

Chapter 1091

Concentrating all his energy into a single strike, an explosive sound could be heard as Christopher launched himself toward Gerald with an attack aimed for the youth's chest!

Seconds before his attack collided with Gerald, a loud buzzing sound could be heard. It was only when his fist arrived inches before its target that Christopher realized a split second too late that all his strength had suddenly been drained by some mysterious force.

Knowing that he wouldn't be able to stop his punch's momentum in time, Christopher immediately tried to intensify his force again.

When his fist finally collided with Gerald's chest, however, he quickly realized that the amount of force he ended up exerting was only comparable to that of a newborn.

As if that wasn't perplexing enough, Christopher found himself flying backward, unable to regain control of his movements! It felt similar to toppling down a steep mountain, and before the old man knew it, he had crashed harshly onto the ground!

"H-how... How is this even possible?!" groaned Christopher in utter disbelief as he sat feebly on the ground, his eyes wide open.

The old man was now holding on to his numb left arm that felt close to being broken.

How could this be? It had only been ten days since they last fought!

Back then, Gerald had only been able to make it out alive with the aid of some odd swordplay. Christopher was well aware that he could've killed Gerald back there and then as long as he had been a bit more alert, and he was certain that Gerald understood that as well.

In short, the only reason Gerald had won the battle was because of his sneak attack.

Knowing that Gerald didn't have any other tricks up his sleeve, Christopher chose to wait for Gerald to show himself again. If things had gone according to plan, he would've killed the youth once that happened.

Following that, Christopher would tell Daryl that he had his grandson before threatening to kill Gerald should Daryl refuse to tell him the secret of the ancient tomb. Once he got the information he needed, Christopher would then toss Gerald's corpse before Dylan!

The thought of how desperate Daryl would look at that moment brought endless glee to Christopher back when he was still waiting for Gerald.

It was a simple plan that—if everything had gone smoothly—would've resulted in Christopher gaining the secret of the ancient tomb for his own family.

Truly a simple plan... Yet it had never occurred to him that he would actually be unable to take down Gerald!

"Oh? Did you still have plans to kill me?" asked Gerald, flashing a cold smile.

"It's... It's illogical! How could you have gotten this strong in such a short period of time? There's no way you could've gone through that much training in only ten days!" shouted Christopher in his shock.

"Let's just say I got lucky!" replied Gerald.

"...What? Could it be the secret of the ancient tomb? Is it truly able to make others this powerful?" said Christopher, stunned.

Immediately after, however, the old man's eyes grew fierce as he grabbed a handful of sand before tossing it directly at Gerald's face!

Instantly getting to his feet, Christopher then leaped from where he stood, aiming a kick at Gerald's chest!

The moment his foot hit its mark, another explosive sound could be heard. This time, however, white smoke began gushing out from the spot Christopher's kick had landed, completely enveloping the old man's body!

Before Christopher could even question what the hell had just happened, the white smoke surrounding him—somehow—exploded, sending his body flying off into the opposite direction once more! The force itself was akin to standing before an exploding boiler, and it wasn't long before Christopher felt his back crash against the mountain's stone walls.

As the old man fell to the ground, a large indent was revealed on the spot he had been flung against. Now coughing blood, Christopher raised his head to look at Gerald, feeling completely stupefied.

"What... What exactly is the secret of the ancient tomb?! By god! How could knowledge of its secret increase someone's inner strength and training to such a frightening amount within only ten days?!"

Christopher had no doubts that he had managed to land that kick earlier. To think that Gerald's inner strength alone had managed to counter the impact, resulting in the old man getting hurt instead!

In order to achieve such a feat, Gerald's inner strength needed to surpass Christopher's. From the old man's personal experience just moments ago, he estimated that Gerald's inner strength had to be at least ten times more powerful than his own for him to get this hurt.

"If you had only left, I would've let it go, you know? Still, since you kill people like flies and you even waited so long for me here, I guess I truly can't allow you to continue living!" said Gerald, his cold gaze alone sending chills down the old man's spine.

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After saying that, Gerald slowly lifted a hand... Through the force of his inner strength alone, Gerald slowly lifted the old man off the ground. Christopher wasn't

even able to attempt to fight back due to some invisible force holding on to his entire body.

“P-please don’t kill me, Gerald! T-the pledge of the hold water is coming soon! I’m still useful to you, so please don’t end me yet! I-I know a major secret you know?!” shouted Christopher in both panic and fear as green veins began bulging from his forehead.

“What secret?” asked Gerald coldly.

“I-I know that your family has been investigating the Sun League for a long while now. I’ll be honest with you and say that including the Moldells, all the other major secret societies—such as the Naplocks and the Fergusons—have never truly given up on investigating the Sun League even after all these years... I-I have an important clue to share with you, so please, please spare my life...! It wasn’t easy for me to get to this level of training, so even if you still wish to end me, please do so when I attend the pledge of the holy water!” wailed Christopher as the old man burst into tears.

“...You’re truly a sly, old fox! You’re almost a hundred by now yet you claim to still fear death? Do you think I’ll spare your life just because you shed a few tears?” replied Gerald, starting to feel slightly awkward.

“I-I won’t be unreasonable and request that you just let me go, of course... However, aside from the fact that the pledge of the holy water is closely linked to the Sun League, do understand that my father died because of that pledge... Since then, my only wish in life had been to enter the realm of legends and gain access to the pledge of the holy water. Once I’m there, I wish to find out the reason for my father’s death. I also wish to find out what the pledge of the holy water truly is.”

“Regardless, I remember Kort telling me that the Crawfords managed to find half of a stone tablet out at sea. The map displayed on said tablet reveals a place called Warhill Mountain, which is where the pledge of the holy water takes place. Endless secrets lie within that mountain, you know?” explained Christopher hurriedly, knowing that he was no longer able to defeat Gerald no matter what he did.

Despite still resenting the youth, everything he had said was true. He didn’t dare to lie since he truly wanted to live to see the pledge of the holy water with his very own eyes. The way Christopher saw it, even if he was to die, he wanted to pass on

in the mysterious way that many others—across the past ten thousand years—who had participated in the pledge had done.

“I already know that it’s going to be held in Warhill Mountain.”

“E-even so, you may not be aware of this next bit, and I’m willing to bet that your grandfather hasn’t heard of this either! I’m assuming that you still don’t know where Warhill Mountain is, and for good reason! See, the token of the holy water only provides a few details about the mountain itself. It doesn’t really tell you the location’s exact coordinates. To enter Warhill Mountain, you must first gather several great masters to team up with. I’ll be frank and say that attempts to even enter the mountain require a lot of human and material resources. As a result, only a small group of people usually make it into the mountain.”

“According to legends, Warhill Mountain is located on a large island that can be found deep within the ocean. While that may sound odd, rumors state that the island only appears once the token of the holy water is issued. The island itself is called Divine Island, and I know how to get there!” added Christopher.

“You’re not the only one who’s aware of all that, you know? After all, your father wasn’t the only one who returned from the pledge of the holy water that year. With the pledge of the holy water just around the corner, you should know that rumors like these are commonplace for those who are aware of the event. Also, since everyone knows that the pledge is extremely dangerous, no sane great master would choose to head there alone,” sneered Gerald.

‘What a slick b*stard he is!’ Thought the old man who was now drenched in cold sweat.

Just as Gerald had said, Christopher definitely wasn’t the only one who knew about the ‘secrets’ he had just shared. In fact, the old man had already agreed to go there with the Naplocks and a few other great masters from other families.

“Fine, even if you already know all this, I have something else to tell you that you’ll surely find interesting!”

“Spill it.”

“Well, regardless of whether they’ve gone mad or not, I’m sure everyone agrees that great masters who are able to return from the pledge of the holy water are extremely powerful. After all, they were able to survive long enough in that perilous place! Due to that logic, my father should be considered to be a powerful person, no?”

“Indeed. My grandfather himself admires him a lot. From what I’ve heard, several of the secret societies back then treated the Moldells as their default leader,” replied Gerald.

“Well, the thing is, those who managed to return alive are far from the strongest... In fact, they’re the weakest who weren’t able to remain there for long! You know, after my maddened father returned, he called me to his bed on the night before his death. The moment I was beside him, he immediately tugged my arm before shouting the same sentence three times in a row!” said Christopher with a gulp before displaying a solemn expression.

Frowning slightly, Gerald then lowered Christopher to the ground before putting away his inner strength.

“I... For the rest of my life, I’ll never forget my father’s expression when he shouted those words at me on that night...!”

“What exactly did he say?”

“With... an extremely terrified expression, he shouted, ‘I don’t want to go back!’ three times in a row!”

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“All his life, my father had been a hero to many, including me... You can imagine how shocked I was when I found out that instead of the powerful man I had always envisioned him to be, he was in fact, one of the weakest. I had never seen him cry out in fear the way he did that night... Once I did, however, I began to waver slightly. What exactly did my father experience for him to end up that terrified? What on earth took place during the pledge of the holy water? All these questions made me adamant about investigating the pledge! My fear of failure has been the reason why I keep wanting to improve my strength!” added Christopher, his eyes now bloodshot.

“...So what you’re saying is, according to your father, those who didn’t return aren’t dead? Are you saying that they were brought someplace else instead?” replied Gerald, bewildered.

The incident resembled Mila’s disappearance a lot. After all, the victims of both incidents had received some kind of item—the token of the holy water, in this case—before eventually going missing.

Instead of simply accepting that she was dead, Gerald had always believed that Mila had simply been captured by others and was still alive. What Christopher had just told him greatly increased his theory’s plausibility.

Was the Sun League—after handing out their items—truly responsible for all those disappearances? But the world was such a massive place... Where could all those who had been kidnapped been taken to...?

“Exactly... The place itself was someplace my father greatly feared and didn’t dare to head to! So... after telling you all that, please... I’m begging you...! Please allow me to die at the pledge of the holy water!” said Christopher as he knelt before Gerald.

“You truly are capable of doing just about anything in order to achieve your goals, aren’t you, old man?” replied Gerald, feeling speechless.

Shaking his head, Gerald’s voice turned cold as he added, “Fine, I’ll spare your life, under three conditions!”

“P-please, state them!”

“First of all, those from the Moldell family have to give way to any Crawfords they come across!”

“I... I agree to that!”

“Secondly, you’re prohibited from leaving the Moldell family manor before the pledge of the holy water officially begins. Should I find out that you attempt to leave before then, I’ll end you the moment I can. I hope you realize that you’re no longer anywhere near capable of defeating me!”

“Understood! I’ll remain indoors!”

“As for the final condition, I’ll be holding onto your mysterious mirror for the time being,” said Gerald as he stretched his hand out.

The moment he did so, the mysterious mirror—that Christopher had hidden under his sleeve—flew into Gerald’s hand!

“Speaking of which, I’ve inserted a venom-based poison into your body. I’m telling you this so that you know that should you disobey any of the three conditions, the poison will melt all your internal organs. Oh, and don’t even try to force it out. The result will be akin to you committing suicide,” added Gerald, his tone even more frigid than before.

“...W-what?!” replied Christopher as the corner of his lips twitched.

‘This Gerald... How vicious of him! He may as well just kill me right here and now!’

Despite feeling that way, Christopher was well aware that he had no other option than to obey. He needed to stay alive.

“...I... I promise!”

“Good. Now get lost!” sneered Gerald as he waved his hand, gesturing for the old man to leave.

Allowing Christopher to live till the pledge of the holy water was by no means an act of kind-heartedness. Rather, it was because his grandfather knew little regarding the pledge itself, seeing that it was his first time attending it.

Nobody knew for certain what would happen during the pledge of the holy water, so Gerald needed to ensure that someone who had confidence and deep knowledge of the pledge stayed by Daryl's side.

Christopher was the perfect candidate for that.

Now that he had control over Christopher, Gerald knew that that old fox would be obedient no matter how cunning he usually was.

Regardless, at this point in time, the pledge would take place in less than three months. Knowing that, Gerald knew he needed to pick up the pace. Besides, he still wanted to investigate the secret of the eternal coffin as well.

Now that he had surpassed the realm of legends, he wondered if his death prophecy would still come true.

Shaking the thought off, he then quickly left the desert and began his journey back to the small town where he had first bumped into Giya again.

Speaking of Giya, he attempted to look for her throughout his journey back, though there were no signs of her or the other researchers. He was, however, able to find traces that Giya and the others had left the desert.

True enough, when he finally arrived at the small town, Gerald bumped into them upon entering Bacht Hotel. Well, what remained of the large group, that is.

Most of the people from before had already left, and only a few people from the initial tourist group remained. Them and a sole woman from the research team who now appeared to be working in the hotel.

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The moment the woman saw him, she immediately teared up as she shouted, "Gerald! I'm so glad to be able to meet you again!"

“Why are you still here, Giya? And again, I told you that my name isn’t Gerald! It’s Xadrian!” replied Gerald, honestly feeling relieved that she was doing fine. Still, it was rather unexpected that she had chosen to remain here.

“You’re still trying to lie to me? Give it up, I already know you’re Gerald! You may have successfully changed your body figure and temperament, but you’ll never be able to change those eyes of yours! You’re Gerald and that’s that!” replied Giya as she put down the plates she was holding onto before running over to Gerald.

Gerald himself took a brief glance at the plates before averting his gaze from Giya as he said, “Why would you choose to be a waitress here instead of remaining with the research team? I’m pretty sure being with them is a much nicer job than this...”

“I don’t care about that anymore... Waiting for your return was more important. Even if it had taken you days or even years, I would’ve continued waiting here for you! I just want to know why you’d lie to me! It’s impossible for two random people to look so alike, and you know it! You may continue trying to deceive me but I know those eyes! So tell me, why did you lie to me...?” cried out Giya who was now starting to attract the attention of several of the hotel’s customers.

Gerald himself was feeling extremely moved by all that she had said.

‘So you were planning to wait for me here for the rest of your life, huh... Giya... Giya, can’t you see that I really can’t bear hurting you anymore...? Why can’t you just understand that?!’ Gerald thought to himself.

“...Giya, you’ve truly mistaken me for someone else... Look, since you wish to meet that Gerald so much, give me a year. I promise to locate him for you by then... Also, even if I’m not actually Gerald, you were waiting for me this entire time, right? Now that we’ve met, I’m sure you’re finally satisfied... With that in mind, you should really return to your work, Giya...”

After saying that, Gerald turned around to leave, clearly uninterested in entering the hotel.

However, it only took him a few steps before he heard a soft ‘thud’ behind him. Turning around, Gerald saw that Giya had gone limp and fallen to the floor!

Seeing that, he immediately ran back to her side while shouting, "Giya!"

"T-there... Try saying you aren't Gerald again... Even your voice had changed... I'm certain that it's the same voice that used to always call me!" said Giya as she tried her best to hold on to Gerald's arm.

"I... I won't allow you to leave me anymore, even if I have to continue following you like this for the rest of my life! I'm willing to do so!" added the girl as she clung on tightly to him.

Gerald, however, frowned as he replied, "...Have you gone mad? I simply treat you as a friend! Regardless, how could you fake falling to the floor just to grab my attention? Forget it... Also, I'd rather not have a constant burden by my side. With that, I bid you Godspeed!"

With that said, Gerald quickly turned around and left.

"G-Gerald!" cried out Giya as she immediately got to her feet again to chase after him.

While Gerald was fast, Giya still tried her best to run in the direction she had last seen him head to. She ran, and ran, until eventually, she arrived at the small town's border. Only a sandy road could be seen from that point onward, yet she continued running on, knowing that she would eventually reach the highway.

Aside from rows of pine and cypress trees, Giya hadn't bumped into anyone up till this point. She didn't even know how long she had trudged along that road. Despite her paling face and her cracked lips, she still continued heading in the direction that Gerald had left.

"I... I won't let you run away again... Why... Why do you hide from me like this...? Just why...?" muttered Giya to herself as the number of blisters on her soles continued to increase, causing her white shoes to slowly gradient into red, her fresh blood dyeing them.

She was feeling extremely dizzy, and this had been the case ever since she returned from the desert. With that in mind, it was evident that her falling to the ground earlier hadn't been just for show.

Feeling the last of her strength leave her body, she ended up kneeling on the road, exhaustion taking over her. Her eyes were filled with tears, yet she simply gnashed her teeth before crawling back up again.

Darkness soon began creeping in as the day slowly turned to night. After walking for an entire day, Giya could no longer feel her legs. At long last, she finally arrived at the highway and located there, was a tea stall.

Noticing her, the boss smiled before asking, "Well hey there, young woman! You have a terrible expression on your face! Would you like a cup of tea?"

"H-How much for a cup...?"

"Pretty cheap, honestly! Only two dollars!" replied the boss.

Feeling her pocket, Giya realized that in her hurry to run after Gerald earlier, she hadn't brought a single penny out with her...

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"What's wrong, beauty? Don't you have any money with you?" said an idler as he and a few others began walking toward her.

The moment one of them attempted to touch Giya's chin, she immediately dodged. Seeing that, the other idlers immediately grabbed Giya's arms, intent on harassing her.

Realizing that struggling wasn't getting her anywhere, Giya found a chance to bite down hard on one of the idler's fingers!

A shout of pain was heard as the idler who was bitten held on to his badly injured finger.

Seeing that, none of the others dared to make any other moves on her. This was because all of them saw the murderous intent in her eyes.

However, due to her prior exhaustion and the sudden adrenaline rush, Giya was now feeling extremely dizzy. As a result, she soon ended up toppling to the ground, barely conscious.

Understanding that Giya barely had any energy left in her to even get up, the idlers turned around to face another person who was now walking toward them. One of them then complained, "Isn't this a bit too cruel, boss? You didn't warn us that this woman was going to be this vicious! My finger almost got broken, you know?"

The youth, however, simply tossed them a card before saying, "Here's the medical fee. The password is today's date!"

"H-holy sh*t! Thanks, boss!" shouted all of the idlers simultaneously in delight.

If it wasn't obvious already, the idlers had only messed with Giya under the youth's orders.

Recognizing that voice anywhere, Giya slowly lifted her head to see if it truly was him. As she had guessed, the youth in question was, of course, Gerald!

"I-I knew you wouldn't abandon me...!" cried out Giya as she burst into tears.

While Gerald had easily outpaced her earlier, once he was sure that Giya had lost sight of him, he kept a close eye on her from there on out, worrying that something might happen to her before she got back to the hotel.

Unexpectedly, Giya had chased after him the entire day.

He had honestly thought that Giya would eventually give up once she could no longer see him. Of course, that didn't happen. As a result, he had hired those idlers earlier to scare her back into town.

'This girl...' Gerald thought to himself as he sighed internally.

Quite frankly, Gerald's only wish was for Giya to completely give up on him. She deserved to live a normal life without the pain of longing for him, which was why he was trying so desperately to end things right now rather than prolong her agony.

However, seeing how much Giya had suffered earlier—just to get a chance to meet him again—made him feel sorry for her.

Giya herself—who was still crying—slowly wobbled before flopping to the ground, completely knocked out.

Guilt-ridden, Gerald immediately ran over to her while shouting, "Giya!"

The moment he lifted her up, however, Gerald immediately sensed that something was amiss.

"...Hmm? You're... You were this ill this entire time?"

While he had initially thought that she was merely bluffing back when she fell to the floor at the hotel, after checking her pulse, he now realized how terribly ill she was. With this realization, Gerald then quickly brought her elsewhere.

When Giya finally awoke again, she was immediately greeted by the droning of a helicopter. Her body felt suspended though it was much more relaxed now compared to earlier when the pain had been so excruciating that she felt for sure that she was going to die.

Looking around, she realized that she was lying on a lounge seat, and her body was covered with clothes. The moment she saw Gerald sitting beside her, however, her eyes immediately widened as she shouted, "G-Gerald?! A-am I dreaming now...?"

"You foolish girl! Did you know how seriously ill you were? If you hadn't bumped into me, your life would be in danger by now!" replied Gerald with a slight frown.

“So you finally admit that you’re Gerald! Why did you have to lie to me? Were you really that reluctant to meet me? Just so you know, I previously had thoughts that if I still couldn’t find you no matter what, then I’d rather die!” said Giya as she ignored Gerald’s reply, her eyes now bloodshot and teary.

The Gerald sitting beside her now was so much more mature compared to the one she once knew a year and a half ago.

There was a lot that Giya wanted to learn about, and that urge stemmed from the need to always have a sense of security when she was by Gerald’s side.

“Where are we headed to...?” asked Giya.

“We’re returning to the Crawford manor in Northbay. I’ll have a few special doctors look after you once we’re there,” replied Gerald.

Quite honestly, Gerald was currently finding it difficult to look Giya in the eye. After all, it would be a lie for him to claim that he felt nothing for that woman now.

Whatever the case was, he truly wished her well.

“...So... Where have you been in the past year and a half...?”

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The question had come from Giya.

“...It’s a long story. Regardless, just rest easy and focus on healing for now... I’ll tell you more about it in the future...”

Now that he had located the eternal coffin, it only made sense for Gerald to return to his family as soon as he could. After all, there were still multiple mysteries that had yet to be solved.

It was the second reason why he had called the helicopter over. The main reason, of course, was because he was extremely worried about Giya’s condition.

“We’re nearing the island now, Mr. Crawford. However, it seems that something is happening at the mouth of the island. Quite a lot of people are currently down there...” said one of the Crawford bodyguards who were present in the helicopter.

“...Hmm?” said Gerald as he immediately stood up and looked out the helicopter’s window.

Just as the bodyguard had said, his grandfather and many others could be seen standing at the mouth of the island. However, they seemed to be discussing something with a woman he couldn’t quite recognize, at least from his current height. As a result, he was at least sure that they definitely weren’t standing there to welcome his return.

“Take care of Miss Quarrington. I’ll be heading down there to have a look!” ordered Gerald as he slid the helicopter’s door open before jumping off!

“Gerald?!”

“Mr. Crawford!”

‘By god! We’re currently over two thousand feet above the ground!’ Thought both of them, feeling completely astonished as cold sweat dripped down their foreheads.

However, they had clearly forgotten that Gerald was now no longer an ordinary man. Due to that, he landed quite easily before the crowd, greatly shocking several of his family’s present bodyguards.

“...W-what... M-Mr. Crawford is back!” shouted several of the guards in both respect and fear.

How the hell had Mr. Crawford safely descended from the sky like that?!

Even Daryl and Dylan—who had been standing at the side—found themselves slightly shocked.

Quickly getting over his surprise, Daryl's eyes lit up with excitement as he delightfully said, "Gerald! You're back!"

"Indeed I have, grandpa. Were you worried about me?" said Gerald as he walked closer to the group.

At that moment, Gerald watched as the woman from before squeezed out from the crowd, a baby in her arms. The moment her eyes met Gerald's, she immediately looked at her baby before saying, "Haha! Mable, look! Your father's home!"

Hearing that, the dismayed Daryl and Dylan turned to look at each other, their expressions suggesting that they didn't even know whether to laugh or cry.

"...Alice? What do you mean, 'your father's home?' Whose baby is that?" said Gerald as he took in a deep breath, his eyes widened.

Ever since Alice had made him drunk—which caused him to fail to meet up with Mila before her disappearance—he hadn't contacted her. After all, he honestly still resented her for that.

To think that she had managed to find out where he lived a year and a half later.

"Why, she's our daughter, of course! She's now six months old! Her name is Mable, you know?" said Alice with a smug expression on her face.

"...Our daughter? ...But... Back then, didn't you say that we didn't...?" replied Gerald, his eyes wider than ever now.

"Well, if I had told you the truth that morning, would you have let me go that easily? Knowing you, you certainly wouldn't have allowed our daughter to be born in the first place!" said Alice as she tied her hair, now looking very much like a young mother.

"You... How despicable!" shouted Gerald, filled with remorse.

“...What... What did you say? Did you just call me despicable?” replied Alice, slowly getting anxious.

Turning to look at the slightly dazed Jessica, Alice then said, “Sister! Did you see how he treated me?!”

Jessica, however, simply turned to look away as she scratched the back of her head,

Seeing that, Alice then turned to face Yulia before adding, “Mom! Just look at how he’s treating both me and my daughter!”

Displaying a stiff smile, Yulia then replied, “I’d rather you refrain from calling me mother just yet, girl. Regardless, the most important thing now is for us to get to the bottom of all this. After all, Gerald has never told us about this incident before...”

“...You’re right! Since this child truly is a Crawford, go ahead and take as many paternity tests as you want!” said Alice as she turned to look at Gerald.

Looking at Dylan next, she then shouted, “Dad!”

“...Aye! Well, whatever the case is, don’t get too nervous first, child... It’s a bit windy out here so bring the child into the house first... I’ve already arranged for a few doctors to run the required tests...” replied Dylan as he shook his head, feeling a headache coming.

Gerald himself had yet to break free from his daze.

“...Have I truly become a father now...?”

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“...No. This is too much of a coincidence! I’m not sure what sort of tricks Alice is up to now, but all I remember is me giving her a few hundred thousand dollars to let her lead the life she wished!” muttered Gerald to himself as he frowned slightly.

This sudden turn of events was honestly quite strange to him. After all, ever since he had gotten tangled up with the Moldells' disputes, he had focused most of his life on training, rarely ever getting involved with city life.

To think that such an incident would happen not long after he finally returned to his old lifestyle... While it was already extremely hard for him to accept the fact that he now had a daughter, it was even harder to believe that the mother was Alice!

Knowing that both Giya and Lyra would become aware of this soon as well, Gerald found himself being cornered into an increasingly difficult situation.

'...Bah! There's no use thinking about it! I'll just wait for the paternity test results!'

With that, Gerald entered the mansion and waited outside the door—where the test was being held—together with his grandfather and father.

Alice herself was in the room, holding onto Mable for the paternity test.

"I think it'd be better if you removed the jade charm from the baby, Miss Bradford... After all, it's rather dangerous for a baby to wear such a thing around her neck," said one of the doctors present in the room.

The doctors had told her to remove the charm—which looked similar to the one Alice was currently wearing—since they knew there was a chance that they were dealing with Mr. Crawford's daughter. As a result, they were all well aware that they couldn't afford to be careless.

"Humph! But I refuse! There's no reason to, is there? Just hurry up and run the test already!" retorted Alice.

Hearing that, the doctors didn't dare to refute and simply began running the test.

A short while later, the test results were finalized.

Upon hearing that, both Dylan and Daryl simultaneously—and anxiously—asked, “What are the results?”

“...Congratulations, old master, master, and Mr. Crawford! Based on the test results, this truly is Mr. Crawford and Miss Bradford’s child! She has the bloodline of the Crawford family!” replied the doctor respectfully as he smiled.

“...A-ah... She... She’s really my great-granddaughter...?” said Daryl, an expression of great joy on his face.

Jessica and Yulia, however, had slightly unpleasant looks. Quite frankly, both of them severely looked down on Alice.

‘Who even was she? How could she just become a part of the Crawford family all willy-nilly?’

Both the women also disliked the fact that Alice was so scheming. After all, it was clear that she had deliberately waited for the baby to be born before making her presence known to their family. Due to her meticulous planning and Mable being born, Gerald now had to marry Alice no matter what.

What about Lyra, then? Both Jessica and Yulia didn’t even know how to break it out to her.

“Look, Gerald! You now have a daughter!” said Dylan as he held the baby intimately while showing her to Gerald.

In response, however, Gerald simply frowned.

In fact, he continued doing so until his father and the others had left.

Seeing that they were now alone, Alice stood behind Gerald and said, “You need to take responsibility for me, Gerald!”

To her shock, Gerald instantly grabbed her by her collar and pulled her to the side before replying, "What exactly happened? There's no way in hell that I could've had a child with you. You may be able to deceive everyone else, but I'm sure that she isn't my child!"

Gerald's eyes were so ferocious that Alice instantly began trembling as he continued staring at her. It was almost as though glare could see through everything.

Gulping, Alice then cried out, "A-are you even still a man...? The paternity test results are out! It truly is our baby, even if you refuse to admit it! If you still choose to deny that she's our child, then I may as well just cease to live! After all, this is already the second time you've humiliated me!"

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"Still unwilling to tell the truth? While I have no idea how you altered the paternity test machine's results, I know for a fact that you weren't even the one who had given birth to the child. Look, since we're ex-classmates, I'm willing to let you off if you tell me the truth," said Gerald coldly.

Hearing that, Alice immediately became stupefied, fear reflected in her eyes as she thought, 'When did Gerald get this powerful...?'

"Now that I think about it, could you be doing all this because you have some sort of motive?" asked Gerald.

Since he had been thinking about the death prophecy throughout his trip home, he couldn't help but be extra wary.

"I... I have no idea what you're talking about! Unhand me!" denied Alice.

"Still reluctant to tell the truth, huh? Fine, then! I'll treat this child as my own and raise her... But I'll toss you into the ocean to be food for the fish!" declared Gerald as he instantly lifted her up.

Alice was now extremely terrified. After all, the Gerald she once knew was both timid and weak. No matter how cruel the old Gerald was, he simply couldn't bear to look at crying women, which usually resulted in him instantly dropping his cruel façade.

However, despite the fact that she was now crying so much, Gerald's ferocity and murderous intent remained.

He had completely changed, and Alice was now more certain than ever that what he had declared was no joke.

"F-fine! I'll tell you! I'll tell you! Just put me down first!" squealed Alice in fear.

Hearing that, Gerald tossed her onto a bed where she promptly—and extremely bitterly—shouted, "Y-you're right! The child truly isn't ours!"

The moment she said that, however, she was instantly hit with immense remorse.

"So where did you get the child? Did you steal it? As far as I remember, I've already given you a lot of money. How could you still be so dissatisfied to the point where you're even willing to do all this?" said Gerald coldly.

"N-no! I didn't steal that child! Don't look down on me, Gerald! While I may not be a nice woman, I wouldn't do such a cruel thing! I simply adopted the child from an orphanage!"

"Explain how the Crawford doctors came to the conclusion that the child was ours."

"That... I'm not too sure about that either... An old master taught me that tactic..." said Alice as she gently touched her hurt neck while getting off the bed before taking a few steps back.

"If that's the case, then go clear things up with my grandpa and father. Once you do that, I'll hand you a large sum of money that'll be enough to comfortably sustain you and your family for at least three generations," replied Gerald.

Hearing that, Alice immediately stood up anxiously as she said, "I... I don't need money! Gerald, did you honestly think that I did all this just for money...? While it's true that I once looked down on you for being a pauper, all of that is in the past now... Don't you know that I've already fallen for you for quite some time, Gerald...? I wish to be with you! Even if you go penniless now, I still want to be yours!"

After saying all that, she immediately threw herself onto Gerald, attempting to hug him.

Gerald, however, simply used a hand to push her aside before calmly saying, "Cease your nonsense and tell me what you truly want already."

"You!" shouted Alice who was so angry that she began stomping her foot.

"...Look, just let me stay, alright? You can't just drive me away, Gerald! I mean, just have a look outside! Can't you see that grandpa and dad are taking turns holding Mable? They're already treating her as part of the family and they look so happy too!" added Alice as she pointed out the window.

"Besides, I've already heard that you and your grandpa are about to embark on a long journey and won't be back for quite a bit... I've even been told that grandpa may end up never coming back... Now that he's filled with hope after meeting his great-grandchild, don't you think the beautiful lie should be kept alive?" cried out Alice.

"You'd better stop twisting your insincere words to sound beautiful. Tell me what you have up your sleeves or I won't let you off that easily!" shouted Gerald, his voice now extremely frigid.

Just as he was about to pick Alice up to toss her out, Lyra's voice could suddenly be heard saying, "Oh? Whose child is that, dad? Grandpa? She's so cute! Speaking of which, I heard that Gerald's back... Where is he? There's something I need to speak to him about..."

— To be Continued... —