real deal, Noel quickly descended the stage before bowing slightly to Gerald and saying, "So it turns out that we have a distinguished guest with us today! Please excuse the Snyders for not greeting you immediately earlier. We hope that you'll forgive our mistakes."

Naturally, he wasn't paying his respect to Gerald. After all, Gerald was nothing but a subordinate. No, it was evident that he was doing so to show his respect to Mr. Crawford.

Riley herself was feeling slightly touched by Gerald now. After all, though their lie had almost been exposed earlier and he could've just let them deal with the rest, Gerald turned out to be quite insightful and had actually stayed back to help them!

Xyon and his son, on the other hand, weren't even able to stand still anymore. With their composure in shreds, both of them were currently seriously considering rushing over to kneel before Gerald and begging for his forgiveness.

"T-to think that was Mr. Crawford's subordinate this entire time...!" stuttered Abner's girlfriend, fear reflected in her eyes.

At that moment, Xyon turned to face her before slapping her directly in the cheek without warning!

As Abner's girlfriend fell to the floor, feeling faint as she cupped onto her now swollen cheek, Xyon gritted his teeth before roaring, "You... You b\*stard! Our family is now ruined because of you!"

"Hold it! Something doesn't add up!" shouted a youth from the crowd out of the blue.

"...Hmm? What do you mean by that?" asked Noel.

"Well, you see, I headed to Northbay to negotiate some business matters a few months ago. Back when I was there, I heard some rumors that a major incident had befallen Mr. Crawford's family who was living there! Putting it simply, Mr. Crawford had separated from the main Crawford family and shortly after, he mysteriously went missing! Mind you though, that this is news from over a year ago."

"Regardless, from what I heard back then, Mountain Top Villa had apparently been transferred to the Moldell family, and the same went for Wayfair Mountain. Isn't it a bit odd that Mr. Crawford would reappear all of a sudden? Odder yet is the fact that he invited the young lady of the Smith family to head to Mountain Top Villa—which he probably doesn't own anymore—to meet him! I'll be frank and say that I called up a few of my friends from Northbay just minutes ago. Apparently, Mr. Crawford's whereabouts is still unknown till this very day!" explained the youth without any doubts in his voice.

"...You have a point!" replied Noel as he clicked his tongue, seemingly remembering something at that moment.

Naturally, Riley was stunned by this sudden turn of events, and she instantly glared at the youth who had raised everyone's doubts again.

'You mother\*cker! We had already succeeded in getting them to believe us earlier! Why the hell did you have to talk so much?!' Riley thought to herself, now so anxious that she had to hold herself back from flying into a rage.

Noel himself turned to look at Gerald before asking, "If I may, may I know whether Mr. Crawford has returned to Mayberry, sir?"

“He hasn’t. However, I do know that he’s planning to head back there sometime soon,” replied Gerald.

While the doubtful youth from earlier was clearly unconvinced by Gerald’s explanation, Noel simply raised his hand before the youth could ask anything else.

“Now, now, let’s not get too impatient, ladies and gentlemen! Quite honestly, it’s useless to discuss whether Mr. Crawford’s already returned or not. Let’s just wait for the arrival of that mysterious guest instead! Once he’s here, we’ll all know the truth! After all, the guest in question belongs to the Crawford family as well!” declared Noel with a laugh.

Upon hearing that, everyone instantly grew extremely intrigued. Could Noel truly have gotten into contact with the Crawfords?

“Since you’re Mr. Crawford’s subordinate, I wonder if you know who the distinguished guest attending today is? Could it be that Mr. Crawford didn’t inform you that he’s sending a guest over?” asked Noel again, still quite respectfully.

Noel was a person who was well acquainted with how the world worked. Knowing that there was a chance that Gerald truly was working under an extremely powerful and influential person, he didn’t dare offend him any more than he needed to until he got the truth.

Gerald simply shook his head before replying, “I have no idea who’s coming over. As I’ve said, Mr. Crawford only told me to send this invitation card!”

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After saying that, Gerald himself began wondering, ‘People from my family are coming over...? Who could they be?’

As for the others, many were clicking their tongues as they discussed how weird the turn of events was getting.

“Humph! You’d better give it some thought if you aren’t truly Mr. Crawford’s subordinate! I’ll say it right now that I dared to state the possibility that you aren’t working under Mr. Crawford since there was once a case where someone pretended

that they were him! After deceiving several people in Northbay, the real Crawfords eventually caught wind of what the impersonator was doing. From that day onward, that person—along with his family—simply vanished off the face of the planet! With that in mind, if you truly are an impersonator, now would be the time to confess! If you do, you'll at least have a much higher chance of leaving alive!" said the youth from before.

Hearing that, Riley immediately gulped in fear. It seemed that the incident had just gotten a lot messier... How was she going to settle this?

Cundrie herself was brimming with fear after hearing that people who were involved with 'fake Mr. Crawfords' would be completely exterminated along with their families. The worst part was that she now knew that those from the actual Crawford family were coming over soon!

"I'm the real deal!" retorted Gerald.

"That's quite enough!" shouted Cundrie at that moment, sending everyone silent as they took turns exchanging glances with each other again.

Now knowing full well that she had potentially just created an overwhelming disaster, Riley didn't even dare to say another word.

Mrs. Smith herself seemed to have caught on that something was amiss, and her earlier excitement had now switched to fear. After all, if he truly was an imposter, they were all going to be exterminated! Nobody had the means to deal with the Crawford family.

"T-the truth is... The invitation card is fake...!" declared Cundrie as she bit her lower lip slightly before tossing the card to the floor.

As the invitation card lay flat on the ground, Cundrie looked at the words written on it. 'Inviting Miss Cundrie Smith to meet Mr. Crawford at Mountain Top Villa!' The more she looked at the words, the more she felt like they were contemptuously mocking her. She simply wasn't able to bear keeping the façade up.



“...So it really is a fake!” shouted several people from the crowd as another uproar began brewing.

While Noel was stunned by the revelation, Xyon himself nearly tumbled to the floor in his delight. He had earlier been under so much pressure that he even ended up wetting himself! Then again, nobody could blame him since the amount of pressure he was facing surpassed that of what any regular person could deal with.

Feeling like he was just reborn, Xyon then excitedly said, “I... I’m going to get a change first!”

As the man quickly ran off to change his pants, hoping to make a speedy return to watch the rest of the drama, the anxious and teary-eyed Mrs. Smith turned to look at her daughter before asking, “What... What exactly happened, daughter...?”

Heaving a long sigh, Cundrie then replied, “...It was a tactic I thought of so that Yves Snyder would give up on proposing to me today... I had hoped that after presenting him with difficulties, I wouldn’t have to decline his proposal in the first place! Still, I’m amazed none of you caught on sooner! Humph! Do any of you have any idea of how many beautiful women surround themselves around Mr. Crawford? Why would he ever invite me to Mountain Top Villa!”

Cundrie said all that with only a single breath, and it was evident that she was placing all the blame and responsibility on herself.

“S-sister, I-!” cried out Riley, not even sure what to say anymore at this point.

“If those from the Crawford family come later and wish to investigate the incident, just place the blame on me! I’m the only one who arranged for the impersonating incident to happen and it has nothing to do with my family!” added Cundrie.

Mrs. Smith herself looked like she had gone insane at that moment. After all, throughout the past few minutes, she had gone through a rollercoaster of emotions. Finding no better way to vent her immense anger, she turned to look at Gerald before shouting, “You... You son of a b\*tch! You’ve ruined the Smith family for good this time!”

Following that, she ran over to a table and grabbed some sweets before throwing them at Gerald!

As Cundrie burst into tears and ran over to stop her desperate mother from continuing to take her anger out on Gerald, the crowd began throwing scornful boos at both Gerald and Cundrie.

Even so, Gerald retained an oddly composed expression.

Walking over to where Cundrie had earlier tossed the card, Gerald picked it up, took a look at it, and then said, "Well, I guess I'll officiate this invitation card then. If you're free, Miss Smith, then I invite you over to Mountain Top Villa to have a chat with me!"

Upon hearing that, the crowd momentarily went silent again.

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"...What... What on earth are you even talking about...?" asked Cundrie—who was still in tears—as she turned to look at him in disbelief, unsure of what he was even going on about.

"Does he really think that he's the real Mr. Crawford now? Do you think he's gone cuckoo from the fear? Hahaha!"

"I know, right? He's even made an official invitation for Miss Smith to have a chat with him at Mountain Top Villa! What a clown!"

"Hah! Does he even have the slightest of self-awareness?!"

As several of the ladies within that hall continued spitting contemptuous remarks at Gerald, Xyon returned with a new pair of pants on.

The moment he saw everyone mocking Gerald, he became just as excited as his son was. By that point, even Abner's girlfriend had forgotten the pain she had suffered from the slap earlier.

“That guy’s ruined for certain this time, dad! Not only had he impersonated Mr. Crawford’s servant earlier, but now he’s pretending to be Mr. Crawford himself! I’d like to see how he worms himself out of this one!” growled the woman viciously.

As the situation grew more and more chaotic, the door to the large hall was slowly opened...

Following that, one of the waiters shouted, “The distinguished guest has arrived!”

Knowing that the guest in question was a person from the Crawford family, silence ensued almost instantaneously as everyone—including Gerald and those atop the stage—turned to look at the door.

Once the two large doors were fully opened, around fifty Maybach cars could be seen parked by the red carpet leading out of the room. Seconds later, the doors to all the cars were opened—almost simultaneously—and black-suited bodyguards stepped out with extremely respectful stances.

As everyone remained shocked and in awe of the scene, a middle-aged man was led to the red carpet by one of the guards, and he began calmly walking toward the crowd.

Everyone who was still seated immediately stood up as Noel and the other Snyders quickly ran toward the door to greet the biggest of big shots within the business field.

“We’ve been awaiting your arrival for the longest time, Mr. Lyle! You’re finally here!” greeted Noel as he made a sharp bow, prompting the other juniors of the Snyder family to do the same.

“You’re being way too cordial, Chairman Snyder... I’m only a bit late since I had to deal with a few issues first!” replied the middle-aged man as he and the other guards began walking into the large hall.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Lyle!”

“Thank you for taking the time to come over, Mr. Lyle!”

As the others took turns nodding at and greeting the middle-aged man, Cundrie couldn't help but feel—as she looked at Mr. Lyle and his bodyguards—that the Crawford family's presence alone was able to immediately change the atmosphere of the area.

Even the Crawford bodyguards themselves felt simultaneously imposing and awe-inspiring. However, she, of all people, knew that this wasn't the time for her to admire the Crawfords.

In all honesty, Cundrie was beyond terrified now. She was afraid that someone would expose the incident that had happened earlier. Should that happen, then the fate of the Smith family would definitely be changed.

Mrs. Smith was arguably even more afraid than her daughter was, and she kept her head low the entire time, looking very much like a primary school student who had just made a mistake and was now waiting to be scolded by the teacher.

As they say, however, the more afraid one is of something happening, the more likely it will happen.

At that moment, Xyon took a step forward before saying, “Speaking of which, Chairman Lyle, there's an incident I wish to inform you about. You see, before you arrived, someone impersonated Mr. Crawford in hopes of deceiving all of us!”

There were two reasons why he was doing this. Firstly, he wanted to show where he stood before Chairman Lyle. By making a contribution, the Gross family could potentially earn a chance for massive development.

As for the second reason, he simply wanted to use the opportunity to get rid of that b\*stard in order to avenge his son.

“...Hmm? Is that so...?” replied Chairman Lyle as his expression instantly turned grim.

The forty over bodyguards standing behind him—who hadn't taken their seats yet despite there being special chairs arranged for them—found themselves frowning deeply as well. To them, Mr. Crawford was a man with extraordinary status, and whoever dared to disrespect him had to die!

“...Have you investigated who that person is?” asked Chairman Lyle in a frigid tone.

Filled with delight—and glad that he had changed his pants earlier—Xyon then ran toward Chairman Lyle while shouting in a clear voice...

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“You don't have to look far, Mr. Lyle! For that person is among us! He's the impersonator!” declared Xyon as he pointed at Gerald.

Before Chairman Lyle could even turn to look, Abner and his girlfriend quickly ran over—clearly intending to show off—as they added, “Indeed, Chairman Lyle! You know he tried to trick everyone into believing that the real Mr. Crawford had invited Cundrie to Mountain Top Villa earlier! I assure you that everyone here can testify to my statement!”

“What a b\*stard!” roared Chairman Lyle as he immediately turned to look at where Xyon was pointing.

Holding their breaths, everyone was ready to see Chairman Lyle flip out... However, they were instead greeted by the shocking sight of him trembling in place!

He wasn't the only one either. All the other Crawford bodyguards were equally as stupefied as Mr. Lyle was.

“I-It's not his fault! I was the one who had told him to impersonate Mr. Crawford! If there's anyone that needs to be punished, it's me! He was only following my orders!” shouted Cundrie as she gritted her teeth.

Hearing that, Mrs. Smith's anxiety peaked. They were already placing the blame on someone else! Why was her stupid daughter stepping up to take the blame instead?!

“Have you gone mad, Cundrie? Why are you even speaking up for this ugly toad?!” asked Mrs. Smith, her immense unease evident in her tone.

“I haven’t! I only speak the truth! Since I was the one who told him to do all that, then I should bear the responsibility!” replied Cundrie.

Before Mrs. Smith could retort, she suddenly heard Mr. Lyle shouting with great difficulty, “M... Mister Crawford...!”

Turning to look at him, everyone was shocked to see him filled with tears as the middle-aged man trembled vigorously.

Following that, the other bodyguards bowed deeply before shouting in unison, “Mr. Crawford! We stand before you with the utmost respect!”

The shout itself was so loud that it almost felt like the entire structure swayed for a moment there, leaving everyone completely flabbergasted.

While the Snyder father and son found themselves widening their eyes, the father and son from the Gross family—who had been laughing cunningly just seconds ago—on the other hand, found themselves unable to even close their jaws in their utter disbelief. In fact, they were gaping so widely that one could stuff an egg in there without any issue.

‘...Mister... Crawford...? We... We must’ve heard that wrongly... right?’

As the atmosphere grew rigid, Gerald simply replied, “It’s been quite a while since we’ve last met, Zack!”

He truly hadn’t expected Zack to be the special guest they had invited over.

Regardless, Zack was extremely loyal to him, and had it not been for him trying his best to save Gerald back then, Gerald probably wouldn’t have been able to escape the Salford Province in the first place.

With that in mind, not long after Gerald reunited with his family, he had given Zack a lot of power and authority without the slightest hesitation. However, since he was still busy dealing with the Moldells back then and he barely had to deal with business affairs, both Gerald and Zack found little to no reason for them to meet till today.

“Indeed it has, Mr. Crawford! You have no idea how excited I am to finally meet you again!” replied Zack with a broad smile.

Cundrie, Riley, and Mr. Smith were now in a daze, unable to simply accept that the person they had previously labeled as a beggar was actually the infamous Mr. Crawford!

“A-are... Are you truly the real Mr. Crawford...?” asked Cundrie as she gulped.

Turning to look at her, Gerald then smiled before nodding slightly and replying, “I am, which is why my early officiation of that invitation card is a hundred percent real. Again, if you’re free, I hope that you’ll come to Mountain Top Villa in Mayberry to have some fun! The scenery up there isn’t bad, you know?”

Before Cundrie could even reply, Noel immediately fell to his knees and said, “I... I apologize for not being an insightful person, Mr. Crawford! To think I failed to recognize who you were, even after repeatedly asking you about it earlier... I hope you’ll forgive me!”

Being a smart man, Noel naturally knew that apologizing was his best course of action now. While the Gross father and son were naturally thinking the same thing, they didn’t even know how to start apologizing after all they did to him!

‘It... It’s over... The Gross family is truly ruined this time...!’ Xyon thought to himself as he felt a familiar dampness in his pants again.

“Speaking of which, Zack, this family over here is extremely evil! Do get rid of them for me by making them go bankrupt as soon as possible! Let them have a debt of over a hundred and fifty million dollars! With your current influence, I’m sure it shouldn’t be too difficult for you!” said Gerald as he turned to look at Abner and the others with a cold smile.

“Oh? Gladly!” replied Zack as he returned a cold smile.

Following that, Zack then turned to look at his subordinates before ordering, “Head out and investigate any business partners that the Gross family has. Your task will be to cut off their relationships with the Gross’s! Should any of the business partners be unwilling to do so, then just make them bankrupt as well!”

“Right away, Mr. Lyle!” shouted the bodyguards as they hurriedly ran off to carry out their new task.

So this was how powerful the Crawford family was!

After looking at how respectfully Zack treated Gerald, nobody dared to doubt the authenticity of Gerald’s true identity anymore.

Everyone found themselves holding their breaths, as Gerald turned to look at the Gross family before saying, “You enjoy building your happiness over others’ misfortunes, do you not? Well, I’m glad to tell you that the same goes for me as well! I’m honestly overjoyed to see how much suffering you’re currently going through!”

—— To be Continued... ——