

Chapter 1685-1712

However, this contest was not that simple.

The academy would hold this event every year after the enrollment of new students. This was also to test the students' true ability. It would be carried out in the form of a duel between students from the beginner to the elite classes.

Soon, two days had passed.

And today was the very day of the contest at Leicom Academy.

Everyone in the academy gathered in the square. The beginner class sat in the east corner, the intermediate in the west corner, and the elite class in the south corner.

As for Gerald, he sat beside Dean Sumeru.

Seeing Gerald sitting beside Sumeru, everyone was in shock. They were curious about what his status was so much so that he was receiving such good treatment.

"Fellow students, today is the annual martial arts contest of our academy after the enrollment of the new students. As always, the students from three different levels will join the contest and duel with each other!"

After that, Master Ykink came forward and explained the flow of the event to the students.

"Next, let me introduce you to one person. He's the student of our dean, Gerald Crawford. He will join this contest as well. You will have the chance to duel with him later!" Master Ykink introduced Gerald to the other students.

The whole crowd was stirred up at once with all the people talking about the same thing.

Who would have thought that Gerald would become a student of the dean? As far as they knew, the dean had never taken a student under his guidance. And now, Gerald had become the first one. This made them wonder how strong Gerald was.

“Master Ykink, I have a question. If we beat him, does that mean that we will also become the dean’s student?”

Suddenly, a student from the elite class stood up and asked Master Ykink.

Master Ykink was stunned after hearing the question. He turned and looked at Dean Sumeru.

Sumeru pondered for a moment before standing up and saying, “Dear students, anyone who can defeat him will become my student!”

Upon his words, it once again caused a stir among the students down the stage. It was clearly a rare opportunity for all of them. Thinking of becoming the dean’s students just by defeating Gerald, they were very much willing to do it.

However, it would not be that easy, as it was impossible for them to defeat Gerald.

“Great. Next, let’s start with the first duel between a beginner student and an intermediate student. I shall invite the two classes to send out their respective students to the centre of the square!” Master Ykink said to the students immediately.

Having said that, a student from each of the classes walked to the centre of the square.

It was a battle between a beginner and an intermediate right in the first round. Although the contest

might seem unfair, it wasn't. In truth, the distribution of the students of different strengths varied among the three levels, so there might be some strong and powerful characters in the beginner class.

Soon, the duel between the two students at the centre of the square started.

It was worth mentioning that the student from the intermediate class was quite satisfactory. Whether it was his attack skills or speed, he was more excellent than the beginner student.

Even so, the beginner student was not easy to deal with either, and he didn't get defeated too soon.

The two students fought for a few rounds before the intermediate student finally defeated the beginner student and won the battle.

Regardless, the beginner student's performance was considered quite good. It was just that there was still a small gap between his ability and his opponent's.

"Well, the victory of the first round goes to the intermediate student! Next, for the second round, let's welcome a beginner student and an elite student!"

With the first duel ended, Master Ykink announced the second match.

A beginner student actually had to fight against an elite student in the second round. It seemed to be too demanding.

Naturally, nobody from the beginner class dared to step forward. "I will do it!"

Suddenly, a voice rang out from among the beginner students.

Gerald found the voice very familiar, so he looked in the direction of the voice immediately.

It turned out to be Zelig.

Gerald didn't expect that Zelig would dare to come forward, knowing that this match was between a beginner and an elite, whose level of strengths would be apparently wide.

"What's your name?" Master Ykink looked at Zelig and asked.

"Zelig Lear!" He blurted out his name.

Then, a student from the elite side came out. He was none other than Lev Bayfield, who had recently joined the elite class.

Lev Bayfield and Zelig Lear were both from Jaellatra, but Lev was slightly stronger than Zelig.

Zelig was currently in the Rune Realm, whereas Lev had already broken into the Sage Realm. Hence, there was a big gap between them in terms of power.

Lev's lips curled upward into a wry smile, thinking that he had finally gotten the chance to torture Zelig.

Although they were both people from Jaellatra, the Lear family was more influential than the Bayfield family. This was also another reason Lev looked down upon Zelig, as he felt that it was absurd for the young master of the Lear family to be so weak.

"Yo, Young Master Lear, we finally meet again. But be careful, don't blame me for showing no mercy!"

Lev walked forward and stood in front of Zelig as he spoke, looking at him with a grim smile.

Zelig ignored what Lev said. He knew what Lev was thinking in his mind. He must have seen him, so he had deliberately stepped forward to fight with him. He had to be planning to humiliate him since he had gotten the chance.

Even though Zelig knew his ability was weaker, he would not retreat nor feel scared. He would resist Lev's attacks with all his might.

"Get ready, the match is about to start!"

Master Ykink cued Zelig and Lev.

Zelig and Lev got back to their respective sides, forming a ten-meter distance between them so that both of them would have a chance to react.

Meanwhile, Gerald was looking at them from above. He couldn't help but start worrying.

Gerald was aware of Zelig's strength. This match would most probably end with Zelig's defeat since Lev was a strong opponent in the Sage Realm.

However, Gerald could not intervene and stop it since this was the rule of the contest.

So, Gerald could only hope that Zelig would be able to withstand the attacks and not lose too terribly.

"And it starts now!"

After that, the second match started officially with Master Ykink's announcement.

Lev leaped forward immediately, heading toward Zelig at top speed.

Lev was in front of Zelig in the blink of an eye, drawing out his sword and stabbing it at Zelig.

The speed of a Sage was, of course, faster than a Chakra King.

But luckily, Zelig had been highly alert since just now. He took a few steps backward immediately and dodged Lev's first attack.

"Huh. It looks like your reaction is fast enough!"

Lev smirked and smiled disdainfully as he mocked Zelig.

Having said that, Lev leaped into the sky and rotated his body one hundred and eighty degrees. Then, swinging the sword in his hand so fast that it formed a flower-like shadow, he attacked Zelig. Zelig immediately shone his sword to shield himself.

"Cascading petals!" Lev yelled.

This was the name of Lev's move, and the sword's shadows cascaded everywhere from the sky like flower petals, rendering Zelig unable to determine which one was the real sword.

After a few seconds, Zelig's shirt was already torn and ripped up with marks from the sword everywhere, and he seemed to be extremely battered and confused.

At this moment, it was already known who had won and lost—it was obvious that Lev had won this round.

“Alright, both of you can stop now. We already have a winner!”

Master Ykink instantly yelled and announced the result of the battle.

“Lev Bayfield from the elite class won the second round!”

Although Zelig was unsettled and unwilling to admit defeat, his ability was indeed not as good as Lev’s, so he could only accept the result.

“Hmph. Zelig Lear, I’m telling you, you’re going to lose to me forever, so, from now on, you’d better scam whenever you see me around the academy. Otherwise, I’ll beat you up every time I see you!”

Lev warned Zelig coldly as he pointed his finger at him before everyone else at the scene.

His words caused a surge amongst the crowd again. Who would have expected that Lev would be so reckless to announce such ruthless words in front of everyone, not to mention the headmaster and great masters were there as well.

However, these were all normal happenings. Dean Sumeru and the other great masters wouldn’t care that much as the competition was really strong here. After all, students from the elite class indeed had higher statuses than those from the beginner class.

Still, Gerald didn’t think the same way as them. He felt that Lev was too arrogant and ruthless for his own good, and this made Gerald a bit enraged.

Zelig was his friend, and Lev was obviously insulting his friend. Naturally, this made Gerald feel unsettled,

and he decided to avenge Zelig's dignity and justice.

"Okay, for the third round, it will be the elite class versus the dean's selected student—Gerald Crawford. I would like the elite class to select someone among yourselves to fight, and for Gerald to wait patiently in the center of the square!"

The battle was continued with master Karsten's announcement of the third battle.

Gerald knew his chance was here, and he stood up instantly, leaping right toward the center of the square swiftly, becoming the center of everyone's attention.

Everyone wanted to see how incredible Gerald's ability was.

Now, the students in the elite class were all chattering and having a commotion. A lot of them wanted to fight against Gerald as they were all tempted by the reward.

"Dean and fellow grand masters, I have a request!"

At that moment, Gerald yelled as he stared right at the headmaster and the four grand masters.

"Gerald, please let us know!"

Dean Sumeru asked instantly.

"Can I choose someone from the elite class for the battle!" Gerald made a request.

His words immediately made students from the elite class unsatisfied, and they felt as though Gerald



was too arrogant. This simply meant that he didn't really value any of their abilities at all.

"Okay, then. Tell me, who do you wish to choose?"

After all, he was still the dean's own selected student, so of course he would treat him slightly more special. He then swiftly asked Gerald.

"Him! Lev Bayfield! He's the one I wish to choose!"

Right after Sumeru's sentence had ended, Gerald immediately announced a name as he pointed right at Lev, who had just sat down.

Right at that instant, everyone's eyes were on Lev. None of them had expected that Gerald would actually choose Lev as his opponent, and this made them astounded.

Lev, on the other hand, was excited and felt as if his chance was finally here. After all, if he beat Gerald, he would be the dean's selected student himself.

Under everyone's gaze, Lev stood up slowly.

Lev walked right toward Gerald in front of everyone.

"Who would have thought that you would choose me. Looks like the position as the dean's selected student will be mine for sure!"

Lev ridiculed Gerald with utmost confidence.

They hadn't even started the battle, and Lev was already acting so arrogantly.

Gerald, on the other hand, wasn't really bothered by it. In his eyes, Lev was just a buffoon, so he didn't really have to care about his arrogance.

The strong ones always held a low profile instead of showing off in a high-key way. If not, that would be stupid, and that referred to none other than Lev himself.

"Both sides, please get ready!"

Master Ykink spoke up and signalled at Gerald and Lev.

Hearing Master Ykink's instructions, Lev immediately entered a fighting stance, waiting to attack anytime. Once the start was announced, he would immediately attack Gerald.

Gerald was as calm and composed as he had ever been with his eyes closed while standing at the same place, without even a slight change in his expression.

Seeing Gerald's action, everyone around them wondered whether this meant that it was a sign that Gerald was surrendering?

"The battle starts now!"

After a few seconds, Master Ykink announced.

As soon as those words fell, Lev took action instantly as he shoved his sword out and jetted right toward Gerald.

Gerald, on the other hand, was still standing at the same place calmly without moving at all. It was almost as if he was waiting for Lev to stab him.

Just as everyone thought that Gerald was going to lose for sure, Gerald opened his eyes suddenly and extended two fingers as he held Lev's sword in between them almost instantly.

The sharp head of the sword was just a few millimetres from Gerald's eyes! What a move right at that juncture!

"What?!"

Lev was extremely astounded.

He wanted to take back his sword but suddenly realized that he couldn't take it back at all. It was as though the sword was frozen in mid-air.

Immediately after, Gerald bent and snapped Lev's sword with his fingers.

Without waiting for Lev to react, Gerald smacked Lev's chest with his other palm.

Lev flew backward immediately in an arc across the sky before crashing onto the ground, blood leaking from his lips.

Gerald didn't intend to take Lev's life with his palm. After all, this was a battle test and it should be light, not life-and-death in any way. Therefore, Gerald held back, otherwise, Lev would be an ice-cold corpse by now.

"Gerald has won!"

Master Ykink announced loudly.

Right at this moment, Dean Suneru had a satisfied smile on his face as he started clapping.

Seeing how the dean was clapping his hands, the four grand masters and other students started to clap as well. Instantly, thunderous applause could be heard from the scene.

Gerald had won without a teeny hint of suspense.

Now, everyone knew that Gerald truly had strong abilities, and it was not just a rumor. He was indeed worthy enough to be the dean's selected student.

"I'm not satisfied. I want to compete against him!"

Right at that moment, a deep voice was heard from the elite class.

"It's Master Ray!"

"Master Ray is going to fight, looks like there'll be a good battle to watch!"

"Yeah! Master Ray is incredible, of course he won't accept this willingly!"

After discovering the owner of the voice, an uproar appeared amongst the crowd again.

The man who was being discussed by everyone was Ray Leighton, the best student in the elite class. His ability had reached the Seventh-soul-rank in the Sage Realm.

Ray got up and walked out of the circle coldly toward the center of the square to stand before Gerald, and he pointed at Gerald icily as he said, "I, Ray Leighton, want to challenge you. If you win, I will willingly listen and follow you. If I win, you have to scam from this position of yours and be my underling!"

Ray's words were extremely arrogant with a dominant vibe.

After listening to him, Gerald wasn't angry at all. On the contrary, he thought that Ray was very interesting.

Someone like Ray was direct and straightforward, and he would express his dissatisfaction outright instead of doing something dirty behind one's back. This deserved other's respect.

"Okay, I accept!"

Gerald didn't reject him and accepted it immediately.

Without waiting for Master Ykink to announce the start of the battle, Ray charged right toward Gerald like a ferocious tiger with a crushing force like a tornado.

Ray had a buffy physique and muscular body, and he crashed his fist right toward Gerald heavily.

Ray, who had reached the Seventh-soul-rank in the Sage Realm, already had strong power. If one really got hit by his fist, his bones would be crushed into pieces for sure.

However, Gerald liked fighting against opponents like this. This was because he could test his body's strength at the same time.

The next moment, Gerald thrust his fist out as well.

Gerald matched his fist with Ray.

Right in that instant, the sand around the square flew everywhere, and heatwaves were created, surrounding the two in between.

The ground beneath both of them was already cracked and collapsed, numerous rocks flying up into the air. It could be already be seen how powerful the aftereffect of them clashing against each other was.

After that, dust and the sand dissipated.

Everyone saw Gerald and Ray both standing in the same spot, but Ray seemed to be a bit sick.

If they were nearer, it could be seen how Ray's purlicue was already torn with blood streaming out of the wound endlessly, dripping onto the cracked ground.

With just one move, the winner and loser could already be determined.

The two stood still for a few seconds facing each other before Ray finally retracted his fist slowly.

"I've lost!"

His words made everyone turn silent.

Everyone was still in surprise and disbelief.

Ray had actually surrendered?!

This result wasn't something that could be expected by anyone. One should know that Ray was the strongest man in Leicom Academy, and now, he had actually lost to Gerald, which he had admitted himself willingly. What astonishing news!

"You're really powerful! You have my respect!"

Ray smiled and told Gerald.

"You're not bad yourself. I hope we can be friends!"

Gerald smiled back politely as he replied to Ray, stretching out his hand.

"Of course. It would be my honor to be friends with you!" Ray stretched his hand out for a handshake with Gerald without thinking twice.

At that moment, the two were like the strong ones sympathizing with each other. The truly strong ones were always respected by everyone.

Gerald felt that Ray would be a worthy friend. There were not many people as magnanimous as Ray anymore.

"Okay, that's the end of our battle test today. Tomorrow will be the practice test in Heaven Tower, I hope everyone can get a good rest tonight!"

After the end of the day, the sky had begun to turn dark by the time Master Ykink made this announcement.

Then, everyone left the scene.

Heaven Tower was the most powerful challenge in Leicom Academy, and there were twenty levels.

Up until now, no one had been able to reach the top successfully. Even Dean Sumeru had been halted at the eighteenth level while the four grand masters had stopped at the seventeenth.

Every floor had different challenges for different people, so no one knew exactly what kind of challenge would be given by Heaven Tower. Hence, no one knew how to even cheat.

That night, Gerald was called to Sumeru's bedroom.

"Dean, you wanted to see me?"

Gerald entered the room respectfully as he asked Sumeru, who was meditating on the meditation deck.

Sumeru opened his eyes slowly and looked at Gerald with a smile on his face.

"Gerald, you did well this afternoon. I'm very satisfied as your teacher, but are you prepared for the challenge tomorrow at Heaven Tower?"

After praising Gerald, the dean asked Gerald with concern.

"Dean, I've listened to Master Ykink introduce Heaven Tower in a simple way, but I'm curious, what kind of challenges are there inside? Please teach me about this, teacher!"



Gerald instantly asked Dean Sumeru curiously.

“Hoho!” Sumeru chuckled lightly.

“Heaven Tower was created by the ancient god of Astral Traveler in Leicom Academy. After the god of Astral Traveler stepped into the human world, Heaven Tower became the most symbolic feature of the Leicom Academy. Every scholar who enters Leicom Academy has to pass the challenge of Heaven Tower. Only then can they be deemed as students of Leicom Academy!”

“About the challenges inside, I can’t tell you anything. Heaven Tower is fascinating, and the challenges it offers vary from person to person. You’ll only know when you go inside yourself!”

Sumeru didn’t answer Gerald’s question and instead told him the general information about Heaven Tower.

“Dean, I heard from Master Ykink that you stopped at the eighteenth floor, right?”

Gerald asked Sumeru carefully.

“That’s right. It gets harder as you proceed further up Heaven Tower. It was tens of years ago when I reached the eighteenth level. From then onward, I never went into Heaven Tower anymore!” Dean Sumeru nodded and answered.

Sumeru’s words made Gerald more and more curious as he told himself that he would surpass the old in the future as a new generation.

Now that even Sumeru could only stop at the eighteenth level of Heaven Tower, he himself had to surpass Sumeru and reach the top of Heaven Tower to prove himself.

If the older generation couldn't make it, it didn't necessarily mean that the new generation couldn't do it as well. After all, times were always changing.

Subsequently, Sumeru took out a sachet from his sleeve and passed it to Gerald.

"Dean, what's this?"

Gerald asked curiously.

"This is a sachet I got from Heaven Tower back then, but I have never opened it before. Now, I want to give this to you. Maybe this can help you when you enter Heaven Tower, but you can only open and use it at the most critical and urgent moment. You must remember my words!" Sumeru reminded Gerald seriously.

"Yes. I'll keep that in mind, Dean!"

Gerald nodded automatically and promised him.

After their chat, Gerald left Sumeru's room.

After Gerald had left the room for a while, Sumeru waved his arm, and a starry sky map appeared right in front of his eyes instantly.

The starlight shone brightly on the map, but one couldn't see anything beneath those starlights.

"Messy starry map and diminishing starlight—looks like the catastrophe of Leicom Continent is bound to arrive soon!"

Sighing after throwing a last look at the map, Sumeru's expression turned complicated and sad.

But right at that moment, a bright white starlight appeared out of the blue in the starry map, shining brightly and eye-catchingly. "Could it be that Gerald will be the saint who will save our Leicom Continent?!"

Upon seeing the starlight, Sumeru couldn't help but become astonished.

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Not long after, Gerald returned to the South Pavilion.

"Brother Gerald!"

Just as he reached the door, a familiar voice was heard from behind him.

The owner of that voice was none other than Ray Leighton, the man who had fought him this afternoon.

"Brother Ray, anything you need at this late hour?"

When he saw that it was Ray, Gerald became puzzled as he asked, not expecting Ray to come to find him.

"Hoho! Brother Gerald, I'm here to have a casual chat. Would you like to have a drink?"

Ray chuckled lightly as he shook the beer bottle in his hand.

Gerald smiled understandingly and nodded. "Sure. Come in, then!"

After that, Gerald led Ray inside the pavilion.

When they entered the pavilion, Nori and the two others were sitting inside.

"Gerald, you're back!"

Seeing Gerald arrive, Nori stood up and greeted him.

"Hmm? Isn't this Senior Ray?"

When they saw Ray, they all became surprised.

"Good day to you all!"

Ray greeted Nori and the two politely.

Then, the few people sat down as they drank and chatted.

Beer was, after all, something to bond people together and make friends without much effort. Gerald and the three were soon good friends with Ray, and the five were happy to meet each other as they talked while laughing, making it seem as if they had known each other for a long time already.

It was only until late at night before they finally fell asleep in the pavilion.

The next morning, with a ray of sunshine shining into the pavilion, Gerald and the four woke up.

Today was the day of Heaven Tower's practice test, and all newbies of Leicom Academy had to participate in the practice test.

Of course, Gerald was the one to bear the brunt.

As the dean's selected student, of course Gerald had to be the one kickstarting this.

At 9.15 am, all the trainees had gathered below Heaven Tower.

Heaven Tower stood tall amongst the clouds, striking and elegant.

"Today is the day where the new trainees will enter Heaven Tower for the practice test. Every newbie has to enter and accept the training. Regardless of the result, only those who accepted the training of Heaven Tower will be worthy enough to be students of our Leicom Academy!"

Master Ykink walked out and announced to the crowd beneath.

"The dean's selected student, Gerald Crawford, will be the first to enter Heaven Tower for the practice training!"

After receiving the instruction, Gerald stood up and walked toward the door of Heaven Tower to wait.

At that instant, the door of Heaven Tower opened, followed by a loud noise, the pitch-black environment inside displayed to everyone. No one could see what it looked like inside.

Gerald didn't say another word as he took a step to enter Heaven Tower.

Following Gerald's entrance, the tower door was shut instantly.

As the tower's doors were lowered, Gerald couldn't help but look around, attempting to gather his bearings. However, the pitch darkness made it impossible to see a thing...

Just as Gerald was wondering what to do next, a beam of light suddenly appeared from the tower! With how increasingly bright it was getting, the light's radiance was reminiscent of a raging bonfire...

Regardless, it wasn't long after before a man donning white clothes walked out from the light...

Seeing that, Gerald was prompted to ask, "...And you are?"

"I am the god of Astral Traveler in the Leicom Continent, and the form that you're currently seeing is the final primordial spirit that I've left behind in the Heaven Tower. I was summoned by your arrival!" explained the primordial spirit as it stared at Gerald.

"You're the god of Astral Traveler? And what do you mean my arrival summoned you?" replied Gerald, stunned by the sudden turn of events. For one, he definitely hadn't expected the person before him to be the legendary ancient god of Astral Traveler...

Chuckling when he heard that, the god of Astral Traveler simply extended his hand... before snapping his fingers.

And just like that, Gerald was greeted by the sight of countless stars! While it was most probably just a manifested illusion, it truly felt like he was currently standing in the middle of space...

Apparently not done yet, the god of Astral Traveler then waved his hand... Revealing another scene to

Gerald. A greatly unsettling one...

The continent was in ruins, complete shambles! With countless bones scattered across the lands and the sky layered with a blanket of dark clouds, Gerald felt a shiver run down his spine just from looking at all that...

'What the hell happened here...?' Gerald thought to himself.

Now curious out of his mind, Gerald was prompted to ask, "What... on earth happened here, god of Astral Traveler...?"

The second his question ended, an ethereal 'whir' could be heard, prompting Gerald to look at the source of the sound... and projected there, was the number, 'three hundred'.

Raising a slight brow, Gerald began wondering, 'Three hundred? What does that signify? Is it a secret code of some sort...?'

After a slight pause, the god of Astral Traveler then replied, "...This... is the fate of the world in exactly three hundred days..."

Upon hearing that, Gerald was rightfully shocked. Eyes widened and filled with incredulity, Gerald then asked, "...What? The world's falling into complete ruin by then?"

"Indeed. On the three hundredth day, Masrus, the demonic god will be revived... Following that, he'll surely take over the entire world! If he's allowed to do that, then not only will the Leicom Continent fall under his rule, but Jaellatra and the other continents will share that fate as well!" explained the god of Astral Traveler in a solemn tone.

Though Gerald felt that the claim was somewhat reminiscent of some legendary fairy tale, he knew that the god of Astral Traveler—of all people—wouldn't lie to him. With that in mind, that meant that the

world's fate was truly looking grim...

"...I see. God of Astral Traveler, I'm assuming you're showing me all this for a reason. Could it be that I'm capable of preventing all this suffering?" asked Gerald.

After all, the God of Astral Tower surely wouldn't have shown him all this without a proper reason. Could he be some prophesied savior for the new generation...?

"Your assumption is correct. Only you have the power to go against Masrus, and should you succeed, you'll surely become the savior of the world!" replied the god of Astra Traveler as he gave Gerald a determined look.

Utterly shocked by this sudden revelation, Gerald could only think, '...But... Why was I chosen to be the savior out of the blue...?' He simply found it weird how the world's fate suddenly concerned him.

"...Alright, but... Why me?" asked Gerald.

"It's because there exists an ancient will hidden within your body. If you manage to properly develop that will, then you'll surely be able to resist Masrus! With that in mind, you truly are the world's final hope!" explained the god of Astral Traveler in a patient tone.

Seeing the relevance of his words, Gerald then replied, "...And how do I develop that will?"

Hearing that, the god of Astral Traveler then cupped his hands together, causing a scroll of sorts to materialize there shortly after...

After being handed the scroll, Gerald noticed that there was a slot of sorts on it. It was quite apparent that something needed to be fitted inside it to open the scroll...



“That there is the Scroll of Stars... In order to unlock its secrets, you’ll first have to obtain an item known as the Scintillating Gem. While you’ll be able to begin developing the will in your body after you open the scroll, know that nobody’s ever been able to obtain or even locate the gem from the day it came into existence!” explained the god of Astral Traveler as he looked at Gerald with a serious gaze.

Upon hearing that, Gerald couldn’t help but look at the scroll for a little longer before storing it within his storage ring.

With that done, Gerald then turned to face the god of Astral Traveler before asking, “...Well, that aside, what exactly is the trial of the Heaven Tower?”

‘I came to participate in a trial, no? Who do I now feel like I’m here to receive a mission instead?’ Gerald thought to himself.

“I established the trials of Heaven Tower only as a front. My goal had always been to await the arrival of the destined individual, and you’ve finally come today. With that in mind, you naturally don’t have to go through the trial. After all, all the trials here are useless for you. Time is of the essence, so I’ll be sending you to the top of the tower immediately!” replied the god of Astral Traveler.

Hearing that, Gerald could only raise a slight brow as he bounded up the tower with extreme speed...

Seconds later, someone from the outside could suddenly be heard shouting, “...H-hey! Look up there! The top of the tower is shining!”

Realizing that what the person had said was true, Sumeru and the four great masters instantly expressed great shock. After all, the light—that everyone was now seeing—would only begin shining when someone managed to reach the top of the tower... With that in mind, Gerald must have been able to achieve that! How unexpected!

Ever since the trials were established hundreds of years ago, nobody had been able to fully scale the tower... Until today.

Moving back to Gerald, upon arriving at the top of the tower, Gerald was greeted by the sight of a sword that was emitting a white light.

Walking closer to the sword, Gerald watched as it instantly began quivering in place. In a sense, it almost seemed like it was behaving that way due to some telepathic link it had with Gerald...

Before he could get too close, the god of Astral Traveler appeared before Gerald again before saying, "That there is the Astrabyss Sword, and it'll function as your special weapon from today onward. Beside it, is a book that contains all the skills you can perform with the sword. I hope you'll use it wisely and master all the Astrabyss's skills. If you do, you'll definitely get much stronger!"

That was needless to say, of course, so Gerald simply nodded before continuing to walk toward the sword.

Now before the sword, Gerald heard as the god of Astral Traveler shouted, "Outstretch your hand and pull it out!"

Momentarily stunned by how commanding the god of Astral Traveler suddenly was, Gerald quickly shook out of it before firmly grasping the sword's hilt... Only to instantly feel a slight pain on his palm!

Unbeknownst to Gerald, the sword had caused a tiny cut to form on his palm, resulting in a single drop of his blood coming into contact with the sword's hilt...

The second that happened, the Astrabyss Sword immediately emitted an ethereal ring...

Releasing the hilt and taking a step back, Gerald then watched as the sword quickly began flailing wildly!

It only took the Astrabyss a few seconds to break from its restraints, and the second it was freed, it

instantly flew into Gerald's hand!

Instinctively holding onto the sword's hilt tightly, Gerald immediately began feeling a strong force surging into his elixir-of-life field from his palm... This feeling...

He was about to make a breakthrough!

Feeling the immense power continue surging into his elixir-of-life field, Gerald quickly sat on the floor and began meditating. With his eyes now closed, Gerald actively attempted to tame the immense power in his body...

To his dismay, he wasn't able to do it!

Momentarily feeling anxious, an idea suddenly came to Gerald as he thought, 'Wait, don't I have plenty of Heaven's apples?'

Quickly retrieving one from his storage ring, Gerald then bit into it.

The second he did, his entire body instantly felt cool and refreshed! As for the surging power from earlier, it was no longer pulsing wildly through him...

In other words, Gerald had successfully breached the Ninth-soul-rank of the Sage Realm! He was now finally at the first rank of the Avatar Realm!

With his body now brimming with power, Gerald could tell that he was much, much stronger than before.

"Congratulations for breaching into the Avatar Realm, Gerald. You now possess the power to enter God Transformation mode, a state where you momentarily grow inhumanly strong! Even so, you'll only be

able to use it when facing extreme situations. Consider it as a last resort to remain alive!” explained the god of Astral Traveler.

As the god of Astral Traveler had said, God Transformation was a skill that those from the Avatar Realm could use to defend themselves near death. A textbook example of how useful this ability was, was by using God Transformation to suddenly gain a massive boost in strength to hopefully turn the tables during a losing battle.

Of course, there were pros and cons to everything.

While the power of God Transformation was certainly nothing to scoff at, the user would go feeble for a rather long time after using it. With that in mind, it was wise to only use the tactic as a final resort.

“I appreciate the advice, god of Astral Traveler. Regardless, I definitely won’t disappoint you!” replied Gerald in a gratuitous tone as he bowed.

Seemingly satisfied with Gerald’s response as he laughed, the god of Astral Traveler then said, “Remember, you’re the world’s only hope! Use the next three hundred days wisely!”

Before Gerald could even reply, the god of Astral Traveler’s primordial spirit instantly disappeared. Now that its final mission had been fulfilled, the god of Astral Traveler could finally rest in peace...

And just like that, the burden of the world had been placed on Gerald’s shoulders, and he was the only one who knew about it...

Shortly after, the Heaven Tower’s entrance was reopened, and everyone watched as Gerald slowly made his way out...

By this point, his aura was immensely pressuring, and many from within the crowd had to shield their eyes from the waves of dust that repelled themselves from Gerald!

Sumeru himself—who was seated at the seat of honor—could only reveal a satisfied smile when he saw that. Gerald had definitely succeeded...

When noon came, Gerald could be seen standing in the middle of Leicom Academy's large hall. Naturally, Sumeru was once again seated at the seat of honor while the four major great masters sat at the side.

Beaming subtly as he looked at Gerald, Sumeru declared, "Congratulations for being the first person to ever fully scale Heaven Tower! With that in mind, I'm sure you now know why all the trials were held there in the first place."

"I do, Master, and four great masters! This is about the event that will be taking place in three hundred days, correct?" replied Gerald as he slowly looked at all five of them.

Hearing that, the four masters then turned to look at Sumeru as the dean nodded in response.

"So, you truly do know everything now... I suppose that means that you really are the destined person! With that in mind, are you ready to hold that responsibility, Gerald?" asked Sumeru as he stared closely at Gerald.

"I am! After some thought, I feel that locating the Scintillating Gem should be prioritized!" replied Gerald in a resolute tone.

He was placing priority on the gem since with it, he would be able to open the Scroll of Stars. Following that, Gerald would hopefully be able to quickly develop the hidden will in his body in order to stand a chance against Masrus when the demonic god appeared three hundred days later.

"While you're free to do things in whichever order you please, please remember that the clock is constantly ticking. If you can't locate the gem by the time the three hundred days are up, the only thing that awaits our world is ruin!" replied Sumeru without mincing any words.

"I understand, master! Also, in order to hasten the search, I'm thinking of banding together a small team! What do you think of that, master?" asked Gerald.

Gerald, for one, felt that doing things on his own again would surely make him feel lonely. With that in mind, Gerald was planning to bring Nori and the four others along in search of the Scintillating Gem.

"I see no issue with that. Go on ahead and select the members you see fit to be part of your team!" replied Sumeru.

Hearing that, Gerald then bade farewell to Sumeru and the four great masters before leaving the large hall to begin making his preparations.

Once they were sure that Gerald had left, Jizo couldn't help but look rather worriedly at Sumeru as he asked, "...Do you really think he'll be able to do it, dean?"

With the fate of the world on his shoulders, Gerald was most probably feeling immense pressure at the moment...

"...We simply have to believe in him and give him all the support he needs. Otherwise, the world will surely end in ruin!" replied Sumeru in a firm tone without giving Jizo a direct answer. Even so, what he meant was clear as day.

With that, all four of the major great masters nodded in understanding, prompting no further questions to be asked...

Sometime later, Gerald returned to the South pavilion. Upon entering, he saw that Nori and the other three were resting inside while chatting among themselves.

Upon realizing that Gerald had returned, the four of them immediately smiled at him before praising, "You're just way too powerful, Gerald! To think that you'd actually be able to get to the very top of the tower! Because of that feat, you're now immensely famous within the academy, and many are now looking up to you!"

Despite hearing that, Gerald really couldn't be bothered about such trivial fame. After all, there were much more important affairs to deal with at the moment.

Shaking his head, Gerald then stood before the four people and straightened his back before saying, "Alright, putting all that aside... Please listen carefully to what I'm about to say next. I'll be leaving the academy as soon as possible to start locating an item called the Scintillating Gem. With that in mind, I was wondering if all of you would be willing to come with me and help look for the gem. Don't worry, I've already gained the dean and the four major great masters' permission. What do you say?"

Hearing that, Nori and the others were momentarily stunned. After all, it was a lot to take in.

After a short while, Zelig snapped out of it before asking in a slightly puzzled tone, "The... Scintillating Gem? What exactly is that...? And why do we need to leave the academy all of a sudden to look for it?"

"I'm afraid I can't share the details with you just yet. However, I'll definitely do so one day. Regardless, my question remains. Are you willing to join me in my search? Do note that we may be facing a lot of troubles and dangers throughout the journey, so if you're reluctant, I understand and I won't try to force you to come along. I'm completely fine with going alone!" replied Gerald as he retained his serious gaze.

With how serious this affair was, Gerald wasn't even planning to make a joke to lighten up the mood.

Seeing that Gerald meant business, Nori and the others found themselves momentarily exchanging glances with each other.....I'm willing to join your team, Gerald! I'll follow you wherever you go!" declared Nori after a brief moment's thought.

"Count me in as well, Mr. Crawford!"

“We’re all willing to be part of this!”

Seeing that Nori had taken her stand, Zelig, Cyril, and Ray felt the urge to do the same.

Upon hearing their enthusiastic replies, Gerald couldn’t help but feel touched.

In all honesty, he had already factored in the chance that none of them would go with him. After all, the four people weren’t even long-time acquaintances of his. With that in mind, Gerald knew that it was already asking a lot for them to risk their lives just to help him.

Now that all of them were agreeing without so much as a second thought, however, it showed Gerald that they truly saw him as a friend. In fact, it also displayed how much they trusted in him.

“...Thank you... All of you. While I’d like to have a sentimental moment, there simply isn’t any time to waste. With that said, do hurry and start packing up! We leave in two hours!” declared Gerald.

Since time was of the essence, the faster they packed up their essentials and headed out, the sooner they could hopefully locate the Scintillating Gem.

While three hundred days may have sounded a lot, Gerald was well aware that the days they would spend searching for the gem would come and go extremely quickly. It certainly didn’t help that he didn’t even have any clues as to where the gem could be. With that in mind, the faster they acted, the higher the chances of them actually succeeding in finding the gem in time...

Regardless, after hearing Gerald’s order, all four of them hurried off to do as they were told.

Thankfully, exactly two hours later, all four of them regrouped with Gerald, fully prepared.



Following that, the five people made sure to bid goodbye to Sumeru and the four major great masters before finally leaving the Leicom Academy.

Immediately after leaving the academy, Gerald and the others made sure to stock up on food and drinks. Not knowing how long their journey was going to take, the more preparations they made, the better.

Once they got everything relevant that they could think of, their hunt for the gem officially began.

“...Speaking of which, where are we headed to first...?” asked Nori.

Since Gerald hadn't even told them where to begin looking, the four of them were feeling rightfully curious.

Upon hearing that, Gerald opened up the map and began inspecting it. It took him a while, but he eventually pointed at an area on the map before declaring, “We're going to start looking here! The South Wastelands!”

The South Wastelands was a desolate area located south of the Leicom Continent. Literally nobody inhabited that place, and few dared to venture there...

However, since Gerald had made his choice, Nori and the others simply agreed. With the location settled, all five of them immediately set off for the South Wastelands...

It took them half a day, but they eventually arrived at the border of the South Wastelands by evening.

Upon leaving the Leicom Continent, the five found that the place was as desolate as the rumors had claimed. No buildings and not even a single soul... The fact that evening was quickly turning to night definitely amplified the creepiness of the area.

Even so, the five simply continued walking on. After all, Gerald wasn't afraid of such things.

After walking for a while within the South Wastelands, the group came across a loess wall and decided that it was high time for them to take a temporary rest.

By that point, it was completely dark... A little too dark...

Raising a brow, Nori turned to look at the moon in the sky... Only to have a jaw drop.

"...H-hey! Look at the moon! Its shine stops right at the border of the Leicom Continent! The moon's rays can't reach us here at all!" shouted Nori as she pointed at the bright moon in the distance.

Realizing that what she had said was true, the other group members instantly found that fact to be rather mysterious and strange...The South Wastelands truly was an extraordinary place... To think that the moon's shine couldn't get in here! How utterly perplexing! Even so, it wasn't as though they could do anything about it.

With that in mind, Gerald and the others could only continue sitting there as they stared at the bright and beautiful moon...

Sometime later, Ray was scanning through the area when he suddenly shouted, "...Mr. Crawford, come quick! There's some kind of stone tablet here!"

Upon hearing that, Gerald and the other three immediately ran over to where Ray was. True to his words, all of them now saw an erect stone tablet before them...

Wiping the thick layer of dust off the tablet with his hand, Gerald noticed that a few words had been carved onto it.

Squinting his eyes to get a closer look, Gerald then declared, "The South Beast of the Wastelands!"

Immediately after Gerald read that out, an angered and ear-piercing roar could suddenly be heard coming from above them! As the roar continued resonating across the barren wastelands, an explosive sound was heard!

Following that, everyone could only watch wide-eyed as a massive black figure leaped out of the stone tablet!

Upon landing right before the five individuals, the creature's inhumanly strong landing caused the ground around them to quiver so much that it was difficult to even maintain their balance! What terrifying strength!

"W-what the hell is that thing...?" stuttered Nori as she looked at Gerald slightly fearfully.

"...I guess that's our South Beast!" replied Gerald as he stared at the humongous figure that somewhat resembled a lion.

To think that simply reading the text on the tablet would summon it! Judging from how angry it seemed, they must have awoken it from its nap!

"D\*mn it, we need a proper light source! We can't even see it properly now!" grumbled Zelig as he frowned. Since the moon's rays were unable to pierce into South Wastelands, their vision was severely limited to only a few feet in front of them!

"Don't worry, I have a solution!" replied Gerald as he summoned his talisman paper and brush from his storage ring.

After swiftly painting a talisman, he then tossed it into the air, prompting the talismans to burst into a huge ball of fire!

Under the newly illuminated light source, everyone could now see the beast before them in full detail. With a huge, golden mane, the massive male lion's open jaws exposed its extremely sharp teeth for all to see. Fuming in anger, the lion continued glaring with its rage-filled eyes at all five of them... Though it didn't appear to be in an attacking stance.

Finding that fact to be slightly puzzling, Zelig was prompted to ask, "...Why... isn't it attacking us...?"

To everyone's dismay, the second he said that, the lion instantly began rushing toward them!

"You and your big mouth!" grumbled Cyril.

"All of you, hurry and run! I'll deal with it!" Ordered Gerald as he bolted toward the lion with lightning speed.

Continuing to roar as it charged straight for Gerald, the lion then leaped, clearly trying to slam its weight down on the incoming youth!

Naturally, Gerald wasn't about to grant it that opportunity!

Sliding right under the lion, Gerald expertly struck the beast's belly with his palm, instantly stunning it and sending the oversized lion flying!

Watching as it soared quite a distance away, Gerald had already summarized that though the lion was massive, it was bogged down by its weight. With that in mind, there was no way it was ever going to be able to match Gerald's speed.

Regardless, Gerald wasn't particularly trying to end the lion's life. On the contrary, he was thinking of taming it. After all, Gerald was certainly not against the idea of having such a large lion under his control.

Moving back to the lion, the second it hit the ground, it ended up rolling a few times before finally coming to a stop. Shaking its body as it crawled back to its feet, it then turned to face Gerald, glaring and growling fiercely at him.

Though it was a beast, it wasn't stupid. It was well aware that it wasn't going to be able to take on Gerald, which was why it was refraining from rashly attacking him again.

Seeing that, Gerald then took a few steps forward before pointing at the lion and shouting, "You have two choices. The first is to come along with me and obediently allow me to be your master. If you refuse, the only other choice you have is to get killed, cooked, then eaten! Just so you know, I've never tasted lion before, and I'm quite keen on trying! Regardless, state your choice!"

Being a divine beast, the supernatural lion could naturally understand human speech. With that in mind, upon hearing Gerald's proposal, the lion appeared to calm down a bit, seemingly falling deep into thought...

After a brief moment, the lion emitted a low growl.

"Are you serious? You'd rather get eaten than be under my control? Surely you aren't stupid enough to believe that you can even come close to defeating me!" taunted Gerald as he snorted contemptuously at the lion's behavior.

Quite frankly, if he had wanted to end the lion's life, Gerald could've done so extremely easily. Giving the lion a choice to be under him was already Gerald's way of showing mercy.

Still, if the lion was going to continue being stubborn, Gerald truly saw no reason to keep it alive. He would rather just deal with it decisively.

Either way, in response, the lion simply sassily lay on its belly before turning to look to the side with a grunt, completely refusing to even look at Gerald. How arrogant!

“Aww... Did I piss off the princess?” scoffed Gerald, seeing how childishly the lion was behaving.

All of a sudden, something flew out from Gerald’s direction before landing right in front of the lion! Upon seeing it, the lion instantly whimpered as it got to its feet and lowered its head before the tiny figure...

Of course, the figure in question was none other than the small green dragon!

Now appearing to be much tamer, it was evident that the lion was feeling intimidated by the tiny dragon. To think that the aggressive beast would be this terrified of a mere baby! It was shocking to the group of five, to say the least. Who would’ve guessed that the tiny green dragon would actually be powerful enough to scare that large lion!

“That dragon must have an immensely prestigious identity! After all, it’s able to intimidate that lion despite being so tiny!” said Ray as he walked toward Gerald’s side.

Following that, they watched as the dragon let out a tiny cry before flying back to Gerald, staring at him while swaying its body. Realizing that it was trying to ask him for something, Gerald easily put two and two together.

Shaking his head, Gerald could only say in resignation, “I get it, you want a Heaven’s apple, don’t you? Fine, I’ll give one to you!”

With that, Gerald retrieved a single Heaven’s apple from his storage ring before handing it to the dragon.

However, the dragon didn’t appear to be content with only a single apple. Swaying its body even more, the dragon then continually alternated its gaze between Gerald and the lion.

Understanding that the dragon wanted him to give the lion a Heaven's apple as well, Gerald was slightly hesitant. Even so, he had come to adore the baby dragon. With that in mind, in the end, he couldn't help but hand a second apple to it.

Satisfied, the small dragon—that was holding the two apples within its jaws—then quickly flew over to the lion. After placing an apple right before the lion, the dragon then swallowed its own apple with a single gulp.

Seeing that, the lion raised a brow before alternating its gaze between Gerald and the apple in front of it. Upon confirming that nothing was amiss, the lion quickly swallowed the apple whole, seemingly worried that someone would steal the apple from it.

The second it ate the apple, the lion instantly appeared much happier. Aside from its temperament clearly becoming much gentler, the lion also began shrinking to about the same size as Gerald and the others.

Following that, the lion then walked up to Gerald before lying down and rubbing its cheek against his leg. It was evident that this was its way of showing its submission to him.

"So I could've bribed you over with just a single Heaven's apple? If I had known, I wouldn't have wasted my energy trying to fight you in the first place!" said Gerald with a chuckle seeing how differently the lion was now behaving toward him.

Still, now that the lion was obedient to him, it meant that he had a new pet to take care of. With that in mind, Gerald then took another two Heaven's apples out to feed his pets.

It was at that moment when he remembered how precious Heaven's apples were. It pained him slightly to know that he was going to lose even more apples at a faster rate now.

Gerald could only hope that the lion didn't need to eat as many Heaven's apples as the baby dragon did. If that wasn't the case, then his apple supply would surely deplete to nothing soon enough...

“If I may, was what you just fed the lion the legendary Heaven’s apple, Mr. Crawford?” asked Ray as he looked at Gerald in surprise.

Ray had heard about the legendary Heaven’s apple for a long time now, and it certainly hadn’t occurred to him that Gerald would actually possess the holy fruit. Truth be told, it made him jealous that Gerald had access to such resources.

Regardless, Gerald simply smiled in response as he replied, “Bingo!”

Now that they knew about his stash of Heaven’s apples, Gerald felt the need to share them among his companions. With that, he retrieved four more apples and handed them to Nori and the others.

“Go on, have one each! With any luck, your strength could improve after ingesting them!” added Gerald.

Since the four of them were now good friends of his and they were even willing to follow him in his search for the Scintillating Gem, Gerald felt that it was only right for them to be rewarded with the Heaven’s apples.

Upon seeing Gerald’s generosity, the delighted four quickly took an apple each and began munching down on them.

After consuming them, the group of four instantly made breakthroughs in their strength!

Zelig finally managed to enter the Sage Realm while Nori was able to enter the Second-soul-rank of the Sage realm. Cyril himself landed in the Fourth-soul-rank of the Sage realm while Ray entered the Sage realm’s Eight-soul-rank...Regardless, after the lion was tamed, the rest of the night was rather quiet and uneventful. With that in mind, Gerald and the four others were well-rested by the time morning came.



Since the South Wastelands wasn't exactly an area one could call safe, the group of five decided to set off as early as possible. Naturally, Gerald made sure to open the map first to find out where they were headed next before actually starting their journey.

Shortly after, he declared that they were headed to Dragonblood City next. With any luck, they'd be able to find the gem there...

There were many rumors surrounding the ancient Dragonblood City, the most famous one being about the existence of an ancient Blood Dragon within the city's grounds. Within said dragon, was supposedly an object known as the Dragonblood Ball, and whoever managed to obtain the item was said to be able to gain the powers of the Blood Dragon.

While the tale was certainly compelling, Gerald wasn't going there in search of the Dragonblood Ball. He was strictly going after the Scintillating Gem, which was why he showed little interest in obtaining the Dragonblood Ball.

Either way, Gerald and his group of friends finally arrived at Dragonblood City after walking the entire morning.

However, just as they were entering the city's grounds, the group of five watched as several aggressive-looking people began riding their horses past the city's gates! Had it not been for their quick reactions, they'd surely have ended up getting trampled by those horses!

Staring at the riders, each of them seemed to have immensely murderous auras which only served to amplify how demonic those people were. While terrifying, it certainly set up the premise that they weren't ordinary people who could be trifled with.

Regardless, the fact that they had just barely avoided getting hurt prompted Zelig to scowl, "Who the hell were those brutes?!"

Upon hearing that question, Ray instantly replied, "They're from the Hulkerioic Union!"

As everyone turned to look at Ray—unsure how he even knew about such a group—Gerald couldn't help but ask, "The Hulkerioic Union...?"

Understanding that Gerald and the others wouldn't know about the Hulkerioic Union since they were new to the Leicom Continent, Ray then explained, "They're a powerful force within Dragonblood City..."

"...I see. Call it a gut feeling, but I feel like they aren't very nice people!" replied Gerald in a decisive tone.

Rei simply shrugged without saying another word, his silence a clear sign that what Gerald had stated was right.

True enough, the Hulkerioic Union was infamous for doing all kinds of outrageous and lawbreaking activities within Dragonblood City. The fact that the force was so strong only served to make its members more violent during their rampant acts of savagery.

With that in mind, locals of the city knew that it was best to just stay away from them. After all, offending them would only bring unnecessary trouble to themselves...

Either way, the group then continued strolling around Dragonblood City. The city, for one, was vastly different compared to the area around Leicom Academy...

As they were walking on, the group suddenly heard a woman screaming!

After exchanging glances with each other, all five of them then hurried over to the source of the sound...

By the time they got there, they witnessed four men dragging a young woman into an alleyway! Some of them had even begun tearing her clothes off! To think that such heinous activities would occur, even in broad daylight!

During times like these, someone needed to play the role of a white knight. Thankfully enough, Gerald was best at doing that.

With that, the group immediately charged into the alleyway together...

By the time they got to the mouth of the alley, the group was just in time to see the four men shredding the woman's clothes to bits! What savages!

Witnessing that, everyone was instantly infuriated!

Gerald hated such people with a passion, and he couldn't help but point at the assailants before roaring, "Cease that at once!"

Upon hearing Gerald's shouts, the men simply raised their brows as they turned to glare at the youth.

"Scram, you meddlesome brat! This doesn't concern you!" scowled one of the men.

"You better do as he says or I'll end you with a single slice!" growled another as he unsheathed his long sword to scare Gerald and his party members away.

"You b\*stards are doing such heinous crimes against this woman in broad daylight! It'd be a sin to not take care of scum like you!" retorted Gerald, his expression contorted by his fury.

"What's that? I don't think you know who you're dealing with, kid! We're from the Hulkerotic Union, you know?! Offend us anymore and you won't be leaving this city alive!" scoffed the man wielding the sword.

Sneering in response, Gerald simply rebuked, "Who you are doesn't matter to me! I'm only going to

warn you once so listen up! If you know what's best for you, release that woman! Otherwise, don't blame me for your deaths!"

Seeing how unafraid and daring Gerald was, the four assailants were greatly infuriated. To think that this young man would actually dare to threaten them! He wasn't even intimidated by the fact that they were part of the Hulkerioic Union!

"D\*mn this rude kid! Fine, if you want to die so much, be our guest!" roared another man from that group as the other three drew their long swords as well!

As the group of four charged straight for Gerald's group, Gerald calmly turned to face his own party before instructing, "Don't move a muscle. I'm dealing with them personally!"

His party naturally didn't have any objections to that. After all, they each knew how strong he was. The opposing party was going to be a piece of cake for him.

Following that, Nori and the others were able to catch a momentary glimpse of how frigid Gerald's gaze became as he turned back to face the incoming attackers.

Not even making a move until they were inches away from him, Gerald simply waited patiently for them to swing their swords... But when their blades came down, Gerald was no longer before them!

Utterly shocked by that, they were just about to start looking for him when Gerald suddenly reappeared behind them! However, this time, Gerald already had his aurablade drawn!

With a swift swipe, there was momentary silence... and the next thing everyone knew, blood was already gushing out of the four assailants' exposed necks!

With a single move, Gerald had decapitated all four of them with barely any effort needed. Since Gerald had already entered the Avatar Realm, there was simply too large a gap between their strength levels...

Regardless, now that the scum was dealt with, Gerald walked over to the young woman before helping her up. Retrieving a coat from his storage ring, he then placed it on her.

Now feeling much warmer and pleased with how considerate Gerald was being, the woman was compelled to declare, “Thank you, my benefactor...! I... I don’t have much to offer, but I’m willing to follow you till the ends of the earth!”

Upon hearing that she was willing to be under him, Gerald simply revealed a gentle smile before replying, “There’s no need for all that. If you really wish to thank me, then be more careful from now on. Also, take these gold coins. Make sure you leave this place safely with them!”

After saying that, Gerald then took a handful of gold coins from his storage ring before handing them to the woman. Once that was said, Gerald and the others then turned to leave...

Staring as they slowly walked off in the distance, it was quite a while later before the woman clutched the gold coins in her hands before leaving as well.

Fast forward to evening, Gerald and the others had managed to find a suitable hotel to stay the night in.

Since all five of them were going to share a room tonight, everyone began relaxing once they were done unpacking.

After a short while, Ray—who was sitting on one of the beds by this point—couldn’t help but say, “...Honestly, Mr. Crawford, I think we should leave Dragonblood City as soon as possible. After all, the Hulkerioic Union is definitely coming after our heads after what we’ve done!”

Since the Hulkerioic Union was so powerful in Dragonblood City, it was only natural that they would quickly realize that four of their disciples had been slaughtered, and it was exactly because of that that Ray was so worried.

Understanding that it would be disadvantageous for them to linger too long within enemy territory, Gerald then nodded as he replied, "I see your point. We'll just stay here for the night and leave the city early tomorrow morning then!"

Gerald himself didn't want to waste too much time and energy on the Hulkerioic Union. After all, getting entangled with that group would certainly delay his important mission. With that in mind, the sooner they left this place, the better their chances of avoiding trouble.

At that moment, the shattering of glass could be heard within the Hulkerioic Union's lair...

The sound had stemmed from a now shattered teacup that had been thrown to the ground by Tiger Layfield, the master of the Hulkerioic Union.

Glaring at the porcelain shards lying atop the spilled tea, Tiger gritted his teeth before ferally roaring, "How dare they kill four disciples of my union! I'm not letting them off if it's the last thing I do!"

"From what we've gathered, the person in charge of killing our men is rather young! He also has four companions with him! If my sources are correct, then they should still be in Dragonblood City!" reported a scarfed man who went by Xuio Curtice as he looked at Tiger. He was the second master of the Hulkerioic Union.

Upon hearing that, Tiger then growled, "I see! Send our men out immediately to search every corner of Dragonblood City! I want the culprits brought back to me, dead or alive! Nobody messes with the Hulkerioic Union and gets away with it!"

None in the city had ever dared to piss off those from the Hulkerioic Union. Now that four of the union's disciples had been murdered, it definitely felt like a direct challenge of authority, at least to Tiger. It certainly explained why he was so angered.

Whatever the case was, Xuio found no issue with Tiger's command. He knew better than to further piss

off the already furious Tiger. With that in mind, he then respectfully excused himself before leaving the hall. The night was definitely going to be a chaotic one...

After gathering several of the union's men, Xuio led all of them around Dragonblood City. Riding atop horses to hasten their hunt, the men searched every household from top to bottom, with or without permission from the residents living there.

With every corner of the city brightly lit, the locals weren't the only ones affected by the chaos. Outsiders of the city, in particular, were mercilessly interrogated and mistreated by those from the Hulkerioic Union. They were going to find Gerald and his party no matter what!

Due to all the hullabaloo outside, Gerald and the others—who were already asleep in their room by this point—were naturally awoken.

Peeking out the window, Ray was immediately greeted by the sight of a group of people thoroughly inspecting the area.

Noticing how pale Ray had gone, Gerald was prompted to ask, "What's wrong?"

"I-it's the people of the Hulkerioic Union...! They're most probably here for you!" replied Ray as he turned to face Gerald.

"H-huh...? Then... What should we do now...?" Upon seeing how worried Nori was when she asked that question, Gerald couldn't help but frown. To think that those from the Hulkerioic Union would be this quick to act.

After a brief pause, Gerald then obeyed, "...Pack up. We're heading up to the roof for now!"

Upon hearing that, the others quickly did as they were instructed. Shortly after, all five of them then leaped onto the roof from the hotel's window. The plan now was to lie down there and observe how the

situation played out...

It was barely even seconds after they had gotten onto the roof when Xuio and his men began barging into the hotel.

After interrogating the hotel's owner, Xuio learned that the ones they were hunting for were here. With that, Xuio instantly ordered the hotel owner to lead them to Gerald's room.

Upon arriving at the door, Xuio kicked it open with a loud 'bang' before instructing his men to rush in!

However, they quickly realized that the room was deserted!

Raising a brow, Xuio then glared at the hotel owner before growling, "Where are they? You said they were staying the night here, didn't you?"

"I-I have no idea! The five of them really are staying in this room...! I assure you that none of them left through the front door either, Mr. Curtice! Please, believe me!" whimpered the hotel owner as he looked fearfully at Xuio.

Seeing how terrified the hotel owner was, Xuio was pretty sure that he wouldn't dare lie to him. Noticing the open window, he then looked out before shouting, "...They must have escaped through the window! We must pursue them immediately!"

With that, Xuio and his men rushed out and quickly rode their horses away from the hotel.

Unfortunately for them, Gerald and his party had never left the hotel. They were on the roof this entire time!

After making sure that Xuio and his men had left, Gerald and the others then came down from the roof



and re-entered their room through the window.

The second they got inside, they saw the hotel owner standing there in a daze.

Surprised to see the hotel owner in such a terrified state, Gerald was instantly prompted to walk over to him.

However, the second the hotel owner saw him closing in, he quickly took a few steps back before running over to a corner and curling up before whimpering, "P-please sir...! Please don't kill me! I don't know anything!"

"...Kill? Boss, I'm thinking of no such thing! I was just walking toward you to tell you not to tell anyone else that we're still here! Also, take this. Consider it to be extra compensation!" replied Gerald as he took out a handful of gold coins before handing them to the hotel owner.

As the saying went, the most dangerous places were usually also the safest, and that saying definitely applied now. Since Xuio had already raided the place, he and his men definitely didn't have any reason to return. With that in mind, Gerald and his party could continue hiding here, at least for the moment.

Regardless, after realizing that Gerald wasn't after his life, the hotel owner gladly agreed with his wish. Seeing that Gerald was even handing him such a large sum of money, that pretty much sealed the deal that he wasn't going to be making things difficult for Gerald any time soon.

After the hotel owner left, Gerald and his party then remained hiding there for an entire day.

It was only after the upheaval died down on the second day when the group of five dared to leave the hotel...

The second they did, however, they were instantly greeted by a female voice calling out, "My benefactor!"

Turning to face the source of the voice, the group realized that it was the woman Gerald had saved the other day!

“Why are you still in the city?” asked Gerald with a slightly raised brow.

“Putting that aside, I know you’re in trouble, benefactor! With that in mind, please come with me! I’ll lead you to a safe place where they definitely won’t be able to find you!” replied the woman with a serious expression on her face.

Exchanging glances with each other, all of them appeared to unanimously believe in her. With that in mind, the party of five then began following her lead...

After walking for quite a while, the party suddenly heard someone call out, “Hmm? If it isn’t Miss Zorn!”

Upon hearing that, all six of them stopped in their tracks before turning to look at who had said that...

“...Oh, it’s you. To what do I owe this pleasure, young master of the Wroe family?” replied the woman with a snort.

Just from her reply alone, it was evident that she didn’t have a good impression of the youth. Gerald and the others didn’t have a hard time imagining why. After all, a single glance was all it took for them to register that he was a hedonistic child who had rich parents.

The youth went by Quaan Wroe, and just as the woman had said, he was the young master of the Wroe family. The Wroes themselves were famous for their strength, particularly within Dragonblood City.

From what Gerald could see, Quaan had already entered the Third-soul-rank within the Sage Realm, which definitely proved that the Wroe family’s strength was no exaggeration.

“Oh, don’t be so cold, Miss Zorn! Regardless, I heard that your elder sister was defeated in that martial arts competition. I guess that just shows how incapable the Zorns are now! Adding that to the fact that you don’t even possess any martial arts skills, I guess it’s fair to say that you’re the most humiliating aspect of your family!” mocked Quaan, his words filled with contempt.

The woman’s true name was Meilani Zorn, and she was the second daughter in the Zorn family. As for her sister, she went by Juno, and she had gotten to the Second-soul-rank in the Sage Realm.

True to Quaan’s words, Meilani didn’t have any martial arts skills. As a result, her family never had a good impression of her, causing her sister to usually be the prioritized one between the two.

“It appears that my sister hasn’t taught you a lesson for a bit too long, seeing that you’re free enough to wait around just for the sake of mocking me!” grumbled Meilani as she glared at the cocky person.

Laughing in response, Quaan then replied, “You misunderstand me, Meilani! Why on earth would I mock you? No, I’m just here to ask who defeated your elder sister! You know, just in case I bump into them on the streets! If I do, I’ll surely do your sister justice by teaching them a good lesson!”

Seeing how shamelessly Quaan was bragging, Gerald couldn’t help but chuckle in his mind. How naïve and amusing for a person who’s only in the Third-soul-rank of the Sage Realm to be this cocky!

“...Hmm? You aren’t pulling my leg are you?” asked Meilani, her mood switching from grumpy to curious in a flash. If one paid close enough attention, they would be able to see the gears in Meilani’s head grinding...

“But of course! I’m a man of my word, after all! If I ever catch that person, they’re as good as dead!” replied Quaan confidently as he patted his chest before Meilani.

Upon hearing that, Meilani turned to look at Gerald for a moment... before finally saying, “Well, if you say so! The person you’re looking for is right here!”

Watching as Meilani then pointed at Gerald, Quaan found himself momentarily stupefied. To think that a person as unnoteworthy-looking as Gerald would be the culprit!

Gerald himself was equally as stunned as he thought, 'Who the hell even is her sister? Don't use me as an excuse!'

"You're kidding, right, Meilani? As if this scrawny guy could ever beat your sister!" replied Quaan as he briefly looked at Gerald rather disdainfully before turning back to look at Meilani.

"As if I'd joke about such a serious matter! Though, seeing how hesitant you're being, I wonder if you're just afraid..." taunted Meilani.

Being as naïve as he was, Quaan instantly took the bait. Grumbling angrily, Quaan then pointed at Gerald before yelling, "You and me, one-on-one! Do you accept my challenge?!"

"You sure?" asked Gerald in a casual tone.

"Of course, I am! Unless you're too chicken to accept!" scoffed Quaan.

"Oh no, I'm just worried that you'll lose a bit too terribly for your taste!" replied Gerald calmly in a confident tone.

Still, to think that Meilani would actually give him trouble...The way things were going, it was clear that he wouldn't be able to easily walk out of this anyway.

Before Gerald could say anything else, Meilani secretly winked at him before whispering, "Please teach him a lesson for me, Gerald! This guy just loves pestering me!"

“Allow me to remind you that I’m not your hired thug!”

“I’m sorry if I made it sound that way, but please, please help me out...! Don’t worry, if anything happens, I’ll be sure to take responsibility for it!” pleaded Meilani as she made puppy dog eyes.

Hearing that, Gerald could only sigh as he agreed to her request.

“Hey kid, you must’ve cheated to defeat Juno, right? You couldn’t possibly have taken her down any way else! With that in mind, I hope you’re ready to receive a good pummelling!” scoffed Quaan as he pointed confidently at Gerald.

Before Gerald could even reply, Quaan began dashing toward him!

However, Quaan was so pitifully slow that Gerald couldn’t help but feel sorry for him. Compared to Meilani—who didn’t even have any martial arts training—, Quaan was probably half as slow as she was!

Now seeing the underwhelming extent of Quaan’s strength, Gerald felt that it was disdainful to even make a move on the cocky youth. Even so, since things had come to this, he still needed to defeat Quaan in the end.

While he did feel slightly sorry for the weakling, Gerald wasn’t against the idea of having a bit of fun with Quaan first before defeating him.

Regardless, Gerald easily dodged Quaan’s punch just by moving slightly to the side.

Seeing that his attack missed, Quaan instantly responded with a clawing attack!

Naturally, Gerald was quick to respond, and he raised his arm to block Quaan’s attack!

When Quaan's attack managed to shred Gerald's sleeve to pieces, Gerald found himself slightly surprised. Upon closer inspection, the attack appeared to be the Dragon Claw... So even someone like Quaan was able to use that technique!

"Not bad... So, you've mastered the Dragon Claw attack! Now things are getting slightly interesting!" said Gerald as he took a step back while looking at Quaan with a devilish smile.

"So, this is the extent of your power, kid? Hah! I really have no clue how you even managed to take Juno down!" scoffed Quaan in return, still brimming with confidence. After all, to him, Gerald had no way of fighting back at all.

Meilani, on the other hand, knew exactly what was going on in Gerald's mind. Standing at the side, she could easily tell that Gerald was simply toying around with Quaan. With how strong Gerald was, using actual skills on Quaan would only be a waste of energy!

"Now, now, you haven't even defeated me yet! Till you do, don't you think it's a bit shameless to be so overconfident?" retorted Gerald, not even finding the need to be angry toward such a weak person.

"Hah! Fine, then! Here comes your finishing blow!" declared Quaan before leaping and aiming a kick right for Gerald!

In response, however, the calm Gerald simply kicked the incoming youth right in the side!

Unable to even block the attack in time, Quaan found himself flying several dozen feet away!

Hitting the ground extremely forcefully, Quaan couldn't even find the energy to crawl back up. That just showed how truly powerful Gerald's simple kick had been...

The delighted Meilani couldn't help but smile when she saw Quaan getting destroyed like that. To her, he was finally reaping what he sowed, and he deserved all that had just happened to him.

Regardless, what happened to him next was of little concern to her. With that in mind, Meilani then led Gerald and the others away from there...

It wasn't too long after they left when Quaan—who had fainted from all the pain—slowly regained his consciousness...

Upon crawling to his knees, he instantly placed his hand against his chest when he felt an acute pain there! It appeared that he had suffered some internal injuries...

Looking around to see where Meilani and Gerald were, he quickly realized that they were long gone. With another surge of excruciating pain, Quaan was unable to remain conscious and ended up flopping to the ground again, completely devoid of energy...

Shortly after, Gerald and his party arrived at the Zorn family's residence under Meilani's guide.

"I can't believe how mean you were earlier, Gerald! You could've clearly taken him out much earlier but you made sure to humiliate him first!" teased Meilani.

"Well excuse me, princess... You're the one who put me in that position in the first place! I can't just end a duel within seconds! Also, while we're on the topic, don't use me to get things done ever again..." grumbled Gerald slightly awkwardly.

He particularly made sure to make this clear so that Meilani wouldn't keep doing the same thing. After all, if she continued using him like she just had, then Gerald was fairly certain that it wouldn't take her long to land him in even more troublesome affairs.

Aside from the Hulkeroic Union, he now had Quaan as an enemy as well. Gerald was simply facing

dilemma after dilemma...

Either way, after hearing that, Meilani quickly nodded before replying, "Got it! Don't worry, I just wanted to get rid of him earlier! I promise that there won't be another time!"

Honestly, she was already very pleased that Gerald was willing to help her teach Quaan a lesson in the first place.

Regardless, while Gerald and the others were now at the Zorn family's residence, Quaan himself was soon found by those under him. After being carried to the Wroe family's residence, it was quickly made evident that Quaan's martial arts skills had been sealed. With even his motor functions in shambles, Quaan was unable to move on his own anymore...

Fast forward to a few days later, three elderly men donning long robes could be seen standing around Quaan's bed in the dead of night...

Quaan had remained lying in bed ever since his duel with Gerald ruined him. The fact that he needed help from his servants to do even the most basic of daily activities such as drinking, eating, and even using the washroom, brought immense humiliation to him.

Even so, Quid Wroe wasn't hesitant in the slightest to spend massive amounts of money to cure his son. With that in mind, he had paid no small sum to hire the three old men from Glenpawa Mountain—who each had extraordinary martial arts skills—to hopefully help his son recover...

Either way, after sitting by Quaan's side for a while to check his condition, one of the elderly men eventually said, "...Hmm... Young Master Wroe's condition is really serious!"

"How serious are we talking about here, Mr. Quarles?" asked Quid in a worried tone.

As Quid had stated, the old person went by Lidorn Quarles, and he had already entered the Third rank in



the Avatar Realm.

“Extremely, Master Wroe. After all, from the injuries sustained alone, I can already tell that the person who did this to him was immensely strong. The assailant’s attack was both fierce and decisive, and with how much damage that precise strike did, I’m afraid it won’t be easy to cure the young master,” replied Lidorn as he shook his head and sighed in resignation.

Upon hearing that, Quid couldn’t help but frown as anger surged through him.

Well, this was just perfect! Now that he knew that the assailant was immensely powerful, Quid definitely wasn’t going to be able to take revenge on his son’s behalf!

It certainly didn’t help that the Zorns were the only true rivals of the Wroe family in Dragonblood City. With his son’s condition like this, falling out with the Zorns was the last thing he wanted at the moment.

However, Quid had paid close attention to Lidorn’s choice of words earlier. Hoping for a silver lining, he then asked, “...You said curing him would be difficult... However, that means he can still be cured, correct?”

Hearing that, Lidorn turned to look at Quid before nodding slowly...“Indeed. While curing a person whose martial arts skills have been annihilated has been immensely difficult from the dawn of time, there is a way to get it done... Your son can definitely be healed if we manage to obtain an ancient secret medicine called the Guddegella! Once the young master ingests it, he’ll surely be able to regain the ability to use martial arts!” explained Quid.

“And how do I obtain this medicine?” asked Quid eagerly.

Of course, obtaining such precious medicine was never going to be easy.

“Well, according to the legend, the Guddegella can be found at the crisscross of vast rivers and streams

in the Treholm Highlands. With that said, it's not easily obtained. As proof of that, the Guddegella has only been successfully acquired twice throughout history!" replied Lidorn.

While that was certainly disheartening to hear, it was better than having no cure at all. At the very least there existed a chance for his son to function normally again...

"Don't you worry, Mr. Quarles! I'll definitely obtain the Guddegella one way or another!" declared Quid as he confidently looked at Lidorn.

"Very well, then. Speaking of which, I wonder if the person who wounded Young Master Wroe is still within Dragoblood City... Since we're now here anyway, we may as well seek revenge on behalf of your son!" said Lidorn.

Since Quid had paid them so well, the least they could do was seek revenge for his son's behalf.

Naturally, Quid was instantly overjoyed to hear that. Gerald and his party were definitely going to meet a terrible end now that these three were stepping in!

Even so, Quid was prompted to say, "...Are you sure, Mr. Quarles? You said it yourself that the kid was extremely strong!"

Laughing in response, Lidorn then confidently replied, "Worry not. With our powers combined, the three of us will definitely be able to take him on! Now, without further ado, we'll be on our way to seek revenge on behalf of Young Master Wroe! Till we meet again!"

Before Quid could even reply, all three of the elderly men had already leaped into the shadows, their destination the Wroe family's residence...

Meanwhile, Gerald and Meilani were sitting in the back garden of the Wroe family's home. Meilani herself seemed particularly happy to be able to sit and talk idly like this with Gerald. After all, she had

started developing feelings for him ever since he saved her...

Regardless, Gerald and his party members had remained safe with the Zorn family's residence this entire time since Meilani's family was quite influential and powerful within Dragonblood City. With that in mind, nobody dared to behave rashly toward them in fear of offending the Zorns.

Either way, as Meilani continued talking happily, Gerald's keen senses suddenly detected a sword being thrown toward them!

"Careful!" shouted Gerald as he immediately tugged Meilani toward him, allowing both of them to dodge the incoming sword!

Staring at the sword that was now lodged in the ground, both of them instantly grew vigilant.

As they were scanning the area, the duo witnessed as three people donning grey robes leaped over the fence before landing right in front of Gerald and Meilani.

Glaring at Gerald, Lidorn shouted, "I'm finishing you off today, kid!"

"Who even are you? I don't remember bearing any grudges against you! What's your purpose of killing me?" retorted Gerald as he frowned.

"Cut the cr\*p and just give up your life already!" scoffed Lidorn as he snorted, unwilling to reveal his identity... "Go seek shelter, Meilani! I'll deal with them!" instructed Gerald.

Understanding that staying here would only give Gerald more trouble—since she didn't know any martial arts—, Meilani simply nodded before running off. At the very least, she could look for help...

Once he was sure that she had left, Gerald turned to look at the three elderly men again... and with that,

their battle commenced!

Facing an onslaught of attacks from three people who had already entered the Avatar Realm, it quickly became increasingly strenuous for Gerald to deal with them. With that in mind, Gerald could only stall for time and look for gaps for him to strike...

Eventually, however, three on one was a little too much for him, and Lidorn finally managed to land a blow on Gerald!

Upon impact, Gerald was instantly flung backward as blood spurted out of his mouth! Landing hard on the ground, Gerald was well aware that Lidorn's strike had undoubtedly caused massive damage to his inner breathing shield.

Staring at Gerald's pathetic state, Lidorn then sneered, "To think that you've managed to enter the Avatar Realm at your age, kid! While you truly are a martial arts genius, you've unfortunately offended someone you shouldn't have! With that said, it's a pity, but your life ends today!"

Lidorn really meant it when he said that. After all, few were able to enter the Avatar Realm at Gerald's age. Those who made it to this realm were usually elders who had trained hard for many, many years... What a pity that this martial arts genius had to go...

Shaking the thought off, Lidorn then raised his sword, aiming it at Gerald...

Upon seeing that, Gerald knew he was done for. With that, he simply closed his eyes tight, awaiting death.

However, just seconds before the sword pierced his heart, Gerald suddenly remembered the silk bag that Sumeru had given him. With that, he immediately grabbed the silk bag and opened it!

Immediately after Gerald did that, the bag released a golden light that lit up the entire back garden! Due

to how blinding it was, Lidorn and the other two elders were forced to back away a little since they couldn't see a thing.

The next thing everyone knew, a figure could be seen leaping off the roof... and landing right between the two parties.

Before Lidorn could even react, he was greeted by a swift force palm from the figure!

Watching as Lidorn flew backward, Gerald was overjoyed when he realized that the person before him was none other than Sumeru!

"M-master...!" called out Gerald in a weak voice before finally blacking out.

Seeing the terrible state his beloved student was in, Sumeru was instantly infuriated!

Leaping back to his initial position, Lidorn then glared at Sumeru before scoffing, "I'm assuming you're that kid's master! Since you've decided to step in, we'll just get rid of you first!"

With that said, all three of them began charging toward Sumeru!

Sumeru, however, didn't budge from his spot. Instead, he simply stood there extremely calmly as he unsheathed his sword...

And with an expressionless face, he drew the rest of his blade out in a flash of an eye. Sumeru's slash was so fast that Lidorn and his men didn't even know what he had done...

Until they felt blood trickling down their necks.

Eyes widened as they stared at Sumeru, all three of them held onto their necks before finally falling lifelessly to the ground...

Lying in the slowly growing puddle of blood, none of them could have anticipated that Sumeru would be this strong...! To think that it had barely taken him a second to finish them off!

Sumeru himself simply growled at the three corpses. They never had a chance against him...It was around then when Meilani returned to the scene together with Nori and the others.

Upon realizing that Gerald's master had killed off the three elderly assailants, Meilani was instantly shocked. To think that he was this powerful... Having such a strong master, it now made sense why Gerald was able to be as strong as he currently was!

Quickly snapping out of it and returning her attention to Gerald, Meilani then rushed over to the injured youth while calling out, "Gerald...!"

Call as she might, Gerald was already unconscious...

With the three old men dealt with, Sumeru then sheathed his sword before heading over to Gerald's side and inspecting his wounds.

"...His inner breathing structure is in a mess... I need to treat him immediately!" declared Sumeru after checking for Gerald's pulse through the youth's wrist.

Following that, he lifted Gerald in his arms and ran—under Meilani's guidance—all the way to Gerald's room.

After placing the unconscious Gerald on his bed, Sumeru then yelled, "All of you, get out! Don't bother me as I cure his wounds!"

Though Meilani wanted to stay, in the end, she quickly gave up trying to protest.

As Meilani closed the door behind her and leaned against it—planning to wait there till Gerald’s master was done curing him—, she watched as her father rushed toward her.

“What on earth happened, Meilani?” asked Yeurquin Zorn in an anxious tone.

“Three powerful people suddenly attacked us, declaring that they wanted to kill Gerald! While he’s terribly injured, he’s thankfully still alive!” explained Meilani while looking at her father.

“What? How preposterous! To think that someone would dare hurt our family’s benefactor, and within our residence no less! I must get to the bottom of this!” growled Yeurquin.

While he was greatly angered, the priority now was still to ensure that Gerald’s injuries were successfully cured. Meilani was even more anxious about that than he was, and she truly hoped that Gerald would turn out fine in the end...

“...Speaking of which, where is Gerald? And what’s his condition?” asked Yeurquin as he looked at his daughter.

“...Well... Gerald’s master is currently treating his injuries...” mumbled Meilani before dragging her father a little further from the door.

Raising a slight brow, Yeurquin couldn’t help but ask, “...What’s wrong, Meilani? Why so secretive?”

“W-well, you see, Gerald’s master is extremely powerful! From how clean the cuts were on the corpses, it’s evident that he killed all three of those mighty assailants with a single slash!” whispered Meilani as she looked at her father in her bewilderment.

“...And? Is that why you’re being so secretive? My child, you, of all people, should know how strong Gerald is. With that in mind, his master must definitely be stronger than him!” replied Yeurquin in a calm tone.

Yeurquin had caught a glimpse of Sumeru earlier—as the dean was rushing to bring Gerald to his room—, and even from that moment, he could already tell that Sumeru was an extraordinary person.

Now that he realized that Sumeru was Gerald’s master, Yeurquin was able to confirm that assumption. To him, Sumeru was the kind of person who wouldn’t take action if others could do so. After all, a single move from Sumeru would certainly amaze the world...

His train of thought was cut short when he heard Meilani ask, “Say, do you think Gerald’s master would take me as his disciple as well, dad...?”

Raising a brow, Yeurquin then retorted, “As if he’d do that, Meilani! You can’t just ask him to be your master! Besides, he already has Gerald as his disciple. What makes you so sure he’ll even want another?”

Hearing that, Meilani instantly zipped her mouth. While she already knew that being Sumeru’s disciple was near-impossible, a girl could dream...

At that moment, both of them heard a door creaking open... Turning to face the sound, they watched as Sumeru walked out from Gerald’s room...Seeing that, both Yeurquin and Meilani hurried over to him.

“How’s Gerald’s condition, master?” asked Yeurquin in a concerned tone.

“He’s fine for now, though he’ll need to recuperate properly for the next few days. Until then, do take care of him. While I’d love to stay, I must leave now to deal with some affairs,” replied Sumeru before leaping off and disappearing almost instantaneously.



While Sumeru hadn't specified what exactly he needed to do, Yeurquin and his daughter had a hunch that he was going to avenge Gerald.

Whatever the case was, both of them then quickly headed into the room to check on Gerald.

Sitting by his bed, they couldn't help but worry when they saw how pale and feeble he now looked. After all, he had suffered from terrible internal injuries.

Thankfully, Sumeru had successfully repaired Gerald's internal breathing shield, and the only minor drawback to this incident was the fact that he needed a few days to properly recuperate...

A little while later in the Wroe family's residence, Quid could be seen sitting anxiously as he awaited the three elders' return.

Shortly after, one of the family's butlers came bursting in while nervously shouting, "T-this is bad, master! Something's terribly wrong!"

"What is it? Calm yourself!" retorted Quid as he glared at the flustered butler.

"M-master... Mr. Quarles and the other two elders... they... they're dead...!" stuttered the quivering butler.

"What?!" yelled Quid, momentarily stupefied.

The three old men were incredibly strong! How had Gerald managed to take on them...?!

Now starting to panic, Quid—who was still in disbelief—was prompted to ask, "...Are you really sure of

that?"

"I swear on my life, master! Since you told me to keep an eye on their progress, I was able to witness all three of them getting decapitated in a single slash!" replied the terrified butler as he recalled what he had earlier witnessed.

Upon hearing that, Quid's terror instantly began sinking in. If the murderer was on Gerald's side... then he'd surely find out soon enough that Quid was the one orchestrating all this!

His train of thought was cut short when an explosive sound was suddenly heard!

Dodging just in time to avoid getting squashed by a flying door, both Quid and his butler could only stare wide-eyed at the figure that had just appeared before them...

Snapping out of it, Quid instantly attempted to call for his guards... only to realize that he couldn't make a sound!

Placing his hand on his neck, both Quid and the butler quickly realized that a stream of blood was already flowing down their necks...

And just like that, the two men flopped onto an encroaching puddle of their own blood, dead.

Now that both of them were dealt with, the figure made another leap before vanishing without a trace...

By the time the other Wroes got to the scene, they were instantly greeted by the sight of Quid and the butler's corpses lying in a pool of their own blood... Naturally, this caused a major uproar among the Wroe family members, and the lady of the Wroe family even blacked out.

For the Wroes, it was a night of chaos and great confusion...When Gerald awoke the next day, he was

greeted by the sight of his master—who had his eyes closed—sitting by his bed.

Attempting to get up, Gerald immediately realized that his entire body was aching... He couldn't even sit up!

At that moment, Sumeru suddenly opened his eyes. Realizing that Gerald had regained consciousness, he instantly smiled as he said, "Gerald! You're awake!"

"Master, I..."

"Don't worry, you'll be fine. You're just suffering from some internal injuries at the moment. You'll be as fit as a fiddle soon enough as long as you recuperate properly for the next few days!" replied Sumeru before Gerald was even able to finish his question.

Hearing that, Gerald fell silent...

Shortly after, knocking could be heard from his room's door.

Walking over to open it, Sumeru saw that it was Meilani who was here to bring Gerald his breakfast.

After entering the room, Meilani placed Gerald's breakfast on his table before asking in a concerned tone, "How do you feel, Gerald? Any discomfort anywhere...?"

Smiling subtly in response, Gerald then shook his head before weakly replying, "I'm fine... I just need to recuperate for a while..."

Seeing that Meilani was going to care for Gerald, Sumeru then left the room.

Upon seeing that, Meilani then took the chance to whisper, "Say, I have some good news, Gerald! The master of the Wroe family was killed in his own house yesterday!"

Appearing momentarily stunned, it was made evident that Gerald hadn't expected such an event to happen out of the blue.

A short pause later, Meilani then added, "...Also, you may not know this, but your master went off someplace last night to, 'attend to something', as he said..."

Raising a slight brow as he pondered on Meilani's obvious hint, Gerald stared at her for a while before replying, "You... think my master did it...?"

"If you need further proof, I went over to look at Quid's corpse today... The gash in his neck was similar to the ones on the three elders your master killed yesterday!" explained Meilani.

Upon hearing that, Gerald began thinking, 'If what she's saying is true, then I guess master has already avenged me...'

"...Well, either way, there's no need to worry too much about it, Gerald. After all, the Wroes don't seem to know that your master was behind all this. What more, since the Wroes attacked you yesterday, their family probably won't be too keen on making this event public," said Meilani.

After suffering two major losses for attempting to outwit their enemy, the Wroes were definitely going to play it much safer after this...

Not long after, Nori and the rest of Gerald's party entered the room as well.

Sitting by the foot of his bed, the concerned Nori couldn't help but ask, "How are you feeling, Gerald...?"

After seeing how terrible Gerald's state was the day before, Nori had been frightened half to death, fearing that Gerald wasn't going to be able to recover.

"Don't worry, I'm feeling much better now!" replied Gerald with a smile.

"That's great to hear, Mr. Crawford! Do rest up in the next few days so that we can resume our journey once you're fully cured!" said Ray.

In his current state, there was no way that they were going to be able to continue their journey at their initial rate. With that in mind, the best course of action now was to wait for Gerald to get better.

Nodding in response, Gerald went silent for a while before eventually turning to look at his party and asking, "Speaking of which, where did master go?"

"Ah, the dean's already left! He told us to take good care of you, and he also instructed us to tell you that he's resolved everything for you. With the Wroe family currently in disarray, it won't be long before they ruin themselves!" explained Ray.

Upon hearing that, Gerald could rest assured. Despite the good news, however, there was a nagging feeling within him...

The fact that he was still beaten up that terribly the day before meant that he still wasn't powerful enough..."Either way, make sure you rest up properly in the coming days! You can leave handling anything else to us!" added Nori.

Upon hearing that, Gerald understood that he didn't really have any other choice but to obey. With that, he lay back down to recuperate...

Early in the morning a few days later, Juno—Meilani's elder sister—could be seen knocking on Gerald's door before asking, "Gerald? Are you awake...?"

After waiting for quite a while and getting no response, Juno couldn't help but raise a slight brow as she opened the door... only to find that he wasn't even inside!

'Where could he have gone? He couldn't have just left, could he?' Juno thought to herself in bewilderment.

Frowning slightly, she had an idea of where else Gerald could possibly be... With that in mind, she quickly headed to the back garden to see if he was there.

Just as she had thought, Juno was instantly greeted by the sight of Gerald and Leit Query meditating on stone benches upon arriving at the back garden. With their eyes closed, both of them appeared rather content...

Rolling her eyes, Juno couldn't help but sigh. No wonder his room was empty! The two had woken up early in the morning to train themselves!

After a slight pause, Juno then walked over to Gerald's side before whispering, "Gerald...!"

Hearing his name, Gerald then opened his eyes before smiling as he replied, "Ah, Young Lady Zorn! You're up early! Are you here to train as well?"

Momentarily disregarding Gerald's question, Juno took a peek at Leit who was sitting beside him...

Seeing that he had barely moved and there were little to no changes in his expressions, Juno could only sigh. She was well aware that Leit wasn't someone to be trifled with, and she was honestly slightly afraid that he would be angered since she had come looking for Gerald...

Regardless, when he sensed Juno's gaze on him, Leit opened an eye before getting up and leaping

straight out of the back garden...

Upon seeing that, Gerald was slightly pleased by Leit's ability to read the mood. He was sure that Leit had only left since he didn't want to disturb Gerald and Juno's moment.

Juno herself was happy that Leit got the hint. Either way, now that he was gone, Juno quickly turned her attention back on Gerald as she asked, "Why on earth did you wake up so early, Gerald?"

"I'm just used to waking up early!" replied Gerald.

Gerald had developed this habit ever since he was a child, and it had surprisingly helped him improve both his body's capabilities as well as his martial arts skills in later years.

"...I see. Anyway, if you're done meditating, follow me! I'll bring you someplace!" said Juno as she instantly grabbed Gerald's hand and began tugging him out of her home without even waiting for him to reply...

Seeing that she had her mind made up, Gerald simply allowed himself to be pulled along...

Eventually, they arrived at a bakery of sorts...

"Breakfast is going to be my treat today, Gerald! Just so you know, I come here daily because the bread they make is just way too delicious!"

Following that, she dragged him into the bakery before shouting, "Waiter! Three trays of bread, please!"

Since Juno was a regular, he naturally knew her and prioritized her order.

With that in mind, it took less than a minute for the waiter to carry three trays filled with delicious-smelling bread over to Gerald and Juno's table.

"Go on, don't be shy! Try some!" urged Juno as she pushed one of the loaves over to Gerald.

Not even waiting for him to reply, Juno then began stuffing bread into her mouth without caring about her image at all.

Juno's appetite was... astounding, to say the least.

While Gerald was full from just a single tray of bread, Juno managed to finish the bread from the remaining two trays she ordered!

"...A rather voracious appetite you have there, Lady Zorn..." muttered Gerald in a slightly surprised tone as he rested his palm against his forehead...Upon hearing that, Juno simply turned to look at Gerald before bluntly replying, "What of it? I was just born with a big appetite!"

Shaking his head, Gerald simply zipped his mouth, worried that Juno would flip the table over if he pressed on.

Regardless, the duo then headed to Dragonblood City's training court after finishing their breakfast.

In the Leicom Continent, each city had its own training court, and such places were used to host all sorts of yearly competitions. Of course, training courts were also used as formal places for those proficient in martial arts to train and battle.

Either way, by the time they got to the training court, many people were already sparring against each other.



Upon realizing Juno's presence, everyone there instantly displayed respectful expressions, even going so far as to offer Juno their sparring areas.

From that alone, it was evident that Juno still had a pretty large influence in Dragonblood City. After all, powerful people were always respected by others, regardless of gender.

Turning down their offers, Juno simply selected a secluded area before looking at Gerald and saying, "Allow me to challenge you to a duel, Gerald!"

"I accept!" replied Gerald without the slightest hesitation.

After all, he had previously promised to teach Juno some martial arts skills, and what better way to learn such skills than to brawl against each other. The more they sparred, the more rapid Juno's martial arts skills would improve.

With that in mind, both of them stood at opposite ends...

Looking at Gerald, she then asked, "Are you ready?"

"Ready as ever!" replied Gerald with a nod.

Hearing that, Juno wasted no time and instantly began charging toward Gerald! Being quite fast, it barely took a second for her fist to get inches away from Gerald's face!

While she was definitely strong, Juno was simply using the same attack she always did. With that in mind, Gerald easily avoided her hit before grabbing onto her arm and yanking it toward the ground!

Due to the sudden shift, Juno lost her balance and almost fell face first! Thankfully, Gerald quickly pulled her back up to save her the humiliation.

Whatever the case was, upon witnessing all that, everyone else at the scene instantly revealed surprised expressions.

They, of all people, knew how strong Juno was. After all, she kept challenging them in the past, and after continuously getting pummelled time and again, nobody dared to initiate challenges with her anymore. She was simply too strong for them!

When they had seen Gerald earlier, they thought that she had just pulled some poor sap to duel with her since she hadn't been able to duel anyone in a while. They certainly hadn't expected that young man to be able to defeat her that easily! It was truly a stupefying thing to witness...

Shortly after, Juno—who definitely wasn't going to admit defeat so easily—then got on her feet again before shouting, “Again!”

She was sure that she could eventually be able to at least launch more moves before getting disengaged by Gerald.

“Hold on a second, Young Lady Zorn!” yelled Gerald in return.

Raising a slight brow, Juno then asked, “What is it?”

“A suggestion...You may need to consider changing your attacking style. If you keep coming at me with the same move, I'll be able to disengage you in a single move regardless of how many times you attack me!” replied Gerald as he shared his analysis with her.

“There's... a problem with my attack style?” asked the puzzled Juno.

She had been using this attack style her entire life! Juno didn't feel like it needed changing. With that in

mind, what was Gerald's reason for suggesting that...?