

Chapter 1877

Shortly after, a scar-faced man walked up to the woman before scoffing, "Planning on going somewhere, boss?"

"...Big Brother, we just run a small business...! We really don't have any money to give you...!" replied the stall owner in a resigned tone.

"Cut the cr*p!" sneered the scarred man before slapping her right in the cheek!

Due to how hard he had hit her, the woman ended up staggering two steps back before having to lean against her cart to support herself...

"Mother!" yelled the woman's daughter as she immediately ran over to her to help her up.

Following that, she glared at the scarred man before shouting, "You utter b*stard...! To think that you'd dare to hit a woman!"

"Hmm? This your daughter, boss? She's quite a looker!" sneered the scarred man, a malicious smile on his face as he walked over to the stall owner's daughter before yanking her over to his side!

"L-let go of me, you b*stard...! What are you planning to do?!" shouted the poor girl as she attempted to break herself free of his grip. Sadly, she was far too frail to even garner a response from him...

Regardless, upon seeing that he wasn't planning on releasing her daughter, the now teary-eyed stall owner quickly pulled her daughter back!

Once the girl was behind her, the stall owner turned to face the scarred man before pleading, “Please, Big Brother...! Just leave her be...! I’ll give you the money...!”

Smiling even more sinisterly after hearing that, the scarred man then replied, “Hah! I don’t want your money anymore! Instead, why don’t you and your daughter just follow me and be my servants? I’ll make sure you have a comfortable life! How about it?”

It was evident that this despicable man preferred women over money, and he now had his eyes on both the stall owner and her daughter...

Understandably frightened after hearing that, the duo knew that they weren’t going to be able to avoid trouble tonight...

Not wanting her virgin daughter’s future to be destroyed by him, the stall owner eventually proposed, “...Big Brother, how about this... Leave my daughter be and I’ll willingly follow you...!”

“What? You dare bargain with me?! Since you’re that foolish, men! Get them!” yelled the scarred man in a rage. Since they dared to resist him—despite the fact that he had been ‘courteous’ enough to ask—, he was no longer against using force!

Whatever the case was, upon hearing his order, his underlings immediately rushed forward and began dragging both the stall owner and her daughter away!

While there were still people around, none of them dared to step in. After all, nobody wanted trouble with these hooligans...

All of a sudden, a masculine voice yelled out, "Stop right there!"

Surprised, everyone turned to look at the source of the voice... And standing there while pointing at the scarred man, was Rey!

Glaring at the youth, the scarred man then sneered, "Huh? Who the hell even are you? Look, just finish your meal and don't be a busybody, kid!"

"I'd rather be a busybody than be a b*stard like you! To think there'd be a man on this planet who would dare bully two innocent women with his group of hooligans!" scoffed Rey.

At that moment, Gerald, Rey, and Juno could only stare wide-eyed at Rey. After all, none of them had expected him, of all people, to confront those gangsters...Chapter 1878

"You tired of living or something, kid? Are you seriously meddling in my affairs? Do you even know who I am?!" growled the scarred man as he continued glaring fiercely at Rey.

"Don't know, don't care! Regardless, let them go already or I'll call the Great Council over!" retorted Rey before fishing his phone out in hopes of threatening the gangster.

Upon hearing that, the scarred man and his underlings instantly began laughing mockingly.

Once he was done laughing, the scarred man then jeered, "Do you honestly think they'll come over when they know we're involved! Go ahead and call them then! See what happens!"

Hearing that, Rey was slightly taken aback. To think that these hooligans weren't afraid of the Great Council's power!

Shaking his head, the scarred man then signaled for his men to go after Rey, prompting Rey to instinctually take a step back...

However, before he could take another, he suddenly felt a firm pat on his shoulder.

Turning around and seeing that it was Gerald, Rey then whispered, "...Brother Gerald..."

Simply pushing Rey back into his seat, Gerald then calmly replied, "Just relax and leave the rest to me!"

Understanding that everything was going to be fine now that Gerald was stepping in, Rey chose not to say another word.

Quite frankly, Gerald would've eventually stepped in even if Rey hadn't. Still, Rey did simplify things for him. Now he could skip talking with those numbskulls in the first place and simply go straight to teaching them a well-deserved lesson.

With that, Gerald took a step forward... before vanishing into thin air!

As everyone's eyes widened, wondering where he had gone to, their question was promptly answered when several of the scarred man's underlings fell to the ground!

Staring at the youth—who was somehow already standing close to him—, the scarred man now realized how fearfully fast and powerful Gerald truly was.

Not wanting things to just end like this, the scarred man quickly snapped out of his shocked state before turning to look at his remaining subordinates and ordering, "D*mn it all! Attack!"

To his horror, before his remaining men could even react, Gerald had already taken all of them out! The only one left standing was the scarred man himself!

Realizing that he couldn't even see Gerald's afterimage before his men went down, the now terrified scarred hooligan knew that he stood no chance against this youth...

Feeling a breeze before him, the scarred man then quivered as he realized that Gerald was now staring him right in the eye...!

Sneering, Gerald then declared, "Get out of my sight! I never want to see you or your men here again! Ignore that and all of you can expect to receive one-way tickets to hell!"

Gulping as he immediately nodded in fear, the scarred man then quickly scurried away with his underlings like the pitiful rats they were...

With that dealt with, Gerald then walked over to the stall owner and her daughter before smiling as he said, "Everything's alright now."

"T-thank you... Thank you so much...!" cried out the relieved stall owner.

"Don't worry about it. I'm only doing what's right!" replied Gerald in a humble tone.

Still, to think that Rey would be faster than him when it came to seeking justice for others...

Gerald was thankfully around when all this happened, otherwise who knew what kind of trouble Rey would get into... While Rey's righteousness was definitely applaudable, he was still a bit too weak to be taunting others...

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Chapter 1879

"Speaking of which, we're not full yet, boss! With that said, why don't you resume business?" said Gerald.

"Oh! Just give me a minute and I'll make more for all of you to eat then!" replied the stall owner almost instantaneously, a wide smile on her face.

Since they had just saved her, it was only natural that she felt the need to repay their kindness with hospitality. With that, she quickly began setting up her stall again before getting to work... and not long after, a massive plate of food was served at Gerald's table.

"I'm truly grateful for your help today, so all this is on me!" declared the stall owner.

Before Gerald or the girls could even reply, Rey was already saying, "You're being way too polite, boss! It was only a small matter to us!"

Upon hearing that, the trio could help but stare at Rey with raised brows, thinking how shameless he was.

“Well, small or not, it was still a great help to us! Now eat up and do tell me if you need more!” replied the stall owner before happily returning to work.

Once she left, Juno couldn't help but glare at Rey as she said, “Hey, don't go acting so impulsively next time, Rey!”

Scratching the back of his head in response, the slightly embarrassed youth then chuckled sheepishly before replying, “I was just trying to help, Miss Zorn!”

“I get that, but you have to consider your own capabilities before picking a fight like that! Had Gerald not been present today, you'd surely have been beaten into a pulp!” retorted Juno.

Just about anyone would've stepped up to deal with those hooligans if they had the capability to. However, the fact that no one did meant that they all understood that they were never going to be able to take on those bat-wielding gangsters without getting into serious trouble.

Whatever the case was, Rey then grinned cheekily before replying, “I know, I know, I won't do something like this again, Miss Zorn... I'll just leave it to brother Gerald!”

Hearing his name, Gerald then cleared his throat before saying, “While it's true that your righteous behavior deserves praise, even I implore you not to be so impulsive in future!”

Compliments aside, Gerald had to make sure to properly share how he felt about today's events.

“Got it, brother Gerald! I'll keep that in mind!” replied Rey as he nodded, completely understanding where Juno and Gerald were coming from.

Essentially, Gerald was telling him not to be overly righteous when the odds were stacked against him. After all, he was still nowhere near as strong as Gerald yet. Still, Rey couldn't help but wonder how great it would be if he could deal with foes the way Gerald did...

Regardless, it was about half an hour later when the four finally finished their meal and began to leave.

Naturally, Gerald insisted on paying the stall owner, and in the end, she was forced to accept the payment. Gerald, for one, knew that life wasn't easy for her and her daughter, so he would've paid her regardless of how much she objected.

Either way, upon returning home, the four then headed to their respective rooms to get well-deserved rest. After that busy day, all of them were rightfully exhausted... Well, most of them.

Gerald, for one, knew that he couldn't just sit there and do nothing now that he knew that the scarred man and the Hoklux Gang existed. They were already causing trouble and fear to members of society, and they would surely get more and more daring in the future if something wasn't done now.

With that in mind, Gerald laid down on his bed... and before long, his ghost form flew out before quickly heading toward the Hoklux Gang's headquarters...

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Chapter 1880

Tonight, some people were simply fated to mysteriously disappear off the face of the planet...

Soon enough, Gerald found himself hovering over the Hoklux Gang's headquarters...

As previously seen, the Hoklux Gang was a bunch of hooligans, and the head of the group was a vicious man known simply as Roger. From the rumors Gerald had managed to gather, he was frequently summoned to the Great Council for 'coffee talks'.

Upon phasing through the headquarters' ceiling, Gerald was immediately greeted by the sight of the scarred man kneeling before a seated person—whom Gerald assumed to be Roger—while saying, "I apologize, master...! We truly are useless for being defeated by others...!"

"That you all are! Rubbish! To think that all of you weren't a match for a single man! You've truly embarrassed the Hoklux Gang this time!" retorted Roger as he glared at the scarred man.

Hearing that, the scarred man and his subordinates simply lowered their heads, not having the guts to even look up.

"Y-you don't understand, master...! That person was so powerful we didn't even have a chance to fight back...!" replied the scarred man.

"Excuses! Just admit that you're weak already! What are you even here for if you're that pathetic!" scoffed Roger with a snort, clearly unwilling to believe his subordinate. Of course, had Roger been at the scene while Gerald did the deed, he would've thought much differently.

"Regardless, our gang has lost face today because of this! We can only regain our pride by dealing with that person! To think he has the nerve to go against us... He must crave death! Go look for him immediately!" ordered Roger in a furious voice.

"R-right away, master...!" replied the scarred man in a respectful tone.

“There’s no need for that! I’m right here!” yelled an unfamiliar voice at that moment, causing Roger and his men to instantly feel astonished.

After realizing that they couldn’t even detect the source of the voice, Roger stood up before roaring, “Who the hell are you? Show yourself!”

However, the only response Roger got was a tight slap across his face! The slap itself was so hard that Roger found himself landing a good distance from where he had initially been standing!

Upon seeing that, everyone was rightfully dumbfounded. There was nobody even remotely close enough to Roger to cause him to be flung like that...!

As the horrified scarred man took a step back—unsure of what was even happening anymore—, a sudden gust of wind blew past him... and seconds later, he was prompted to hold onto his now bleeding neck as his eyes bulged from his skull!

Not even knowing how that gash had suddenly appeared on his neck, the scarred man soon flopped to the ground, dead...

Roger himself had just gotten to his feet again at that point, only to end up getting stunned again when he saw his dead subordinate.

Before he could even react, his eyes widened as blood suddenly began gushing out of his own neck! And just like that, the dying Roger dropped to his knees before splashing into his own puddle of blood...

Seeing how unusual their leaders’ deaths were, the subordinates instantly began screaming as they

attempted to escape the scene...

Gerald himself—who was still invisible—simply glared at the two fresh corpses without the slightest remorse...

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Chapter 1881

To Gerald, they deserved to die.

Instead of letting them come and cause trouble, Gerald would rather get rid of them in advance. That way, he would be able to avoid getting into bigger trouble.

After staring at them for a few seconds, Gerald took out the Phangrottom Rune.

With a firm wave of the Phangrottom Rune, Gerald exterminated the souls of those two.

People like them didn't qualify to be reincarnated. They should just turn into nothingness.

After dealing with the matter, Gerald left right away.

Gerald knew that the next morning, the death of the head of the Hoklux Gang would be reported on every news channel, and the news would definitely shock the whole city.

However, most of the people would only feel glad seeing as the gang's head had finally been punished for his evil deeds.

After going back to his place, Gerald returned to his body and fell asleep.

The next morning, a phone call woke Gerald up.

When Gerald was awakened, he took his phone and saw that it was from Harold.

Gerald could roughly guess what Harold was calling him for. He had to be calling for help to solve the murder case of the head of the Hoklux Gang.

After hesitating for a few seconds, Gerald answered the call.

"Hello, Mr. Lee."

Gerald greeted Harold with a weary voice.

Harold seemed to be able to sense Gerald's tone, so he immediately apologized politely, "Mr. Gerald, I'm sorry to call you this early in the morning. However, something strange happened in the headquarters of the Hoklux Gang last night. The head of the gang and one of his subordinates died. Their deaths were very strange, and the other underlings said that they didn't see anyone when it happened."

As expected, Harold was indeed calling Gerald regarding that very case.

“Oh, really? Okay, I will go there right away!”

Gerald pretended to be surprised before agreeing to help.

After hanging up, Gerald got out of his bed.

When he went out of his room, Rey and the girls were already watching the television in the living room. The news about the death of the leader of the Hoklux Gang was being reported in the news.

When Gerald came out, the three of them looked at him simultaneously.

“Why are you looking at me?”

Gerald asked in surprise.

“Gerald, does the matter of the Hoklux Gang have something to do with you?”

Juno seemed to have sensed something, and she questioned him immediately.

“That’s right. It was me.”

When being asked, Gerald did not have anything else to say, and so, he chose to admit it.

“What? Brother Gerald, was it truly you who did it?”

Hearing his words, Rey shouted in surprise.

“If I didn’t go to them, they would have come and troubled us. I heard them talking about finishing us off, so I took action first!”

Gerald explained in a normal tone.

Juno and the two understood after hearing his words.

“Right, Rey, let’s go to the headquarters of the Hoklux Gang now. Mr. Lee called just now and asked us to go there!”

Later, Gerald told Rey.

“What? He asked us to go there? Brother Gerald, did they find out it was you already?”

Rey was startled and looked at Gerald doubtfully.

“Don’t worry. They won’t know it was me. They just want us to help solve the case. It’s better this way. I can just think of a random reason and tell them that. Anyway, they don’t know how we do our business.”

Gerald told Rey.

Everything was under Gerald's control. He would never leave any evidence behind.

Besides, only Gerald could handle such things flawlessly.

Having said that, Gerald and Rey left the house and headed to the headquarters of the Hoklux Gang.

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Chapter 1882

"Brother Gerald, you should be using that out-of-body experience technique, right? When will I be able to learn that?"

In the car, Rey asked Gerald curiously. He also wanted to learn that skill.

"Don't rush. You will learn it one day, but you should focus on the basics first!"

Gerald turned his head and looked at Rey.

Some skills were not that easy to master. One could not learn to run before he could walk.

They arrived at the headquarters of the Hoklux Gang as they were conversing.

The place was surrounded by many people inside and outside. It was really crowded.

There were already a few cars of the Great Council in front of the building, and the inspectors were working to maintain the order at the scene.

Gerald walked over with Rey.

“Rey, don’t say anything once we get inside. I’ll handle everything!”

Gerald reminded Rey softly as they walked in.

Rey nodded in understanding.

“I understand, Brother Gerald!”

Rey knew what Gerald meant.

When they arrived at the entrance, the inspectors of the Great Council stopped them.

“Where is Mr. Lee? He was looking for us. I am Gerald Crawford!”

Gerald glanced at the inspector who didn’t allow them to go in and asked, at the same time telling him his identity and name.

When he heard Gerald's name, the inspector showed a surprised expression on his face.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Crawford. Mr. Lee has been waiting for you for a long time!"

The inspector quickly let them in as he spoke.

Although he had never seen Gerald, he had heard of his name. He didn't expect that the person before his eyes would be Gerald Crawford, and so, he quickly made way and let them in. He didn't want to delay the investigation as he could not afford to be blamed for that.

Gerald brought Rey inside.

Once inside, Harold quickly came forward to greet them.

"Mr. Crawford, You're finally here!"

Harold greeted Gerald briefly and brought them to the scene.

Gerald pretended to know nothing. He pretended not to know the way and let Harold lead them in.

In the hall, it could be seen that Roger and the scarred man were lying in the pool of their own blood.

"What happened?"

Gerald asked suspiciously.

“They were killed in one strike. According to the underlings, Roger and the scarred man were lifted off the ground by an unseen force. Then, their throats were suddenly slashed, and they died on the spot. It was rather bizarre when they died.”

Harold shared every piece of information he had with Gerald

After Gerald heard it, he didn't find it surprising at all.

“Anything else apart from this?”

After a pause, Gerald asked Harold again.

Harold shook his head.

“Apart from this, there's nothing else.”

Harold replied helplessly.

Gerald took Rey along and looked around.

Even if it was Gerald who had done it, he still had to pretend that he was trying to solve the case.

“What a strong aura of resentment!”

Suddenly, Gerald felt a very strong aura of resentment, and he exclaimed.

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Chapter 1883

“Aura of resentment? Why didn’t I feel it?”

Harold asked in confusion.

Gerald glanced at Harold.

“You are an ordinary man, so you can’t feel it.”

Gerald gave a simple answer.

Hearing this, Harold felt a little helpless, thinking that it would have been better if Gerald could have told him this more implicitly.

Rey, who was standing at the side, found it rather funny.

However, only Gerald could see everything.

Rey thought that Gerald was just pretending when he said that. However, it was actually true. Gerald did

indeed feel a strong aura of resentment.

Gerald hadn't sensed this aura last night, but today, it suddenly appeared.

This genuinely surprised Gerald as he was sure that the aura wasn't coming from the souls of Roger and the scarred man.

This was because their souls had been eliminated by Gerald using the Phangrottom Rune earlier.

It looked like there was something wrong with this place. Someone must have died here, and the body must still be here somewhere.

"Mr. Lee, I suggest you search the place up and down. Apart from the bodies of Roger and the scarred man, there must still be a corpse hidden somewhere in this place. Otherwise, there wouldn't be such a strong aura of resentment here!"

After a pause, Gerald instructed Harold.

Harold didn't hesitate and took action upon hearing Gerald's words. He started ordering his men to check the place thoroughly.

As for Gerald and Rey, they began searching another place.

When there was no one around, only then did Rey ask Gerald, "Brother Gerald, what you said just now is all fake, right?"

Rey asked suspiciously.

“Who told you that? When I came here last night, I didn’t feel such a strong aura of resentment. It seems that the Hoklux Gang must have done too many bad things in the past.”

Gerald looked very serious when he said that to Rey. He was not joking.

After hearing that, Rey realized that what Gerald had said just now was true. He had initially thought that Gerald was just acting in front of Harold.

“Argh!”

After a while, a loud scream was heard.

Immediately, everyone ran in the direction where the sound had come from.

They came to a wall and saw a skull sticking out from a hole in the wall.

Seeing this, Rey looked at Gerald.

It was indeed true. He now believed in Gerald’s words.

Harold frowned, and his face turned gloomy.

Now, Harold believed in Gerald's ability even more, because everything was just as Gerald had told him.

"Smash the wall and dig out the corpse!"

Harold ordered his subordinates solemnly.

Then, they started working, smashing the wall.

Finally, the skeletons in the wall fell out one by one.

As the skeletons fell out, everyone was taken aback.

There wasn't just one set of skeletons, but a few.

"Oh, my God! There are so many sets of skeletons!"

When Rey saw this, he exclaimed.

"There must be more than one corpse here!"

Gerald reminded Harold.

As an inspector, Harold would naturally be able to see that. He was equally shocked. He didn't expect that there were still so many corpses hidden inside the Hoklux Gang. No wonder Gerald had said that there was a strong aura of resentment here. It seemed to be true.

“Quick. Get someone to put these bones together!”

After that, Harold ordered his men once more.

Rumble!

Suddenly, the sky turned dark, and the thunder rumbled.

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Chapter 1884

“Oh, no! The aura is getting stronger!”

Gerald was alarmed.

“Quick, Mr. Lee, get your men out of here. Get out now! The masculine aura in your bodies is the target of the grudgeful ghosts!”

Immediately, Gerald shouted at Harold.

“Retreat!”

Harold shouted right away without a second thought.

Hearing this, all the inspectors retreated from the hall with Harold and stood by the roadside immediately.

Once outside, Harold and his men saw the black fog rush into the hall of the Hoklux Gang from the sky.

Seeing this, everyone at the scene was terrified. They thought that it was very frightening as they had never seen such a thing happening before.

At that moment, only Gerald and Rey were left inside the hall.

Gerald glanced at Rey, who was behind him.

“What are you doing here?! Get out now!”

Gerald shouted.

“Brother Gerald, I want to stay to help you!”

Rey replied.

“What can you help me with?! You haven’t learned anything yet. I can handle this alone! Get out quickly before it’s too late!”

Gerald chased Rey out of the hall.

It was no laughing matter as Rey was an ordinary person just like Harold Lee. So, the masculine aura in their bodies was very alluring for the grudgeful ghosts.

“Brother Gerald...”

“Go! Are you not listening to me?”

Rey wanted to say something, but he was immediately scolded by Gerald.

When Rey heard that, he knew that he had no choice but to obey Gerald. So, he turned around and ran toward the door.

Bang!

However, it was too late. The door swung shut and blocked the entrance.

Seeing this, Gerald knew it was too late.

“You can’t go out now. Come back here!”

Knowing that Rey was unable to get out, he instructed Rey right away.

Rey walked to Gerald obediently, grabbing a corner of his shirt.

Swish!

The next second, a black fog appeared in front of them.

The black fog circled around them continuously, almost as if it was waiting for something.

Rey didn't dare to make a sound nor breathe.

"What kind of ghost are you? Show yourself!"

Gerald stared at the black fog and shouted angrily.

Having said that, Gerald summoned his Astrabyss Sword and swung his sword.

The black fog felt the power from the sword and retreated further away from them.

Then, the black fog morphed into a human form and stood in front of them.

It was a grudgeful female ghost with a pale face, red lips, and blood-red eyes.

This female ghost was formed by the fusion of a few female corpses, so it was a very powerful grudgeful ghost.

"I know you were killed by the Hoklux Gang. However, Roger is already dead, so you can rest in peace now!"

Gerald said to the female ghost.

The female ghost stared at Gerald and released a red ribbon toward Gerald without saying anything.

Gerald swung his Astrabyss Sword immediately and started battling with the female ghost.

Rey, who was hiding behind Gerald, moved here and there. He didn't dare to open his eyes to look at the female grudgeful ghost, thinking that it was too scary.

At the next second, the female ghost released another red ribbon from her other hand.

This time, the red ribbon flew toward Rey.

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Chapter 1885

"Rey, be careful!"

Gerald shouted at Rey to alert him.

When Rey heard Gerald's warning, he immediately opened his eyes.

The next moment, Rey's waist was already tied by the red ribbon.

Swish!

Rey was dragged forward.

Seeing this, Gerald reacted quickly and cut the red ribbon with his sword.

Snap!

Fortunately, Gerald was fast enough. He cut the red ribbon and saved Rey.

“Soul Chain!”

After saving Rey, Gerald threw his Soul Chain toward the ghost.

The Soul Chain flew toward the female ghost.

However, the female ghost was not an easy target. She waved her red ribbon to block the Soul Chain.

Not giving her any chance, Gerald leaped forward and rushed toward the female ghost.

Gerald’s speed was so fast that the female ghost didn’t have any time to react.

Then, Gerald stabbed the female ghost with his Astrabyss Sword.

“Exterminate!”

Gerald shouted angrily in a deep voice.

With that, the Astrabyss Sword emitted a dark blue flame and engulfed the female ghost.

Then, using the power of the sword again, Gerald absorbed and annihilated the female ghost.

After finishing off the female ghost, Gerald fell to his knees. His body started emitting a blue dark flame. This happened when Gerald was absorbing the ghost into his body.

However, Gerald had no choice but to do this. This was the only way he could defeat the female ghost.

“Are you alright, Brother Gerald?”

Seeing this Rey immediately rushed forward and asked Gerald in concern.

“Don’t come here. Don’t touch me!”

Gerald reminded Rey.

Rey stopped moving at once.

After a while, the dark blue flame around Gerald finally disappeared, and he returned to normal.

Gerald stood up once again and looked at Rey.

“If you had touched me just now, you would have been consumed by the aura and been turned into a grudgeful ghost right away!”

Gerald uttered word by word.

Hearing this, Rey was shocked. He didn't know the consequences would be so horrible.

At the same time, the sky had returned to normal. The black clouds in the sky had disappeared completely.

Seeing this, Harold knew that the crisis inside must have been lifted.

Boom!

The door blocking the entrance of the hall was smashed, and Gerald and Rey walked out together.

Seeing them come out, Harold breathed a sigh of relief.

Harold quickly approached them.

“Are you alright, Mr. Crawford?”

Harold was concerned about his safety.

“I’m fine, Mr. Lee. The grudgeful ghost has been dealt with. It’s alright now. Roger and the scarred man were killed by that ghost!”

Gerald said to Harold.

“Thank you, Mr. Crawford. You are so incredible!”

Harold thanked Gerald excitedly. Now, he believed in Gerald’s power completely, and he would not doubt him anymore.

“It’s nothing, Mr. Lee. You are being too polite. This is our obligation!”

Gerald replied humbly.

Then, Gerald said to Harold, “Mr. Lee, since it’s safe now, I shall hand it over to you. We shall take our leave!”

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Chapter 1886

“Of course. Take care, Mr. Crawford!”

Harold said goodbye to Gerald respectfully.

After that, Gerald and Rey left the Hoklux Gang by car.

“Brother Gerald, it looks like the truth about this matter will not be discovered!”

In the car, Rey spoke, feeling very lucky.

“Hehe, I didn’t expect that there would be a grudgeful ghost in the hall. So, I just blamed everything on it. Anyway, those two deserved to die.”

Gerald said with a faint smile.

In truth, even without the grudgeful ghost, nobody would have found out that it was Gerald who had killed Roger and the scarred man.

It was just a coincidence, so Gerald simply put all the blame on this grudgeful ghost.

“Rey, next time when I tell you to leave, don’t hesitate. Fortunately, the grudgeful ghost this time was not particularly strong. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have been able to save you!”

Gerald reminded Rey.

“Okay, I understand, Brother Gerald.”

Rey nodded obediently.

What happened today was too frightening for him especially when the red ribbon had been tied around his waist. He still felt horrified when he thought about it.

Luckily, he had Gerald. Otherwise, he would have been doomed.

“Starting from tomorrow, I will teach you some basic skills. After you master the foundation, I will teach you how to protect yourself!”

After that, Gerald suggested.

“Really? That’s so great, Brother Gerald! I can finally start learning the skills!”

Rey shouted in excitement when he heard that.

The two arrived at the office in the middle of their conversation.

Upon returning to their office, they saw Juno and Yrsa watching the news about the Hoklux Gang. The news was broadcasting the scene when the sky above the Hoklux Gang’s place had turned dark.

“Hey, you’re back!”

Seeing the two of them, Juno stood up and greeted them.

“Yeah!”

Gerald replied with a smile.

“How was it? I can see that something happened from the television.”

Juno asked in concern.

Gerald smiled and answered.

“It’s nothing. There was just a grudgeful ghost hiding in the headquarters of the Hoklux Gang!”

Hearing his description, Juno understood it right away.

“So you blamed everything on that grudgeful ghost?”

Juno was quick-witted, and she guessed it right away.

“Yes. It saves me a lot of trouble that way!”

Gerald shrugged his shoulders and said.

“Great, then!”

Juno was assured after hearing it.

“By the way, Gerald, Yann called just now. He’s looking for you. You should go and meet him later!”

Just then, Juno remembered about the phone call and told Gerald.

“Yann? Why is he looking for me?”

Gerald was doubtful.

Yann Williams was a good friend of Gerald’s.

However, Yann was a playful man who just loved to eat, drink, and play. He always stayed out, so Gerald knew what kind of person he was.

Now that he was looking for him, there must be something.

“Alright. I’ll go and meet him later!”

Gerald didn’t say anything more and agreed to Juno’s suggestion.

“Juno, you can start teaching Rey and Yrsa some theoretical knowledge about cultivation in the evening!”

Then, Gerald told Juno.

“Okay, I know what to do.”

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Chapter 1887

“Right. Then, I shall go and find Yann now. Call me if there’s anything!”

Gerald reminded Juno once more and left the office.

After he had left the office, he drove to Yann’s place.

On the way, he didn’t forget to call Yann.

The call was answered in a short time.

“Hello, Yann. Why are you looking for me?”

Gerald asked Yann, who was on the other end of the phone curiously.

“Gerald, I’ve got a good thing for you!”

Yann said to Gerald excitedly.

“Good thing? What good thing?”

Gerald was still doubtful.

“Ha! Ha! Ha! I’ll tell you later!”

Yann kept Gerald in suspense.

Hearing this, Gerald couldn’t help but roll his eyes. This lad was acting mysteriously again.

Regardless, Gerald didn’t say anything as he knew what kind of a person Yann was.

“Alright. Are you at home now? I’m on the way there. I’ll get there in about ten minutes!”

Gerald asked Yann in advance and told him that he was heading there.

“So soon? Yes, I’m at home.”

Yann was surprised, but he replied immediately.

“Okay. That’s fine. See you later.”

Gerald replied and hung up.

A rich kid like Yann was always like that. From his tone, Gerald knew that he had to be messing around at home at the moment.

However, Gerald didn’t want to bother about that. It was Yann’s personal matter after all.

Everyone had a different life.

After ten minutes, Gerald arrived at Yann’s place, a luxurious villa.

Gerald parked his car and walked to the door. Just in time, he saw Yann coming out through the door with a woman around his arm.

Seeing this, Gerald smiled helplessly. Just as he had expected, Yann was indeed doing that.

After seeing the woman off, Yann looked at Gerald.

“Hey, brother! You’re here!”

Yann was very excited at the sight of Gerald. He came forward and opened his arms.

Gerald and Yann hugged each other.

“You don’t even stop for a day. Be careful or your body won’t be able to take it!”

Gerald teased him.

“That’s not possible. I’m in great shape! I’m not afraid of playing with two together!”

Yann said confidently.

Gerald smiled in his heart. Yann was still his old self. He never changed.

Later, the two went to the living room and sat down.

Yann poured a glass of wine for Gerald, and they started talking while drinking.

“Tell me, Yann. Why are you looking for me? What is it that is so mysterious?”

Gerald went straight to the point and asked Yann directly.

His relationship with Yann was very close, so there was no need to hide anything. He could simply say what he wanted.

“Gerald, it’s like this. I discovered a place, and it is rumored that there are many treasures there. I hope you can join me to explore the place. We might find some good stuff.”

Yann didn’t hesitate and told him straightforwardly.

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Chapter 1888

When Gerald heard him, he doubted for a while, thinking what good place it was that Yann was referring to.

“Where is it?” Gerald asked immediately.

“Hehe. Gerald, have you heard of Mount Dakriont?”

Yann tried to keep Gerald in suspense and asked him playfully.

Gerald hesitated for a while and nodded.

“I know. Isn't it a tourist attraction? Why are you asking me that?”

Gerald looked at Yann in suspicion as he responded. He didn't understand why Yann would be interested in a tourist attraction.

“Well, there is something you don't know, Gerald. Although that place is a tourist attraction, there is actually a deep cave hidden in the mountain, and there are lots of treasures inside the cave.”

Yann told Gerald with a very excited expression on his face.

“Really? But, Yann, from whom did you hear about this?”

Gerald was a bit surprised, so he quickly asked Yann.

For Yann to know about such a secret, there had to be someone telling him that. And there had to be a plot behind this.

“Um...”

Yann hesitated and did not answer.

“Gerald, just tell me if you are willing to join me or not. If you are, I will tell you everything!”

After a pause, Yann suggested.

Hearing this made Gerald even more suspicious. He felt that there was something fishy going on.

It had been a very long time that Yann didn't look for him. And now when he came looking for him all of a sudden, he held some information that was so secretive. He must have some motives behind this.

“If you don't tell me the truth, I will not promise you anything!”

Gerald said frankly.

Although Gerald was close to Yann, he would not simply make a promise regarding anything. He had to think it through first.

“Um...”

“Yann, do you still see me as your brother? If you do, then tell me the truth. Where did you hear this from? Who are you working with actually?”

Gerald uttered word by word.

Gerald knew Yann wouldn't do such a thing alone. He had to be working with someone.

However, Gerald was still unsure if the collaboration was a good one or not. That was the problem.

Ding dong!

Before Yan could open his mouth to answer Gerald's question, the doorbell rang.

Yann got up to answer the door immediately.

When he opened the door, they saw a middle-aged man come in with a walking stick. A woman in a leather jacket walked inside together with him. Behind them, there were two bodyguards. They seemed to be rather high-profile people.

“Gerald, let me introduce you to the chairman of the Sun Group, Mr. Tye Lamano, and this is his secretary, Miss Hailey Hanks. They are the ones I am working with.”

Yann said to Gerald.

Gerald showed doubt on his face instantly.

Gerald more or less knew about this Sun Group. The company specialized in oil drilling and iron mining.

However, that was only superficially. In truth, Gerald knew that the Sun Group also ran a secret business, and that was treasure hunting.

It’s just that Gerald never expected Yann to work with people from the Sun Group.

“I’ve long heard about you, Mr. Gerald Crawford. Now that I’ve seen you in person, you are indeed an incredible person!”

Tye Lamano greeted Gerald with a smile.

“Hehe, you are being too polite, Mr. Lamano. I’ve long heard about the power of you and your company.”

Gerald replied politely.

“Gerald, Mr. Lamano is paying us thirty million dollars to explore Mount Dakriont and the secret cave this time. It’s a great opportunity!”

Yan walked over to Gerald and tried to persuade him once more.

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Chapter 1889

Yan walked over to Gerald and tried to persuade him once more.

Gerald glanced at Yann and looked at Tye Lamano.

“Mr. Lamano, how did you know about the hidden cave in Mount Dakriont? And how did you come to know that there are treasures inside?” asked Gerald.

“About this, I cannot answer you. I can simply tell you that everything I know appeared on the map that my ancestors passed down. I only need you two to make a trip to the mountain for me. I know Mr. Crawford is very capable of psychic things and exploration. That’s why I asked Mr. Williams to look for you. I hope you can help us!”

Tye Lamano said in a serious tone.

Of course Gerald knew what Tye Lamano was thinking in his mind. He wanted the treasures.

“Mr. Crawford, I know you are looking for something, and according to the records from my ancestors, the item you are looking for is most probably in Mount Dakriont. I hope you can think about it!”

Seeing Gerald show no response, Tye Lamano suggested once more.

Gerald was startled when he heard that. He frowned and looked at Yann.

There weren't many people who knew about the item he was looking for. He bet Yann must have told Tye Lamano about it. Otherwise, the latter would not have known about it.

When Yann saw Gerald's face, he lowered his head and dared not look into Gerald's eyes. He knew Gerald would be angry with him.

After a while, Gerald spoke.

"Okay. I can promise that I'll join the exploration. However, once we are there, everything should be under my command!"

Gerald proposed.

Hearing Gerald's proposal, Tye did not have a second opinion.

"Of course, no problem!"

Tye agreed to it promptly.

To him, it was fine as long as Gerald was willing to go with them. As for the rest of the things, he couldn't be bothered.

“Mr. Crawford, let’s wish for a happy collaboration!”

Tye smiled and said to Gerald.

“Sure!”

Gerald replied indifferently.

Having said that, Tye and his secretary left the house.

After they had left, only Gerald and Yann were left in the house.

“Gerald, I...”

Yann looked at Gerald and lowered his head, not knowing how to explain this. He felt guilty for telling Tye about Gerald’s matter.

“Sigh. Yann, do you know what kind of business the Sun Group runs that you even dare to work with these people?”

Gerald asked Yann helplessly.

Gerald was well aware of the business of the Sun Group. That was what he found most worrying.

Hearing his question, Yann didn't know how to reply.

"I'm sorry, Gerald."

Yann could only apologize softly.

"Forget it. It's useless to say anything now. Since I've promised to take the job, I will do it properly. But Yann, I hope you can remember that you must discuss everything with me first next time."

Gerald didn't want to talk about it anymore nor did he want to blame Yann for anything. So, he simply reminded the latter.

After all, they were good friends.

More importantly, it was not a difficult thing for Gerald to handle, and the most important thing was that he wanted to get what he was looking for. That was the reason he had taken the job.

"Okay. I will, Gerald!"

Yann quickly nodded in response.

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Chapter 1890

Yann felt glad that Gerald didn't blame him much. He had been shocked just now, thinking that Gerald

would be very angry with him.

“Alright, I will head home first. You keep in touch with Tye Lamano. Inform me of the time of departure in advance. I will go back and get ready for it!”

After that, Gerald reminded Yann.

“Okay, sure, Gerald.”

Yann nodded and responded obediently.

Having said that, Gerald left the house and returned to his office.

Soon, he was back in his office.

When he walked inside, Rey and Yrsa were studying at the table, and Juno was playing with her phone beside them.

“How is it? How is your progress?”

Gerald asked them as he walked in.

“Brother Gerald, you’re back!”

When Rey saw Gerald, he stood up and smiled at him.

“Brother Gerald, Miss Zorn taught us some basic knowledge about the spiritual world. I learned everything about the spiritual world, souls, and ghosts.”

Rey reported his progress to Gerald immediately.

After Gerald heard that, he nodded in satisfaction.

“Great. Not bad. Well, let’s have a meeting!”

Gerald replied to Rey and suggested a meeting to all of them.

The four sat around the table.

“There’s something I need to tell you. I was at Yann’s place just now, and I am going on a trip to Mount Dakriont with him soon.”

Gerald told the three.

“Mount Dakriont? Why are you going there all of a sudden? Isn’t that just a tourist attraction?”

Juno was surprised when she heard him. So, she asked him immediately in confusion.

“Yes, you’re right. It is indeed a tourist attraction. But this time, we are working with the Sun Group to find a hidden cave in the mountain!”

Gerald didn’t hide it from them and explained the situation clearly.

Now that Rey and Yrsa were in the team, they needed to know about everything.

“The Sun Group? How did Yann get involved with them?!”

Juno was taken aback once more. She didn’t expect that Yann would be related to the Sun Group.

Regarding the Sun Group, Juno was also very well aware of their business.

“Brother Gerald, this Sun Group is not a proper company. They run a proper business superficially, but they are engaged with other businesses in secret.”

Rey reminded Gerald about that.

“Huh? You know about this?”

Hearing Rey’s tone, Gerald asked in suspicion. He didn’t know that Rey also knew about the real businesses of the Sun Group.

“Of course I do. There’s nobody who doesn’t know about the Sun Group. It’s just that they are not willing to reveal it!”

Rey nodded and said.

“Well, you’re right. But this time, I have no choice. I need to look for something very important there, so I can only work with them!”

Gerald explained helplessly.

“Brother Gerald, I’m going with you, then!”

Rey proposed immediately.

Gerald glanced at Rey but did not agree to it right away.

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Chapter 1891

“Negative, you just stay here this time. I’ll be heading there with Yann!” replied Gerald as he looked at the trio.

“But... Mr. Crawford-”

“Look, I know you want to come with me to see and learn more of the world, Rey, but not this time. After all, none of us know what dangers await us at Mount Dakriont. There are simply too many risks involved! With that in mind, please just stay here and train with Miss Zorn for the moment!” replied Gerald before Rey could even finish his sentence.

In the end, Rey was still an ordinary person, which meant that his capabilities were vastly different compared to Gerald's. With that in mind, Gerald had only said all that earlier since he truly was worried for Rey's sake.

Besides, staying here to train with Juno would undoubtedly be more beneficial to Rey. By taking the time to properly train and learn about being a cultivator, Rey would definitely be able to solve problems together with Gerald—instead of simply being a sidekick—in the future.

Regardless, understanding where Gerald was coming from, Rey knew that it was best for him to simply agree.

Either way, once Rey agreed, Gerald turned to face Juno before adding, "As you may already have guessed, I'll be leaving everything in the office to you, Juno. If there's anything you're unsure about while I'm gone, we can discuss it once I return!"

Nodding in response, Juno then replied, "Roger that! Don't worry about me!"

Juno, for one, didn't mind Gerald's delegation of tasks. After all, it was the only way she would be able to support him.

"I'll take your word for it! Now then... both of you! Continue your training! As for Juno... I'd like to speak to you in private for a bit..." said Gerald, prompting Rey and Yrsa to resume training and Juno to walk over to the side with the youth.

Once they were out of earshot, Juno couldn't help but ask, "...Gerald... are you really sure that you're going to cooperate with the Sun Group...? I personally don't think they're all that reliable...!"

Smiling subtly in response, Gerald knew where Juno's worries were coming from. Even so, he simply shook his head before replying, "Don't worry, those from the Sun Group won't be able to even touch me. Regardless, I'm heading there in the first place to search for an important thing... Remember that picture of a lady that we've been trying to track down all this time? I have a hunch that it's going to appear at Mount Dakriont! With that in mind, I need to head there to see for myself!"

"...I see... Still, do be careful... Those from the Sun Group definitely have hidden agendas..." muttered the concerned Juno.

Simply nodding in response, Gerald then smiled as he gently patted her on the back...

At that moment, Gerald's phone began ringing. It was a call from Yann...

Already having a pretty good guess that Yann was calling to tell him that the departure time had been decided, Gerald simply stared at the phone for a few seconds before eventually picking it up and saying, "Hello? Yes, Yann?"

"Ah, there you are, Gerald. Tye's updated me on the departure time. We have to be at the highway entrance by nine tomorrow morning!" replied Yann.

"Got it. See you there before nine, then!" said Gerald before hanging up.

"Tomorrow morning? You're heading off so soon, Gerald...?" asked the surprised Juno.

"Indeed. From the looks of it, those from the Sun Group simply can't wait any longer!" replied Gerald.

“...Well, I suppose that’s that. Regardless, again, please be careful out there...!” said Juno with a sigh, not wanting to nag any further...

Soon enough, night fell and by then, Gerald had pretty much packed everything that he needed. While he had only packed four sets of clothes, the rest of his luggage consisted of equipment that he would possibly use during the journey.

After all, nobody knew what hurdles they would encounter during the journey, so all Gerald could do was prepare everything relevant that he could think of so that he wouldn’t regret being underprepared halfway through the journey...

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Chapter 1892

Regardless, since he made sure to pack early, Gerald was able to turn in earlier that night. After all, the more rest he got, the better shape he would be once he got up...

It was early morning by the time he finally got up again, and after a simple breakfast, Gerald then patted his backpack before driving off to the highway’s entrance...

It was nine sharp when Gerald finally met up with Yann, Tye, and the others. Just as they were about to greet each other, a loud ‘bump’ could suddenly be heard coming from Gerald’s car trunk, followed by a loud, “F*ck!”

Raising a slight brow, Gerald—along with several others—immediately went over to investigate... And upon opening the trunk, Gerald was shocked to see Rey lying inside, his arms wrapped around a luggage bag!

“...What are you doing here, Rey?” asked the rightfully stunned Gerald.

Chuckling awkwardly in response, Rey then sheepishly grinned as he said, “I... well, I just really wanted to come along! So please let me come with you...!”

“What monkey business is this? Return to Juno’s side!” scowled Gerald, causing Rey to momentarily fall silent.

However, after a short while, Rey stared at Gerald with puppy dog eyes before pleading, “...Please...?”

Upon seeing how pitifully Rey was begging, Gerald could only facepalm as he sighed before saying, “...Oh, what the hell... Since you’re already here anyway... Fine, you can come along!”

“T-thank you, Mr. Crawford!” exclaimed the excited Rey.

“Who exactly is this, Mr. Crawford...?” asked Tye in a curious tone.

“Ah, he’s my disciple, Chairman Lamano... He goes by Rey!” introduced Gerald.

Upon hearing that, Tye instantly found himself feeling more comfortable as he replied with a smile, “Your disciple, you say? Well, let’s go together, then! Who knows, your bond could make you stronger!”

Hearing that, Gerald couldn’t help but glare at Rey again before signaling for Rey to follow him into

Yann's car.

Only three cars were going to be driven for this journey, and Gerald's wasn't one of them. Instead, it was simply left behind in a parking lot.

Regardless, only three people were in Yann's car, with Yann naturally being the driver. Sitting beside him was Gerald, which meant that Rey was the only one sitting in the back...

None of them said a word during the first half of the journey. Eventually, however, the nervous Rey mustered up the courage to mutter, "P-please don't stay mad at me, Mr. Crawford... I know I've done wrong...!"

Upon hearing that, Gerald—who had his eyes closed up till this point—reopened his eyes before fishing his phone out...

"Hello? What's wrong, Gerald?" asked Juno on the other end of the line, sounding relatively surprised that Gerald had called out of the blue.

Rey himself grew increasingly worried when he realized that Gerald had just called Juno...

"Nothing much, I just wanted to inform you that in the end, I've decided to bring Rey along!"

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Chapter 1893

Naturally, that statement made both Juno and Rey rather surprised. Even so, Juno was quick to recover and simply went with it.

Rey himself hadn't expected Gerald to take his side instead of ratting him out.

With that, after Gerald ended the call, Rey couldn't help but look at Gerald for a while before muttering, "...Um... Mr. Crawford—"

"There's no need to say anything. You're already here anyway so let's just make the most of it. Regardless, please hold your tongue as much as possible once we get there. And please listen to my orders if I give any to you!" replied Gerald, not even waiting for Rey's sentence to finish.

"G-got it, Mr. Crawford! Don't worry, I'll be extremely obedient!" declared Rey as he nodded rapidly.

At that moment, Yann—who was still driving—couldn't help but smile as he said, "You know, you have a rather fine disciple, Gerald. After all, he's worried enough about you to sneak over!"

"Hah! He's just someone who makes me worry all the time!" scowled Gerald in a playful tone.

Realizing that Gerald was grinning, Rey—at the very least—knew that Gerald wasn't angry with him anymore. With that, Rey couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief as he embarrassedly scratched the back of his head.

Truth be told, Rey very much preferred gaining knowledge of the world by participating in adventures with Gerald rather than simply training indoors. While it was true that danger was aplenty out in the open world, Rey truly believed that adventuring was the best way for him to gain more experience.

Whatever the case was, since even Yann was now talking, Gerald figured that it was as good a time as any to introduce Rey to him.

“Speaking of which, this man goes by Yann, Rey. You can choose to address him as Mr. Williams or Brother Yann,” said Gerald.

“A pleasure to meet you, Brother Yann! My name is Rey!” replied Rey with a smile.

“Got it!” said Yann before chuckling in response.

“Now that that’s out of the way... By estimation, how long should it take for us to get to Mount Dakriont...?” asked Gerald as he looked at Yann.

Before Yann could even reply, Rey beat him to it by saying, “I’ve already checked the route in advance, Mr. Crawford! From the highway entrance, it should take approximately six hours before we get there!”

Following that, Rey showed his phone to Gerald, and displayed on it, was a navigation system. Rey himself had keyed in Mount Dakriont as their destination the second they got into the car.

Nodding in response, Gerald then muttered, “Six hours, huh... That’s going to take quite a while... Guess I’ll take a short nap first.”

There really wasn’t much else to do in the car for six hours, so he may as well get some shut-eye.

Watching as Gerald leaned against his seat before lowering it slightly and promptly falling asleep, Rey decided to do the same. After all, in order to hide in the trunk, he had woken up much earlier than Gerald, which explained why he had been sleepy for a while now.

Regardless, upon realizing that the two had dozed off so quickly, Yann could only chuckle in a slightly bitter tone. After all, being the driver, he couldn't exactly rest like the duo. Thankfully, he was used to driving for much longer, so he knew he could handle six hours just fine...

It was around three when Gerald and the others finally left the highway and arrived at Mount Dakriont.

Mount Dakriont itself was a scenic traveling spot that didn't have its own city. Aside from its unique geographical location, Mount Dakriont was also famous for how spacious it was. This was made evident by the fact that at a glance, Mount Dakriont didn't even seem to have an end...

Either way, for those who came all the way up here for trips, five days was usually the minimum. After all, it was a well-known fact that nobody would be able to truly enjoy their experience here if they only stayed for a single day.

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Chapter 1894

Whatever the case was, after parking the car, Gerald and the others immediately headed to the ticket counter to officially enter Mount Dakriont. While a single ticket cost sixty dollars, Tye was the one paying, so Gerald and his party didn't have to worry about the entry fee.

Upon entering, rather than anxiously getting straight to business, the first thing the group did was to find a spot to relax in instead.

After eating some of the rations they brought along—to replenish their energy—Tye cleared his throat

before saying, "Alright, listen up, everyone. We'll be staying the night here, but we set off at the break of dawn, understand?"

Hearing that, everyone simply nodded in agreement. After all, it wouldn't be long before night came, and traveling in darkness was never a good idea. Aside from obviously being more dangerous, one could easily lose their bearings as well. With that in mind, it was objectively a better choice to set off once morning came.

With that out of the way, Tye then ordered one of his men to book a cabin for them to stay the night in. Naturally, lodging was never going to be cheap in this place. Adding that to the fact that the wooden cabin—that the group eventually settled with—looked extremely exquisite, a single night there cost a whopping hundred and fifty dollars!

Regardless, Yann, Gerald, and Rey were grouped together to stay in one of the cabin's rooms. Upon entering that room, Rey immediately suggested, "Alright, Mr. Crawford and Brother Yann, how about this? You two take the bed while I'll sleep on the couch!"

"There's no need for that. You can take the bed!" replied Gerald.

"But, Mr. Crawford—"

"No arguing. You get the bed," said Gerald, not even waiting for Rey to finish his sentence. Hearing that, Rey knew he had no choice but to give in. While he didn't say it, Rey honestly felt touched. Gerald really was too nice to him...

While it was rather late when the trio finally decided to hit the hay, they received sufficient rest and were awoken by the chirping of birds at the start of dawn...

By the time Gerald and his party went downstairs—all packed up and ready—, they saw that Tye and the others were already waiting for them.

“There you all are! Had a good sleep?” asked Tye with a smile.

“How kind of you to ask, Chairman Lamano! We had a pretty good sleep, at least I did,” replied Gerald in a polite manner as Tye nodded before fishing out a map...

Pointing at a spot on the map, Tye then said, “Alright, we’re currently here. Our first stop will be the Officer Viewing Deck which is about five miles from where we are. Is anyone against that?”

Naturally, nobody had any objections. After all, Tye was the owner of the map. Gerald himself could only hope that they would be able to deal with any issues that arose during their journey.

With that, the group then did one final double check—to see if they had everything with them—before setting off...

As they traveled on, Gerald and Yann could only stare speechlessly at Rey who seemed to be photographing just about everything. Was that boy here for an adventure or a trip...?

Eventually getting rather annoyed by all the ‘snapshot’ sounds, Gerald couldn’t help but mutter, “Rey, could you quit it for a while...?”

Chuckling in response, Rey simply replied, “But it wasn’t easy for us to get a chance to come here, Mr. Crawford! These photographs will prove that we’ve been here!”

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Chapter 1895

“Just let the boy be, Gerald. I, for one, appreciate his liveliness since all there is out here is miles upon miles of boring scenic views...” said Yann.

Upon hearing that, Gerald could only sigh in agreement. After all, it was estimated that at least two hours were needed before the group would be able to cover five miles and finally arrive at the Officer Viewing Deck. With that in mind, Gerald had to admit that Rey’s childishness would—at the very least—keep the trek amusing...

Regardless, it was almost noon by the time the group arrived at the Officer Viewing Deck.

The Officer Viewing Deck was located quite high on Mount Dakriont, and it allegedly got its name due to the fact that an officer used to come up here to enjoy the view, many centuries ago. While that was the formal name of the viewing deck, it was also colloquially known as the cloud viewing platform. As the name suggested, all sorts of clouds could be seen from up here as well.

Whatever the case was, upon arriving, Tye turned to look at the others before saying, “Alright everyone, we’ve arrived! Let’s take a short break and have something to eat first! Bear in mind that we’ll start taking the rough mountain path after this!”

While the others seemed to agree, Gerald, on the other hand, walked toward Tye before asking, “Could I please have a look at the map, Chairman Lamano?”

Though he was surprised to hear that request, Tye handed the map to Gerald.

“Thank you!” replied Gerald before immediately inspecting the map.

“Is something the matter, Mr. Crawford...?” asked the curious Tye.

A short while later, Gerald then pointed at the map before saying, “Well, after looking through the map, I feel that we could’ve arrived at our destination sooner if we didn’t take the path to the Officer Viewing Deck. After all, from this point on, all that awaits us are rough mountain roads, and I can assure you that that’ll hinder our progress quite a bit!”

Upon hearing that, Tye took a closer look at the map... And true to what Gerald had said, they could’ve arrived at their destination much sooner if they simply took an alternate path. Why hadn’t he noticed it before?

“...I see... Correct me if I’m wrong, Mr. Crawford, but are you suggesting that we go all the way back to where we started from?” asked Tye.

“Indeed, though just to clarify, it is merely a suggestion. Naturally, you’re the one who will make the final call. That’s all I wanted to say, now if you’ll excuse me,” replied Gerald before walking over to where Yann and Rey were.

Gerald wasn’t particularly keen on helping them, to be quite frank. Had it not been for the fact that Yann was cooperating with them, Gerald would’ve simply brought Yann and Rey along, making it a manageable party of three.

Regardless, as Tye watched Gerald reunite with his party, Tye himself began pondering what Gerald had just said. While it was true that they could technically arrive at their destination faster if they

backtracked, Tye concluded that backtracking at this point would simply waste even more time.

With that, Tye made up his mind to simply continue going down the path he had picked. So what if it was a little further away? The important thing was for them to arrive at their destination....

Shortly after, the party resumed their journey. However, it wasn't too long later when the weather suddenly began changing rapidly...

Seeing how drastic the changes were, Rey couldn't help but mutter, "Isn't the weather changing a bit too quickly...? It wouldn't surprise me if we got hit by a sudden thunderstorm!"

The second Rey's sentence ended, a low rumble could be heard emanating from the sky, prompting the rest of the party to stare at Rey...

Upon realizing that he shouldn't have jinxed it, Rey simply lowered his head, feeling rightfully embarrassed...

Even so, Gerald was used to Rey saying things like this. With that, he diverted everyone's attention from Rey by saying, "Regardless, let's focus on finding someplace to escape the rain!"

After all, walking around so many trees in a thunderstorm was a recipe for disaster... Thankfully, the group soon found a cave to take cover in.

Upon entering, Rey couldn't help but exclaim, "Holy! This place is huge!"

True to Rey's words, a few hundred people could probably fit in this place...

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Chapter 1896

“...Hey, come over! Hurry and have a look at all this!” called out one of Tye’s men who had earlier scouted ahead.

Upon hearing that, everyone followed the source of the voice... and soon enough, they all widened their eyes in utter amazement.

A little deeper into the cave, a bright light of sorts could be seen glimmering beautifully... What more, all sorts of natural jades and jadeites could be seen growing all over the place!

“Holy cr*p...” muttered Rey as he rubbed his eyes in disbelief. He had never seen such pure and natural-looking jades and jadeites in his life!

The sentiment was, of course, shared by everyone else there. To think that such a wondrous place existed here of all places... How truly magical!

Quickly snapping out of it, everyone immediately began looking around the mystifying cave...

Shortly after, Gerald was just in time to notice that one of Tye’s men had taken out a hammer!

Knowing full well where this was going, Gerald immediately yelled, “Stop!”

Hearing Gerald's voice—and realizing that the command was directed toward him—, the man then raised a brow as he glared at Gerald while asking, "...What? Go get your own!"

"Nobody should take any of these jades or jadeites! They belong to nature!" retorted Gerald.

"Bah! Mind your own business!" scowled the man before aiming his hammer at one of the jades!

Realizing that his advice wasn't getting through, Gerald immediately bolted toward the man, hoping that he could stop him in time! Unfortunately, Gerald was just a second too late.

The second the jade dislodged from the earth, a low rumble could instantly be heard... and following that, the entire cave began quivering! Gerald had had a gut feeling that something bad would happen if someone tried to take any of the precious stones, and unfortunately, he was dead right.

With how much the cave was shaking, everyone became increasingly anxious.

Just as they were about to start leaving the cave, a massive stone suddenly came crashing down, completely blocking the entrance!

Well... this was swell. Everyone was now trapped in here!

Unable to contain his anger, Gerald immediately stomped his way over to the man that had caused all this before punching him right in the nose while yelling, "You god dmned bstard...!"

The second the man fell to the ground, the rest of Tye's men instantly aimed their weapons at Gerald!

“Stop! Everyone, calm down!” yelled Tye as he tried to maintain peace between the two parties.

After a few seconds, Gerald took a deep breath before narrowing his eyes at Tye while asking, “...Correct me if I’m wrong, Chairman Lamano, but I specifically recall that my condition for leading you here is that you listen to every word I say!”

While Tye was momentarily stunned to hear that out of the blue, he had to admit that he really had made that promise.

Understanding that he was the one in the wrong, Tye quickly yelled, “Men! Put your weapons away!”

Once Tye’s men reluctantly kept their weapons again, Tye smiled subtly toward Gerald while saying, “Mr. Crawford... I truly hope that we can cooperate nicely... With that in mind, since my men have retracted their weapons, could you avoid pushing any further into this matter...?”

While Gerald knew where Tye was coming from, what was the point of only saying all this now that they were trapped?

Whatever the case was, they needed to find a way to leave the cave as soon as possible...

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After a slight pause, Gerald then looked at Tye before replying, “...Fine. Regardless, if you wish to leave

this place safely, I implore you to tell your subordinates to be more obedient. No more touching things at random! Trigger one more trap and we'll probably end up stuck in here forever!"

Knowing that he had made himself extremely clear this time, Gerald then turned around without saying another word. Whether or not Tye decided to listen was up to him...

Momentarily staring at Gerald's back—as the youth walked off to find another exit—, Tye couldn't help but glare at the man who had caused all this. Had he not been so greedy, none of them would be trapped here!

The man himself quickly lowered his head to avert his gaze, not even daring to look Tye in the eye...

Huffing in response, Tye then looked at all his subordinates before declaring, "Alright, listen up! If any of you even dare to touch anything at random again, I'll personally chop your hands off! Got that?"

With how stern Tye's command was, his subordinates knew he meant business, prompting each and every one of them to quickly nod in response...

While this was happening, Gerald, Rey, and Yann were already scouting ahead, hoping to find other passageways that they could use to leave the cave.

Unfortunately, even after looking around for quite a while, none of them were able to find another exit path! From the looks of it, this place seemed to be mostly sealed off from the world, save for the one exit that was now blocked...

"...Not to be a downer but... there doesn't seem to be any other exits here..." muttered Rey, clearly getting more and more anxious by the minute.

“...As much as I hate to admit it, Rey’s right! We truly are trapped in here!” added Yann before sighing in frustration.

By this point, Yann was already starting to regret working with Tye to get here. Had he known that one of Tye’s men would bring them so much trouble, there was no way in hell he would’ve even considered Tye’s assistance!

“Well, since no other paths exist, let’s take some time to think about the mechanism that caused the stone to seal the mouth of the cave in the first place! After all, there’s no way the cave could’ve ended up this perfectly sealed by natural means!” replied Gerald in a calm tone.

“Agreed. After all, don’t you find it strange that nobody’s discovered this cave before despite the abundance of jades and jadeites in here? Honestly, the strangest part about all this is the fact that nobody’s excavated this place yet!” said Ray with a slight frown.

Had this been any other cave, several people would’ve already flocked here ages ago after finding out about all the precious stones in here. If that had happened, then this place would have surely been left barren by now!

Chuckling in response, Gerald then replied, “The fact that the precious stones in here have largely remained untouched makes it obvious that there’s something odd about this place.”

The second his sentence ended, the corner of Gerald’s eye suddenly noticed something disturbing.

Raising a brow, he began walking toward a spot where multiple jades and jadeites were growing... and upon closer inspection, it appeared that his eyes hadn’t been playing tricks on him.

There were hints of human bones inside the jades and jadeites!

Walking closer to see what Gerald was so interested in, Rey's eyes instantly widened when he paid closer attention to the 'precious stones' Gerald was currently staring at.

"M-Mr. Crawford... Those... are human bones, right...?! Why are they enveloped by the jades and jadeites?!" exclaimed the rightfully shocked Rey.

"My guess is that after being trapped here like us, this person eventually died. Once he was nothing but bones, all it took was a few years for the jades and jadeites to start growing on them!" replied Gerald, proposing his theory.

However, if Gerald's theory was correct... then that definitely meant that they weren't the first group to get trapped in here. After all, that was the only plausible explanation for these bones being here!

Still, to think that the jades and jadeites here grew with the help of human bones...

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Regardless, after hearing what Gerald had to say, both Rey and Yann instantly drew in cold breaths.

"...A-are you saying that we'll end up like them, Mr. Crawford...? Are we going to die here...?" muttered Rey, looking incredibly anxious now.

“Hey now, don’t go jinxing us again! Have a bit more faith in Gerald! I’m sure he’ll think of a way to get us out of here!” retorted Yann.

“I wonder about that... Based on what we’ve gathered after looking around, it pains me to say that there’s a pretty high chance that we really will die trapped here!” replied Gerald.

Hearing that, Rey and Yann’s eyes instantly widened. While it was expected for Rey to say things like that, when Gerald said it, it was simply depressing...

Regardless, after saying that, Gerald then continued walking deeper into the cave. After all, with how massive the cave was, there was still a chance that there existed another exit at the end...

Naturally, Rey and Yann followed him, and it wasn’t too long after when the trio began hearing the crisp and pleasant sounds of water dripping deeper inside the cave...

There was just something extremely calming about those beautiful dripping sounds... They certainly weren’t sounds one could hear in the city.

“You hear that, Mr. Crawford? What beautiful sounds!” said Rey in an almost dreamy tone.

“I know, right? The dripping sounds alone makes me feel like I’m drunk in the middle of an enchanted forest!” added Yann, a lethargic grin on his face.

Upon hearing that, Gerald couldn’t help but raise a brow as he turned around to look at his two intoxicated-looking allies...

While Gerald personally felt that the dripping sounded normal, he could instantly tell that the sounds were affecting the other two, almost hypnotically...

With that in mind, he quickly began shaking the duo by their shoulders while yelling, “Hey, snap out of it! There’s something wrong with the dripping sounds! Rey, Yann! Wake up!”

However, it was useless. Both of them were completely unresponsive...

Sighing in resignation, Gerald decided to return to where Tye and his men were. At the very least, they could help him carry Rey and Yann to a safer spot...

To Gerald’s dismay, Tye and his men had apparently already fallen under the same hypnotic spell as Rey and Yann! Simply standing in place with goofy expressions on their faces, none of them seemed capable of even registering whatever Gerald said or did to them...

From the looks of it, as long as the dripping sounds persisted, none of them would ever snap out of it. With that in mind, Gerald knew that the only way to bring them back to their senses was by looking for the source of the sounds and eliminating it.

Still, to think that everyone else—who had previously been trapped in here—had fallen victim to the dripping sounds as well...

With how sheepishly everyone was grinning, Gerald could guess that the hypnotic effects were somewhat euphoric. To be filled with bliss till the second one died... What a cruel murder tactic...

Shaking his head, Gerald then quickly began heading toward the deepest part of the cave where the

dripping sounds seemed to emanate from...

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It was about ten minutes later when Gerald came across a pond in the deepest part of the cave...

There appeared to be a stone pier of sorts in the middle of the body of water, and on that pier, lay a jade board made of jadeite...

Raising a slight brow, Gerald then watched as a drop of water fell from a stalactite... and right onto the jade board, producing a sound that felt oddly euphoric... Then another... and another....

With how echoey the cave's walls were, it was no wonder why they were able to hear the sound from so far away...

Squinting his eyes at the jade board, Gerald had a feeling that destroying it would only trigger another trap. With that in mind, after some thought, he eventually settled on taking out a shirt from his backpack.

Following that, he carefully aimed at the jade board... and with a toss, Gerald's shirt completely draped over it!

While he couldn't safely destroy it, it didn't mean that he couldn't stop the dripping sounds... or at least, that was what he hoped.

Staring anxiously as the next drop of water fell from the stalactite and rapidly descended toward the now covered jade board... Gerald eventually found himself heaving a sigh of relief when no sound was made.

Now that that was done, Gerald quickly rushed back to where Rey and Yann were to check in on them...

Upon realizing that the two were still in a daze, Gerald quickly began shaking them by their shoulders while yelling, "Hey, snap out of it!"

Thankfully, that seemed to work. Recovering shortly after, Rey shook his head before asking in a slightly sluggish tone, "...Huh...? Mr. Crawford...? I... What happened...?"

"Indeed, Gerald... What on earth happened back there...? The last thing I remember is hearing a pleasant dripping sound... Everything after that is foggy at best..." added Yann, groaning as he slowly regained his bearings.

"Well, essentially, both of you became unresponsive after hearing the sounds of dripping water! From what I can tell, the sounds themselves had hypnotic effects!" replied Gerald.

Now getting the gist of what was happening, Rey was prompted to ask, "Then, the sound..."

"Don't worry, you won't be hearing any more of that dripping for a long while! Regardless, I have a feeling that all those people who previously died here passed on euphorically... At least, that's what I'd assume since all of you had goofy grins while you were entranced earlier..." explained Gerald.

"...C-come again? Euphorically...? To think that we could've died like that as well!" exclaimed Rey in an

incredulous tone.

“Indeed. Whatever the case is, we should resume focus on finding the exit!” replied Gerald, not wanting to stay in this place for any longer for fear that more dangers awaited them.

Hearing that, the two men nodded before continuing to scout the cave together with Gerald...
Thankfully, Gerald was able to find an exit this time!

“Rey, Yann! Over here!” yelled Gerald as the duo immediately ran over to see what was up.

Upon seeing the light coming from the exit, Rey and Yann were rightfully excited.

“Thank god! Looks like there really is another exit, Mr. Crawford!” exclaimed Rey, now feeling like he could trust Gerald with just about everything.

After all, both Rey and Yann had pretty much lost hope of finding an exit earlier. Thanks to Gerald, they were able to see the light of day again...!

Yann himself couldn't help but praise, “Amazing! I have to say, nothing is impossible with you around, Gerald! Regardless, let's get out of here while we can!”

“Hold it!” said Gerald the second Yann suggested that.

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Chapter 1900

Turning to look at Gerald in surprise, Yann couldn't help but ask, "Is... something wrong, Gerald?"

"Yeah, Mr. Crawford! Shouldn't we hurry and leave already?" added Rey in a confused tone.

"Hush. Hand me a small knife, Rey!" ordered Gerald.

Obedying Gerald's words, Rey retrieved a small knife from his belt before handing it to Gerald...

The small knife now in his hand, Gerald then walked toward a crystal-clear, emerald-green jade—the size of a chicken egg—that was embedded into the wall...

Following that, Rey and Yann widened their eyes as they watched Gerald skillfully used the knife to pry the jade off the wall!

"...H-huh? Didn't you say that we shouldn't touch any of the jades in here, Mr. Crawford?!" exclaimed the surprised Rey.

After plopping the jade into his pocket, Gerald simply replied, "True, but bear in mind that there usually aren't any traps near an exit!"

With that, Gerald continued walking out of the cave, causing the two stunned men to quickly snap out of it before running after him.

The second all three of them were out, Rey immediately looked at the sky before taking in a deep breath of fresh air.

“Thank god we’re finally out of that place! The air smells so much better out here!” exclaimed the jovial Rey.

While Yann was feeling just as pleased, he couldn’t help but face Gerald as he asked, “Speaking of which... What about Tye and the others, Gerald...?”

Raising a slight brow, Gerald simply replied, “What? Do you still expect to obtain all that money from him?”

Upon hearing that, Yann fell silent for a moment before saying, “...That’s not what I meant... Essentially, I’m just worried and Tye and his men won’t let us off that easily once they realize that we’re gone!”

“Hah! What makes you so sure that they’ll find the exit anytime soon? I assure you that by the time they finally get out, we’ll be miles away from them! They’ll never be able to catch up to us!” replied Gerald with a chuckle.

Realizing that Gerald had a point, Yann simply nodded.

“Now then... If there’s nothing else, let’s get moving already!” added Gerald.

“But which direction should we head to, Mr. Crawford...? After all, we don’t exactly have the map!” asked Rey.

Smiling smugly in response, Gerald then replied, “And who was it who told you we don’t have the map?”

Understandably stunned to hear that, Rey and Yann could only stare incredulously at Gerald as the youth fished out the map from his pocket!

“...Wait, didn’t Tye have the map? How did you get your hands on it, Gerald?” asked the bewildered Yann.

“Hah! I got it while they were still entranced!” replied Gerald with a smile, prompting Yann to momentarily freeze before giving Gerald two thumbs up!

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“My god! You truly are something else, Gerald!” exclaimed Yann in awe. To think that Gerald had been able to remember to steal Tye’s map earlier despite being in such a stressful situation!

Regardless, how splendid! Now that Tye and the others didn’t have the map, they’d surely be unable to continue their search!

“Whatever the case is, Tye and his men may have come here for the treasure, but we’re different. What we find valuable is different from them. With that in mind, I want both of you to listen carefully to me. Once we get to our destination, you can’t touch or take anything without first asking for my permission! Do I have myself clear?” said Gerald.

“Got it, Mr. Crawford!” replied Rey.

“But... if we don’t take anything back, then this trip will be a bit of a waste, don’t you think, Mr. Crawford...?” muttered Yann in a slightly reluctant tone.

“While I won’t repeat myself, I hope you understand that greed only leads to ruin, Yann,” replied Gerald, prompting Yann to fall silent.

Yann, for one, wasn’t about to disobey Gerald’s words. After all, he was well aware of how capable and strong Gerald was.

Even so, greed was different for everyone. While some may not have it at all, others simply had endless greed...

Either way, with that said, the trio then resumed their journey...

It was quite a while later before Tye and his men would finally snap out from their dazes.

Soon realizing that Gerald and his party weren’t around, Tye rubbed his groggy forehead before asking, “Hey, have any of you seen Gerald and his party...?”

Watching as his subordinates shook their heads, a realization suddenly came across Tye, prompting the man to feel his pocket... and it was at that moment when he noticed that his map had been stolen!

“That b*stard...!” scowled Tye, causing all of his men to immediately begin exchanging glances, not even sure what had happened to make Tye this angry.

Hailey—Tye’s secretary—herself quickly walked up to the angry man before asking in a concerned tone, “What’s wrong, Chairman Lamano...?”

“Everything! To think that those three b*stards would actually dare to steal my map!” roared Tye, his entire face now reddened in fury.

Though she was momentarily stunned, Hailey quickly snapped out of it before replying, “Could... they perhaps have taken the map to ease their search for the exit...? After all, the last I saw them, they were heading deeper into the cave... Maybe they’ve already found the exit!”

Upon hearing that, Tye realized that she made sense. With that, he immediately ordered his men to begin going deeper into the cave...

Shortly after, the group got to the deepest part of the cave and were promptly greeted by the sight of a board of sorts that was covered by a drenched shirt...

Before Tye could even begin wondering what the shirt was doing there for, one of his scouting subordinates came rushing back as he reported, “C-chairman Lamano! We’ve found an exit on the other side!”

“So they really did steal my map and flee! Those mother f*ckers...! Pursue them immediately!” roared the furious Tye as the group quickly left the cave...

Unfortunately for Tye, Gerald and his party were nowhere remotely close to the cave anymore, just as Gerald had predicted...

Regardless, the trio had just come across a stream when Rey suggested, "Say, why don't we take a short rest here, Mr. Crawford...? After all, with the distance we've covered, it's pretty much impossible for them to catch up to us!"

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Hearing that, Yann then chimed in, "Indeed! We've already walked for two hours anyway. Let's take a short rest!"

Understanding that the duo didn't have his stamina and endurance, Gerald could only agree with them. After all, exhaustion during a journey was best avoided...

Nodding, Gerald replied, "Sure, why not. Let's take a short break!"

With that, the trio sat by the stream to enjoy a well-deserved rest...

While Gerald didn't do anything in particular, Rey and Yann began washing their faces with the stream's water and even began drinking it.

However, shortly after the duo quenched their thirst, Rey happened to see something stuck at the bottom of the crystal-clear stream... Squinting at the object, his eyes immediately widened when he realized what it was.

Startled to hear Rey screaming out of the blue, Gerald was immediately prompted to ask, "What is it?!"

“M-Mr. Crawford...! Look there...! It... It’s a human bone...!” replied the quivering Rey as he immediately backed away from the stream.

Upon hearing that, Yann quickly ran over to have a look... and once he saw that Rey wasn’t fibbing, Yann and Rey immediately began vomiting. After all, they had drunk the same water where the bone had been in!

Gerald himself calmly walked toward the stream before pulling the bone out...

Inspecting it, Gerald couldn’t help but say, “How odd... A random human bone in the water...? Could someone have died here...?”

After looking at it for a while longer, Gerald realized something unsettling.

“...Hey, come look at this! The way the bone snapped couldn’t have been done by another person... After all, it looks like it was damaged by something feral on the hunt...” muttered Gerald, prompting Rey to quickly begin looking around.

“...A-are you suggesting that there’s a fierce beast lurking around, Mr. Crawford...?” stuttered Rey.

“Most likely!” replied Gerald with a nod as he got up from his squatting position before tossing the bone away. Naturally, this quickly made Rey and Yann nervous.

“T-then let’s hurry and leave this place, Mr. Crawford...!” said Rey, not wanting the fierce beast to suddenly ambush them.

Nodding in response, Gerald was just about to begin leaving the area with his party... when all of a sudden, the trio froze.

After all, all three of them had noticed that a fanged monster was glaring straight at them not too far away...!

While neither of them made a sound in the first few seconds, eventually, Rey wasn't able to hold back from whispering, "M-Mr. Crawford... What now-"

"Hush!" whispered Gerald in return as he placed his palm over Rey's mouth.

Following that, Gerald gestured for the duo to slowly inch their way to the side, not wanting to alarm the beast. While making their move, all three of them kept an eye on the monster, not wanting it to get a free chance to ambush them...

However, they had only taken a few steps when the monster suddenly let out an ear-piercing roar!

"God d*mnit! It sounds angry too! Run!"

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Hearing Gerald's order, Rey and Yann immediately began bolting away from the scene.

Unfortunately for them, their sudden movement only served to make the monster even more excited!

Realizing that the monster had its eyes on him, Rey began running even faster as he yelled, “P-please stop chasing after me...!”

As expected, all that shouting simply caused the beast to increase its speed as it continued bolting toward Rey!

Realizing that the monster was now inches away from Rey, Gerald quickly summoned the Astrabyss Sword before tossing it toward the beast!

The second the sword successfully cut through the monster’s flesh, it let out a mighty roar of pain!

Following that, it turned to glare at Gerald before charging for him next!

Despite how intimidating it was, Gerald kept his cool and resummoned the blade into his hand.

Once the monster was only a few steps away from him, Gerald—who had positioned himself to strike by now—bolted toward it as well!

Ducking exactly in front of the monster, Gerald managed to get right underneath it... and seeing the perfect chance, Gerald then raised his sword, causing the monster to literally gut itself as its sliced open belly ran through the blade!

With blood gushing all over the place, the monster released one final roar before flopping heavily into a puddle of its own blood...

Seeing that Gerald had managed to take it down, Rey and Yann immediately breathed sighs of relief.

Quickly returning to Gerald's side, Rey instantly asked in a concerned tone, "A-are you alright, Mr. Crawford...?"

Putting away the sword, Gerald then turned to face Rey before replying, "I'm fine!"

Though neither of them said it, they were both relieved that they had Gerald with them. Otherwise, they would've surely ended up as monster food! Thinking back, their bones would probably end up in the river as well...

Shaking the terrifying thought off, Rey then stared at its carcass before muttering, "...What the hell even is that beast...? While I want to call it a tiger, it isn't exactly one either!"

After giving the monster a better look, the trio saw that the hideous beast had two long and thin fangs in its mouth. While it did slightly resemble a tiger, everyone knew that that wasn't the case.

"...You know, it sort of looks like Taotie... don't you think? That mythological monster? But that's just nonsense... There's no way it could exist, right...?" said Yann after observing it for a little longer.

Upon hearing that, Rey looked like he wanted to say something. However, Gerald beat him to it and replied, "And why couldn't it? After all, if ghosts can exist, why not Taoties?"

Hearing Gerald's statement, Rey couldn't help but nod. After all, since ghosts existed, pretty much everything else could exist.

At that moment, a group of plainly dressed people suddenly rushed out from the forest and surrounded the trio!

While they initially kept firm gazes on Gerald and his party, upon seeing the dead Taotie on the ground, they instantly appeared shocked before looking back at the three men with fearful eyes... It was almost as though they were looking at strange animals...

Regardless, the group of people weren't the only ones shocked.

The trio found themselves surprised as well when they realized that all the people were wearing traditional garments. In fact, 'ancient' was probably a better word...

Though there was a brief silence, an old man—holding onto a walking stick—soon walked out from the crowd...

Momentarily looking at the fresh carcass, the old man then asked, "...If I may, where did you come from, gentlemen...?"

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Snapping out of it when he heard the confused elderly man's question, Gerald then replied, "...Well... we came from the other side of the mountain... Before anything else, could you please tell us where we are

and what this monster is...?”

“...Ah, I... see... Well, that monster there is called a Taotie... Before you killed it, it lived deep in the mountains and was known for being extremely ferocious!” replied the old man.

Upon hearing that, Gerald and his party exchanged glances with each other. As Yann had earlier guessed, the creature turned out to really be a Taotie...

“Maybe I misheard, but you said the three of you come from the other side of the mountain...?” added the old man, his tone hinting at his disbelief.

As all three of them nodded in response, Gerald replied, “You heard right!”

Seeing that those from the crowd immediately began discussing that fact, Rey couldn't help but raise a slight brow as he asked, “...Is... there a reason why you all sound so shocked...?”

Hearing that question, the old man quickly explained, “Well... you see, nobody's ever been able to come over to this side of the mountain... After all, there's a trap there that hypnotically ensnares anyone who tries to come over! With that said, how on earth did all of you even manage to make it across in one piece...?”

It was clear that the old man was referring to the jade board in the hypnotic cave from earlier...

Whatever the case was, Gerald simply smiled subtly before replying, “Let's just say we aren't too sure about that either right now, sir.”

“Well, if you managed to achieve such a magnificent feat without even paying attention to it, it wouldn't

be a stretch to call all three of you wise men! Since you're already here anyway, come along to our village! Allow us to indulge you for managing to get to this side of the mountain!" declared the old man in a jovial tone.

Seeing no harm in that, Gerald and his party then followed the old man—and the crowd of people—back to their village...

Upon arriving, the trio saw that the village looked exactly like ones that could be found in history books. They also came to learn that the people here led lives where they woke early to work and turned in as soon as sunset came. From those two facts alone, it became evident that the people here had lived completely separate from the outside world for many, many years...

"...Say... do... you think we could've time-traveled, Mr. Crawford...?" whispered Rey along the way, finding everything here to be too bizarre to belong to the present.

"Negative. I'm sure that this place is just a utopia that came to be since it was cut off from the rest of the world quite early on..." replied Gerald.

After all, if they truly had time-traveled, then their phones wouldn't still have signals! That was honestly the main reason why Gerald was sure that Rey's hypothesis was wrong.

Regardless, after hearing what Gerald had to say, Rey couldn't help but agree...

By the time they got to the old man's house, the entire village was already abuzz with news about outsiders' arrival. After all, none of them had ever met people from the other side of the mountain before!

Once they were inside, Gerald immediately asked, "Speaking of which... How should we address you,

sir...?”

“Ah, well, I go by Stanton Lingard, and I’m the chief of this village! In case you were wondering, this place is called Moonbeam Village!” replied Stanton as Gerald, Rey, and Yann nodded understandingly.

“A pleasure to meet you, Chief Lingard! Though... why Moonbeam...?”

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Chapter 1905

Upon hearing Rey’s question, Stanton immediately chuckled before replying, “You’ll find out once night comes!”

Hearing that, Rey could only shrug in response.

Regardless, it wasn’t long before the villagers brought all kinds of food and drinks over to Stanton’s home.

After they placed all the goodies in front of Gerald and his party, Stanton smiled before declaring, “Come, have some food! All of you must be famished and exhausted after traveling such a long way!”

Before Gerald could even say a word, Rey immediately replied, “Well yeah, I’m starving! Thank you for

having us, chief!”

By the time Gerald turned to stare helplessly at Rey, Rey was already busy stuffing his mouth with food. After all, the trio hadn't eaten anything for most of the day, and being a young man, Rey's appetite was nothing short of voracious. Still, with how quickly he was eating, Gerald felt that it honestly wasn't a stretch that his hunger could rival that of a hungry ghost who hadn't eaten for a century... What was he going to do with this boy...

Shaking his head, Gerald then began eating as well, followed by Yann shortly after.

Stanton himself was smiling at how quickly Rey was munching down on the food...

After eating for a while, Gerald cleared his throat before asking, “Speaking of which, chief... Do you know of any other caves on this mountain...?”

Surprised by the odd question, Stanton replied, “A... cave? Why would you be looking for a cave of all things...?”

“Well, the three of us have actually been trying to look for something important... From what we've gathered, that thing can most probably be found in a cave on this mountain!” replied Gerald, making sure not to give too much information away.

“Oh? I see! Well, rather than 'a' cave, we have quite a few of them here! Unfortunately, that also means that I don't know which one you're referring to!” replied Stanton in an apologetic tone.

“I see... then... among them, are there any that are particularly special...?” asked Gerald.

“Special you say... Well... one cave comes to mind... If I recall correctly, the cave had a large wall of stone covering its massive entrance... However, I didn’t really pry into it since night was soon to come at the time...” replied Stanton after thinking for a while.

“Hmm... Do you still remember where that cave is located?” said Gerald, his interest clearly piqued.

“Give me a moment to think...” replied Stanton as he began racking his memory...

Quite a while later, Stanton suddenly raised his head before declaring, “While I can’t remember where its exact location is, I do recall that two massive pillars stand before the cave’s entrance! You can’t miss them!”

While that statement only described what the cave’s entrance looked like, Gerald was just pleased that he received a clue in the first place.

“Got it! Thank you, chief! We’ll start looking for it first thing in the morning!” replied Gerald in a gratuitous tone.

Chuckling in reply, Stanton then said, “You’re most welcome!”

Following that conversation, it wasn’t long before night fell and a bright crescent moon enveloped Moonbeam Village in a calming glow...

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Chapter 1906

Contrary to the hustle and bustle of a typical city's nightlife, the second darkness fell, the entire village went dead silent. Everyone simply remained in their homes and turned their light sources out, not even bothering to go against the norm. They truly were living like people from ancient times...

Sometime during the night, Rey couldn't help but whisper, "...Say... Mr. Crawford...? Do you really think we'll be able to find the cave...?"

"Well, based on the chief's description, it shouldn't be too hard to find!" replied Gerald.

"I guess... I wonder if Tye and his men have left the cave by this point..." muttered Rey, a hint of worry in his voice.

"They probably have. After all, even we were able to locate the exit rather easily!" said Gerald in a calm tone.

Gerald, for one, wasn't worried about Tye at all. So what if they managed to get out? Gerald and his party were pretty much always going to be a step ahead of them anyway. With that in mind, them catching up to the trio was improbable at best.

Then again, even if they did manage to catch up to them, it wasn't as though Gerald couldn't take on them.

Whatever the case was, after chatting a bit longer, the two finally decided to hit the hay...

Not long after the sun began to rise, knocking could be heard on the trio's door as the chief's familiar voice called out, "Morning, gentlemen! Are you all up?"

Upon hearing that, Gerald instantly got out of bed before walking over to the door.

Opening it, Gerald then smiled subtly as he replied, "Well you're early, chief!"

Chuckling in response, Stanton then said, "All of us here are just early risers! Regardless, I'm here to tell you that we're entering the mountain later. With that in mind, I wonder if you'd like to come along with us!"

"Oh? But of course! Please give us a moment, chief! We'll be packed up and ready in no time!" replied Gerald, now looking much more pumped up. After all, they'd surely have a much easier time finding that cave with Stanton's help.

"There's no rush! Also, I've already had someone prepare breakfast for you, so we'll only be setting off once you've all had your meals!" said Stanton.

"I see! If I haven't said it already, we really appreciate being in your care!" replied Gerald in a gratuitous tone. After all, not only had Stanton personally come over to wake them, but he had even got others to prepare breakfast for them! It would be rude if he didn't show appreciation toward Stanton's thoughtfulness!

Regardless, with that said, Gerald quickly woke the others up...

Once they were done packing, they headed over to the village chief's house and had a lavish breakfast...

This didn't take long, and soon enough, the party of three set off for the mountains with Stanton and his men...

Being about three thousand feet above sea level, the mountain was considerably high and was rather difficult to hike. Had Stanton not been there to lead the way, Gerald and his party would've surely had a much rougher time navigating the mountain...

Even so, that didn't mean that the hike was easy. Rey himself—who wasn't used to hiking—couldn't help but complain, “T-this hike is a bit too rough, isn't it, Mr. Crawford...?”

“It could've been much rougher if we didn't have the chief's guidance!” replied Gerald, causing Rey to instantly shut up...

Chapter 1907

“Hah! Just so you know, there didn't even use to be a road on this mountain! This footpath here is the product of us mapping out the mountain for years! This path is considerably easy, you know? Some of the more difficult terrains require us to climb!” scowled Stanton—who was taking the lead—in a joking tone.

While the trio appreciated the old man's light-heartedness, it didn't change the fact that all this hiking was a challenge for them. Even so, they were well aware that this was the only way they were going to be able to locate that cave... As they said, ‘No pain, no gain...’

Regardless, after about an hour of trekking, the group finally arrived at an area with relatively flat land. Judging from how high up the mountain they were, they were possibly halfway up the mountain as well. With that in mind, looking down at the deep valley—that was now hundreds of feet below them—would make anyone feel giddy...

Just as all three of them were trying hard not to think about how high they were, they quickly snapped out of it when Stanton called out, “Gentlemen! That’s the cave right there!”

Turning to look at where Stanton was pointing, the three men could immediately see the two stone pillars standing before the blocked cave entrance... It was exactly like how Stanton had described the night before...

Seeing that this was their stop, Gerald then nodded before saying, “So it would seem! Thank you for guiding us up till this point, chief! We’ll be heading there on our own now!”

“Got it! Speaking of which, do be careful in there... Once you’ve located whatever it is you’re looking for, do return to the village!” replied Stanton in a kind voice.

“Loud and clear! We appreciate all the hospitality, chief!” declared Gerald and his party in unison before bidding goodbye and heading toward the cave...

Stanton—and the other villagers—themselves continued on their own journey further up the mountain...

Regardless, upon standing before the mouth of the sealed-up cave, Rey couldn’t help but say, “That’s one massive stone wall blocking the entrance... Still... Do you think there’s some kind of mechanism to get it to open, Mr. Crawford...?”

“I do, and I’m pretty sure it’s around here somewhere,” replied Gerald.

“Then what are we waiting for? Let’s hurry and find it!” declared Yann in an enthusiastic tone.

All nodding in agreement, the three then began searching the area... and soon enough, they found the mechanism they were looking for...

“...Say... doesn’t the mechanism resemble The Eight Diagrams...? The one from Feng Shui...? Have you heard about it, Mr. Crawford...?” asked Rey as he looked at Gerald.

Nodding slightly in response, Gerald then replied, “I have. While I’m not particularly knowledgeable in the art of Feng Shui, I do know that The Eight Diagrams are also known as the eight doors, and each door bears different meanings!”

From the looks of it, the only way they were going to get the cave to open was by solving this Feng Shui-based puzzle...

“I see... but... if even you don’t know much about Feng Shui, then doesn’t that mean that we’ve hit a dead-end...?” muttered Yann in a slightly defeated tone.

“It’s still too early to give up! While it’s true that I don’t know much about Feng Shui, I believe that whoever made this contraption wouldn’t have made entry into the cave all that difficult. After all, the hard part is usually getting out of such areas. With that in mind, I’m sure we can at least make it inside if we just use our heads!” replied Gerald as he looked at the two.

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With that said, Gerald then began giving The Eight Diagrams a closer look...

After thinking for a while, he eventually exclaimed, "I think I get it now! The Eight Diagrams isn't the mechanism at all! From what I've gathered, it's a clue that will lead us to the mechanism instead!"

Before the other two could even reply, Gerald was already looking for the mechanism according to the positions of the elements on The Eight Diagrams...

"The left and right sides symbolize water, whereas the front and back symbolize fire..." muttered Gerald as he continued keeping an eye out on the mechanism... and eventually, he found it.

Thankfully, Gerald had minor knowledge about Feng Shui. Otherwise, they would've never been able to find it! Still, Gerald knew he was also considerably lucky that the puzzle to opening the entrance was this simple...

Regardless, now that the mechanism was in sight, Gerald quickly twisted it... and moments after he did, the large stone wall began shaking vigorously...!

Shortly after, the wall parted in the middle, and it swung open like two massive doors...

Staring wide-eyed at the dark passageway before them, for a brief moment, all the trio could do was exchange glances with each other...

Yann was the first to break the silence as he excitedly exclaimed, "Y-you did it, Gerald...!"

While this was certainly something to celebrate, the three knew that their journey was far from over. With that, they immediately began making their way into the cave...

The second they entered, however, the large doors of the cave instantly began closing again... As Gerald had expected, leaving was definitely going to be much harder than entering...

Still, they knew they had to take the rough with the smooth, so the trio simply gritted their teeth as they continued further into the cave...

With how dark it was getting, Rey took some torchlights out from his backpack before handing them to Gerald and Yann.

Quite honestly, this place was practically a nightmare for anyone who was afraid of being alone in the dark... Thankfully, the trio was together and with three beams of light lighting their way, they were able to proceed forward with more comfort and security...

About three hundred feet later, the trio finally arrived at the end of the passageway... only to find it blocked by yet another stone wall!

In a way, this was the perfect embodiment of the saying, 'Out of the frying pan and into the fire...'

"D*mn it, another wall...?" muttered Rey as he turned to look at Gerald.

Gerald himself simply stared at the wall for a while before gently placing his hand on it... and the second he did, the entire wall began to shake!

Soon enough, the stone wall slowly slid to the side... revealing jaw-dropping amounts of treasure! Glittering gold coins were seemingly everywhere, with some even piled up so high they resembled mountains...! As if the sight wasn't grand enough already, the candles inside even began lighting up on

their own!

“H-holy cr*p!” exclaimed both Rey and Yann simultaneously, utterly amazed by all they were seeing.

“T-there’s so many gold coins...! We’re rich! We’re filthy rich!” yelled Yann excitedly as he bolted into the room!

While Gerald wanted to stop him, his attention was suddenly caught by something else...

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Chapter 1909

Atop one of the many piles of treasure, lay a treasure chest... and upon seeing it, Gerald immediately knew that what he was looking for was in there.

As he had predicted, it truly was here! Now that it was so close to him, there was no way he was going to be able to hold himself back from obtaining it!

With that, Gerald paid little attention to what Rey and Yann were doing and simply walked toward the treasure chest...

Watching as seemingly endless amounts of gold coins slid down from the mountain of treasures that Gerald was slowly climbing, Yann couldn’t help but get even more excited.

Taking his backpack off, he immediately began filling it with piles upon piles of treasures! After all, he had never seen this many gold coins in a single place before, so he simply couldn't help himself...

While Rey—who had been standing at the side—was equally as excited to see all that gold, he knew better than to do what Yann was doing.

After all, Gerald had told him not to touch things at random, and he wasn't about to disobey him.

Regardless, Gerald finally made it to the top of the mountain of coins at that moment...

Upon opening the treasure chest, he was greeted by the sight of a crystal clear, emerald-green jade pendant that was shaped like a butterfly...

This was it... he had finally found it!

Gerald was the only one who knew what the pendant was used for, so he wasn't too worried about Yann wanting to take it. Still, it was better to be safe than sorry, so Gerald quickly hid it in his clothes. Nobody could ever learn that he had obtained the item...

Whatever the case was, now that he had obtained the pendant, he slid down the mountain of gold coins, fully prepared to leave as he called out, "Alright, we've found what we were looking for, now let's head back!"

"What? Are you seriously telling me that you wish to leave just like that?" retorted Yann.

Stopping in his tracks, Gerald raised a slight brow as he turned to look at Yann before saying, "If I recall correctly, I specifically remember telling you not to touch any of the treasures here!"

"I know, I know, but... all this treasure, Gerald...! If we get all this out of here, we'll be able to live the rest of our lives without worry!" replied Yann in an enthusiastic tone.

Sensing the glint of avarice in Yann's eyes, Gerald could already tell that Yann was dangerously close to completely losing himself to greed.

"I'll only say it one more time. We're leaving now, and we're not taking anything else back with us!" declared Gerald in a solemn tone.

"I refuse! After all, I saw you take something for yourself! If you can do it, why can't I?" scowled Yann.

Realizing that Yann had noticed him taking the jade, Gerald was slightly tongue-tied. How was he even going to explain that the pendant had a much greater value than all those treasures...?

Seeing that Gerald was having trouble, Rey then yelled, "Brother Yann, please just listen to Mr. Crawford! I'm sure he has his reasons for disallowing you to take any of them back!"

Unfortunately, Yann was already completely consumed by greed by this point.

"Over my dead body! Since you don't want them so much, fine! They all belong to me now! Mark my words, I'm definitely getting all of them out today if it's the last thing I do!" howled Yann as though he had gone insane.

“You...!” growled Rey as he turned to look at Gerald, understanding that Yann would no longer take advice from anyone...

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“...What should we do now, Mr. Crawford...?” asked Rey.

Staring straight at Yann, Gerald simply narrowed his eyes before shaking his head. He knew for a fact that Yann was already a lost cause... Greed truly was a frightening thing...

Even so, he wanted to try one last time. Glaring at Yann, Gerald’s tone sounded much angrier as he growled, “...One final time. Are you leaving with us, or aren’t you?”

“I’m not leaving yet!” roared Yann, instantly causing Gerald’s anger to peak.

That was the last straw. Not wanting anything to do with Yann anymore, Gerald then began walking out of the treasure room...

However, the second Gerald stepped out, all the candles in the room immediately went out. Following that, the room began glowing in an eerie green light!

‘This isn’t good!’ Gerald thought to himself as he quickly got out of the room—along with Rey—before yelling, “Yann! Get over here! Quick!”

Of course, Yann’s fate had been sealed the second he chose to disobey Gerald...

Unable to react in time, Yann's eyes could only widen as he watched all the gold around him transform into green goo that quickly enveloped him! He didn't even have the time to scream before the goo completely melted him down to the bone...

Gerald and Rey were understandably stunned to witness all this. To think that such a punishment had been set up for those who had been overtaken by greed...

Regardless, Yann was now dead and there was nothing Gerald could do about it.

With that in mind—and the fact that the goo was slowly coming their way—, Gerald quickly grabbed onto Rey's arm before yelling, "Come on, let's leave this place!"

Rey wasn't about to say no to that, and the duo bolted back into the passageway from before...

Shortly after, they heard the familiar scraping of stone on dirt coming from behind them, and it was pretty obvious that the door had closed itself again... Thank god they had left the room quickly...

Taking a momentary rest by sitting in the passageway, Rey couldn't help but look at Gerald with grief-filled eyes as he said, "...Mr. Crawford... Brother Yann, he..."

While he knew that Rey was frightened since this was probably the first time he had seen someone die in such a terrible way, Gerald simply opted to reply in a calm tone, "He's dead..."

Naturally, even Gerald was sad about Yann's death, but had the man not been consumed by avarice, he wouldn't have had to die so horribly... With that in mind, Yann's end was honestly deserved...

After calming down a bit more, Rey couldn't help but ask, "What even was that green goo..."

"I'm not sure, but it probably resembles sulphuric acid since it could corrode so well..." replied Gerald who couldn't help but sigh, still slightly bummed out that Yann had to die.

After all, he saw the man as a good friend. Still, Gerald did find solace in the fact that Rey wasn't like Yann.

With that in mind, Gerald then patted Rey on the shoulder before praising, "...Regardless, I'm glad you weren't consumed by greed as well, Rey. I'm proud of you!"

Despite the compliment, Rey was simply too sad to even feel pleased about it. After all, they had just lost a teammate...

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Chapter 1911

Understanding that staying here for any longer would only spell more trouble, after resting for a bit, Gerald got to his feet before saying, "Alright, let's leave this place while we can!"

With that, the duo made their way back to the sealed main entrance...

Once they were there, they quickly realized that there wasn't a mechanism to open the doors at all, at least not one they could easily see... The pitch darkness of the place certainly didn't help...

Understanding the fact that they didn't even know where to start looking for the mechanism, Rey

couldn't help but stare at the massive stone wall—blocking the cave's entrance—before looking at Gerald and asking, "...How... should we leave, Mr. Crawford...?"

"...Well, since there was a mechanism outside that allowed us to enter, I'm sure there's another one in here that will allow us to leave! Since the Yin and Yang sides—based on the layout of The Eight Diagrams—was the key to opening the door from the outside, I'm assuming that the mechanism in here can be found opposite of that!" replied Gerald after thinking for a bit.

Following that, Gerald began searching the opposite areas... and after feeling around the stone wall, he managed to find a mechanism!

Immediately twisting it, Gerald and Rey's eyes quickly widened as the floor beneath them began to crumble! To think that the mechanism would cause this!

Regardless, unable to react in time, both of them soon found themselves sliding down an inclined path!

While Rey screamed all the way down, Gerald himself could only think about how badly he had messed up this time. As it turned out, things weren't as easy as he had expected...

Whatever the case was, it was quite a while before the slope suddenly ended, sending both of them shooting out and landing on a soft pile of dirt.

Groaning as they got up, the two quickly realized that they seemed to have entered another cave... Aside from the fact that there was a pond in the cave—that had water so clear that one could easily see its bottom—there was not much else to note at first glance...

“Holy cr*p... Where even are we, Mr. Crawford...?” asked Rey as he dusted the dirt off his clothes.

Naturally, Gerald had no clue of where they were either. Even so, to think that there would actually be another cave under that cave... What a special place...

Simply shaking his head in response, Gerald and Rey then began investigating the surrounding area, hoping to find an exit. Unfortunately for them, no matter how hard they searched, there didn't seem to be one. They were trapped once again...

“Well that's just great! I guess we're stuck here!” said Rey as he sat down while heaving a heavy sigh.

Frowning slightly, Gerald then took Tye's map out before giving it a good look. Something had to be wrong here... Thankfully, Gerald was right.

Now that he had managed to find something significant, Gerald quickly called out, “Rey!”

Hurriedly getting to his feet, Rey then raised a slight brow as he looked at the map while asking, “...Yes, Mr. Crawford? Did you find something?”

“Indeed! See the Officer Viewing Deck where we started from? While we've changed course several times, I retraced our steps... and here! See that other cave on the map? I have a feeling that we're currently here! And that cave clearly shows an entrance!” exclaimed Gerald, pointing at the map the entire time.

While Rey definitely felt that Gerald's words made sense, he couldn't help but say, “That's fine and all... But we've already made a thorough search of this place! Forget an exit, we haven't even managed to

locate anything resembling a door opening mechanism!”

Though Gerald saw where Rey was coming from, he was sure that there definitely had to be a way out. After all, there was a high chance that they simply hadn't looked in the right direction.

With that in mind, Gerald simply replied, “I'm sure the exit will appear soon! Keep calm, we'll definitely find a way to leave!”

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Following that, Gerald got up and began feeling around the walls again...

Since the stone walls were quite uneven, it made finding mechanisms—to potentially lead to a way out—even harder than usual...

Regardless, after hearing what Gerald had to say, Rey was motivated to give it another shot. With that, he began doing the same as Gerald, hoping to finally find a way to get out of this place...

While continuing to feel the walls, Gerald's ears perked when a crisp 'click' was heard. Eyes quickly widening, Gerald could only stare as the stone slab—that his foot was currently on—began sinking in...

Lifting his foot, he watched as the slab continued sinking deeper and deeper... And by the time it stopped, a part of the stone wall had shifted open!

Both surprised and delighted, Rey couldn't help but turn to look at Gerald while calling out, "M-Mr. Crawford...!"

Though Gerald himself was surprised by all this, he quickly snapped out of it and walked through the newly formed entrance...

To the duo's dismay, they quickly realized that all the entrance led to was a flight of descending stairs that appeared almost bottomless! The fact that it was pitch dark down there certainly didn't help...

"...Where do you think this leads to, Mr. Crawford...?" muttered Rey as he turned to look at Gerald.

"Only one way to find out!" replied Gerald, prompting the duo to begin descending the stairs...

As they walked on, a sort of mist began appearing and the lower they went, the denser it became...

It was about half an hour later when Rey couldn't help but cry out, "...There's just no end to these stairs, Mr. Crawford! We've been walking for almost thirty minutes now yet the end is nowhere in sight!"

Gerald himself was starting to find all this weird. This place really was too mystifying...

After thinking for a while, Gerald eventually sighed before saying, "...Alright, since we don't seem to be getting anywhere, let's just return to where we came from!"

With that, the duo began ascending the stairs... However, another half-hour later, the two youths finally realized how serious their current dilemma was. After all, no matter how long they walked, the area where they started from was simply nowhere to be found!

“Seriously?! We should have reached the entry point by now! Where the hell is it?!” cried out the increasingly distressed Rey.

To think that even their return route would end up changing!

“It’s important to stay calm during such situations! With that said, let’s think about it first!” replied Gerald as he began racking his brain...

Looking closer at the stairs, Gerald noticed that the steps appeared to be numbered... Were the numbers there for a reason...?

After thinking about it for a while, Gerald’s eyes suddenly widened as he exclaimed, “I got it!”

Surprised by Gerald’s sudden shouting, Rey quickly shook his head before asking, “G-got it? You’ve figured out how we can get out of this place, Mr. Crawford?”

“Indeed! Essentially, we’ve been trapped by an Eight Diagrams puzzle ever since we set foot into this place! If my guess is correct, in order to get out of this loop, we’ll need to solve The Eight Diagrams puzzle of the stairs! If you look closer, you can see numbers on the steps, right? I’m assuming that by utilizing The Eight Diagrams chart on them, we’ll be able to finally escape!” explained Gerald.

Despite the explanation, Rey wasn’t too familiar with The Eight Diagrams, so very little of what Gerald had just said made sense to him...

Seeing that his point wasn’t getting across, Gerald decided to just try his theory out instead...

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Chapter 1913

“It’s fine if you don’t get it. Whatever the case is, I’m going to be having an out-of-body experience now to check if my theory is correct! With that said, be sure to guard my body well in the meantime!” said Gerald.

“Got it, Mr. Crawford! Do be careful!” replied Rey as Gerald nodded before lying down...

Shortly after, his ghost form shot out from his body before diving downward!

Continuing to dive deeper and deeper, Gerald eventually came across the source of the duo’s plight... True to Gerald’s guess, there really was a giant mechanism underneath them this entire time!

With that mystery solved, Gerald knew that in order for them to escape this hellish loop, they would need to take a literal leap of faith after finding a specific number on the stairs... If they didn’t, they could very well end up living the rest of their lives on these stairs...

Regardless, now that he had learned all this, Gerald bolted back to his physical body... and upon re-entering it, he instantly yelled, “Bingo!”

Since Gerald had made such an abrupt return, it scared the living daylights out of Rey!

Once the youth finally calmed down, he could only look helplessly at Gerald as he muttered between pants, “D-d*mn it, Mr. Crawford...! You almost gave me a heart attack...! Don’t go shouting so abruptly...!”

To be fair, being all alone in such darkness would make anyone feel utterly terrified...

While even Gerald was momentarily stunned by Rey's reaction, he quickly snapped out of it before saying, "...Got it! Anyway, listen, I think I've found a way to get out of this place!"

"...H-huh? Really? Then what are we waiting for, Mr. Crawford? Lead the way!" replied Rey, instantly forgetting about being scared half to death just seconds earlier. After all, Rey's priority was to leave this place as soon as possible since he felt that he would go mad from anxiety if he had to stay in this place any longer...

Nodding in agreement, Gerald then began leading Rey down the stairs again... and eventually, he found the exact spot they needed to be at.

Seeing that they had stopped, the confused Rey couldn't help but ask, "...Um... Mr. Crawford...? Didn't you say we were leaving...? We've been descending the stairs for quite a while now..."

Hearing that, Gerald turned to face Rey before saying, "This is it. We're jumping down from here!"

"...H-huh?!" replied Rey as his jaw instantly dropped, unsure of whether he had heard right.

Upon seeing how determined Gerald's following nod was, the worried Rey immediately replied in a fearful tone, "P-please don't joke about this, Mr. Crawford... We can't even see the bottom from here! We'll surely die!"

After saying that, Rey couldn't help but gulp as he stared down... The longer he stared at the abyss, the more terrified he got...

Gerald himself simply raised a brow as he said, "...Rey, do you honestly think I'd joke about something like this?"

While Rey was sure that Gerald wouldn't, his master's order to leap into the abyss was simply mind boggling...

Seeing how hesitant Rey was being, Gerald couldn't help but sigh as he added, "...Fine, I'll be jumping first then. However, if I do end up dying, good luck thinking of other ways to leave!"

Momentarily left stupefied by Gerald's absurd suggestion, Rey could only stare wide-eyed as Gerald leaped off the stairs without even waiting for his reply!

While Rey was left panicking, Gerald himself had made a safe landing atop another set of stairs...

Just as he had thought, the trick to escaping that loop was by hopping off the step with that specific number!

However, Rey wasn't aware that Gerald was still alive. With that in mind, it wasn't a surprise that he soon began calling out, "M-Mr. Crawford...!"

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Hearing how worried the boy was for his safety, Gerald couldn't help but smile subtly as he looked up

while shouting, “What are you waiting for, Rey? Jump already!”

Upon hearing Gerald’s response, Rey was instantly overjoyed. After all, not only was Gerald still alive, but he had apparently successfully found a way to escape this hellish loop!

Now that he knew this, Rey mustered up his courage... before leaping and plunging straight into the abyss!

Immediately screaming as he plummeted, his utter terror soon turned into confusion when he realized that his feet were already on the ground. The fall had barely even taken a second!

“...Was there really a need to scream that loudly...” grumbled Gerald whose ears were now throbbing due to how loud Rey had been.

While Gerald was left annoyed, Rey himself was so overjoyed—that he was still alive—that he immediately exclaimed, “I-I’m alive! And to think that the jump wasn’t even all that long! W-we’re finally free from those stairs, Mr. Crawford...!”

Shaking his head in resignation at how childish his disciple was being, Gerald simply patted him on the back before starting to walk toward the light before them...

Now realizing that the exit had been this close this entire time, Rey’s eyes widened as he called out, “W-wait for me, Mr. Crawford!”

Quickly catching up to Gerald, the duo soon went past the shining exit... However, what awaited them was nothing short of surprising.

Beyond the exit, lay a worn-down place that looked utterly ravaged...

Staring at the near-endless towering pillars around them, Rey couldn't help but exclaim in awe, "H-holy cr*p! To think that such a place existed down here...! Everything here looks ancient!"

Though Gerald said nothing, he shared the same sentiments. After all, who wouldn't be amazed and shocked to find ancient ruins out of the blue...

Regardless, Gerald was first to break the silence by saying, "...Come on, let's have a look around!"

Nodding in agreement, Rey then began exploring the wondrous place with Gerald...

However, they had only taken a few steps forward when both of them stopped dead in their tracks.

Strange skittering sounds seemed to be quickly approaching them, and they could immediately tell that something was amiss. Was it danger...?

"...What... is that, Mr. Crawford...?" whispered Rey as he leaned in closer to Gerald.

Instead of replying with a guess, Gerald simply chose to slowly turn around, prompting Rey to do the same... and the second they saw what was coming for them, Rey's eyes immediately widened.

As it turned out, the sounds were coming from a hoard of giant scorpions!

“H-holy cr*p! Why the hell are those scorpions so massive?!” stuttered the quivering Rey.

“Shut it! And stop moving around so much!” ordered Gerald in a calm tone.

While it was his first time seeing such massive scorpions as well, he wasn’t afraid of them at all. After all, he had already seen all kinds of horrifying ghosts, so how scary could scorpions be for him?

Though Gerald wasn’t intimidated by the giant scorpions, that wasn’t the case for Rey. He was completely frozen in fear as he watched the scorpions quickly encircle them, swaying their pointy stingers from time to time, seemingly prepared to attack them at any moment...

Small scorpion stings were already quite venomous, so Rey didn’t even want to begin imagining how potent these large scorpions’ stingers were... In fact, from how large and sharp those stingers looked, one would probably die from the stab alone...

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Chapter 1915

“W-what should we do now, Mr. Crawford...?” whispered Rey, gulping as he stared at all the giant scorpions around them. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t see an opening for them to escape at all!

“Stay calm! I’m thinking!” replied Gerald as he continued looking around, hoping that it would help him devise an escape plan.

Thankfully, it wasn’t long after before Gerald spotted a large door leading out of this area.

With their escape route in his sight, Gerald quickly whispered, “Rey, do you see that large door at your twelve o’clock?”

Turning to look in that direction, Rey then nodded before replying, “I do!”

“Good, now listen up. The plan is simple. You rush over to open that door while I distract the scorpions! Got it?” explained Gerald.

“L-loud and clear!” replied Rey, knowing that that was their best bet of surviving this encounter.

Hearing that, Gerald then drew his Astrabyss Sword before pushing Rey with his other hand while yelling, “Good! Now go!”

As Rey nodded before bolting toward the large door, Gerald himself began channeling his energy into the Astrabyss Sword, allowing it to emit its spiritblade.

Watching as the scorpions backed off a bit—after they saw the spiritblade—, Gerald took that chance to get a bit closer to Rey. He made sure to stick close enough to Rey to ensure that Rey wouldn’t get sneak attacked by any hiding scorpions...

Thanks to the duo’s teamwork, they were able to get Rey to the large door...

To Rey’s dismay, however, no matter how hard he pushed, the door wouldn’t budge! Then again, it wasn’t really all that surprising. After all, the door was made of stone and it stood over thirty feet tall. There was no way Rey was ever going to be able to open it!

Understanding that, Rey yelled, “Um...! The door’s too heavy for me to open...!”

“Again, stay calm. I’m sure there’s a mechanism to open it!” replied Gerald who currently had his eyes on the giant scorpions that were now charging toward him!

Seeing that, Rey knew that it was all up to him now. If he failed to find the mechanism, then this would be their end... Because of that, failure wasn’t an option!

With that in mind, Rey quickly calmed himself before starting to search for the mechanism... and not long after, he found it!

The mechanism itself resembled a circular door handle, and after Rey pulled it, the large door instantly began shaking!

Taking a few steps back, Rey could only stare wide-eyed as the door finally swung open a few seconds later.

Delighted, Rey then yelled, “M-Mr. Crawford, come quick! The door’s open!”

Hearing that, Gerald instantly turned to charge for the exit... and moments later, both of them found themselves staring at the large scorpions—that had now stopped in their tracks—from the other side of the giant door...

Shortly after, the scorpions began retreating, prompting the confused Rey to ask, “...Huh? They’re... not chasing after us...?”

Staring as they scuttled off, Gerald simply replied, "Indeed... I'm assuming that they're afraid of something in here!"

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After saying that, Gerald turned around and began exploring this new place with Rey...

Shortly after, they came across a spring of sorts that had crystal clear water that splashed all over the place...

Naturally, this surprised the duo. To think that there would be a spring here of all places...

"How odd to find a spring out of the blue!" exclaimed Rey as he walked over to the body of flowing water before scooping some up to drink...

Eyes-widening the second he gulped down, Rey couldn't help but turn to face Gerald as he added, "Holy! The water's sweet!"

Rey had never tasted such sweet and refreshing spring water in his entire life!

Hearing that, Gerald walked over as well to taste the water... and true to Rey's words, the water truly was rather sweet.

The fact that a spring with such sweet water was down here in this horrible place truly was mystifying...

Before Rey could take another scoop, the water suddenly began bubbling, causing the youth to freeze in surprise.

It wasn't long after before the entire spring was filled with bubbles, and within seconds, all the water suddenly evaporated!

"...H-huh? The hell? How did all the water suddenly disappear!" exclaimed Rey in an incredulous tone.

Before Gerald could even theorize, however, a crisp 'crack' could be heard from the middle of the dried-out spring...

Fixing their gazes on the source of the sound, the duo simply watched as a slab of stone suddenly began rising from the center of the dried-out spring...

Exchanging glances with each other, Gerald and Rey slowly walked over as the stone slab shifted to the side... revealing what appeared to be a darkened entrance that led downward!

While Rey's first reaction was to stare at Gerald in disbelief, Gerald himself was already shining his flashlight to illuminate the bottom of the hole...

A while later, Gerald wordlessly began descending the hole... Of course, upon seeing that, Rey had no choice but to follow him down...

The hole itself led to a flat path, and the duo walked on until they eventually came across a huge chamber...

Seeing that there was a golden casket in the middle of the chamber, Rey couldn't help but exclaim, "...I- is that what I think it is...? My god! This chamber... it's a tomb!"

As Rey wondered how the hell their expedition ended up becoming a tomb exploration, Gerald himself began walking deeper into the tomb...

It was only a few steps later when the candles in the chamber suddenly lit up, instantly brightening the entire tomb...

Now that everything was well lit, Gerald noticed that there was a tombstone within the chamber.

Walking over and seeing that ancient script had been carved onto the tombstone, Gerald turned to look at Rey before asking, "Say, can you read this?"

Gerald knew that Rey was a top student, which was why he felt that Rey had a chance of deciphering the text.

Regardless, Rey quickly jogged over before having a look at the tombstone...

It took him a while, but eventually, Rey replied, "Well... It contains information about this tomb's owner, Mr. Crawford! From what I've gathered, the owner of the tomb goes by Talias Yah, and he was a general in an ancient country called Zanekh... To think that the tomb of such a great general could be found within Mount Dakriont... How stupefying!"

Upon hearing that, Gerald immediately knew that they couldn't touch anything in here. After all, triggering a trap in such a high-profile tomb would surely spell their doom...

As he was thinking of that, the corner of Gerald's eyes suddenly caught a glimpse of a familiar symbol on the golden casket... Where had he seen that before...

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Looking at Gerald's raised eyebrow, Rey couldn't help but ask, "Is... something wrong, Mr. Crawford...? Did you find something...?"

"...See that symbol there? I feel like I've seen it somewhere before..." muttered Gerald as he continued flipping through his memories...

Sometime later, he suddenly yelled, "I remember now!"

Following that, Gerald fished the map out before quickly scanning through it.

Raising a slight brow, Rey then inched closer to look at the map as well... and when he finally realized that the exact symbol—on the casket—could be found on the map, Rey immediately exclaimed, "...Holy, is that... Then... Instead of going after the treasure, Tye was trying to locate this tomb this entire time...?!"

"I'm guessing so!" replied Gerald with a nod, finally a hundred percent sure that Tye was up to no good.

But what was he scheming...?

As Gerald was wondering about that, Tye and his men finally made it to Moonbeam Village...

Despite Gerald taking pity on them and allowing them to live, Tye wasn't about to give up on his goals that easily. Still, without the map, Tye and his men had remained lost in the mountain's forests for ages...

Regardless, upon attempting to step foot into the village, Stanton—who just so happened to see them—immediately rushed over before asking, “And who might all of you be?”

As more of the villagers ran over to stand behind Stanton, they knew why he was being so vigilant. After all, Tye and his men looked incredibly suspicious...

Raising a slight brow, Tye then glared at the old man before replying in an annoyed tone, “That isn't important. Regardless, have you recently come across three individuals dressed like us?”

Stanton was no idiot. From Tye's expression alone, he could already tell that the man wasn't a good person. With that, he simply shook his head as he replied, “...I'm afraid not! It's been ages since anyone from the outside world came to our village! Speaking of the outside world, how did all of you get here?”

Upon hearing that, Tye squinted his eyes at the chief, wondering if the old man was telling the truth...

Unfortunately, at that very moment, a young woman came jogging toward Stanton while yelling, “The meal's ready, chief! Have the three wise men returned yet?”

While Stanton was surprised to hear that statement, Tye and his men immediately frowned.

Now fully aware that Stanton had lied to them, Tye then yelled, "How dare you lie to me, old man!"

Stanton himself was at a loss for words. That young woman truly had arrived at the worst possible time...

Seeing that Stanton wasn't keen on replying, Tye then grabbed the old man by his collar before roaring, "Enough games! Where the hell are those three!"

It was clear by now that Tye's hatred for Gerald was beyond words... Tye himself had even sworn to show Gerald no mercy the next time they bumped into him.

Whatever the case was, Stanton hardly even flinched at Tye's attempt at intimidating him. Instead, the old man simply replied, "How should I know? They simply left without telling us where they were headed to!"

"Are you honestly still lying to me? Don't blame me for being ruthless then!" scowled Tye with a snort, his gut telling him that Gerald and his party were well acquainted with Stanton. After all, why else would the old man lie about something like this?

Following that, Tye ordered his men to gather all the villagers. Once that was done, Tye also instructed them to tie Stanton to the pillar at the village's entrance...

"I'm going to ask one final time... Tell me where they went!" shouted Tye, believing that the old man would finally spill the beans now.

"I've already told you, I don't know!"

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Despite how serious Stanton looked as he scowled back, Tye wasn't buying it.

Now fully enraged, Tye glared at his men before ordering, "Men! Beat this old b*stard up till he talks!"

Hearing that, two of Tye's men then stepped forward with whips in hand... and without the slightest mercy, they began whipping the poor old man!

Naturally, the other villagers instantly became enraged, and some of the bolder ones even rushed forward to rescue their poor chief!

Seeing that, Tye simply shook his head, glaring at those who dared oppose him as his hand quickly reached out for his pistol...

And with a deafening 'bang', one of the courageous villagers flopped to the ground, dead...

Upon witnessing that horrifying scene, none of the other villagers dared to take another step forward...

Tye himself simply sneered, "Listen, every time you refuse to tell me where they are, I'll just kill another villager! With that in mind, you'd better start fessing up already! Still, I'm glad nobody even knows about your village! Because of that, I can do whatever I want with you!"

“Chief, just give them the information!” called out one of the villagers, not wanting the entire village to get massacred just for the sake of protecting those three wise men.

“Yeah, chief! Our entire village is at stake here!”

“Please, just tell them, chief...!”

One after another, the villagers continued pleading Stanton to share Gerald’s location with them... and eventually, the chief knew he didn’t really have any other choice. After all, he needed to prioritize his village’s safety.

With that, Stanton sighed before declaring, “...Fine. I’ll tell you on one condition! You have to leave us once you get the information! Deal?”

“Deal!” replied Tye without the slightest hesitation.

“They’ve gone deeper into the mountain! To be more specific, they entered a cave with two stone pillars before it!” said Stanton.

Hearing that, Tye’s expression instantly soured. To think that Gerald was able to locate the exact cave Tye himself was trying to look for!

“Hah! Not bad...” replied Tye with a nod, a sinister smile on his face as he slowly aimed his gun at Stanton’s chest... and with the pull of a trigger, a bullet shot through the old man’s chest.

“C-chief...!” cried out the villagers as Stanton spat out a mouthful of blood... before his head drooped and his limbs went completely limp...

After staring for a while at their chief’s fresh corpse, several of the villagers turned to glare at Tye while roaring, “How... How inhumane...! You utter b*stard...!”

“You promised you’d leave us be! Why did you have to kill our chief?! You demon!”

Upon hearing all those curses, Tye’s frown only worsened as he aimed his pistol at the villagers... and just like that, several more villagers fell to the ground, dead.

Each bullet had hit its mark, and as Tye reloaded his gun, he yelled out, “Kill them all! Make sure you don’t miss anyone!”

Nodding in response, Tye’s men then retrieved their knives... and the massacre soon began.

By the time Tye and his men were done, the entire village population had been wiped out. Moonbeam village was no more...

How absolutely vile...

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Moving back to Gerald and Rey, they had no way of knowing about the massacre that had taken place at Moonbeam Village. Even so, it was pretty much guaranteed that Gerald wouldn't let Tye and his men off the second he found out about what they had done...

Regardless, since they were both standing before the casket now, Rey was prompted to ask, "Should... we open the casket and have a look inside, Mr. Crawford...?"

"Negative. I truly believe that something terrible will happen if we do," replied Gerald, instantly causing Rey to give up on his idea.

Even so, he couldn't help but remain curious about the contents of the golden casket. After all, Tye had been trying so hard to search for it. What kind of treasures lay within...?

"...Say, Mr. Crawford? What kinds of treasures do you think are in this tomb for Tye to travel so far just to obtain them...?" asked Rey.

Shaking his head in response, Gerald then said, "I have no idea, though I believe the things he's after lies within that casket!"

Though Gerald knew that the casket was bad news, he also had a pretty good idea that it contained something extremely valuable. After all, Tye was trying so hard to get it.

Whatever the case was, Gerald then began searching high and low around the chamber. After all, he was sick of remaining trapped in here.

Rey started doing the same, and with their combined efforts, the duo eventually managed to find a way out!

Quickly making their way out, the two soon found themselves stepping into a forest of sorts...

Still, Gerald and Rey were much too glad to finally be able to see the sky again to be bothered by that. With how stale the air in the cave had been, the two men couldn't help but feel extremely relaxed now that they could finally take whiffs of fresh air...

Exhaling loudly, Rey then sat on the ground before exclaiming, "Thank god we're finally out of that place, Mr. Crawford...!"

"Indeed! Let's head back now!" replied Gerald.

At that very moment, both of their ears perked as several rustling sounds could be heard in the distance!

Immediately getting vigilant, the duo then hid themselves well before peeking out to see who was making all that noise... and the second they saw the culprits, Gerald and Rey were rightfully surprised.

"Mr. Crawford...! It's Tye and his men!" whispered Rey.

Gerald himself was much too busy wondering how they had found their way here so quickly without the map.

Whatever the case was, Tye and his men appeared to be fully focused on getting to the cave. With that in mind, they were unable to detect Gerald and Rey...

Remembering that the cave wasn't too far off from here, Gerald had a hunch that the group would soon

come across it...

Even so, Gerald couldn't help but wonder if they would be able to get into the cave in the first place.

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