

Chapter 1856

Upon hearing that command, the duo could only exchange glances.

Knowing that it wouldn't do them any good to cause a scene, both of them simply followed the phantom soldiers' lead...

Eventually, they arrived at what appeared to be a palace of sorts within the city...

After being led in, the two soon saw an armor-clad ghost sitting atop a throne, looking all high and mighty...

Unbeknownst to them, the ghost went by the name of Yohr God, and he was the ruler of Phantom City.

"Your highness! We captured these two foreigners in our city's town!" reported one of the phantom soldiers as two others led Gerald and Rey forward.

Upon hearing that, Yohr got to his feet before squinting his eyes at Gerald...

After a while, Yohr was prompted to say, "...You're quite the special one!"

"Thank you, though... Who are you again...?" asked Gerald in a composed tone.

Booming with laughter, Yohr then replied, "You... don't even know who I am? You truly have some nerve coming here if you don't even recognize me!"

“He’s our city’s magnificent king, Yohr God!” snapped one of the phantom soldiers standing at the side.

Hearing that, Gerald and Rey couldn’t help but feel slightly surprised. To think that there would actually be a ghost king here!

Whatever the case was, Gerald felt that it was best not to immediately offend these people. It was honestly amusing how Gerald was the one trying to be reasonable with actual ghosts instead of the other way around.

Regardless, Gerald then said, “Just so you know, we’re not here to cause any trouble! We’re simply passing through the most feminine place!”

“Passing through? Where exactly are you headed to?” asked Yohr in a much sterner voice now.

“I’m off to seek the Phangrottom Clan!” declared Gerald, seeing no reason to lie.

Even so, upon hearing Gerald’s answer, Yohr’s expression instantly grew gloomy as he said, “You can’t be serious. In case you didn’t know, anyone who barges into their territory will definitely suffer a terrible fate! Do you honestly think you can make it back in one piece with just the two of you? How utterly ridiculous!”

Watching as Yohr then snorted disdainfully while glaring at them, Gerald simply chuckled before smiling as he replied, “But of course I’m serious. Why wouldn’t I head there when even you called me a ‘special one’?”

“Are you talking back to me? Are you trying to court death or something?!” growled Yohr as he instantly

transformed into a dark fog that bolted toward Gerald!

In barely a split second, Yohr was already standing inches away from Gerald's feet, his eyes glaring straight into the youth's.

"Aren't you afraid of death at all?" scoffed Yohr as he continued staring at Gerald.

"Hah! As if I'd come here in the first place if I was afraid of dying! Regardless, perhaps this will answer your question!" retorted Gerald with a snort as he separated his spirit from his body!

Staring at Gerald's ghost form, the surprised Yohr couldn't help but exclaim, "...So you're a cultivator who's half human and ghost? Color me surprised!"

While Yohr was well aware that there existed other half human and ghost cultivators like Gerald, he also knew that these hybrid cultivators were generally much stronger and had way more capabilities than fully human ones.

With that in mind, Yohr then turned to face his phantom soldiers before ordering, "...Untie them!"

After watching the soldiers do Yohr's bidding, Gerald then returned to his body.

Rey himself had been shocked silent this entire time. Based on what he had just witnessed, he now knew how that innkeeper had ended up getting all tied up the other day. After all, just like what had happened moments ago, Gerald's physical body had gone unconscious while he was in his ghost form. If Rey remembered correctly, this was similar to having an out-of-body experience!

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“...Leave us be! All of you!” ordered Yohr at his soldiers, prompting the phantom soldiers to quickly leave the room...

Once they were gone, Yohr immediately gestured for Gerald and Rey to take a seat before looking at Gerald and asking, “Now then... I wonder how I should address, good sir?”

“I go by Gerald Crawford!”

Nodding in response, Yohr then turned to look at Rey, cueing the boy to add, “You can just call me Rey!”

“I see, I see... A pleasure to meet both of you, Gerald and Rey. I admit that I may have been a bit offensive earlier... With that in mind, I do hope that you don’t take that to heart!” said Yohr in a respectful tone as he smiled subtly.

Upon hearing that, Gerald and Rey were rightfully confused. After all, Yohr’s attitude toward them had just taken a complete one-eighty!

“...We don’t. Regardless, we really are just hoping to pass through Phantom City to accomplish something important elsewhere! With that in mind, I hope you’ll just let us go!” replied Gerald, not wanting to waste any more time than he needed to here. Every second counted when it came to obtaining the Phangrottom Talisman...

“Of course, of course... But before that, I do have a favor I’d like to ask from you!” said Yohr.

“...A favor?” asked Gerald in return.

“Indeed! Essentially, I hope that you’ll bring a Phangrottom Jade back once you’re done with your mission!” said Yohr as he retrieved a sheet of paper from under his armor before handing it to Gerald.

After taking the paper and looking at the sketch of the Phangrottom Jade, Gerald couldn’t help but ask, “...And why do you need this jade?”

“That... I’m afraid I can’t tell you about that for the time being... However, I’ll definitely tell you more about it once you bring it back!” replied Yohr in an almost pleading tone.

“...Fine. Consider it done!” said Gerald since he just wanted to leave this place already.

“I appreciate it, Gerald and Rey! I’ll get my men to escort you out right this instant!” declared Yohr with a wide smile on his face as he ordered for his soldiers to re-enter the room.

Escorted by the phantom soldiers, Gerald and Rey then left Phantom City rather easily... and soon after, they got to Quay Waves.

Quay Waves itself was a large ocean that separated the Phantom City from the territory of the Phangrottom Clan. With that in mind, the duo would have to scale the ocean in order to get to their destination. However, how were they going to do it?

“...Are there no boats to ride to cross this ocean?” asked Gerald as he looked at one of the phantom soldiers.

“Negative. We’ve never been there either, so even if we had boats, we wouldn’t know how to get there.

Regardless, this is where our escort ends. The rest is up to you,” replied the phantom soldier as the rest of them nodded before quickly riding back to the city...

Watching as the soldiers left, Gerald and Rey couldn't help but feel that they had just been deserted.

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

Gerald himself appeared rather perplexed. To think that this ocean would be the largest hurdle of their journey yet!

Looking around, Gerald saw that there really weren't any boats around. Did they actually have to resort to swimming...? Then again, Gerald knew better than to actually attempt to scale an ocean just by swimming...

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“...I'm sure there's a way across! It just hasn't shown itself yet!” declared Gerald as he immediately began searching for ways to cross the large oceans.

Seeing that, Rey began doing the same. However, even after quite a while had passed, they were unable to find any suitable modes of transportation.

With that, the duo could only sit by the beach, hoping for a miracle to appear...

“...Say, Mr. Crawford...? Do you really think that a ship will come if we just wait around...?” muttered Rey as he looked at the sky.

"I believe in miracles, so yes. Yes, I do," replied Gerald in a confident tone.

The second his sentence ended, a low rumble could suddenly be heard coming from the ocean...

Getting to their feet, the duo watched wide-eyed as the ocean began bubbling and the waves began to part...! Within seconds, what appeared to be a solidified watery path appeared right atop the ocean's surface!

Exchanging glances with each other, the delighted Gerald couldn't help but say, "See? Miracles do exist!"

Before Rey could even reply, Gerald was already rushing over to the watery path... and upon stepping on it, Gerald felt that the path—that was formed by seawater—was soft to walk on, almost as though he was walking on an air cushion...

Seeing that it was safe to walk on, Rey quickly ran after Gerald... And after realizing that he too could walk on water, Rey couldn't help but exclaim, "How... How truly magical, Mr. Crawford...!"

This was naturally a first for Rey, which explained why he was so shocked. Still, to think that he would be able to actually experience walking on water in his lifetime! Such scenes were usually reserved for television dramas!

Whatever the case was, both of them quickly began proceeding across the watery path... and after walking for about ten minutes, the duo was finally able to see the sole piece of land at the end of Quay

Waves...

The land, of course, was the territory of the Phangrottom Clan, and aside from Gerald and Rey, only seven other spirit explorers had ever managed to come this far...

Either way, the second they stepped on land, the watery path behind them quickly disappeared...

Noticing the presence of a stone tablet to their left, the duo walked over and saw that the words, 'Phangrottom Clan' had been carved into it. Beside the tablet, was a gigantic stone statue that was modeled after one of the past rulers of the Phangrottom Clan. From how grand it looked, it was evident that the statue symbolized how supreme the ruler was...

Regardless, upon confirming that they were at the right place, Rey couldn't help but exclaim, "We're finally here, Mr. Crawford! To think that we'd make it here in one piece!"

Nodding in response, Gerald then retrieved the key to the large entrance of the Phangrottom Clan's territory—that he had obtained from Torme—before inserting it into the door...

After turning it, a loud rumble could be heard as the large entrance began shaking rather violently... and within seconds, the entrance to the Phangrottom Clan's territory was opened.

The first sight that greeted them was several statues that appeared to be modeled after individuals from the Phangrottom Clan. For some reason, Gerald felt that the statues had been placed there for a reason...

Either way, thanks to how perceptive Gerald was, he was able to realize in time that a volley of arrows had just been shot toward them from inside!

“Duck!” yelled Gerald as he immediately pushed Rey to the side of the entrance.

Gerald himself was just in time to have his back against the opposite side of the entrance as hundreds of arrows began shooting out!

Had Gerald reacted any slower, both of them would’ve surely ended up becoming arrow-filled corpses by now...!

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As it turned out, there were traps littered all over the place here to prevent intruders from entering...

Either way, it was only a few minutes later before arrows finally stopped shooting out...

Once they were sure that the coast was clear, the duo then cautiously peeked beyond the door again...

Turning to look at the countless arrows littered on the ground, Rey couldn’t help but gulp as he muttered, “...Thank god you reacted so quickly, Mr. Crawford... Otherwise, we would’ve surely been pierced to high heaven!”

“Indeed... I’m assuming even more traps await us inside. With that in mind, do be careful and stick close to me! Never walk around randomly, understand?” replied Gerald.

“You don’t have to tell me twice, Mr. Crawford...!” replied the still slightly rattled Rey.

Even if Gerald hadn’t said that, Rey would’ve still done the same. As if he’d dare to even move five feet away from Gerald after witnessing all that!

Regardless, the duo then cautiously began entering the area...

Meanwhile, back in the real world, Juno and Yrsa were simply waiting for the duo’s return at Mr. Bates’s place. Since they had no idea when Gerald and Rey would return, all they could do at the moment was wait there.

“How much longer will they remain in there, Mr. Bates...?” asked Juno.

“I wish I could answer that... After all, even I don’t know what could happen there... We can only hope that their fortune protects them there...” replied Mr. Bates.

While his reply was vague, Juno really couldn’t be bothered about it. After all, in her mind, she only hoped that the two would make a safe return...

It was at that moment when all three of them suddenly heard whispers coming from within the nearby forests...

Raising a brow, Juno turned to look at the source of the voices... and to her shock, the speakers appeared to be the Soul Hunters from before! To think that they had managed to survive the incident that had befallen them back at the wooden bridge!

“Mr. Bates! It’s the Soul Hunters!” said Juno.

Snorting in response, Mr. Bates then replied, “They just don’t know when to give up, do they?”

Upon hearing that, Juno and Yrsa were momentarily stunned. To think that Mr. Bates knew about them...

“Leave from the back and find someplace to hide. I’ll be dealing with them, and until I say it’s safe to come out, remain hidden!” ordered Mr. Bates.

“Got it! Be careful, Mr. Bates!” replied Juno as she quickly held onto Yrsa’s hand before leading her out the back door...

Barely even seconds after they left, the cloaked man could be seen barging into Mr. Bates’s courtyard with several Soul Hunters.

Seeing that, Mr. Bates walked out and simply stared at the cloaked man right in the eye...

Smiling subtly, the cloaked man then stared back at Mr. Bates before saying, “Been quite a while, Mr. Bates!”

“How have you still not given up, Leandro?” replied Mr. Bates without beating around the bush.

The man Mr. Bates was squinting at went by Leandro Zaborowski, and he was the leader of the Soul Hunters...

Laughing aloud after hearing Mr. Bate's statement, Leandro then shamelessly declared, "But of course I haven't! I won't stop until I've obtained the Phangrottom Talisman! Once I finally have it, I'll be able to rule over the ghost world and make everyone there obey me!"

"Hah! And that's exactly why you'll never be able to obtain it, Leandro!" sneered Mr. Bates.

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Upon hearing that, murderous intent instantly flashed across Leandro's eyes! Within a split second, Leandro's palm was already inches away from Mr. Bate's chest!

However, Mr. Bates had anticipated the attack! With that, their two palms clashed, sending powerful shockwaves flying all over the place! How absolutely powerful...!

Naturally, the two weren't about to stop there, and the duo continued exchanging blow after blow!

Witnessing all this from afar, Juno and Yrsa couldn't help but feel stunned. To think that Mr. Bates possessed such powerful martial arts skills! After all, he was able to be on par with Leandro's strength! With how things were going, however, it was honestly quite hard to see who was more powerful...

Not long after Juno had that thought, Mr. Bates failed to react in time to one of Leandro's attacks, causing his eyes to widen as Leandro's palm hit him square in the chest!

Snorting contemptuously as he watched Mr. Bates spurt blood out his mouth, Leandro then sneered, "Bold of you to think that you can still handle young people, you old b*stard!"

Following that, Leandro kicked Mr. Bates right in his stomach, sending the old man flying backward! Landing quite a distance away, Mr. Bates—who was now lying on the ground—was unable to even crawl back up anymore...

Sadly, his age was the factor that disallowed the old man from winning against Leandro. There was simply no competing against a younger person's speed...

Regardless, Juno's fury instantly flared up when she saw what had just happened. While she wanted to go save him, she knew that if she revealed herself, not only would she expose Yrsa and herself to danger, but she would also let Mr. Bates down.

Biting her lower lip, all she and Yrsa could do was continue to helplessly watch as Mr. Bates continued getting beaten up by Leandro...

However, shortly after, a Soul Hunter donning purple attire came running over to report, "Leader! We've found quite a number of footsteps in the forest nearby!"

"Oh?" replied Leandro as he immediately dragged Mr. Bates to his feet.

"Tell me... Did four individuals come looking for you? Did you open the portal for them, you old b*stard?" interrogated Leandro as he glared at Mr. Bates.

In response, however, the infuriated Mr. Bates simply spat at Leandro's face before yelling, "Like I'd tell you that!"

"You mother*cker...! Just perish then!" roared Leandro before instantly snapping Mr. Bates's neck!

Witnessing that, Juno and Yrsa could only close their eyes as tears began rolling down their cheeks... To think that Mr. Bates had died just to protect them...

“Lead me to the footsteps and we’ll follow them wherever they lead! Also, bring this b*stard’s corpse along!” instructed Leandro as his subordinates immediately did as they were told.

Following that, it wasn’t long after before the group arrived at the Stonehenge lookalike... Upon seeing that, Leandro could instantly tell that this was where the portal to the most feminine place could be opened.

Taking a closer look at the stone pillar in the center of the structure, Leandro found that there were bloodstains left behind. Putting two and two together, he then returned to Mr. Bates’s corpse and lifted the old man’s hand... And true enough, there was a rather recent cut mark there...

While all this was happening, unbeknownst to Leandro and his men, Juno and Yrsa had secretly been tailing them...

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Regardless, Leandro then ordered his men to slit Mr. Bates's neck. With how fresh the corpse was, blood immediately began flowing out...

As it turned out, they were unwilling to let Mr. Bates rest in peace even after mercilessly killing him... How absolutely inhumane...

Even so, this perfectly explained why Mr. Bates had been so reluctant to help Leandro and his subordinates. With that in mind, it made sense why the old man had chosen to die rather than compromise with such a person.

Though Leandro thought he was smart by obtaining Mr. Bates's blood to activate the Stonehenge lookalike, he quickly found out that it wasn't as easy as he imagined.

After all, even after he ordered his subordinates to pour Mr. Bates's blood onto the stone pillar, nothing happened.

"D*mn it!" scowled the angry Leandro as his fury raised even further.

Unable to contain his anger, he retrieved a knife before slowly walking over to Mr. Bates's corpse... and to relieve his wrath, he began slicing the corpse up! How unbearably cruel!

Even the other Soul Hunters could only quiver in fear as they watched their leader commit those heinous acts. None of them even dared to make a sound for fear that he would vent his anger out on them next.

Once he calmed down a little, Leandro glared at his subordinates before ordering, "Set up camp here! We're waiting for them to return!"

Since he wasn't going to be able to enter that place, all he could do was wait for Gerald and his party to return...

Whatever the case was, the other Soul Hunters immediately got to work, not daring to waste any time for fear that Leandro's anger would spark again. Fear was apparently a great motivator since the men were able to set up a temporary encampment around the Stonehenge lookalike in no time at all...

Leandro's plan was to ambush Gerald and his party the second they returned. What a truly wicked plot...

Meanwhile, Gerald and Rey themselves were quietly exploring the Phangrottom Clan's territory, careful with each step so that they wouldn't accidentally trigger another death trap.

Naturally, they had no way of knowing that Mr. Bates was now dead. Still, once Gerald eventually found out that not only had Mr. Bates been killed, but his body had been desecrated so vilely as well, he would surely fly into a rage. Leandro and his subordinates were definitely going to have hell to pay once he finally returned...

They still did not know what had happened out there, and they were also unaware of the result in which Mr. Bates's corpse was being dismembered just to protect them.

If Gerald learned about that, he would definitely be deeply furious. He would certainly not let Leandro and his subordinates off. He would also gain justice for Mr. Bates, making Leandro and his subordinates pay a heavy and horrible price.

But those things would only happen after Gerald gained the Phangrottom Talisman.

Gerald brought Rey along and walked into the territory of the Phangrottom Clan.

Regardless, as the duo made their way to the center most part of the territory, they instantly became vigilant when the torches around them started lighting up!

Following that, a deep and spine-chilling voice called out, "Who goes there?"

Forget Rey, even Gerald couldn't help feeling afraid when he heard that voice!

Being a scaredy-cat, the pale-faced Rey was already hyperventilating as Gerald replied, "I'm a cultivator! I go by Gerald Crawford!"

Seconds after he shouted that, both Gerald and Rey's immense fear finally died down.

Now that he could breathe properly again, the still fearful Rey couldn't help but look at Gerald as he exclaimed, "W-what the hell was all that about, Mr. Crawford...?!"

"Can it!" snapped Gerald.

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Upon hearing that, Rey went silent, not even daring to breathe too loudly... And a split second later, a black figure suddenly appeared before them!

Wielding a scepter, the individual had a crown made of bones atop his head, and his mask bore two sharp fangs... In other words, the person looked utterly terrifying...

Staring at the two, the individual then replied, "...And I go by the Grim Phantom. I'm the ruler of the Phangrottom Clan! Why have you come?"

Each word the Grim Phantom said felt domineering and pressuring at the same time, and with how immensely imposing the Grim Phantom's aura was alone, Gerald could already tell that there was no way in hell he would be able to win against the Grim Phantom in battle.

The Grim Phantom's power was probably way past the Thousand Souls Realm...! Gerald couldn't even begin fathoming how truly powerful the Grim Phantom was!

After doing his best to shake some of the fear off, Gerald cleared his throat before respectfully saying, "...Good day, sir. You see, I'm a half human and half ghost cultivator who's come to borrow the Phangrottom Talisman in order to save all the souls in the world... The anaconda has died, you see, which means that the large entrance of the ghost world is now open..."

"Hah! Everything is simply going according to destiny! With that in mind, nothing will change even if you do take my scepter! Regardless, since the entrance of the ghost world is now open, I'm sure that vast changes have already taken place in the world. Perhaps you'll even find everything to be foreign once you return!" sneered Grim Phantom as he looked straight into Gerald's eyes.

"Even if that's the case, I'd still like to try! At the very least, know that I'll strive to make the residents of both the human and the ghost world live harmoniously! After all, I'm sure none of us wish for mass suffering and pain to occur!" replied Gerald in a determined tone.

Hearing that, the Grim Phantom couldn't help but see Gerald in a new light. As it turned out, Gerald truly was thinking of the benefit for all the souls in the world.

Understanding that, the Grim Phantom couldn't help but sigh as he declared, "...Fine, then! Take it!"

While this definitely surprised Gerald and Rey, they were equally delighted to hear that. After all, neither of them had anticipated that the Grim Phantom would hand the talisman over that easily!

Regardless, even after the Grim Phantom had handed the Phangrottom Talisman to Gerald, the youth honestly found all this hard to believe...

Even so, he forced himself to snap out of it before saying, "Thank you, Grim Phantom...!"

"You're very welcome. Keep to your word and don't make me regret handing the talisman to you! Make sure to save all the souls in the world!" replied the Grim Phantom in a slightly more casual tone.

"Definitely!" replied Gerald as he nodded.

Gerald knew that the Grim Phantom trusted him greatly. Otherwise, why else would he hand the talisman to them that easily? Whatever the case was, since the Grim Phantom was placing that much trust in him, there was no way Gerald was going to willingly disappoint the great individual. He would definitely save all the souls in the world!

Either way, just as Gerald was about to leave with Rey, the duo heard the Grim Phantom shout, "Hold it!"

Turning around, Gerald couldn't help but ask, "...Is... something the matter, sir...?"

While Gerald wondered if the Grim Phantom was about to go back on his word, he immediately shook the thought off. There was no way such a superior individual would ever go back on his word! Then... Why was he stopping them...?Chapter 1863

"You can't leave the way you came in. I'll be frank and say that there are people waiting to ambush you if you return the same way!" explained the Grim Phantom.

Feeling slightly startled by that claim, Gerald then asked, "Are... you sure, sir...?"

Before Rey could chime in, the Grim Phantom simply waved his hand, summoning what appeared to be a viewing portal...

Staring wide-eyed at it, Gerald and Rey realized that the area shown in the portal was none other than the Stonehenge lookalike that they had used to enter this place! Even more shocking was the fact that not only were several tents now pitched around that area, but there were also multiple Soul Hunters patrolling the grounds!

As it turned out, Grim Phantom had been telling the truth! To think that the Soul Hunters would simply wait there to ambush them as soon as they returned!

"...Mr. Crawford... Do you think that Mr. Bates, Miss Zorn, and Yrsa are...?" muttered the stunned Rey.

"...Don't worry, they don't appear to be anywhere in the area. With that in mind, I'm sure they haven't been captured!" replied Gerald in a calm tone.

Even so, his deduction was only partially correct, though Gerald didn't know about that...

Whatever the case was, Gerald then turned to look at the Grim Phantom before asking, "Do you know any other ways out of this place, sir?"

Nodding slightly, the Grim Phantom then waved his hand again... and just like that, another portal—similar to the one the duo had used to come here—appeared before them...

"You can use this exit. Call it a secret exit of the Phangrottom Clan, if you so wish. Now hurry and leave!" replied the Grim Phantom.

"Thank you, Grim Phantom!" yelled Gerald as he immediately led Rey into the portal...

The second the duo were on the other side, the portal instantly closed behind them!

Stumbling to gather their bearings, Gerald and Rey began looking around... only to realize that they were in a forest of sorts.

Before them, was a rather familiar-looking house...

"...Say... Isn't that house...?" asked Rey.

"It is! It's Mr. Bates's house!" exclaimed Gerald with a nod.

To think that the secret exit of the Phangrottom Clan would lead straight behind Mr. Bates's home!

“...You know, I feel that Mr. Bates truly has an extraordinary identity... He’s definitely related to the Phangrottom Clan!” declared Rey.

After all, not only did the secret exit lead straight to the back of his home, but a portal leading to the most feminine place could be opened by merely using his blood! There was simply no doubting the fact that Mr. Bates had a deep relationship with the Phangrottom Clan!

“Whatever the case is, let’s go check on them!” replied Gerald as the duo quickly headed into his home...

However, upon entering, they soon realized that Mr. Bates, Juno, and Yrsa were nowhere to be seen. The more worrying thing, however, was the fact that the insides of the house looked all topsy-turvy!

With such a huge mess before them, Gerald and Rey instantly revealed solemn expressions... As it turned out, the Soul Hunters had already been here!

At that moment, several soul hunters donning purple clothes suddenly bolted out from nowhere!

After successfully surrounding the duo, the leader of that group—who was the only one wearing grey clothes, evidently signifying that he was the strongest among them—sneered, “We’ve been waiting for you two for ages, you know?”

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Realizing that the Soul Hunters had been lying in wait for them even in Mr. Bates's home, Gerald couldn't help but frown as he sneered, "You Soul Hunters just don't know when to quit, do you?"

"Quit the cr*p and hand over the Phangrottom Talisman already! Your only other option is to receive a one-way ticket to hell!" warned the grey Soul Hunter in a frigid tone. Once he retrieved the Phangrottom Talisman, then their mission would surely end in success!

"Hah! Dream on!" scoffed the fearless Gerald as he exuded an imposing aura.

Furious to hear that, the grey soul hunter then yelled, "You only have yourself to blame for what I'm about to do to you then! Men! After them!"

Upon hearing that, the other Soul Hunters immediately began bolting toward Gerald and Rey!

At that moment, a glint of murderous intent flashed across Gerald's eyes as the youth retrieved the Phangrottom Talisman!

Once it was in his grasp, the talisman immediately began emitting a dark purple light... that soon released an immense wave of energy! The next thing anyone knew, countless ghosts—who appeared to be warriors of the Phangrottom Clan—suddenly manifested!

The Soul Hunters didn't even have time to register what was happening before they were mercilessly attacked by the ghosts...! Within seconds, the only thing that remained of the Soul Hunters were pools

of blood...

“H-Holy sh*t...!” exclaimed the shocked Rey as he immediately began rubbing his eyes in disbelief.

“T-to think that the Phangrottom Talisman was this powerful... How absolutely terrifying...!” added Rey, an incredulous expression on his face.

Gerald himself simply smiled subtly as he hid his talisman again before calmly saying, “That’s the true power of the Phangrottom Talisman!”

Since the Phangrottom Talisman could be used to control all the spirits in the world, it wasn’t really all that shocking to know that it held such immense power.

“Regardless, let’s hurry and leave this place already! We still need to locate Miss Zorn and Yrsa!” added Gerald.

Following that, the duo left Mr. Bates’s house and began walking into the forest depths... and it wasn’t long after before a faint cry caught both their attention.

They recognized that voice anywhere... It was definitely Juno!

Swiftly making their way to the source of the sound, the duo soon found the two girls—who had slightly stretched their heads out to make finding them easier—hiding behind a large stone.

“Juno!” yelled Gerald the second he reunited with the two girls.

Immediately throwing herself into Gerald's embrace, Juno could only bawl her eyes out as she cried out, "I-I'm sorry, Gerald... Mr. Bates... He's... He's dead...!"

Upon hearing that, Gerald and Rey instantly went pale from shock.

However, Gerald quickly snapped out of it before gently patting Juno's back as he consoled, "...Don't worry, we're back now... Nothing else will happen now that I'm here...!"

After calming down a little, Juno then told Gerald everything that had happened... and by the end of it, Gerald was so furious that he could barely hold himself back from roaring in anger...!

Leandro and his subordinates... They were definitely going to pay a heavy price for what they had done to Mr. Bates...!

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Chapter 1865

Had Mr. Bates not helped them, Gerald would've been unable to obtain the Phangrottom Talisman in the first place...

With that in mind, since Mr. Bates had died so valiantly for them, Gerald definitely had to avenge the old man! Not doing so would simply mean he was letting Mr. Bates down!

"We definitely have to avenge Mr. Bates...!" growled Rey in indignation.

“I agree with Rey...! Mr. Bates... He died to protect Juno and I... We can’t let the villains do as they please any further...!” added the uncharacteristically angry Yrsa.

“Worry now, I’m definitely not letting those scoundrels go...!” declared Gerald in a frigid tone.

Following that, Gerald got to his feet before saying, “All of you, stay here. I’m dealing with them right this instant!”

“Alright! Also, please, be careful!” replied the concerned Juno who wasn’t about to stop Gerald.

Nodding in response, Gerald then turned around and swiftly began making his way to the Stonehenge lookalike where the Soul Hunters had set up camp...

Gerald was determined to completely obliterate the Soul Hunters off the face of the planet on that very day. All of them needed to pay for their sins, especially their b*stard of a leader, Leandro...!

Since Leandro had defiled Mr. Bates’s corpse so much, Gerald wasn’t about to hold anything back against that scoundrel. He wanted Leandro to be utterly terrified of him by the end of all this, and even then, Gerald was still going to make him suffer a punishment way worse than what his men were about to face.

To top it all off, Gerald wasn’t going to allow Leandro to reincarnate either...

Regardless, upon arriving at the encampment’s entrance, two Soul Hunters—who were standing guard there—immediately fixed their gazes on Gerald.

However, before they could even say a word, their eyes widened as they felt a sudden acute pain on both their necks. Looking down, the last thing they saw were huge gashes on their necks... before they eventually flopped lifelessly to the ground...

With those two out of the way, Gerald then casually continued walking into the campsite...

At that moment, Gerald appeared very much like the manifestation of the god of death himself... After all, everywhere he passed by ended up pooling up with blood...

None of the Soul Hunters were going to make it out alive today...!

Reaching the center of the encampment, Gerald drew his Astrabyss Sword out when he saw over ten Soul Hunters rushing toward him... Of course, Gerald made short work of them. They were barely even noteworthy to him.

Right now, Gerald was no longer a mere cultivator... He was a true Soul Hunter.

By that point, Leandro had realized that something was wrong, so he immediately rushed out of his tent... Only to see that Gerald had killed so many of his subordinates...! While Leandro was shocked, he was also fuming with anger!

“Leandro! I heard you mercilessly killed Mr. Bates! For that, I’m making you pay the ultimate price!” yelled Gerald in a furious voice.

Ignoring his statement, Leandro then ordered, “Men! Get him!”

Upon hearing that, all the remaining Soul Hunters immediately dashed toward Gerald... But of course, they were nowhere near his match. As if such minor characters would ever stand a chance against a protagonist!

With a single slash of the Astrabyss Sword, all of the assaulting men simply toppled to the ground, dead!

Seeing how strong Gerald truly was, Leandro couldn't help but widen his eyes. While he was now slightly worried, he wasn't about to retreat. After all, he was much stronger than the rest of his subordinates!

With that in mind, he retrieved his own sword and began charging toward Gerald...! With a mighty leap, Leandro then attempted to decapitate Gerald!

Of course, Gerald wasn't about to let him do that.

Taking a step back to avoid the attack, Gerald then scoffed, "Give it up, Leandro, you're no match against me! Killing you would be as easy as slaughtering a chicken!"

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Glaring at Leandro all the while he said that, Gerald then sheathed the Astrabyss Sword... Before fishing out the Phangrottom Talisman and showing it to Leandro as he added, "I'm assuming you know what this is?"

Eyes now widened, Leandro couldn't help but exclaim, "The... The Phangrottom Talisman! You've actually managed to obtain it...!"

Now that he knew that the talisman was with Gerald, Leandro was more determined than ever to kill him! Once that was done, he would surely obtain the talisman!

His expression now twisted with greed, Leandro glared at Gerald before yelling, "Once I finish you off, the talisman will be mine!"

Following that, he began swinging his longsword toward Gerald...!

Of course, Gerald wasn't about to let the villain have his way. Before Leandro was even able to hit him, Gerald simply waved his hand... and out shot a purple blast of energy!

Unable to dodge the attack, Leandro ended up being flung to the ground! As if that wasn't enough, his longsword shattered to pieces upon impact!

Not giving Leandro a chance to recover, Gerald bolted forward before stepping right on Leandro's back while shouting, "You'll pay the ultimate price today, Leandro! For killing and defiling Mr. Bates, I'm taking away your right to be reincarnated!"

Watching as Gerald then aimed the talisman at him, Leandro could only yell, "No...!"

What followed were screams of agony as Leandro's body instantly got engulfed in dark purple flames...!

Backing away from the burning body, Gerald watched as the flames completely engulfed the sinful man... and by the end of it all, all that remained of Leandro were smoke and ashes...

Naturally, after witnessing all that, the other Soul Hunters were terrified beyond words. Dropping all their weapons and equipment, all of them immediately began fleeing!

Though Gerald saw this, he left them alone. After all, since he had officially avenged Mr. Bates and Leandro was now dead, the Soul Hunter Organization was sure to crumble soon anyway.

Whatever the case was, Gerald quickly called the rest of his party over since all this was finally over.

After searching around for a bit, Gerald eventually found Mr. Bates's dismembered body...

Upon seeing what Leandro had done to him, Gerald's fury instantly flared up again. Now that he thought about it, perhaps he had let Leandro off too easily...

All of a sudden, Gerald suddenly thought of something. Taking the Phangrottom Talisman out, Gerald then stared at it for a while...

The Talisman was extremely powerful, right? Since that was the case, maybe he could use it to repair Mr. Bates's body... While he knew he couldn't resurrect Mr. Bates, at the very least, he wanted Mr. Bates's body to be intact so that the old man could rest in peace...

After thinking about it for quite a while, Gerald then aimed the talisman at Mr. Bates's body, making sure to concentrate his thoughts on the reconstruction of the old man's body...

Surprisingly, the talisman reacted to Gerald's thoughts, and after emitting a bright light, Mr. Bates's body parts began merging together again!

Of course, this made Gerald very happy. To think that the Phangrottom Talisman was even capable of restoring bodies!

Either way, after connecting Mr. Bates's body again, Gerald and his party eventually found a proper spot to give him a good burial...

Standing before Mr. Bates's new gravestone, Gerald then solemnly bowed as he said, "Thank you for everything that you've done for us, Mr. Bates...! I've avenged you so you can rest in peace now...!"

"Please rest in peace, Mr. Bates...!" added Juno as her eyes began tearing up again.

Had it not been for him trying to protect them, he could have probably survived... Even so, death eventually came to all, and maybe his fate was simply predetermined...

Regardless, after bidding their final farewells, Gerald and the three then set off to return to the city...

After all, though Gerald had finally obtained the Phangrottom Talisman, there was still much to do. To think that experiencing all that only marked the beginning of something else...

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Chapter 1867

After flying for an entire day and night, Gerald and his party finally arrived at their city.

Throughout the flight, the four had slept soundly. After all, it had been ages since they had last been able to sleep so comfortably.

Regardless, after disembarking, the four took a cab back to the Sacrasolis Palace.

Once they arrived half an hour later, Rey immediately sighed as he stretched while saying, "We're finally back, brother Gerald...! It feels great to finally be back in the city!"

Rey, for one, was simply pleased that he didn't have to sleep in the open again. That was enough living out in the wilderness for a while now...

"Speaking of which... Do you have any place to stay, Rey?" asked Gerald.

Hearing that, Rey frowned slightly as he replied, "I... don't, actually. After all, I set off with you in a hurry after coming here last time..."

"I see. Well, how about this? Why don't you live together with Juno and I? And I'm sure Yrsa would prefer to live with us too. Don't worry about space, there's a lot of empty rooms at our place. What more, it'll also be more convenient for us to take care of each other if we live together," suggested Gerald.

"I accept!" exclaimed both Rey and Yrsa at the same time. After all, it was good enough for them as long as they had a roof over their heads.

"Then it's settled! I guess we'll be taking you to your new home now! Also, do rest up today. We're going to get busy again when tomorrow comes!" replied Gerald.

Following that, Gerald and Juno led them to their home...

Gerald's home was a luxurious villa that wasn't all that far from the Sacrasolis Palace. Naturally, this

shocked both Rey and Yrsa the second they arrived at the villa.

“H-holy cr*p! I didn’t know you lived in such a magnificent villa, brother Gerald!” exclaimed Rey who had never even stayed in a villa before. With that in mind, knowing that he would be staying here now naturally made him very pleased.

Shaking his head in resignation, Gerald and Juno then led the duo to their respective new rooms...

Upon entering, Rey and Yrsa were immediately at a loss for words. After all, their rooms were simply wonderful! Happy couldn’t even begin describing the emotion they were currently feeling.

“Alright, rest well, you two. You deserve this rest after working so hard the past few days. Also, once you’ve unpacked your things, come down and we’ll have a nice dinner together tonight!” said Gerald.

After seeing them nod in agreement, everyone then dispersed to get their own things done.

Gerald himself simply returned to his room.

However, it wasn’t long after before his phone began ringing...

Checking to see who was calling, Gerald realized that it was an unfamiliar number. While Gerald could certainly tell that it was a local call, the initial units of the phone number were quite special, to say the least. That alone was enough to tell Gerald that the caller wasn’t an ordinary person.

After briefly hesitating, Gerald eventually decided to pick the call up as he calmly asked, “Hello? May I know who’s speaking?”

“Before that, is this Mr. Gerald Crawford I’m speaking to?” asked a male voice from the other end of the call.

“That would be me, yes. Who is this?” replied Gerald, feelings slightly more curious now.

“Ah, a pleasure to finally get to speak with you, Mr. Gerald Crawford. My name is Harold Lee, and I’m the one in charge of the Great Council of Jhanglum City in Dragenott. I’m currently investigating a rather perplexing psychic case, you see, and I’m hoping to seek your help!” said Harold.

As it turned out, the caller was someone from the Great Council of Jhanglum City...

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Now that he knew that the caller was the one in charge of the Great Council there, Gerald knew it was best if he gave Harold face and helped him out.

“...Alright, I’ll be at your office tomorrow morning!” replied Gerald.

“Glad to hear it. I truly appreciate your help, Mr. Crawford. I’ll be waiting for your arrival tomorrow!” said Harold in a respectful tone before finally hanging up.

Gerald’s Sacrasolis Palace had always been reputable, even when it was first founded. What better proof of that statement than the fact that Gerald was the first person Harold had contacted in order to solve this psychic case. It was evident that Gerald’s capabilities were well known far and wide...

Whatever the case was, rest came first, and the four of them enjoyed a well-deserved sleep...

Early the next morning, Gerald woke Rey up and told him that they were heading to the Great Council.

It was only once they were in the car when Rey curiously asked, "Why exactly are we heading to the Great Council today, brother Gerald?"

"You'll find out once we get there!" replied Gerald, prompting Rey to remain silent. Whatever the reason was, at the very least, Rey was sure that something must have happened...

It was about twenty minutes later when they arrived at the Great Council building.

Upon getting out of the car, the two were immediately greeted by the sight of Mr. Harold who had already been waiting for them at the entrance.

Seeing the two, Harold quickly walked toward them before welcoming them with a warm smile and saying, "A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Crawford!"

"Likewise, Mr. Lee. I've brought along my disciple, Rey, if you were wondering who this is," replied Gerald in a polite tone as he shook hands with the man.

Hearing his name being called out, Rey quickly added, "It's an honor to meet you, Mr. Lee. I go by Rey!"

"The same goes for me! Regardless, let's head in before we continue talking, shall we?" replied Harold who was still smiling. It appeared that he truly felt relieved with the duo's presence...

Regardless, after they entered the Great Council building, the two were led to a big meeting room...

Inside, many subordinates could be seen working hard to crack the case. However, the second they noticed Harold, Gerald, and Rey, they immediately fell silent.

Clearing his throat, Harold then yelled, "Alright, listen up, everyone! Allow me to introduce all of you to Mr. Gerald Crawford and his disciple, Rey! They're here to help us solve the case, so let's give them a warm welcome!"

Upon hearing that, all the subordinates immediately got to their feet and began clapping excitedly to welcome the duo. Naturally, all of them had heard about Gerald before, and now that the real deal was before them, they were definitely overjoyed!

Now that that was out of the way, Harold then gestured for Gerald and Rey to take their seats before saying, "Now then... Without further ado, let the meeting commence!"

With that said, his subordinates instantly resumed discussing the case.

After one of them came forward with a file and placed it on the table before Gerald, Harold smiled as he said, "Please have a look at the information we've gathered about the case."

Nodding as he returned a subtle smile, Gerald then began reading through the documents...

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After reading through it, Gerald couldn't help but raise a slight brow as he asked, "Who exactly is this, Lord Van Tage...?"

“Ah, he’s a person who claims to be able to see the past, and also predict a person’s future. Quite a number of people believe that he truly has the power to read these time-based events, so it’s no wonder why he’s become quite popular of late. I’m honestly surprised that you haven’t heard of him before, Mr. Crawford,” replied Harold.

With how busy he had been, it really was no wonder why Gerald hadn’t heard about that man before.

Leaning closer to Gerald, Rey then whispered, “I know about him, brother Gerald... I’ve read through many of his articles and even seen videos of him before. The truth is, I think he’s just a phony...”

“Phony or not, we’ll be able to tell once we’re there!” replied Gerald in a calm tone.

Since Gerald wasn’t really able to gather much from the information in the file, he knew that their next best bet would be to head straight for the crime scene...

After a slight pause, Gerald then closed the file before asking, “Can we head to the crime scene now, Mr. Lee?”

“Of course!” replied Harold without the slightest hesitation.

With that, Harold immediately—and personally—led the duo to the crime scene...

The crime scene itself was a studio apartment located in Jhanglum City’s Lotus Bay. The victim was a woman in her late twenties who went by the name of Fay West.

She had apparently died in her sleep the night before, and while that was already concerning enough, the real shocker came from two black handprints on the ceiling right atop her head!

It didn't help that aside from Fay herself, nobody else had entered her home that night, as proved by her surveillance camera's footage. While the investigators did go through the footage of the camera across her apartment for extra measure, the end result was simply the same... Only she had entered her home before her death.

What more, after doing an autopsy on Fay's body, no signs of what had killed her were found! Not an injury on her body, nor were there any traces of poison. It truly was perplexing...

After an entire day of investigating and gaining no new information about the unusual death, Harold finally decided to bring in the big guns, which prompted him to call Gerald the night before...

Since Gerald was quite famous for dealing with the paranormal, Harold believed that he was the perfect person to help them crack the case...

Regardless, the trio soon found themselves stepping foot into Fay's studio apartment.

Upon slowly entering, Gerald's expression instantly went sour. An overwhelming feminine aura had completely enveloped the insides of the studio apartment...

Since the human body naturally consisted of masculine aura, immense feminine auras like this would surely trigger a repelling feeling...

Noticing the change in Gerald's expression, Harold immediately asked, "...Did you manage to find something, Mr. Crawford?"

Shaking his head, Gerald then monotonously replied, "Not yet, though I must say, this place has an overwhelming feminine aura..."

Following that, Gerald headed to Fey's bed before lying down... True enough, there were two distinct, black handprints right above him...

Naturally, this surprised Harold and his men, though Gerald paid them no heed.

Instead, he simply closed his eyes... and when he reopened them, a woman was lying right next to him...

Of course, she was none other than Fay West herself.

"Find anything?" asked Fay in a curious tone.

Turning to look at her, Gerald then asked, "...Why did you choose to believe in Lord Van Tage?"

Simply giggling in response, Fay then turned to look at the black handprints on the ceiling...

Just as Gerald did the same, he was suddenly jolted away from the scene when Rey's voice called out, "B-brother Gerald! Are you alright?!"

Opening his eyes, he couldn't help but raise a slight brow as he looked at Rey while asking, "What's wrong?"

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“W-we thought you were possessed! After all, you didn’t respond to us no matter how much we called out to you! You scared us half to death, you know?” replied the stunned Rey.

Choosing to ignore Rey’s statement, Gerald then hopped off the bed before saying, “Regardless, I’ve just discovered something important!”

Immediately drawing everyone’s attention in the room, Harold then quickly walked over before asking, “What exactly have you discovered?”

Pointing at the handprints on the ceiling, Gerald then replied, “There’s something wrong with those black handprints!”

Confused, Harold then asked, “...I’m not quite sure if I follow...”

“Think about it. Why would a killer leave such obvious handprints after doing the deed?” replied Gerald.

Upon hearing that, Harold found himself frowning. After thinking for a while, he then replied, “...Are you saying that the killer is trying to mislead us?”

Nodding in response, Gerald then replied, “Bingo. Regardless, bring Lord Van Tage in for questioning. I have a sneaking suspicion that Fay’s death is related to him!”

Not even questioning any further, Harold then turned to look at his subordinates before ordering, “Send some of our men out to bring Lord Van Tage in for questioning right this instant!”

Watching as Harold's subordinates ran off to do as they were instructed, Rey then inched closer to Gerald before saying, "...Don't you feel that all this is simply too bizarre, brother Gerald...?"

"It is. After all, I believe that instead of humans, ghosts are the true perpetrators of this crime! I'm actually telling them to bring Lord Van Tage back to the office to protect him!" whispered Gerald in response.

After hearing that, Rey finally saw the bigger picture.

Since nothing else could be done here at the moment, Gerald then said, "Alright, let's head back to the Great Council building for now!"

With that, everyone did as Gerald told...

On their way back to the building, however, Harold's phone began ringing.

Answering the call with his other hand, Harold then said, "Yes?"

"Bad news, sir! Lord Van Tage is dead...!" replied his subordinate.

Upon hearing that, the screeching of tires could instantly be heard as Harold slammed on the brakes.

"What? Dead?!" exclaimed the shocked Harold.

From Harold's reaction alone, Gerald could already tell that they were too late.

"So... I'm assuming that the dead man is Lord Van Tage?" said Gerald with a sigh just as Harold was turning to look at him.

Surprised that Gerald could read his mind, Harold quickly snapped out of it before nodding.

"I see... Then let's head to the crime scene immediately!" declared Gerald.

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Nodding in response, Harold then hung up before stepping on the gas as they sped to the crime scene.

As Gerald had earlier told Rey, instead of being the perpetrator, Lord Van Tage was simply another victim. From what he could currently deduce, Lord Van Tage must have encountered something terrible with Fay which led to both of them being targeted and eventually killed...

While Gerald had successfully predicted that Lord Van Tage would end up dying next, he was unfortunately a bit too late to prevent his death...

Regardless, the trio soon arrived at Lord Van Tage's home... The Elysian Labyrinth.

Since it was well known that this was Lord Van Tage's home and he already had a cult following, it was no surprise that several people were already there, looking immensely shocked. After all, hovering right under one of the house's beams, was Lord Van Tage's lifeless body!

For a bit of backstory, after graduating from university, Lord Van Tage had dedicated his life to researching the field of psychology. While his rise to fame was simply by chance, once people started coming to him for consultations and tests, they never stopped seeking his help. And just like that, he became a celebrity on social media.

After getting so used to his presence, it truly was shocking to find out that Lord Van Tage would end up dying in his own home of all places...

Moving back to Gerald and his party, after approaching the crime scene, Harold turned to look at his subordinate—who had just walked up to the trio—before asking with a serious tone, "What's the situation like?"

"Well, according to the witness' descriptions, Lord Van Tage had simply been conducting another of his many consultations earlier when all of a sudden, he began floating! The witnesses could only stare in horror as he squeezed his own neck till he eventually died of strangulation!" reported the subordinate.

Harold was rightfully stunned after hearing that. To think that something that terrifying could happen in the real world...!

As for Gerald, he went ahead and stood right beneath the hovering corpse before looking around... Even so, he simply couldn't see anything out of the ordinary.

“Find anything, brother Gerald...?” asked the confused Rey.

“...Well, for starters, this place is brimming with feminine aura, just like Fay’s place. In other words, I’m pretty sure the culprit is the same individual,” replied Gerald.

“I see... Still, don’t you find all this a bit too bizarre, brother Gerald...? Who in the right mind would strangle themselves to death...?” muttered the bewildered Rey.

Frowning slightly as he narrowed his eyes, Gerald then replied, “Not him, that’s for sure. I’ll be frank and say that from what I can gather, a ghost must have possessed him! How and why else would he strangle himself to death! Still, no ordinary ghost could’ve done this!”

Feeling a chill run down his spine, Rey then quickly held onto his neck before fearfully stuttering, “A-are you saying that that very ghost could be observing us at this moment...?”

“Negative. I can’t sense its presence,” comforted Gerald, prompting Rey to breathe a sigh of relief. Still, Rey couldn’t help but feel goosebumps all over when he thought about how ghosts could secretly be observing him at all times...

Shortly after, Harold walked over to the duo before asking, “Find anything out of the ordinary, Mr. Crawford?”

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“From what I’ve managed to gather up till this point, the killer was never a human, but instead, a grudgeful ghost!”

“...Come again? A grudgeful ghost? Are you absolutely sure, Mr. Crawford? This isn’t exactly a minor

case,” replied Harold in a slightly doubtful tone.

Truth be told, Harold didn't really believe in ghosts. However, with so many supernatural occurrences happening before his very eyes, what other choice did he have but to believe?

“Since you've hired me to solve the case, you'll just have to trust me, Mr. Lee. Regardless, I promise you that I, Gerald Crawford, never lie about things like this! If you still refuse to believe me, however, then let's not continue wasting each other's time,” replied Gerald as he immediately turned around to leave.

If his judgment wasn't going to be trusted, then he may as well just leave.

Quickly stopping Gerald from leaving, Harold then sighed before saying, “You misunderstand me, Mr. Crawford! I'm not doubting your capabilities at all! However, do keep in mind that this case is getting a bit out of hand now. I need something a little more... Convincing to calm everyone, if you know what I mean...”

“Mr. Lee, I assure you one hundred percent that ghosts are among us. Regardless, if I'm staying then let's not waste any time arguing about their existence. The main focus now should be to capture the grudgeful ghost before it causes any more trouble!” declared Gerald in a serious tone.

“...Yes, yes... You're absolutely right! Fine then, I place my trust in you, Mr. Crawford! With that said... What should we do next?” asked Harold.

“For now, I suggest that you and your men head back first while I remain here with my disciple. Call it a hunch, but I believe that the grudgeful ghost still has some unfinished business here. With that in mind, it will surely return tonight!” replied Gerald.

Upon hearing that, Harold simply agreed. Since he had chosen to trust Gerald, he believed that Gerald

had a plan. Besides, Gerald was the expert in the supernatural here, so who was he to question his decisions?

With that, Harold and his men soon left the building...

By that point, the crowd from before had dispersed—since it wasn't like there was anyone to give them advice anymore anyway—, and the Elysian Labyrinth was promptly cordoned off...

To pass the time, Gerald and Rey simply remained in their car outside the dead man's home.

Once night came, Rey couldn't help but ask, "...Are you really sure that we'll see the ghost tonight, brother Gerald...?"

"Putting it simply, all ghosts instinctually feel the need to return to crime scenes involving them. Adding that to the fact that night is usually the most active time for ghosts, I'm pretty sure that the grudgeful ghost will make a return!" replied Gerald.

With how confident Gerald sounded, Rey was inclined to believe that Gerald must be right.

Seeing that Rey had asked, Gerald took his phone out to check the time... Apparently, it was already ten.

Nodding as he slid his phone back into his pocket, Gerald then said, "Alright, let's make our move!"

Following that, the duo left the car before stealthily making their way to the Elysian Labyrinth's entrance...

Just as Rey was about to open the door, however, Gerald suddenly called out in a hushed tone, “Hold it!”

As Rey turned around to look at Gerald, wondering what was wrong, he couldn’t help but furrow his brows as Gerald placed his hand on Rey’s forehead.

The truth was, Gerald was currently transmitting some power into Rey...

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Chapter 1873

“...What... exactly are you doing, brother Gerald...?” asked the confused Rey.

“I’m transferring some power into you so that you’ll be able to see ghosts like me from now on. However, be warned that these evil spirits can be much scarier and more vicious than you could ever imagine. With that in mind, I advise you to steel your will!” explained Gerald.

Since this was going to be Rey’s first time seeing a real evil spirit, Gerald knew that the experience could be quite unnerving. With that, he made sure to tell Rey to prepare himself in hopes that his disciple wouldn’t end up just wetting his pants and fainting on the spot...

“Got it, brother Gerald! I’ll be sure to keep myself in check!” replied Rey, determination in his eyes.

Nodding in response, Gerald then led the way into the Elysian Labyrinth...

Once inside, Gerald quickly summoned the Astrabyss Sword before saying, "Spirit Summoning Spell!"

Following that, he began changing an incantation of sorts to summon any nearby ghosts. Once the spell was successfully completed, any spirits lingering around would instantly be compelled to head to the Elysian Labyrinth...

This was also the reason why Gerald had emphasized so much on Rey steeling his spirit earlier. After all, neither of them knew what kinds of ghosts would show up.

Regardless, with the completion of the spell, Gerald and Rey then waited there in silence...

However, it wasn't long before a chilling breeze blew on the back of Rey's neck, causing shivers to run down his entire body!

"B-brother Gerald..." whimpered Rey.

Upon hearing that, Gerald instantly swung the Astrabyss Sword at the evil spirit that had manifested right behind Rey!

Rey himself quickly turned back to look at what Gerald was attacking... only to find his eyes widening in shock when he saw an evil spirit with a tiny face glaring at him! While the tiny face glowed a dark blue,

the spirit's eyes were a bloody red, making the evil spirit all the more terrifying to look at!

Realizing that Rey was so scared that he couldn't even breathe right, Gerald quickly yanked his disciple to his back before yelling, "Stay behind me! I'll deal with it!"

Now that Rey was in a safe position, Gerald leaped forward to strike at the spirit again!

Even so, the evil spirit wasn't about to allow itself to get hit that easily. Quickly morphing into a black miasma, it immediately began trying to escape!

Of course, Gerald wasn't about to give it that chance. Extending his arm, Gerald then yelled, "Soul Chain!"

And just like that, his Soul Chain was summoned and it quickly wrapped around the evil spirit!

"Pull!" instructed Gerald, resulting in the chain forcefully dragging the now angered and roaring spirit right before Gerald...

"Did you honestly think you were going to be able to escape a cultivator's grasp, evil spirit?" mocked Gerald in a disdainful tone.

Upon realizing that the spirit had been captured, Rey—who had just calmed down—quickly walked over to Gerald's side... only to feel his heart skip a beat once more when he saw how truly horrifying the evil spirit looked up-close!

"Don't worry, it can't attack you now that I've bound it! Speaking of which, if you're still feeling intimidated, don't worry too much about it. After all, this is just the first of many, and the more spirits

you see, the less threatening they'll eventually seem!" comforted Gerald, knowing that Rey was finding it hard to accept all this.

Gerald knew for a fact that many people would've already wet themselves upon seeing this evil spirit for the first time. While Rey was initially scared, he eventually became tough enough to handle this much, and that made Gerald feel rather satisfied. After all, he of all people knew that adapting to such horrifying spirits took time, so Gerald wasn't about to force Rey to adapt to them that quickly.

Regardless, after nodding in response, Rey then muttered, "Um... Brother Gerald... about that evil spirit..."

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Chapter 1874

Realizing that Rey was looking at the evil spirit, Gerald then replied, "I'll be exterminating it so that it can't cause any further harm!"

Following that, Gerald took the Phangrottom Talisman out... and upon waving it before the evil spirit, it instantly let out a mighty roar!

However, the longer it roared, the feebler it sounded, until eventually, it was reduced into nothing but ash... And just like that, Gerald had defeated the evil spirit!

Thanks to the Phangrottom Talisman, dealing with spirits was no longer a major issue for Gerald.

Rey himself could only stare dumbfounded by how easily Gerald had exorcised the evil spirit. To think that the Phangrottom Talisman was that powerful!

“The talisman is truly incredible, brother Gerald!” exclaimed Rey.

“Indeed. Why else do you think the Phangrottom Clan see it as a worthy treasure?” replied Gerald.

If even the Phangrottom Clan treasured it, it was undoubtedly a powerful item... It certainly explained why people even risked their lives just to obtain the talisman. Even so, in the end, the talisman could only ever belong to Gerald....

Regardless, now that the issue had been dealt with, Gerald was prompted to say, “Alright, we’re done here! Let’s head to the Great Council!”

With that, the duo left the Elysian Labyrinth, and not too long after, their car came to a halt before the Great Council building...

Despite the fact that it was already midnight there, the entire building was still brightly lit and the atmosphere there was as tense as ever... After all, Harold and his men had anxiously been waiting for Gerald and Rey to report back.

Regardless, upon seeing Gerald and Rey step out, one of Harold’s subordinates—who had been stationed in front of the building to report the duo’s return—immediately ran toward Harold’s office before excitedly reporting, “S-sir! They’re back!”

Upon hearing that, the delighted Harold instantly got to his feet and rushed out of his office.

Seeing Gerald and Rey there, he quickly greeted them before asking with an expectant look on his face, “What’s the situation like, Mr. Crawford?”

Looking at Harold, Gerald then calmly replied, "I've already exorcised the evil spirit, Mr. Lee. Everything's settled now!"

Hearing that, Mr. Lee immediately heaved a sigh of relief before nodding. By this point, he fully believed in Gerald's words.

"Now then, if there's nothing else, we'll be taking our leave!" added Gerald.

"Of course! Again, we're extremely grateful for all your help, Mr. Crawford!" replied Harold as he personally saw them off till they got their car...

It was only after the duo left when Harold finally returned into the building...

"...Um... Sir? Do you really think the case has been solved...? Just like that...? I mean, not to be rude, but the idea of ghosts existing..." muttered one of Harold's subordinates now that Gerald and Rey had left.

It was natural for them to feel doubtful. After all, anyone would feel skeptical over the existence of ghosts.

Even so, the harsh reality was that ghosts truly did exist in the same plane as they did. Just because they couldn't see them, didn't mean they weren't real...

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Now that the case was done and they were still awake anyway, Gerald and Rey returned home to get Juno and Yrsa out to have supper.

Heading toward a local night market, the four found a nice stall and took their seats there.

Upon sitting down, Rey couldn't help but exclaim, "Wow! To think that there'd be such a place in the city!"

Rey, for one, had never come to places like this before, so he pretty much had no idea that locations like these existed in the first place.

"...What? Didn't you study here? How could you have spent all your years in this university without finding out about this place? Your university life was a complete waste!" joked Gerald before snickering.

Chuckling sheepishly, Rey then scratched the back of his head in slight embarrassment before replying, "Still, that just shows that I work more and play less!"

Though Rey unconsciously praised himself, the trio simply rolled their eyes in response. None of them could win against Rey when it came to narcissism!

At that moment, the stall's owner walked over with a menu, a smile on her face as she said, "Welcome, welcome! There's a discount on everything today, so make sure you choose whatever you like!"

Upon hearing that, Rey instantly exclaimed, "Really? Then I'm ordering lots then, brother Gerald! After all, I won't be the one paying the bill!"

Watching as Rey then laughed before grabbing the menu, Gerald simply shook his head at his childish disciple.

Not that Gerald really minded it. After all, he had plenty of cash to spare, so treating his party wasn't really a big deal to him.

While that was the case, by the time the food—that Rey ordered—arrived ten minutes later, the amount was staggering, to say the least!

“...You... ordered quite a bit, Rey! Can we even finish all this?” asked Juno as she looked at the boy.

“Don't underestimate my appetite, Miss Zorn!” replied Rey as he patted his chest.

Unsure of how to even respond to that, Juno simply shook her head, hoping that he meant what he had just said.

With that, all four of them began eating their meal.

Seeing how rapidly Rey was gobbling down his food, Gerald couldn't help but laugh as he said, “Rey, the food's not going anywhere! Why are you eating like you haven't had a meal in a hundred years? Are you a hungry ghost or something?”

Looking up at Gerald with his cheeks still stuffed with food, Rey then chewed a little before replying, “I can't help it, brother Gerald! We haven't eaten the entire day, you know?”

Sighing as he shook his head, Gerald then said, “You barely care about your image at all, do you, Rey?”

While some may consider that to be an insult, it was a compliment in Gerald's book. Essentially, he was saying that Rey wasn't a pretentious person, and such people were very easy to get along with.

Whatever the case was, after eating a while longer, Juno couldn't help but ask, "Speaking of which... What's our next plan, Gerald?"

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Now that there were no further distractions and they were mostly done with their meals anyway, it was high time to discuss things more seriously.

"Well, I'm thinking of starting a new office in a new place. If things work out, we'll have our own established company that deals with psychic matters. That way, people will know where to find us if they have issues regarding such things," replied Gerald.

After solving today's mystery, Gerald had thought about how the Great Council only dealt with matters between humans up till this point. If he established a company that specialized in dealing with the paranormal, those seeking help would be able to get actual results instead of having clueless investigators.

What more, with the gates to the ghost world now open, more incidents like this would surely happen, which further prompted Gerald to give serious thought about the idea.

Either way, after listening to Gerald's suggestion, the trio immediately nodded without the slightest hesitation.

"I think that's an excellent idea, Gerald!" said Juno as she looked at him.

“I’m glad you think so. Speaking of which, Rey, Yrsa. Both of you will have to start your formal training soon! Juno and I will be training you separately, and once you’re ready, we’ll start sending you out to fight real battles. With that in mind, both of you had best mentally prepare yourselves!” declared Gerald.

Upon hearing that, the two disciples exchanged glances before nodding slightly.

Rey himself had a determined expression on his face as he replied, “Got it, brother Gerald! We won’t let you down!”

Truth be told, Rey had been waiting for this moment for quite a while now. After all, he was rather keen to learn about the many ways of properly dealing with ghosts.

While it was true that he ended up getting slightly frightened earlier—due to it being his first time properly seeing an evil spirit—he had to admit that the experience was a valuable one.

Regardless, as the four continued chatting as they finished their meals, loud crashing noises—that were quite close by—immediately caught their attention.

Turning to face the source of the sound, the group saw a rather intimidating-looking gang armed with wooden bats slowly making their way toward them. As they slowly made their way forward, the hooligans made sure to vandalize all the stalls around them with their bats!

Naturally, the scene instantly caused Gerald and his party members to frown. To think they would bump into such a situation while eating!

The stall owner herself was already packing her wares up, looking extremely anxious.

“Huh? Are you closing already? But we haven’t even finished eating yet!” asked Rey as he looked at the panicking stall owner.

“Look, just leave while you can! Don’t worry about paying! Consider it to be my treat!” replied the stall owner in a hasty tone as finished packing up and prepared to push her cart away.

“Who exactly are those people...? And why are you so terrified of them?” asked Gerald next.

While he obviously knew that they were gang members, he wanted more details about them.

Sighing in response, the stall owner quickly replied, “They’re from the Hoklux gang, and they run illegal protection rackets around here! I can’t say any more than that, so please, just let me and my daughter leave already!”

Just as she was about to continue pushing her cart away, an angry yell could be heard saying, “Stop her!”

Following that, several members of the gang quickly rushed forward to block her path.

Surrounded by the bat-wielding men, the stall owner and her daughter couldn’t even take another step further!

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