

The Invisible Rich Man – Chapter 2311

“Regardless, enough talk! You can contact my secretary when the time comes, but for now, dig in! No need to hold back just because I’m the deputy captain!” declared Maddox with a wave of his hand, prompting several servants to begin serving dishes and drinks.

“As if everything’s that simple... If his words were genuine, then the Maddox we’re looking at is a fake..!” sneered Lucian in a soft tone.

“Either way, we’ll see how things go. Still, I don’t think he’ll be daring enough to cause a mess before so many people,” replied Gerald as he began eating.

“Aren’t you worried that he’ll try to poison you...?” muttered Lucian in a slightly concerned tone.

“Even if he does, his poison probably won’t affect me at all. Remember, I’m no ordinary person,” replied Gerald with a smile.

“... You’re right. Well, I guess I’ll dig in as well!” said Lucian who hadn’t considered that earlier. Only someone with high cultivation like Gerald would’ve been able to obtain the Devotion Mirror in the first place. With that said, ordinary poisons would definitely be ineffective on someone like him!

Either way, Gerald quickly finished his meal before raising his hand as he said, “Deputy captain? Could I have another set? I’m not quite full yet!”

Though he hadn’t expected Gerald to just call out to him like that, Maddox simply smiled as he faced one of the servants before ordering, “But of course! Serve that boy more food!”

To Maddox, the fact that Gerald had used such a friendly tone to speak with him must’ve meant that he was completely unaware of his plans. With that in mind, Maddox didn’t mind humoring Gerald’s request. After all, the boy was going straight to hell once he was full!

After thinking about that for a bit, Maddox turned to look at Lucian before saying, “Lucian!”

“Yes? Can I do anything for you, deputy captain?” asked Lucian as he lowered his fork and spoon.

“Indeed! Now that I think about it, who’s that young man beside you? I don’t recall seeing him before this,” replied Maddox as he looked at Gerald.

“Hmm? Oh, his name is Gerald Crawford, and he’s a guest of the Grubbs. Since his family owns quite a number of properties in Weston, I brought him over to widen his horizons. Who knows, he could end up collaborating with some of the bosses here!” explained Lucian.

“Oh? I heard that companies from Weston are known for their honesty and integrity!”

“Same here! I’m up for a collaboration!” exclaimed several of those present.

All of them knew that Lucian wouldn’t just bring someone random over. With that said, though Lucian hadn’t specified the kinds of properties Gerald’s family owned, the attendees were pretty sure that they were big ones. After all, why else would Lucian treat Gerald so respectfully?

“Gerald Crawford...? Wasn’t that the name of the person who had caused quite a bit of chaos in our country a while back?” replied Maddox with a slight frown, still pretending that he wasn’t aware of who Gerald was.

Hearing that, Gerald then got to his feet before cupping his hands before Maddox as he said, “I assure you that we just share the same name, deputy captain. After all, not only is this my first time in Yanam, but I’m also merely an ordinary person! There’s no way I’d ever be able to cause any sort of chaos!”

“... I see! True enough, plenty of people on the planet share the same name! Either way, I’m quite interested in Weston, so why don’t you stay back and introduce me to some of your properties after the party? Who knows, I could facilitate your collaborations with those in Yanam!” sneered Maddox.

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Though Lucian's hands instantly began trembling, Gerald simply replied, "Why not? I may as well take the chance to learn more about Yanam as well!"

Upon hearing that, Lucian couldn't help but whisper, "Why on earth would you promise him that...?!"

"Don't worry about it. Since he wants me to stay so much, I'll just oblige," replied Gerald with a faint smile.

"Still... Allow me to remind you that we're still pretty close to the military base, so don't do anything unnecessary to him. Remember, Lindsay is very likely in his hands, so if you kill him, we may never be able to get her back!" muttered Lucian who knew that Gerald wasn't easily dissuaded.

"Copy that," replied Gerald with a slight nod.

"Good to know... Either way, I'll be trying my best to stay back with you," replied Lucian as he resumed eating, not wanting Maddox to find him suspicious.

Shortly after, Gerald finished his meal and leaned against his seat with his eyes closed. Though he looked like he had dozed off, the truth was, Gerald was actively spreading out his essential qi to get a better grasp of what was happening around the mansion.

By the time he was done, Gerald sensed the presence of twenty snipers and over a hundred special forces soldiers around the area. There was apparently a group of people surrounding the banquet hall's exterior as well.

Seeing all the effort Maddox had made to trap him, Gerald couldn't help but smile. It would be rude of him not to stay back.

Meanwhile, Maddox who was unaware of what Gerald was doing could be seen talking and laughing with the entrepreneurs and patriarchs whom he had invited. While it was true that he had set all this up just to deal with Gerald, he wasn't about to pass up the chance to get into these peoples' good books. With their support, he would surely have an easier time snatching Carter's position from him in the future...!

Regardless, the party soon ended and almost everyone was left satisfied. After all, Maddox was providing them with benefits unlike any other military official had done in the past! Of course, they were well aware that they'd have to return more commissions to him in exchange. However, since they were still going to be earning much more anyway, they didn't find sharing a part of their earnings to Maddox as something unprofitable.

With nothing else to talk about, the drunken middle aged men then hobbled out of the banquet hall while saying, "Well... We'll be taking our leave first, deputy captain...! We'll surely pay you a visit once we're free in the future...!"

Naturally, the soldiers outside had long retreated before the men even left the building.

Whatever the case was, upon hearing that, Maddox walked up to them with a smile as he replied, "Feel free to come anytime you want! I'll be sure to keep all of you company!"

Once he had sent all of them off, Maddox's smile instantly vanished as he nodded at his confidant before gesturing toward Gerald who was still in the hall. Seeing his cue, the confidant then got his walkie-talkie out before telling the snipers to get ready.

Following that, Maddox returned to the banquet hall and sat beside Lucian before saying, "You know, it's getting rather late, Lucian. Why don't you head back first? Don't worry, I'll have someone drive him home once I'm done talking to him."

"With all due respect, Gerald's new to this place, so he's still unaware of many of our customs. Because of that, I insist that I say," replied Lucian with a slightly awkward smile, not wanting to offend Maddox.

"It's fine, isn't it? In the end, we were all once ordinary people who worked our way up, so I couldn't care less about formalities. Besides, it's not like we're going to have an important talk or anything. It's just going to be a friendly chat," replied Maddox in an annoyed tone.

"... Fine... Then... Can I at least wait outside...?" muttered Lucian in resignation.

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“Just head back first. I’ll get someone to send him home later,” replied Maddox with a wave of his hand.

Though he was clearly worried, all Lucian could do was nod as he slowly left the area. On his way out, however, he recalled what Jobson had said regarding Gerald’s strength. If the boy was strong enough to take out the elders of the three major families, then Maddox was probably nothing to him. The thought of that definitely helped Lucian relax a bit more.

Regardless, once Lucian was gone, Maddox lit a cigarette before clearing his throat as he said, “So... Any idea why I told you alone to stay back?”

“Hmm? Not the slightest idea,” replied Gerald in an indifferent tone as he lit his own cigarette before turning to look at Maddox.

“Well, not only does everyone now know that you’re staying back with me, but they’re also aware that you’re Lucian’s guest! With that said, should anything happen to me, the Grubbs will surely suffer!” scoffed Maddox as he crossed his legs, sounding like he had everything under control.

“You make a fair point,” replied Gerald.

“Of course, I do. Either way, allow me to say that I really hadn’t expected you to be daring enough to return to Yanam. Just so you know, the second we saw you out at sea, my first action was to propose to Carter to send out a fleet to end you! To think that that coward of a man would reject my idea! Had he simply listened to me, you would’ve been dead by now! You have no right to be sitting before me, got that?!” growled Maddox.

Though he said that, he couldn’t help but feel thankful that Carter had rejected his idea back then. After all, had Gerald died then, Maddox probably wasn’t going to get his chance to replace Carter as captain by claiming the glory of killing Gerald himself this soon. While he was no longer that angered by him, Maddox was still disgusted by Carter’s cowardice.

Either way, upon hearing that, Gerald simply pretended to be innocent as he said, “Come again? I don’t get what you’re saying at all!”

“Oh, cut the act. We’re the only ones here now,” replied Maddox with a wave of his hand.

Not even bothering to play along anymore, Gerald who truly felt that what Maddox was doing was meaningless simply asked, “Fine, fine... Regardless, why do you want me dead that much?”

“Glad you asked. Once news about me killing you spreads, I’ll surely be promoted to captain!” said Maddox as he got up before slowly walking around the boy.

“Do it, then,” replied Gerald as he placed his hands against his chair’s armrests while leaning back.

“While I’d love to, I’m going to be the prime suspect if I kill you here. Not to worry, you’ll definitely fall into my hands in the next few days,” said Maddox as he shook his head.

“You sound pretty sure of yourself. ”

“For good reason. Regardless, know that when the time comes, you’ll surely come to me obediently,” replied Maddox.

“I look forward to it, then. Now if you’ll excuse me, I’ll be taking my leave, deputy captain,” said Gerald as he got to his feet before tossing his cigarette butt onto the floor. The second he walked out, however, he was immediately greeted by the sight of twenty armed men, all of them aiming their sniper rifles at him.

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“A bit overprepared, don’t you think?” scoffed Gerald before chuckling.

“Can’t be helped. After all, I had several prestigious guests over today. Have to make sure I keep them safe, you know? Either way, step aside and let him leave,” replied Maddox.

“Roger!” declared the snipers before making way for Gerald.

Simply shaking his head, Gerald then walked out of the villa as everyone watched him leave.

Shortly after, Maddox’s confidant inched over to Maddox’s side before whispering, “... Um... Deputy captain...? That was our best shot of killing him...! Why did you just let him off like that...?”

Smacking the back of his confidant’s head, Maddox then grumbled, “Do I have to spell everything out? Today’s goal was just to see who Gerald had been staying with! The last thing I want is for him to continue being off radar! Putting that aside, if we deal with him now, not only will the Grubbs be after our heads, but Weston as a whole will also be giving us trouble!”

“I... I get it now...! You’re planning to get rid of him once he finds out that we have Lindsay and attempts to save her, right...?” whimpered the confidant as he covered his head.

“Bingo. If we take him out like that and everything goes perfectly, then his death will be called a ‘mysterious disappearance’ that won’t implicate us!” said Maddox as she watched Gerald finally leave his sight.

Moving back to Gerald, he had barely left the villa when he saw the Grubb family’s car parked not too far away. Up on seeing Gerald, Lucian immediately got out of the car

before asking, "That was fast. Why did you leave so quickly? Did he make things difficult for you?"

"Putting that aside, why didn't you head home, Mr. Grubb?" asked Gerald as he got into the car.

"I was just worried for your safety... I figured that as long as I was here, they wouldn't dare to do anything to you," replied Lucian with a sigh of relief now that he knew Gerald was safe.

"He wouldn't have dared to kill me with or without you. Besides, his men wouldn't have been able to defeat me in the first place," said Gerald without a worry in the world.

"His... men?" asked Lucian, feeling slightly puzzled.

After all, he had previously asked Gerald if he sensed any danger, but the boy had simply shrugged the question off.

"Indeed. Twenty snipers and about a hundred special forces soldiers, to be exact. They had been hiding all over the villa this entire time," replied Gerald as he patted the driver's shoulder, prompting him to start driving.

“My god!” exclaimed the shocked Lucian.

“Don’t worry, it was all just for show. He probably wanted to scare me or something,” replied Gerald as he rolled the car window down to look around.

“That’s absolutely terrifying! Had Maddox simply ordered his soldiers to open fire, all of us could’ve died there and then!” exclaimed Lucian, his forehead now drenched in cold sweat.

“Relax. Remember, he’s still the deputy captain of Yanam’s seas, so he won’t make such an amateurish mistake,” replied Gerald.

“Either way, let’s head back... I was slightly drunk earlier but this conversation has fully sobered me up...” muttered Lucian as he rolled his own window down to feel the cool night breeze on his face.

“Speaking of which, I no longer have any doubts that Lindsay is with Maddox,” replied Gerald with a sigh. “Oh? Did he mention anything about her?” asked the surprised Lucian.

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“He said that I’d fall into his grasp within the next few days, so what else could that imply?” replied Gerald, honestly amused by how confident Maddox had sounded.

“Well, that pretty much confirms it. All the things you learned that night pretty much pointed to him being the culprit anyway. Either way, what’s the next step? With how confident he seems with his plan, you should really refrain from acting rashly...” muttered Lucian in a worried tone.

“I’ll just wait for him to tell me the news,” replied Gerald as he looked out the window.

It was nearing midnight when they finally got back to the manor. The second they got out of the car, Aiden immediately rushed out, yelling, “Gerald!”

The butler who had two umbrellas in hand soon ran out as well, calling out, “Master!”

Upon standing before Gerald, Aiden immediately added, “Why didn’t you tell me you left? I could’ve followed to give extra protection!”

“While I appreciate the thought, you’d probably end up needing my protection instead,” replied Gerald with a chuckle as he patted Aiden’s shoulder.

“Heavy rain is apparently going to persist for another week, master. With that said, I’ve already prepared some thick clothes for all of you. That way, you won’t get too cold during the auction,” said the butler as he handed an umbrella to Gerald before raising the other above Lucian’s head.

“Let it rain. It’s rare to get such long periods of heavy rain anyway,” replied Lucian.

“Indeed. Regardless, did Maddox make things difficult for both of you...?” asked the butler as the group began walking back into the manor.

“Not too much, though he did have several men lying in wait...” muttered Lucian who couldn’t help but shiver at the thought.

“I assume he did so out of worry that his guests would find themselves in danger,” replied the butler who lacked the context that Gerald and Lucian had.

“I suppose you’re right,” said Gerald, ending the conversation.

Since it was already past midnight by the time they entered the manor, Lucian chose not to say much and simply returned to his room guided by his butler to rest. The party had given him enough scares for one night.

Gerald himself returned to his guestroom, followed by Aiden. Hanging his coat in the closet-and seeing that Aiden had no intentions of leaving, Gerald was prompted to ask, "Not planning to get some rest?"

"I already took a nap in the afternoon, so I've had plenty of rest. Regardless... Did you manage to gather any clues while you were there?" asked Aiden as he shook his head before pulling a chair out for Gerald to sit on.

"What clues are you hoping for?" replied Gerald as he poured himself a glass of water.

"Clues regarding Miss Lawrence, of course!" said Aiden.

"I guess I did manage to gather something."

"Go on..." muttered the anxious Aiden.

"Well, it's confirmed that Lindsay has been captured by him," replied Gerald as he gestured for Aiden to sit beside him.

After taking a seat, Aiden waited patiently for Gerald to continue... However, the youth showed no signs of having anything else to say. With that, Aiden eventually asked, "... Is that it? What about whether Lindsay is being imprisoned back in that forested area?"

“And how would I learn about that?” replied Gerald as he rolled his eyes.

“... Huh? Then... What should we do...?” muttered Aiden in a disheartened tone. It was clear that he had expected Gerald to bring more news back.

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“What else can we do? We wait for news to come, of course! Do you really think it’s that easy to expose Maddox? Do you take him as a fool?” replied Gerald as he ruffled Aiden’s hair.

Brushing Gerald’s hand off, Aiden then said, “... So... We really can’t do anything...?”

“Precisely. Look, it’s pretty much confirmed that Maddox has Lindsay with him now, so all that’s left to do is to wait for his news. It probably won’t be a long wait anyway since he wants to kill me so much,” replied Gerald with a chuckle as he took another sip of water.

“Then let’s prepare ourselves in the meantime,” said Aiden as he relaxed slightly.

“There’s nothing to prepare. After all, you won’t be helping out much in the first place,” replied Gerald.

“Huh..? Why would you say that?” asked Aiden, rightfully confused.

“Aiden, you only have a single army dagger. Maddox had twenty snipers and at least a hundred soldiers under his command earlier. Tell me again how you’re planning to help?”

“That...” muttered Aiden as he looked at his only dagger before falling silent...

“Still, I’d rather not expose the fact that I’m a cultivator if possible. With that said, I’ll still be bringing you along. Go ask Lucian tomorrow to see if he can get you better equipment,” replied Gerald with a shrug.

“Expose? Gerald, I’m pretty sure everyone in Yanam already knows you’re a cultivator!” said Aiden with a laugh.

“The fewer people who know, the better. Regardless, now that I think about it, just let me ask Lucian about the equipment. Hopefully I can get some good ones for us,” replied Gerald with a sigh.

“Got it,” said Aiden as he nodded in response.

Fast forward to the next day, Gerald went off to look for Lucian the second he got up.

Upon hearing what Gerald had to say, the surprised Lucian couldn't help but reply, "You... need equipment...?"

"It's fine if you don't have any, though I just thought I'd ask," said Gerald, who was well aware that guns couldn't be legally obtained in Yanam, which meant that even families with high statuses like the Grubbs had trouble getting their hands on them. With that in mind, apart from the guns owned by the military, all other guns in the country were most probably smuggled in.

"Well, I can get some, but I'll need some time... Regardless, why are you requesting for them out of the blue?" asked Lucian.

"Let's just say I don't want too many more people learning that I'm a cultivator while I'm saving Lindsay. With that said, having guns will surely help with keeping that a secret," replied Gerald.

"I see... How about this? I'll make some arrangements later to see if I can get some supplies from the war department. It'll probably still take a few days, though," said Lucian, who was eager to help as long as it contributed to saving Lindsay.

"I appreciate the help," replied Gerald.

"Now, now, remember, you're the one doing a big favor for me! I should be the one thanking you for going all out just to save my niece!" said Lucian in a sheepish tone.

Before Gerald could reply, Lucian's butler showed up and said, "Oh? So you're here as well, Mr. Gerald! How convenient!"

"Is something the matter?" asked Lucian as he watched his butler jog over.

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"Well, due to all this heavy rain, it's honestly best if you leave for the island today. Otherwise, delays may happen and you wouldn't want to miss the first day of the auction, right?" said the butler.

Hearing that, Lucian turned to look at Gerald before asking, "Are you fine with leaving today?"

"I'm good to go," replied Gerald with a shrug.

Nodding in response, Lucian was about to leave when he suddenly remembered Gerald's request. With that, he turned to look at his butler again before saying, "Speaking of which, use our family's connections to obtain some guns. The more, the better."

"That'll be difficult, but I'll try my best," replied the butler with a slightly troubled expression.

“I don’t care even if you have to spend extra to get smuggled ones. They’re crucial for the rescue mission,” declared Lucian.

Upon hearing that, the butler had no choice but to reply, “... Understood.”

“Now that that’s out of the way... Go get Aiden. We’ll be leaving as soon as we’re done packing up. As Mr. Schmidt said, the rain will probably impede our journey, so the sooner we head out, the better,” said Lucian as he looked at Gerald. Fast forward to half an hour later, all three of them were all packed up and ready to go.

After driving for quite a bit, they eventually arrived at the port where they would be transported to the island at around noon. As the trio made their way to the small pier, they saw that at least a dozen small boats had already been moored there. From the looks of it, they had been hired by the auction’s organizers to help people get to the island. Regardless, though the boats were pretty small, together, they were still a sight to behold.

Whatever the case was, after approaching a seated man who was wearing a long robe, Lucian asked, “How much to get to the island?”

“Twenty thousand dollars,” replied the man without even looking up.

“Here,” said Lucian as he handed the man a wooden box, unsurprised by the outrageous price. After all, this wasn’t Lucian’s first time here, and the pricing had been

different every time anyway. Still, it was lucky that he had prepared enough before coming over.

Taking the box, the man then looked inside before closing it again, not even bothering to count the exact amount inside. Following that, he handed it to another man-who was standing nearby-who then tossed the cash into his car.

“The three of you, right? Go on!” said the man as he pointed at the boats.

As they began walking down the dock, Aiden couldn't help but mutter, “... Isn't that pricing a bit outrageous...?”

“Twenty thousand is nothing for those attending the auction. In a way, the pricing also acts as a screening process to differentiate between those who really wish to participate and those who are merely here hoping to get some excitement,” replied Lucian as he displayed proof of his payment upon arriving at one of the small boats.

Following that, the three were handed oars before they got into the boat and began rowing. Looking around, Gerald saw that many others were also rowing in the same direction.

Before he could wonder how long they would need to row, however, a tailwind suddenly began blowing. While the wind itself wasn't all that strong, it allowed their boats to sail forward extremely smoothly.

“You know, I really can’t even begin comprehending the power that the auction organizer holds!” muttered Lucian as he stopped rowing and placed his oar to the side.

“Indeed... This really is something else...” said Gerald with a nod. After all, aside from the fact that there were so many boats on the move, the island wasn’t even in sight yet! How strong was the organizer if they were able to conjure winds to move them forward from this range...?

Lighting a cigarette as he enjoyed the cool sea breeze, Lucian then muttered, “I wonder what’s going to be on auction this time... I remember the final auction item being a treasure map the last time the auction was held.”

“I see... speaking of which, do they accept cards?” asked Gerald, remembering that Lucian had paid in cash earlier.

“Of course they do. It’s not like they’re completely isolated from the world. Still, bear in mind that everything here will cost at least a few million dollars...” replied Lucian with a nod.

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“Glad to hear,” said Gerald.

“Is there something you’re hoping to buy?” asked Lucian in a curious tone.

“Nothing in particular, though if I find anything good, I may bid for it,” replied Gerald as he shook his head. While he wasn’t a big fan of auctions, since this one was held once every five years, he had a feeling that there were bound to be items that would catch his fancy. Should he come across one, he would surely bid for it.

After all, what was money to Gerald?

“... Well, alright, but again, I warn that this auction is going to be unlike anything you’ve ever seen in Weston. Once we’re on the island, even random street stall items can cost millions of dollars! With that said, you’ll need millions to purchase even a single auction item...” explained Lucian, hoping that his warnings would help Gerald avoid getting overly disappointed by his lack of purchasing power later.

“I understand,” replied Gerald in an indifferent tone.

After all, he already knew that this was a game for the rich ever since Lucian had told him that the auction was only held once every five years.

“I’m glad. Either way, we’ll probably be on the boat for a few more hours, but rest assured, the organizers have designated places for us to rest once we arrive at the island. While the auction starts the day after tomorrow, the street stalls on the island will begin operating by morning. With that said, maybe we’ll find something nice tomorrow morning,” explained Lucian as he looked at all the other similar boats.

After giving a nod, Gerald simply closed his eyes in response, releasing his essential qi in the process. Since Lucian had mentioned that many cultivators were attending the auction, Gerald knew he had to be careful. True enough, with the aid of his Herculean Primordial Spirit-which allowed him to sense everything within a ten kilometer radius, Gerald quickly learned that there were cultivators in almost every boat. Some of them were even stronger than him, but only marginally.

Gerald wasn't about to let his guard down before those who didn't appear to be cultivators either. After all, who knew whether they were actually at cultivation levels so high that even he was unable to detect them?

While he wouldn't have been this cautious in the past, after getting to know Jobson and the old man in the ancient ruins, Gerald now knew that there were countless more cultivators out there who were much stronger than him. He just wasn't strong enough to be worthy of meeting them yet!

Regardless, as he looked at the boats around them, Aiden couldn't help but ask, "... Say... Won't commoners find all these boats leaving the port suspicious...?"

"Well, every time there's an auction, the organizers disguise the event as something else. Due to that, commoners tend to just ignore all this. Besides, the island is quite far from shore and there's even a sea fog around it, so there really isn't a chance of the auction getting found out," explained Lucian as he pointed at the fog in the distance.

Fast forward to around five hours later, the outlines of the island could be seen, prompting Gerald to stretch before giving his surroundings a good look. Though this was

just an auction, there were countless cultivators attending, so he had to remain vigilant at all times.

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It was half an hour later when the boats were finally anchored at the shore by a few men donning long robes.

Upon disembarking, Lucian immediately displayed their tickets before saying, “The three of us are from the Grubb family in Yanam.”

“Right this way,” replied one of the men after taking a brief glance at the trio.

Nodding in response, Lucian then put their tickets away before gesturing for Gerald and Aiden to keep close as he said, “Alright, let’s have a meal before getting some rest. Since the sky’s going dark soon, I believe that the street stalls won’t open today.”

Though the island appeared small, upon entering, Gerald quickly realized that it was probably even bigger than Gong Island. What more, instead of having a modern look, the island honestly felt like an ancient Weston town. Gerald, for one, felt like he had just time-traveled a thousand years back.

Now feeling a bit more curious about the island, Gerald was prompted to ask, “Do people actually live on this island...?”

“From what I know, the organizer only sends people over a month or two-before the auction takes place-to clean the place up. Following that, they’ll host all the bidders and once the auction ends, the place will be cleaned up again before the island is sealed off. Speaking of which, there’s something that you may find interesting. You see, quite a few people who’ve attended the auction before have claimed that as they were passing through this area-when the auction wasn’t on, the island couldn’t be seen at all! It was almost as though the island only appeared whenever an auction was about to be held! Though many already know about this rumor, nobody’s been able to crack the code of the vanishing island!” explained Lucian as he continued leading the duo to the place they were going to be staying at, at least according to the invitation card.

Regardless, upon hearing that, Gerald instantly frowned as he said, “... Come again?”

“Hmm? Did I say something wrong?” asked Lucian as he stopped walking for a while.

“Well... you mentioned the island only being visible whenever an auction is being held, correct?” asked Gerald as he thought about Yearning Island. After dealing with the Crawford cultivators back then, he had learned of Yearning Island’s mysterious ability to just vanish, something that this very island they were on was apparently capable of doing as well.

“I did, though I assure you it’s only a rumor. Unless you’ve seen this island before?” replied Lucian as he shook his head.

“Negative. I never even knew that this auction existed before you told me,” muttered the frowning Gerald who was already certain that this island was equally as abnormal as Yearning Island.

Knowing Gerald well enough, Aiden—who had thought the same thing as Gerald after hearing Lucian’s explanation—was prompted to ask, “Are you thinking about Yearning Island, Gerald?”

“Indeed... If there truly is a relationship between this island and Yearning Island, then if I learn this place’s secrets, I may finally be able to figure out how to get to Yearning Island!” declared Gerald with a nod.

“... What exactly is this, Yearning Island...?” asked Lucian, feeling utterly confused.

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After looking around to make sure that nobody was listening in, Gerald then whispered, “I’ll tell you about it another time. There are more pressing issues at hand now.”

“Hmm..? Like what? Do share. Maybe I can help!” replied Lucian.

“Let’s talk about this once we’re in a more private area. The walls have ears and I’d rather not have others hear this,” muttered Gerald, prompting Lucian to nod before continuing to lead the way following the path on the invitation card.

It was about twenty minutes later when the trio arrived at a wooden, three-story building that was surrounded by food stalls and even two pawn shops that apparently only accepted gold and silver as currency. The scene naturally puzzled Gerald who couldn’t help but wonder how those pawnshops and food stalls had even come here in the first place. Though he was confused, he put the thought aside for now as he headed upstairs.

The organizer had arranged for them to stay in the easternmost room on the third floor, and since the invitation grouped the trio together, they soon found themselves looking at an antique-looking suite with three bedrooms connected by a living room. Though the austere-looking room was well furnished, there wasn’t an electrical appliance in sight, not even a lightbulb! As Gerald was wondering how they’d keep the room lit at night, his question was quickly answered when he saw an unopened pack of candles on the table.

Shaking his head, Gerald then put his luggage down before lighting a cigarette and saying in a monotonous tone, “I’d like to learn the island’s secrets.”

“That’s... going to be a bit difficult. After all, no ordinary island would have rumors about it only reappearing every time there was an event...” muttered Lucian as he shook his head. While past attendees had certainly been curious about all this, they had never seriously attempted to crack the code. After all, everyone knew that the organizer-who had never even shown their face before-was not someone they could afford to mess with.

“Even so, I’m giving it a go. Understanding how this island works is extremely important to me,” replied Gerald with a sigh, knowing full well how powerful the organizer was. Even after squeezing every ounce of his power, it was still probably going to be impossible for him to use his essential qi to blow boats forward for hours!

“... Is all this related to that Yearning Island you mentioned earlier...?” asked Lucian.

“Indeed. Let’s just say that that island is similar to this one. As for why I’m trying to get there, it’s because my parents and sister are trapped on that island, which explains why uncovering this island’s secrets is so important to me. With any luck, should I manage to learn how this island operates, I may finally get my chance to head to Yearning Island...” muttered Gerald as he looked out the window.

“I see... Still, you should know that the organizer never makes an appearance. With that said, none of us know their true identity!” replied Lucian with a slight nod.

Sensing Lucian’s worry, Gerald simply said, “I believe that that can change. While I won’t do anything too drastic just to crack the code, I’ll still be prying around to see if I can learn anything useful.”

“I’ll help,” replied Lucian as he patted Gerald on the shoulder.

“I appreciate it. Either way, I’ll be getting some rest first. Call me if there’s anything,” said Gerald as he puffed on his cigarette before walking toward one of the bedrooms.

