1704 A Slap Heard Around the World

It seemed like the diminutive Master Sunless, an unknown Ascended from the lakeshore settlement, had no chance against the young master of the Aegis Rose clan. Not only was Tristan much taller and more powerfully built, but he was also a Legacy...

And Legacies still held the title of the most skilled and deadly warriors of humanity, by far, even now that the number of Awakened had swelled. Their upbringing, training, and martial culture were all designed to produce lethal fighters to rule the battlefield unopposed.

The idle onlookers did not know what the pretty young man had done to enrage the Legacy scion so much, but from the looks of it, he was in for a good beating... which was a shame, considering that with his jade skin and slender figure, he looked quite handsome.

Sadly, though, he didn't look like much of a fighter.

Neither did Master Sunless seem very familiar with handling a blade. He tried to swing the provided greatsword to deflect an incoming attack, but failed.

Not, not just that...

Perhaps due to his short stature and slender build, he actually lost control of the heavy blade and allowed its weight to pull him off balance, Instead of deflecting the opponent's sword, he yelped and stumbled forward instead.

That was a common mistake most often seen among Awakened. Young Awakened were prone to overestimating their newfound strength, forgetting that their mass and center of gravity remained the same. So, it was easy for them to misjudge things and end up being pulled forward by the inertia of their own swing.

Still. For a Master to be that inexperienced in combat was a bit...

The delicate Ascended seemed to be doomed.

But, strangely enough, he ended up being saved by his clumsy mistake. It was doubtful that he could have deflected Tristan's powerful strike, but after stumbling forward and nearly sprawling on the ground, the opponent's sword missed and flew harmlessly above his head.

There was a murmur among the onlookers...

"Lucky."

But then, they were treated to a bizarre spectacle.

That Master Sunless was not just lucky... it was as if he was charmed!

No matter what Tristan of Aegis Rose tried to do, his sword never seemed able to reach the cowardly opponent. Master Sunless slipped on the cobblestones, accidentally evading a skillful attack. While trying to stand up, he tripped on the hem of his own silk robe, losing balance and gracelessly sprawling on the ground... but also making Tristan's follow-up strike miss him entirely.

While trying to block a downward slash, he actually failed to hold on to his sword and dropped it, staggering back in panic. However, in the process, the coward accidentally kicked the falling sword and sent it flying in the direction of the Legacy scion, who was forced to hastily defend his lower torso and retreat.

Then, Master Sunless recklessly bent down to pick up the fallen sword a grievous mistake when facing an armed opponent! However, it was exactly because no one in their right mind would think of leaving themselves so open to a lethal blow that Tristan had never anticipated it, once again fruitlessly sliced the empty air above the oblivious opponent's head.

"What are you doing?! Fight like a man!"

A sheepish smile appeared on the unknown Master's deathly pale face.

"But I... I was trying to pick up my sword! How am I supposed to fight without a sword?"

Ascended Tristan let out an infuriated growl.

"Just take it, damn! I'll step back!"

Under everyone's bewildered gazes, he took a step back and waited patiently for his opponent to arm himself.

But Master Sunless did not seem to be in a hurry. breathing heavily.

Tristan's face twitched.

"What are you doing?!”

The delicate young man coughed.

"Well... you didn't specify that I should pick it up immediately, did you? So I thought I'd catch my breath real quick."

The Legacy scion seemed stuck between complete disbelief and apoplectic fury.

"Pick it up right this second!"

Master Sunless bent down and gripped the sword.

"Alright, alright... there's no need to shout..."

Soon, the oddly comical duel continued.

He continued stumbling blindly through the hurricane of steel, remaining unscathed by sheer, ridiculous luck.

But even that helpless fool's luck was bound to run out sooner or later. And finally, in less than a minute, Tristan's sword pierced the silk robe and bit into the delicate young man's shoulder.

He had held back, not wishing to deliver a serious wound to the offending profligate, so the cut was shallow.

Still, a cut was a cut.

...It also hurt like a real cut. Sunny grimaced.

Young Master Tristan, meanwhile, gave him a disdainful smirk and retrieved his sword. The two of them were standing close to each other, and the Legacy was staring down at Sunny, his face full of pleased indignation.

"Serves you right, scoundrel. The victory is mine. Now... apologize! Recount your misdeeds and humbly beg forgiveness! I'll let you off easy if you do... but if you don't, don't blame me for being ruthless!"

But Sunny simply tilted his head.

...Who says that the victory is yours?"

Tristan blinked.

"What? I clearly just won. What are you..."

But Sunny was nonplussed. He raised the collar of the Nebulous Mantle, revealing the black shirt beneath.

"We agreed to fight to first blood. Do you see any blood?"

The young Master stared at his chest in confusion.

There was clearly a cut in the little knave's shirt... but where was the blood?

Even the blade of his sword was clean.

He frowned and started to speak, his tone full of confusion:

"How..."

But before he could finish...

And to the absolute shock of everyone watching...

The next moment, Sunny's fist slammed into his face with an audible bang, sending young Tristan of Aegis Rose staggering back.

The Legacy scion collided with his friend, Master Mercy, while covering his face with a hand. His stunned eyes were opened wide.

There was blood dripping between his fingers beneath them.

Suddenly, the courtyard was silent.

In that silence, Ascended Tristan slowly lowered his hand, revealing two red streams flowing out of his nostrils and marring his handsome face.

His voice was listless:

"You... you..."

Sunny dropped the heavy greatsword on the ground with visible relief, rubbed his wrists, and let out a sigh.

Then, he smiled.

"Well, it seems like I have won. Good fight, good fight. Now, shall we proceed with begging for forgiveness? You don't need to kneel... I'm not a pervert, so I'm not into such stuff..."

At that moment, young Master Tristan looked like he would spit blood. That, too, would have constituted Sunny's victory... if the Legacy wasn't already bleeding...

Then, Tristan's features contorted, and he seemed to completely lose his mind.

With a face flush with murderous wrath, the Legacy lunged forward and roared:

"You wretched mongrel!"

Sunny pretended to be frightened and flinched away with an ungentlemanly shriek.

Coincidentally - or rather, quite purposefully - the sun was directly behind him.

Which meant that his shadow was sprawled on the cobblestones directly in front of him.

Right where Ascended Tristan's foot had just landed.

Using a tiny bit of essence, Sunny stealthily manifested a small part of the wild shadow and made it trip the poor fool without anything noticing.

That was more than enough to send the enraged young Master, who had committed to the attack a little bit too hard, completely off balance.

It all worked splendidly.

...In fact, it worked a little bit too well.

'Oh. Crap.'

Sunny had forgotten to take one small, but vitally important detail into account.

In the next moment, everyone in the courtyard witnessed a startling scene.

Ascended Tristan of the Aegis Rose clan lunged at the dainty Master, who let out an embarrassing shriek and flinched away in fear. By doing so, he not only completely avoided the sudden attack, but also caused the Legacy to lose balance and be pulled forward by the weight of his sword.

And there, right behind his cowardly opponent...

Was the parapet of the courtyard ramparts.

The young Legacy had no time to slow down and collided with it at full speed, buckling at the waist and flying over the stone parapet in the blink of an eye.

A split second later, his figure disappeared from view.

A dumbfounded silence settled over the courtyard.

...In a few moments, everyone shuddered as they heard a loud crash from somewhere far below.

Master Sunless looked back with a strange expression on his face, then cleared his throat and gracefully straightened his mantle with an elegant motion.

Then, he turned to Mercy of Clan Dagonet and said, his voice full of sincere concern:

"Sir Mercy... why are dawdling? Shouldn't you hurry up and tend to your friend? Such a fall won't kill him... I think... but he'll certainly need a good healer."

The petrified young man slowly nodded.

"Ah... y-yes... I'll go..."

With that, he turned around and hurried away. But at that moment, Master Sunless called out to him:

"Wait a moment!"

Ascended Mercy froze and slowly turned around.

"...Yes?"

Sunny smiled and pointed to the heavy greatsword laying on the ground.

"The sword... what was it, the Hard Breaker? Take the sword with you!"

The young Master stared at the greatsword for a moment, then bent down to pick it up.

"Yes..."

He mumbled an apology and dashed away.

Sunny grinned.

"Make sure that Ascended Tristan takes his time to rest and recuperate! There's no need to rush!"

He sighed and then added, his voice full of magnanimity:

"He can beg me for forgiveness at a later date!”