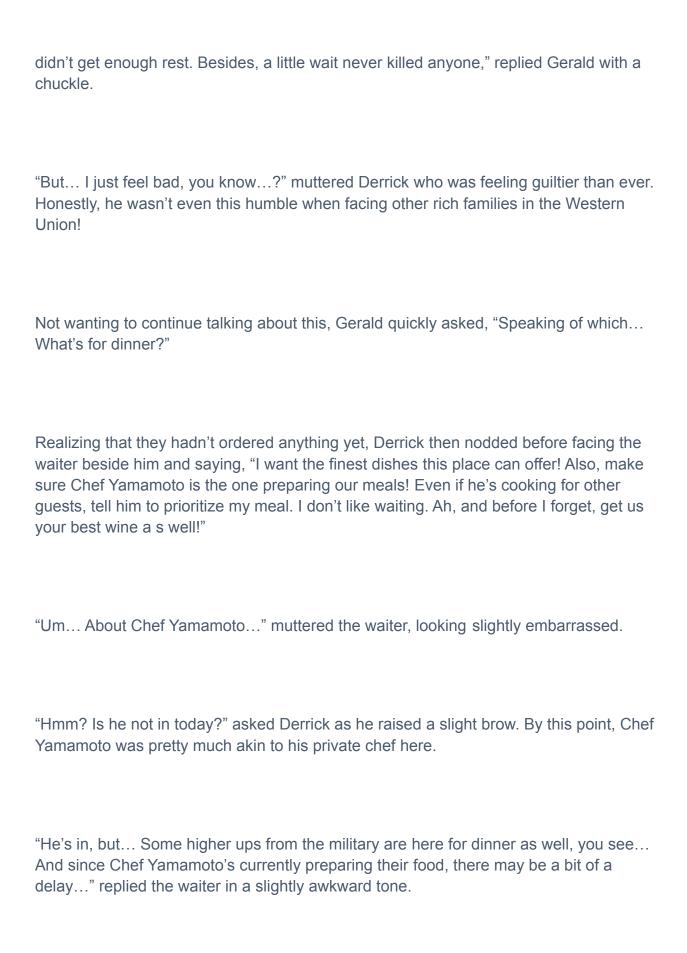
"Trust me, patriarch, I'll be needing your help sooner than you think," whispered Gerald in response.
"Just say the word and I'll surely lend a hand! I wouldn't even mind giving my position as patriarch to you!" declared Takuya as he patted his chest, knowing full well that had it not been for Gerald's help, his family would've eventually crumbled. What more, Fujiko could've died ages ago had Gerald not stepped in to save her back then!
Whatever the case was, the four soon arrived at the private room on the top floor
Once they were seated, Derrick couldn't help but clear his throat before saying, "Um Again, I'm truly sorry for making you wait this long today Once I'm back at the office, I'll definitely give my secretary a good, long, talk for not waking me up!"
"Leave the poor chap be," replied Gerald with a smile.
"Are you sure?" asked Derrick.
"Truth be told, he did attempt to wake you up, though I told him not to. After all, in the

end, you're still a chairman of a massive consortium! It wouldn't do you good if you



"And? You're saying it as if I don't know anyone from the military! I don't care, tell Chef Yamamoto to prioritize our meal! just let other chefs deal with those men! I'll have you know that these three men are highly valuable guests of mine! If you unnecessarily delay my business with them, I'm making sure to pick a bone with this place!" declared Derrick.

While Derrick wouldn't have argued about this if he was dealing with other guests, this was Gerald he was talking about! What more, he was still feeling guilty for how he had made Gerald wait an entire afternoon! If he couldn't even provide Gerald with a good meal, his unease was only going to increase.

Whatever the case was, not wanting to cause an unnecessary scene, Gerald simply waved his hand before saying, "We aren't that particular about food, so any other chef is fine."

"No, you don't understand! Chef Yamamoto has a completely different standard compared to other chefs! With that said, you have to taste his food tonight!" declared Derrick before turning to face the waiter again and saying, "Just tell Chef Yamamoto that I said all this! If those from the military try looking for trouble, tell them to come straight to me!"

"... Right away, Mr. Zirna!" replied the waiter who didn't know how else to respond. After all, he was just a lowly waiter here! If he didn't do as he was told, he could potentially lose his job!

It was only after the waiter left when Derrick returned to his usual self.

Truth be told, part of the reason why he was acting so stubborn was because he hadn't fully sobered up yet. Whatever the case was, Derrick then patted his chest wanting to show Gerald how reliable he was with his current status before declaring, "Not to worry, brother Gerald! I know quite a few people from the military to the point where some of their leaders show respect to me! With that said, getting Chef Yamamoto to serve us first is nothing!"

"So it seems," replied Gerald with a nod. He, for one, knew that Japan was a country where wealth was paramount. While it was true that there was a slight divide between the Japanese and those from the Western Union, they both operated the same way. As long as one had money and power, they would surely be able to stand firm in their respective countries.

Either way, the waiter soon returned to notify them that Chef Yamamoto had agreed to prepare their dishes first. He also told them that the chef had estimated the food to be ready in the next ten minutes.

Following that, the waiter began uncorking the finest wine they had, and the second the cork was removed, the room was instantly filled with the rich aroma of good wine.

Unfortunately, it wasn't long before hard knocking could be heard on the door! Before the waiter could even say a word, the door was slammed open by a uniformed individual! Laughing as he stormed toward Derrick's table, the man then growled, "Who the hell do you think you are?! Daring to tell the chef to cater to you first... What bullslfi't! We're from the military, you

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"Oh, I'm well acquainted with those from the military. Besides, Chef Yamamoto always prepares my food here. Just get some other chef to serve your meals! I'll even pay the bill for you!" scoffed Derrick without even raising his head.

Before the new person could retort, however, his eyes couldn't help but widen when he noticed another guest at the table.

"... Brother Gerald...?"

"Ichiro? What are you doing here?" asked Gerald who was equally as surprised to see him here. Last he remembered, Ichiro was still trying to hunt down the murderer of those Yanam soldiers.

Instantly calming down now that he knew that Gerald was here, Ichiro then sat beside him before replying, "I well, I'm here with a few others to discuss the assassination cases... While we did manage to find out who the murderer was, he was unfortunately successful in leaving the country..."

"What a pity..." said Gerald as he shook his head, though he was merely acting along. After all, Amare was a Crawford cultivator! If the investigation team truly did manage to capture him, it'd be the joke of the century!

"Indeed Speaking of which, why are you here?" asked Ichiro as he raised a slight brow.
"Ah, well, I'm friends with this man, and we're just here to have a drink," replied Gerald as he gestured toward Derrick.
"I see Well, I'll leave Chef Yamamoto to you then. We're already full anyway. Apologies for the outburst earlier, but it's only reasonable to feel annoyed when we were told that our meal was being postponed Regardless, I hope you don't take my initial bad attitude to heart!" declared Ichiro as he outstretched his hand in Derrick's direction.
" Well I wasn't exactly a saint either. Come to think of it, I drank quite a bit this afternoon so this impulsiveness must be a sign that I haven't quite sobered up yet. Either way, since you're friends with brother Gerald, do stay and have a meal with us!"
replied Derrick as he placed his pahn against his forehead. He truly hadn't expected Gerald to know people from the military as well. After all, he had assumed that Gerald didn't know anyone here.
"Maybe some other time. We still have quite a bit to deal with, " replied Ichiro with a wave of his hand.

After Ichiro left, Derrick couldn't help but feel immensely embarrassed.

Sensing that, Gerald then cleared his throat before saying, "You know, while it's true that you've made it big here to the point where even the military respects you, it's best that you refrain from behaving this way anymore. If you keep doing this, I assure you that you'll make a plethora of enemies in no time flat."

"... I know... I was just trying to give you better treatment," replied Derrick with a nod, his face burning in embarrassment.

"As I've said, just treat me normally," said Gerald in an indifferent tone.

Shortly after, the waiter returned with their food. As Derrick and Takuya talked about the contracts in further detail, Gerald and Aiden simply remained quiet as they had their meals.

As they went through the contracts, Takuya found it increasingly difficult not to smile. After all, according to what was agreed upon, the Futabas would be able to earn from the Fareast Consortium at least twelve million dollars per year! With this kind of revenue, the Futaba family could definitely overcome their current crisis!

They would also be given a chance to revert to their former glory! Best of all, the family wouldn't fall during his reign! With that in mind, Takuya could confidently meet with his ancestors once he died years later.

Whatever the case was, it was about three hours later when the duo completed their discussion. With that done, Derrick then handed his bank card to the waiter before looking at Gerald as he said, "Alright, we're done for now. Once we're back at my place, I'll be preparing one of my guestrooms for you. Since I've handed all my work to my secretaries, I'll be giving you a good tour around in the next few days!"

"While I appreciate the kind offer, I still have some things to deal with, so I can't stay with you for the time being," replied Gerald, who knew that he had yet to properly deal with the Hanyus and Kanagawas.

He, for one, knew that they wouldn't quiet down just from a few threats. While it would be for the best if that really did do the trick, Gerald doubted that they would stay down. With that in mind, if they made one wrong move, they only had themselves to blame for what he would then do to them.

"... I see... Well, after you've settled your business, do contact me! Also, if you need any more help, don't hesitate to tell me! Nothing's too difficult for 'Brother Zima'! That's what they call me around these parts, you know?" declared Derrick who didn't try to force Gerald to come with him since he was well aware that Gerald was always busy.

Either way, once Gerald, Aiden, and Takuya got into their car, the trio then began departing back to the Futaba manor.

Hugging his two contracts tightly, the previously gloomy Takuya was now beaming with joy. Without Gerald's help, none of this would've been possible...! As he thought about that, Takuya couldn't help but stare at Gerald for a while. For a young man, not only was he extremely powerful, but he also had extremely wide connections. Hell, he even had an extraordinary temperament! Gerald didn't feel like an ordinary man at all!

With all that in mind, Takuya was eventually prompted to ask, "Again... How did you get acquainted with the chairman of the Fareast Consortium...? He seemed to respect you greatly..."

"I just helped him a few years back. He's merely returning the favor to me," replied Gerald with a smile.

"Who are you really...?" asked Takuya, unable to hold his curiosity back any longer. Being the patriarch of his family, he had seen many outstanding youngsters. However, none of them even came close to Gerald's capabilities.

"I'm just an ordinary person who knows a few skills and people. Aside from that, there really isn't anything special about me," replied Gerald with a wave of his hand.

Chuckling in response, Takuya then said, "... Well, it's fine if you don't wish to tell me. Either way, I truly am grateful for all your help. With these two contracts, my family will now be able to make a comeback!"

Takuya now realized that no matter who Gerald truly was, it didn't really matter. What mattered was that he had never done Fujiko or his family members any harm, and that was more than enough for him. Thinking back, Gerald was honestly the blessing his family needed when they were at their lowest. Whatever the case was, it was nearing eleven when they finally got back to the manor.

The second they entered, Takuya wasted no time and immediately began sending messages to all the members of his family, telling them to gather for a family meeting. Since half of the family was already waiting for Gerald outside the manor, the second they received their messages, they instantly began laughing with joy. To them, if another family meeting was being held so soon, it must be because Gerald had gotten their family more good things! In other words, they would soon have more things to take advantage of!

Either way, those who had already left quickly found themselves bolting back to the manor.

Fujiko herself had received the message, and upon seeing Gerald, she quickly asked, "What on earth has happened? My father's never held meetings this close to each other!"



this rare opportunity to revive his family, he wasn't about to let everything crumble again under these money grabbing b*stards!

Regardless, by the twenty minute mark, almost everyone had arrived. Ignoring the fact that the newcomers had greeted Gerald but only nodded toward him, Takuya then made a brief headcount before eventually asking, "Where's Suke?"

Upon hearing that, the secretary leaned closer to Takuya before whispering, "I've already called him a number of times, but he didn't pick up..."

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"Then let's not bother about him. Either way... I've gathered all of you here today to share some good news! With brother Gerald's help, I've managed to get two contracts with the Fareast Consortium! If everything goes right, then the Futaba family will obtain at least twelve million dollars in revenue per year!" declared Takuya as he looked at the rest of his family.

"W-what...?!" exclaimed almost everyone as they alternated their gazes between Gerald and Takuya. Everyone knew about the Fareast Consortium! It wasn't an exaggeration to say that even the richest of the rich in Japan would benefit from a collaboration with them...! With that in mind, they could surely continue leeching off the family for ages to come...!

"I was in charge of business with others before this, patriarch! With that said, you can leave the contracts to me! With me dealing with the Fareast Consortium, you can expect to get fifteen million a year instead of just twelve million!"
"Bullsh*t! Don't listen to him, patriarch! He's caused several of our business contracts to become utterly wasted! Leave it to me instead! Just so you know, I'm great at negotiating! The problem is, nobody's given me a chance to prove myself!"
"Hold it! Let me take over the contract instead!"
Soon enough, everyone was shouting in hopes that the patriarch would leave the contracts to them. After all, anyone who got the gig would surely be able to obtain an unthinkable amount of money! As Takuya had said, twelve million was simply an estimate. Once the collaboration began, that amount could very well double! If they played their cards right, then they could
easily pocket a million dollars or two every year!
Contrary to how excited everyone was getting, Fujiko appeared somewhat calm as she asked, "Is this what happened?"
"Bingo," replied Gerald with a nod.

"I see... So you've helped us this much again... I really have no idea how we're ever going to repay you..." muttered Fujiko with a sigh. On one hand, she was glad that her family was finally getting a chance to revive. On the other, she knew that this meant that she was only going to owe Gerald more and more.

"Don't worry about it. I've already told you, haven't I? I may need your help in the future, so just make sure you don't refuse when the time comes," replied Gerald with a chuckle as he secretly glanced at the Seadom tribe pendant around her neck.

Now that he had gotten so close to Fujiko and her father, Gerald knew that he had to start emphasizing that he may need their help. That way, they hopefully wouldn't be too surprised when he finally asked them about the Seadom tribe.

Either way, upon hearing that, Fujiko immediately nodded before declaring, "Not to worry! I'll never ball from helping you!"

Fujiko meant it too. After all, her family had taken far too much from him. Even if she had to sacrifice her life, so be it...!

"No need to be that serious, I won't ask for anything unreasonable..." replied Gerald, sensing that Fujiko was looking too much into this.

"Regardless of how easy the task is, I'll still treat it extremely seriously!" said Fujiko as she stared determinedly at the youth. Upon realizing that she was now looking at him,

Gerald quickly looked away from her pendant. The last thing he needed was her thinking that he was some kind of pervert!