

Carefree 531

Chapter 531: Distortion

"Sss..."

Chen Xin drew a sharp breath of cold air.

She had just seen Jiese, a most meticulous monk, walk towards a ditch like he was in a trance.

If it had happened to her, she would not have been able to escape.

"Seems like...we're in trouble!"

In the darkness of the night, Fang Yuan turned towards Tantai Guihu and company, who had most of the colour drained from their faces.

"Be careful. I don't want to injure any of you by accident!"

Before any of them could respond, Fang Yuan unleashed his curse. With his black robes on, Fang Yuan looked like the Grim Reaper. Torrents of fresh blood flowed down from the inside of his sleeves and oozed across the floor.

Black figures began to surface out of the bloodstream. They were spirits and frolicked all over the place with abandon.

"Sw...swarm! It's a ghost swarm!"

Chen Xin nearly keeled over in fright.

Even the most elite exorcist would find it challenging to survive a ghost swarm of this level.

This young man was amazing. What exactly was he? Why was he even more mysterious than this village?

"Go...turn over every nook and cranny in the village and report back to me. Don't miss anything!"

Fang Yuan's eyes were now fully black. They looked even more gruesome in the light of the ghostly fire.

He issued his decree like some kind of ghost lord and the spirits scattered in all directions.

"Grrk! Grrk!"

The night was silent once more and only the grinding of Chen Xin's teeth could be heard.

"Hmm?"

Through the ghost swarm and the power of his curse, Fang Yuan felt his senses expand in reach until they encapsulated the entire village. He could now detect every single disturbance in the area.

It was this sensory web that allowed him to capture the presence of a terrifying entity!

"The origin...of the curse? It doesn't seem to be of the real world..."

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment. Suddenly, his expression changed.

The ghost swarm he had sent out was being dispatched of with haste. Although many of the spirits were as good as cannon fodder, there were numerous elite Murderous grade ghosts as well!

"Well done...you actually destroyed my ghost swarm in such a short time!"

Fang Yuan gritted his teeth and forced out a laugh.

"What? Was the ghost swarm destroyed in a moment?!"

Tantai Guihu did not know what to feel.

The curse of this village was well beyond what he was capable of dealing with, even as an elite exorcist. The only person they could rely on now was Fang Yuan!

"If this is the case, then we should wait till daybreak...we can't see very well in the dark. We'll be able to find out more in the morning!"

Tantai Guihu suggested after thinking for a bit.

"Mm...we could do that!"

Fang Yuan was fine with anything. After all, he had tested the waters and understood that the curse in the Ghost Sealing Village was of the Strange Level!

Sealing up this curse would require great power and a good timing.

'The origin...could it be in the alternate dimension? No, with my abilities, not even the netherworld would be able to block out my senses...that feeling...'

Fang Yuan was mulling over a major doubt, but he kept it to himself.

'If my guess is correct, this curse would be a pain to deal with...'

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Dawn.

As the first rays of sunlight broke through the horizon, they could see that the entire village was enveloped in a fog.

"It is but a common fog!"

Tantai Guihu concluded after examining the air.

At this point, he seemed to realise something and looked around. The 4 of them had arrived at the village entrance unknowingly.

A large man carrying an axe and firewood on his back happened to pass by. He flashed a smile at them when he noticed them.

"You are...visitors from the outside world?"

"Sir...didn't we just meet only yesterday?"

Chen Xin asked him with a puzzled look on her face.

"Yesterday? I was chopping wood the whole day. Didn't meet anyone from the outside world!"

The big man scratched his head.

"Are you people here to tour the place? Or are you archaeologists?"

"How can you not recognise us?"

Chen Xin forced a stiff smile from her lips and looked at the sky. The sun was leaning towards the west. It didn't look anything like dawn.

"Weird people!"

The big man muttered to himself and walked away with his stack of firewood.

Jiese was dumbfounded and experienced a myriad of emotions.

"Time..."

A curse of the Strange Level could reverse cause and effect, and even distort space and time!

Fang Yuan was intrigued.

Even the sages could not turn back time. But this curse could!

Even though the phenomena was local, it was no small matter!

"You are saying...that we have returned to the day before when we first entered the village?"

Tantai Guihu pondered quietly and looked around him.

"Then...where is Chen He?"

"In an infinite time loop, a death caused by the curse is irreversible?"

Fang Yuan nodded to himself. He understood more now.

"Impossible, how can time turn back...why can't my brother come back?"

Chen Xin put her head in her hands. She looked as though she was about to suffer a breakdown.

"Actually, it isn't hard to figure this out. Our equipment and appearance have reverted back to the way they were on the day before..."

Fang Yuan looked down at the belongings he was carrying with him. He then strode towards the village assertively.

"The curse was activated the moment we entered this village. We won't be able to leave the place unless we resolve it once and for all!"

They knew their way around since it was their second day in the village.

Jiese was especially alert after being reminded by Fang Yuan to beware. He found it weird that the villagers were largely expressionless with a vacant look in their eyes.

"Haha..."

A ball woven from reefs rolled into their path with a child following close behind. Chen Xin was taken aback.

"It's Goudan! And Madam Donghua!"

However, the mother and son pair walked past them like they were invisible.

"We have fallen into this time loop..."

Chen Xin broke into tears as she spoke.

"No...I don't want to die. Why did I come here? I want to go home, I want to see my Brother! Boohoo..."

"Alright!"

Tantai Guihu passed her a paper handkerchief.

"Relax...we will defeat this curse."

"It's...it's all your fault! If it wasn't for you, why would I be in this godforsaken place? And my brother wouldn't have died!"

She used to feel that her crush on Tantai Guihu made her willing to do anything for him.

But at this point, with her life in danger and the curse hanging over all of them like an axe, she realised that she wanted to live more than anything else.

"Xin'er..."

Tantai Guihu was speechless.

"I don't want to see you ever again!"

Chen Xin shouted at him and ran towards the village entrance.

Fang Yuan could not help but shake his head at this scene. If the curse could be easily undone, wouldn't it make everything that has happened a joke?"

"I'll go after her!"

Tantai Guihu gritted his teeth. He knew that Chen Xin had no hope against the danger that they faced. He could not give up on her, especially seeing how her brother had died for him.

"Fine. We'll split into two groups. Jiese and I will go look for the village chief and the temple. Let's meet at Madam Donghua's house tonight!"

Fang Yuan nodded.

In truth, he had long considered Chen Xin a burden. If she wanted to look for trouble herself, she could go ahead.

Also, now that they had found the Ghost Sealing Village, even Tantai Guihu was no longer of no use to him.

After watching Tantai Guihu disappear into the distance, Fang Yuan turned away nonchalantly and proceeded to seek out the village chief.

"Yes? Looking for accommodation, sure!"

The village chief agreed readily.

"Don't worry, we will pay for our lodgings. Also, I am an archaeologist and would like to visit your temple. Can we?"

Fang Yuan flashed a bright smile.

"Temple?"

The village chief changed his expression.

"There's nothing to see over there. If you want to examine our antiques, we do have quite a few..."

"Full of rubbish. I won't play this game with you."

Fang Yuan kicked out at the village chief after saying his piece.

Ping!

The village chief had never met anyone this mercurial and screamed as he hit the wall at the far end.

"We have a troublemaker in the village!"

"Hit them! Kill them!"

The villagers responded to the cries of the village chief's wife. Armed with hoes and pitchforks, they surrounded Fang Yuan and Jiese angrily.

"Scram!"

Fang Yuan held up a rock and crushed it into powder with his bare hand. He then threw out the powder towards the mob.

Poof!

Mists of blood burst out among the mob and their shrieks filled the air.

"Amituofo...these are real people!"

Jiese was perplexed.

"Have mercy! Don't go on a senseless killing spree!"

"What if I want to? Are you going to stop me?"

Fang Yuan narrowed his eyes.

"No, but at least allow me to recite the reincarnation mantra for them!"

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Fang Yuan did show mercy in the end and refrained from killing anyone.

The village chief had decided to cooperate with Fang Yuan, albeit reluctantly, after seeing his superior martial arts display. They were led to the temple.

"S...sir, you may take whatever you want to. Don't hurt us, and we'll do whatever you want us to!"

The village chief pulled a long face and took out a bronze key laboriously. He used the key to open the door into a yard.

This yard was hidden among buildings that all looked the same. If they did not have a good guide, they would have spent days looking for it.

Fang Yuan strode across the yard and stopped in front of the main hall. He stared at the rows of tablets before him.

"The memorial tablet of ancestor Gui Kao..."

Jiese read out the inscriptions on a random tablet and turned sharply to the village chief.

"Sir, what is your surname?"

"My surname is Gui [1]"

The village chief pulled an even longer face.

"I'm telling the truth. It's not a joke."

"I see!"

Jiese nodded.

The Gui surname was indeed a surname with ancient origins.

According to the village chief, most of the people living in the vicinity had the surname Gui, which gave rise to the name of this village they were stuck in: Five Ghosts Village.

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[1] Gui is the pinyin of the Chinese character for 'ghost'.

Chapter 532: Name

"How is it going? Any new discovery?"

Jiese watched as Fang Yuan used his Fiery Golden Eyes to scan the surroundings.

"No! It's all clean!"

Fang Yuan shook his head and turned to face the village chief.

"Is this really the temple?"

"Sir...my ancestors are all here? Why would I lie?"

The village chief replied hurriedly upon noticing Fang Yuan's scowl.

Fang Yuan could tell from his reaction that he was telling the truth.

"Is there nowhere else other than this place?"

"Yes, there is nothing else!"

"Strange!"

Fang Yuan shook his head.

"Let's go! We'll go look for Madam Donghua!"

"Amituofu!"

Jiese has a grave look on his face.

"Could it be...that you want to receive that 'thing's curse and try to save Goudan's life?"

"Things probably can't get any worse, am I right?"

Fang Yuan nodded and took Jiese to Madam Donghua.

"What is this about finding out about something and being cursed as a result?"

The woman was bewildered.

"What are you even talking about?"

"We monks never say frivolous things!"

Jiese looked very serious.

"I can read fortunes. Your child has a black mark looming over him. He might experience a calamity tonight!"

Since Madam Donghua did not appear to know anything, Jiese guessed that they probably came into contact with the curse after entering the village. He wanted to observe any new developments from up close.

"You are crazy! How dare you curse our Goudan!"

Madam Donghua would have stared daggers at Fang Yuan if not for his burgeoning notoriety in the village.

"Alright, we are going to board at your house. From this very moment, you and your child will not leave my line of sight, is that clear?"

Fang Yuan could not be bothered to listen to her protests and handed her a wad of banknotes upfront.

"If you can follow my instructions, this money will be yours. If you don't..."

He pressed his palm on a nearby wall and gave it a little push.

Boom!

The entire wall fell backwards with a resounding crash. Goudan was so afraid that he burst into tears.

"You people..."

Madam Donghua lowered her head and look as though as she was about to cry

"Are you kidnappers? No! Goudan is more important than anything in the world. Over my dead body!"

"Enough, I've made myself clear enough. If you continue to make noise, I'll tie up the two of you!"

Fang Yuan's gave her an icy stare.

The villagers nearby were terrified and pretended to go about their business. Madam Donghua had no choice but to wipe her tears and agree.

Fang Yuan and Jiese followed the arrangements of the previous day and moved into Madam Donghua's house. All that was left to do was to wait for nightfall.

This time, though, the mother and son pair would not leave their line of sight.

"Amitufo..."

Other than to utter the occasional chant, Jiese sat there silently without drinking or eating, and kept his eyes fixated on Goudan.

According to their earlier investigations, this adorable boy was about to die.

But he was confused all the same.

The boy looked very much alive to him, as did the other villagers!

'I wonder how Mister Tantai and Miss Chen are? Given Mister Tantai's abilities, he would have no problems linking up with us...'

Jiese could only gaze at the rising moon and wonder.

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Meanwhile. Outside of the village.

"Brother Tantai...what do we do?"

Tantai Guihu had found Chen Xin. She had left in a fit of anger but still returned to him when he came looking for her.

"This fog is unnatural!"

Tantai Guihu's mask had turned blood red and his voice was sombre.

It was not that they did not want to link up with Fang Yuan. They had just realised that they were...lost!

When they had walked out of the fog, they found that they were travelling along a mountain ridge.

The cold wind blew on mercilessly.

Tantai Guihu took off his outer jacket and pulled it over Chen Xin. He then focused his efforts on sizing up the terrain.

"The footprints on the ground are disorderly. A large number of people must have walked past here not too long ago. We can't be too far away from the village!"

Tantai Guihu made his guesses and followed the footprints. He came to a cave shortly after. The ground around them had been turned over, leaving the soil from the lower layers and plant roots exposed.

"Is this...a tomb?"

Tantai Guihu thought back to the words of the village chief and understood.

"There are many tombs in the vicinity of the village. This ancient tomb must have been exposed due to a landslide. The villagers must have gotten to it and taken away the buried treasures. No wonder the village chief wanted to show us antiques and even hinted to us that he wanted to do business. It seems like he wanted to dispose of the stolen goods!"

Tantai Guihu did not think much of this discovery though.

It was only right that inhabitants in this area rely on the mountains for their livelihood. It was not his responsibility to worry about the conservation of cultural relics.

"Brother Tantai...I am scared!"

Chen Xin shivered when she looked into the gaping entrance of the cave. It looked like the open mouth of a huge beast.

"Mm, let's get out of this place now. We'll come back with Fang Yuan tomorrow."

Tantai Guihu was not a reckless person and immediately turned around to leave.

Crack!

He had stepped on something crisp.

"This...is the symbol of the Tantai family?"

Tantai Guihu bent down to pick up a broken piece of tile. He looked amazed.

"Indeed...this is the origin of the Tantai family! The ancestors of the Tantai family are buried in this tomb!"

Whoosh!

His words were cut short by him falling through the air.

The ground beneath them had collapsed and the two of them were swallowed up into the black hole.

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"Hehe..."

"Ring ding ding!"

The ball made out of reeds rolled about on the ground, the bell in it ringing for all it was worth.

Goudan laughed and played on as if all was right with the world. Like there was no curse, no danger.

Smack!

The ball rolled to a stop beside Jiese's foot. Goudan looked at his busy mother and could not make up his mind about what to do next.

"Amitufo, take it back!"

Jiese smiled at Goudan and handed him the ball.

'Strange...why isn't anything happening?'

Seeing Goudan receive the ball and thank him politely, Jiese became even more unsure of himself. He was inclined to believe that everything he had seen the previous night was an illusion.

'So weird...'

Goudan was curious too. Why did this two formidable uncles insist on staying in his house to keep an eye on both his mother and himself?

He had to admit that he was in awe of Fang Yuan.

Raw power could usually win over little children. Every person would have dreamed of becoming a hero when they were younger.

Never mind, off to dinner.

Just as Goudan prepared to dig in, memories flooded in.

It seemed to be from the afternoon of that same day.

The emergence of the sun had cleared up all the puddles on the ground. He was walking along the mountain trail. There were many people, many footprints. Everyone was jostling for their turn to enter a dark cave, to get their hands on the many things in that cave.

There were many toys in that cave.

The most striking object in that area was the great blood-red monolith. It said something that he could not read, but the people around him were mocking it.

"'Restricted Area, No Entry'? What a joke!"

"The artefacts in the ancient tomb belong to our village!"

"One would die if one finds out about it. The sealing of the tomb...what is this? A ghost story?"

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Madam Donghua held Goudan's little hand tightly. The dimness of his surroundings had a frightening quality to it. The men around him were holding onto torches, and the light illuminated their faces in a hideous way. It made them look like savage ghosts.

"Let's go, Goudan, let's hurry up and leave!"

With a firm grip, Madam Donghua pulled Goudan towards the cave entrance.

Except that at that moment, someone had already read 'it' out loud!

"Ahh!"

In the real world, Goudan had burst out crying without any warning.

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"Eh? How did this thing end up in my house?"

The village chief scratched his head and looked at the bronze item hidden under his bed.

It was a beautiful bronze statue with an archaic feel to it. Anyone could tell that this was a valuable treasure.

"Wait a minute, I think I dug this out. From that ancient tomb..."

At the same time, memories came flooding back.

"Funny. It was an activity that took place in the morning involving the entire village. It's the afternoon now. Where's everyone?"

Since he had discovered the ancient tomb on the mountain slopes, he had activated everyone in the village in the hopes of striking it rich.

"I remember now. That tomb was built like a temple inside. There was a tablet that said the items within were cursed, and to stay away. Especially the name on the first memorial tablet. Finding out about it would result in... death!?"

The village chief gave an involuntary shudder and tried to forget all of that by shaking his head violently.

Not even Fang Yuan could find out about his memory loss. Now that the village chief had remembered everything, he would never forget it for as long as he lived.

"That...that name!"

"Tantai..."

Poof!

Streaks of red appeared on the village chief's body and his entire person split apart sickeningly. There was blood everywhere.

A spirit with a blank gaze rose slowly from the blood red puddles. It had taken on the face of the village chief!

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"Cough cough..."

Tantai Guihu helped the dishevelled Chen Xin up in the large pit.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine! It's just that we seem to have fallen into a crypt..."

Chen Xin let out a forced laugh.

"Not only that, I have discovered something else. Look!"

Tantai Guihu turned his torchlight on and the structures around them swam into view. Chen Xin was surprised.

"Is this... a crypt? Why does it look more like a temple?"

"...I think this might be the temple Madam Donghua was talking about!"

Tantai Guihu and Chen Xin took a few steps forward and examined the rows of tablets carved from green stone.

"My Tantai ancestors are buried here?"

Tantai Guihu bowed to the tablets in reverence. When he looked up, he noticed that there was a lone tablet placed on the top row. It was surrounded by chains and was supposed to be covered by a curtain which had somehow fallen down, revealing a set of large characters.

"The ancestor...Tantai Moye!?"

Tantai Guihu was not sure why, but looking at this tablet made his hair stand on end and gave him a sense of impending doom.

Chapter 533: Impending

"This place gives me the creeps. Let's get out of here. We'll come back with Fang Yuan tomorrow!"

Shaking, Tantai Guihu pulled Chen Xin along with him and ran hard towards the exit.

They were currently in the great hall of the crypt. They had fallen into its heart when the ground gave way, but by virtue of the exposed ceiling, the way out was laid bare ahead for them.

"Ah! Brother Tantai, look!"

The two of them had reached the mouth of the tunnel. Chen Xin pointed to the stone tablet in front of them, her face as white as a sheet.

"My god!"

Tantai Guihu broke out in cold sweat as he read the inscriptions on it.

The words on the stone tablet were simple. They explained that the place sealed up a 'name' that should not have existed in the world. The name belonged to an ancestor of the Tantai family. He had committed a heinous crime and as a result, he name was cursed.

Everyone who saw or even heard of the name would die!

If they had entered the crypt from the entrance, they would have seen the warning sign first and would have proceeded with caution.

Unfortunately, Tantai Guihu and Chenxin had not, and hence did not see the warning.

"What do we do now? I don't want to die!"

Tears streamed down Chen Xin's face as she tried to forget about the inscriptions on the memorial tablet. But the more she interfered with the memory, the deeper it was imprinted upon her consciousness.

"I finally understand...why the people of Five Ghosts Village are like that..."

Tantai Guihu had come to a realisation.

"They had intended to move the buried treasure away but saw the memorial tablet along the way, thus unleashing the curse on themselves...they have probably died more than once since then."

Chen Xin understood too and trembled as she thought about it.

A landslide had occurred in the mountains one fine day, revealing the entrance of the ancient tomb.

The villagers of the Five Ghosts Village were overcome with greed and took part in the gold rush despite the written warnings, hence activating the unspeaking curse.

Additionally, due to the distortion of time, death was not the end for them. They were cursed to die and die again every single day in an infinite time loop!

Now, it was clear that the four of them had stumbled upon this neverending cyclical curse!

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In the meantime, in Ghost Sealing Village.

"The unspeakable taboo is a name?"

Fang Yuan looked at Madam Donghua, who had regained her memory, ponderously.

Strange level curses had peculiar triggers. Sometimes it could be simply a name or even an image!

"But if it was only the name, aren't there plenty of people with the same name? Wouldn't it have caused a mess worldwide? Hence, there must be other triggering factors as well, like perhaps...within a set location?"

This would probably explain why the Tantai family chose to migrate. They must have learnt a painful lesson.

He looked at the mother and son pair in front of him with some pity.

This curse. Death. Just how many times had they gone through it? They would never get used to it because their memories would reset every day, and they would relieve fear and desolation every single day.

"Tell me!"

Fang Yuan was direct.

"Tell me about the name, about your fears, everything!"

He did not know if he could handle a Strange level spacetime curse and was planning to try and in the process, find the source of the curse.

"How can I do that? This is something harmful..."

Madam Donghua was pale-faced. She had been frightened by her experience in the afternoon.

"If you don't tell us right now, your son might not be rescued in time!"

Fang Yuan sneered.

"It's your choice to make!"

The only thing stopping Madam Donghua from telling them was her conscience, but when measured up against Goudan, the scales tipped in the favour of her beloved son.

"Fine...I'll tell you, that name!"

Madam Donghua gritted her teeth.

"Monk, are you listening?"

Fang Yuan turned to Jiese with an amused smile.

"Amitufo, as the saying goes, 'If not me, then who?'"

Jiese's face was solemn.

"Also...it is a fact that the curse already affects us, and there's no escaping it."

"Not bad. You're speaking like a true disciple of the Lord Buddha."

Fang Yuan nodded and turned back to Madam Donghua.

"In that ancient tomb, there is a temple. The memorial tablet on the top row has the cursed name inscribed on it. It was originally chained up and covered up by a curtain, but the village chief thought that the tablet might lead to more treasures and ordered them removed..."

Madam Donghua could remember the events of that fateful day clearly.

"That name...I remember it, it is...Tantai...Moye!"

'It is indeed from the Tantai family...'

Fang Yuan and Jiese looked at each other. They were not surprised.

"Tantai Moye?"

Fang Yuan chewed on the name. His sensory perceptions suddenly established a link with the true origin of the curse.

'The memorial tablet was but a catalyst, not the origin...the true origin of the curse is hidden in the space-time gaps.'

He now understood why he had not managed to find the origin during his previous investigations.

It was because the curse did not lie on the plane of existence, but along the spacetime axes!

Once more, a deathly silence had fallen over the world outside.

"It seems like everyone has had their memories reset again. The curse is taking place right now..."

Fang Yuan sighed and put on his black robes. His eyes gave off a golden gleam and his hands had turned purplish-black. He was ready to fight.

After all, he was dealing with a curse that could distort space-time, the most potent among Strange level curses.

'Also...what does this curse have to do with the Tantai family?'

After a deep thought, Fang Yuan stepped forward and set black chains around Madam Donghua and Goudan.

With their souls being kept in check, their expression shifted from one of consternation to one of passivity.

'No wonder I thought they were weird from the start! They had died and revived so many times that they are now neither human nor ghost!'

That was another question answered, but it did not make Fang Yuan feel any better.

His sixth sense and the various occurrences that took place after they had learnt the name told him that the arrival of a terrifying entity...was impending!

"Amituofu, don't worry Madam Donghua, Goudan will be...fine!"

Jiese was attempting to comfort them when a sudden change came over his face.

Madam Donghua had stabbed her hand into Jiese's chest.

"Oh Lord Buddha, Dragon of the heavens, explode!"

Jiese's eyes flew wide open and golden rays shot out. A protective band of light formed around his body.

Ping! Ping!

The two sets of chains were pulled taut, at the end of which were two malevolent ghosts!

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan looked over and was surprised to see Madam Donghua's and Goudan's transformation. Their hands were a greenish-purple with very long fingernails. Their appearances were that of ghosts.

"Humans one minute, ghosts the next? There was no sign at all...no, no. They had already died when the curse had hit them for the first time."

Fang Yuan came to a conclusion quickly before turning to Jiese.

"Monk...are you alright?"

"I won't die!"

Jiese took out his medicine pouch and applied the ointment on his wound. The attack had apparently taken its toll on him for his breathing was weak.

If Fang Yuan had not restrained them from the start, the two ghosts would have dug Jiese's heart out.

Wooooowooooo!

At this moment, there was a commotion outside the house.

When Fang Yuan went to check it out, he realised that there were dozens of ghosts wandering outside.

They were all villagers by day but had transformed en masse into ghosts when night fell. With the village chief leading them on, they began to close in on the yard.

"Ghost Sealing Village...this village is living up to its name!"

Fang Yuan chuckled coldly.

"Did you think I will worry about a ghost swarm of this level?"

Shing! Shing!

Rows and rows of chains extended from Fang Yuan's body until they formed a giant defensive web.

His eyes had simultaneously turned into black holes and rays of blinding light shot out from them.

"Ghost...reaper!"

A large black shadow carrying a sickle appeared behind him and swung it with brutal force!

Expressions of fear appeared on the faces of the ghosts, which made them look human for a moment.

The ghosts who had been hit disintegrated as though their bodies were made out of sand..... all that was left of them were skeletons.

The spirit-like wisps that were left behind disappeared completely into the black holes.

"Amitufo!"

Jiese clasped his hands together and was preparing to recite the reincarnation mantras when a change came over the surroundings.

A thick fog had formed around them and the disintegrated ghosts were materialising again. It was as if...time had been turned back!

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"Quick!"

Tantai Guihu grabbed Chen Xin's hand and sped in the direction of Ghost Sealing Village.

"This curse will definitely not allow anyone to escape... It even made us lose our way so as to force us into seeing the name!"

Tantai Guihu analysed their situation.

"If we run towards the outside world, we will encounter dead ends no matter which path we take. Only by going back to Ghost Sealing Village will we have a chance to survive!"

Indeed, as they sprinted along, they could see the silent Ghost Sealing Village edging closer to them under the moonlight.

"As long as we find Fang Yuan, we will live!"

Tantai Guihu shouted out loud. Suddenly, a crack appeared on his mask.

"What?"

He was shocked and came to a stop.

"My...mask. Even my mask is gradually succumbing to the curse?"

It was thanks to his mask that he and Chen Xin were able to make it this far without getting harmed.

But now, their greatest protection was losing its power.

"Don't worry Chen Xin, I won't let you die!"

Tantai Guihu cut open his palm again. Even though he did not know just how effective his blood could be at this point in time, it was better than nothing.

"Thank you Brother Tantai...I've always..."

Having gone through so much together, Chen Xin was in tears again and was on the verge of saying something.

Suddenly, the world went dark.

She was horrified to realise that she had returned to the crypt, and Tantai Guihu was nowhere to be seen.

The darkness was suffocating and she experienced a heavy feeling of despair.

"No!!!"

Chapter 534: Backtracking

Around them, the wind blew gently and the skies were clear.

"Is this another timeline?"

He looked around him and saw that Jiese and Tantai Guihu were nowhere to be seen.

Just a short while ago, the curse had altered its nature when it was clear that the ghost swarm was no match for Fang Yuan.

"Specifically, the curse has placed us in different timelines so that it can deal with us separately..."

The village of a year ago, or even the village the day before would be an entirely different one from the village of the present. Any alliance, however strong, would be rendered useless if the curse were to isolate its members.

Fang Yuan suspected that Chen He, who had disappeared right at the start, had been thrown into one of these alternate timelines. Given his abilities, he was probably dead by now.

Except that with regards to this curse, death was not the way out. In fact, death would be the beginning of a nightmare!

"I wonder which timeline I'm in..."

In one swift motion, he arrived at the entrance of Ghost Sealing Village.

"Papa...someone's here!"

A few bare-bottomed children were playing in the mud by the millstone. One of them caught sight of Fang Yuan and ran screaming towards the village.

The children looked scrawny and were hollow-cheeked. Life must have been tough in this village.

"This little rascal..."

Fang Yuan narrowed his eyes.

"Is this the village chief as a child?"

Fang Yuan could see that the child bore an uncanny resemblance to the village chief. But the tell-tale sign was the unique quality of his soul.

"There is indeed someone!"

Before Long, a few large men hurried towards him. One of them resembled the village chief of the present day and scrutinised Fang Yuan with suspicion.

"Who are you? Where did you come from?"

"My name is Fang Yuan. I have questions that I need answers to."

Fang Yuan placed his hands behind his back.

"Of course, to prevent any unwise moves from your end, let me give you all a warning."

Ping!

He stamped his right foot on the ground and what followed was a deafening thud. It was as if the entire village fallen from the air.

"The M...Mountain God?!"

The mountain folks had never seen power like that and all of them fell to their knees.

"Forgive us for not recognising you, My Lord. Have mercy on us!"

'...'

Fang Yuan was speechless for a moment. He then pointed at the village chief's father.

"The name is Gui Shisan, My Lord..."

His embittered smile had passed on to his son. Also, Fang Yuan could tell that they were father and son from the quality of his blood.

"When did your branch of the Gui family arrive in this village, do you remember? Do you know what kind of people used to live here in the past?"

Fang Yuan began to interrogate him.

With everyone in the village taking him for the Mountain God, they told him everything he asked them about.

From the respectful answers that the villagers had given to him, he learnt that the Gui family had already settled in the village for more than a hundred years.

The people who had inhabited this place before them had migrated en masse to another place, and no one knew where exactly.

"My Lord...when our ancestors came here, it was already uninhabited. We did not take over these lands by force..."

The villagers were frightened and some of them were close to tears.

"Don't worry, I'm not here to punish anyone."

Fang Yuan shook his head and disappeared in a flash. Gui Shisan was shocked and kowtowed immediately.

"Tantai Moya!! Tantai Moya!!"

Fang Yuan shouted the name as he sprinted through the forest.

"No...although I can sense the origin of the curse, it feels distant, which means that it isn't on this time axis..."

He continued to speed on with no idea how far he had travelled.

"Since this curse probably has area restrictions, I should leave this place and see if anything will try to stop and kill me..."

Fang Yuan sometimes felt sorry for this curse, just like how he felt about the Pawnshop.

Although the curse was afflicted on him, it did not have the power to kill him. It was like it had swallowed an iron anchor that it could neither vomit out nor digest.

Beyond the village were mountain ranges. They were filled with lush greenery and were full of life.

A fog suddenly materialised and when Fang Yuan dashed through it, he was unsettled to find that he had arrived at the entrance of Ghost Sealing Village once again.

The village was quiet and deserted, with no trace of life. The buildings were dilapidated and looked as though they had been abandoned for a long time.

"Indeed...the curse is preventing my escape. Seems like I ran away from the previous timeline only to end up in another timeline."

Fang Yuan looked at Ghost Sealing Village quietly.

"If that was the village of forty or fifty years ago, this will probably be the village of more than a hundred years ago...a pity that there is still nothing that I want here."

He ran at the boundaries of the fog again, not knowing whether to laugh or cry.

"Why do I feel a sense of déjà vu? Should I shout the cursed name out loud again?"

Poof!

He was prepared this time and when the fog assailed him and could feel the destructive power of the space-time curse.

It was a pity that the curse was unable to harm him at all. It had swallowed him up entirely but could do nothing else.

"The curse was going to kill me by making use of a shift in spacetime, but I am simply too strong. I'll exploit it instead and use it to rewrite history!"

Fang Yuan barged through the white fog and arrived at the Ghost Sealing Village once more.

"Who goes there?"

Fang Yuan immediately realised that two village guards were about to pounce on him. He waved a hand and the two bottles of substance thrown at him exploded in midair.

"Exorcists from the Tantai family? They have been trained well!"

Fang Yuan knew that his physical state was scaring them, and he withdrew the spell that gave him his ghostly appearance.

'The Tantai family has not moved out of the village in this timeline?'

"Who are you?"

Even though they were exorcists of the Tantai family, anyone would be nervous if they saw a ghost with black robes, a greenish-black face and with black holes for eyes transform into a person.

"Hmm..."

Fang Yuan gave a small smile and shot beams from his eyes into the heads of the two guards. He began to interfere with their memories.

"You two did not see anyone here today!"

The ability of obliviation from the Pawnshop was working effectively.

The two elite exorcists scratched their heads and looked confused at their actions. They then went back to guarding the village entrance.

"What's happening?"

A Tantai elder walked out. He did not seem to have noticed Fang Yuan.

"Nothing!"

The two exorcists were caught by surprise.

"...Never mind, just watch the gates carefully. It hasn't been peaceful lately!"

The Tantai elder was on the verge of saying more but thought better of it and walked away.

'Indeed...ghostly abilities work better than human abilities!'

Fang Yuan released his inner spirit again, which manipulate the surroundings such that no one would pay any attention to him. He was practically invisible, and strode casually behind the elder.

The elder walked on until he reached the meeting hall of the Tantai family.

"What happened?"

Dozens of elite exorcists were gathered in the hall. They were all of Tantai blood. The leader of the Tantai clan sat at the head of the table and asked with a frown.

"I went to take a look and the two guards told me nothing. But I still have this strange feeling...maybe 'it' has arrived."

The elder answered with a forced laugh.

"That 'name'..."

The Tantai elders were all silent.

At the mention of this issue, all the elite exorcists became troubled.

"Ever since that day, anyone in the clan who would mention the name of this ancestor would fall under the curse. If not for the curse of the Green Bronze Door, our family would have been wiped out long ago..."

The Tantai clan leader let out a sigh.

"To think that the Tantai family's legacy of a thousand years will fall in one day. That person is truly a traitorous sinner!"

"He's dead. There's nothing we can do anymore..."

Another white-haired old man spoke calmly.

"Although the curse of the Door can resist the curse of the unspeakable name, things won't work out in the long term. We have to uproot the family and leave this place!"

"...It's a good thing that we have sealed up the name after discovering the source of the curse. Later, we shall let the clansmen who have not yet been sullied by that 'name' leave for the south and establish the family elsewhere!"

"We who have borne the brunt of the curses will stay here and see if we can seal up this curse...the Tantai clan will now decree that no family member will return to these lands! No! We should not even leave any word behind. Let us be forgotten by history!"

"Indeed!"

The Tantai clan leader punched a fist into the air.

"I will pass on the clan leadership to Quan and stay here to fight alongside all of you elders here !"

"Hmm? Who goes there?"

Suddenly, his eyes gleamed with purple light and his face turned ash-gray. He stared intently at where Fang Yuan was standing.

"Amulet water of the world!"

"Ghost Locking Array!"

Everyone present were elite exorcists. As soon as they were made aware of a ghostly infiltration, they jumped to action right away and tried to contain Fang Yuan with their special abilities.

"Another ghost has come in?"

One of the white-haired elders looked hesitantly in the direction of Fang Yuan.

"Unless...there is another curse that we do not know of in this village?"

"Even the most savage ghost will have to do a double take when facing our combined forces!"

Another clan elder said encouragingly.

In the next moment, a horrifying chill had invaded their hearts.

Ping! Ping!

Dozens of magical equipment were pulverised, alarming all the Tantai clan members present.

"This ghost...how can this be?"

As the dust settled, a figure emerged.

Fang Yuan, with his black robes and golden eyes, had appeared.

"Great! To think that you were able to detect my presence. The prowess of the Tantai family is quite impressive after all."

"Hmm?"

The Tantai clan leader's eyes widened.

"You are...a person?!"

Although more than a hundred exorcists were present, all of them probably still saw Fang Yuan as a ghost. Only the Tantai clan leader could see that he was human!

Chapter 535: Guardian

"Why have you infiltrated the headquarters of the Tantai family?"

The Tantai clan leader had loosened up slightly upon discovering that Fang Yuan was human. He signalled for the other Tantai elders to retreat.

'Hmm? Seems like this person isn't as ignorant as I thought...right, a leader would not be as reckless as to challenge a formidable stranger to a deathmatch, even if that stranger had offended him...'

Fang Yuan shook off the spell that gave him his ghostly appearance and was human again.

"Sss...!"

The Tantai elders sucked in a collective breath of cold air.

"This sort of magic...looks like it is based on sealing up spirits on the body and forcing them to do one's bidding... marvellous! Truly marvellous!"

An old man stared at Fang Yuan with his mouth agape and bowed deeply to him.

"My name is Tantai Feng. Thank you for your demonstration. If I am able to advance my skills in the future, it will be thanks to you!"

'Tantai Feng? Isn't he the creator of the 'Ghost Channelling' taboo spell?

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes and muttered to himself.

'So I was his inspiration? Wait, I still can't be sure if this place belongs to my timeline. Or is it part of the multiverse? Or even a world that was created by the curse?'

"Alright, you may take your leave, Elder Feng!"

The Tantai clan leader had spoken again.

"My friend, what is your purpose in coming here?"

"To be honest, it was a coincidence. I had not intended to come here at all. You may all call me Fang Yuan!"

Fang Yuan introduced himself in a booming voice.

"Now that I am here, I would like to find out more about two things! Firstly, about the origin of the curse regarding that unspeakable name. Secondly, about the man with the unspeakable name and what he did to sully the name of the Tantai family."

"My friend...you seem to know quite a bit about the Tantai family!"

The Tantai clan leader was bemused.

"So...which branch of the Tantai family are you from? Why have I not seen you before?"

There was no way to fake the blood of the Tantai family and the special curse. There was also a sensory method to identify Tantai family members, and there was no way to hide.

"Can you tell?"

Fang Yuan scratched his head. He knew that they probably would not believe his story of having shuttled through different timelines.

"I'm from one of the minor branches. I just want to know the origin of the 20-year cycle."

"The origin?"

The Tantai clan leader forced a laugh.

"To be honest, Ghost Sealing Village is the place where everything began!"

"So that means..."

Fang Yuan's eyes lit up.

"That 'Door'. Did it appear here too?"

"You...really know a lot!"

The Tantai elder sighed and spoke.

"Since we are family, I won't beat around the bush. You're right! That door used to be here, and the Tantai family has been its 'Guardian' for generations. It's been more than a thousand years since we took up the responsibility!"

"Guardian?"

Fang Yuan was astonished.

"A cursed door needed protection for a thousand years...wait, this isn't right!"

"Who told you...that it was a cursed door?"

The Tantai clan leader said with a hint of amusement.

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan shuddered.

"Is that Green Bronze Ghost Door the reason how this world got cursed?"

"Of course not..."

The Tantai clan leader had a strange look on his face and asked on.

"Do you know about the netherworld?"

"Yes. When people die, their souls go there. In my opinion, because it coexists with the human world, one on the outside and one on the inside, it can be known as the 'Inner World'!"

Fang Yuan replied and sensed that the clan leader was about to reveal a great secret.

"'Inner World'? Well said...between Heaven and Earth, everything goes through a cycle. The netherworld might be where darkness gathers, but it was never evil in nature, and was where souls achieved reincarnation...only by passing through the 'Door' that the Tantai family guards can souls be reborn..."

The Tantai clan leader continued.

"Protecting the netherworld and reincarnation is the duty of everyone with the Tantai bloodline! We guardians would never dream of passing through the 'Door' while we are alive, unless we are in a hurry to die!"

"I see!"

Fang Yuan lowered his head.

From this perspective, the original 'Door', with its responsibilities of receiving souls and facilitating the process of reincarnation, was a good thing to the worldly cycles.

Of course, everything changed when that person had went on to do something wrong.

"Then...something would have gone wrong over the course of a thousand-year duty, am I right?"

"Yes...everything changed after that one ancestor with the unspeakable name was born! His great talent was apparent from a young age and was said to be wise beyond his years. At the age of eighteen, his abilities had exceeded everyone else in the Tantai family, and the rest saw him as the future leader and hope of the clan!"

The Tantai clan leader's revelation of the tale then took on an ominous tone.

"Later, for unknown reasons, he committed a huge mistake... He had opened that 'Door' with his human hands! The netherworld was changed forever and the human world was ravaged by calamities. The spirits came... and the curses as well!"

The Tantai clan leader sighed.

"The 'Door' fell away completely into the netherworld and the Tantai family was cursed for betraying our duty!"

"What about...the reason?"

Fang Yuan enquired.

"Why did he do that?"

"Some say he did it because of his ambition, and others say he did it to revive a woman..."

The Tantai clan leader smiled bitterly and shook his head.

"Whatever it is, the Tantai family was burdened with the curse ever since that person and the 'Door' disappeared. Recently, I've even realised that the ancestor's name has become a part of the curse! I do not know what this represents but it makes me fearful."

To have his name become a curse would mean that either Tantai Moye has become a very powerful source of the curse, or...that he has gotten what he wanted and has ascended to a higher plane of existence.

In layman terms, he would have joined the ranks of Buddhas, gods and demon lords!

"Is this the case? Sounds logical to me..."

Fang Yuan nodded.

"But...I don't believe you!"

"What? You are accusing me of lying to you!?"

The Tantai clan leader was stunned.

"You don't have any reason to lie, but people are easily tricked and cannot be trusted even if they see things with their own eyes or hear it with their own ears."

Fang Yuan replied blandly.

He was, in fact, cursing to himself.

'Although I now have the facts and proof, the most important piece of the puzzle is still missing! I still need to find out about the effects of the Demonic Heart Realm!'

In truth, even if the Tantai family had failed in their duty and brought disaster upon the world, there would definitely be a solution to this problem.

The 'Door' was probably not the only door of its kind in this world. There must be other portals to the netherworld, or the Tantai family would never be able to deal with the overwhelming stream of souls passing through the 'Door'!

Also, it was not like Fang Yuan had never seen the common ghost before. Some of the other worlds were more in touch with the Dao and any random daoist on the streets could help spirits gain salvation. However, things were different in this world. Even the Imperial Advisor would not know what to do in this case.

'So...the netherworld has been altered? What exactly did Tantai Moye do?'

Fang Yuan thought to himself, then waved a hand at the Tantai clan leader.

"Alright, I'll be off. We will meet again!"

Fang Yuan knew that he had learnt everything that the Tantai family could tell him, and did not want to stay any longer.

"Wait!"

The Tantai clan leader had turned livid.

He had shared everything he knew with Fang Yuan because he had taken him for his word that he was a Tantai, and seemed like he did not know the true extent of his power. He had hoped to keep Fang Yuan by his side to aid the Tantai cause.

But now, Fang Yuan was throwing them off after getting the information that he wanted? What a joke!

"Lad, you dare defy the orders of the clan leader?"

The surrounding Tantai elders were infuriated as well.

"How impudent!"

"Psh!"

Fang Yuan could not be bothered by the commotion and rushed off like a bullet.

"Prepare the magical equipment!"

"No, he is human! The magical equipment only works on ghosts!"

"Ah! Such powerful skills. I have practised my Iron Sand Palm technique for 30 years and have not yet met my match. Today, I'll use it on you, haha. Take this....Ah! My hand!!!"

"Don't hit my face!"

....

Fang Yuan had forced his way out of the village by virtue of his superior skills in martial arts and did not even need to activate the spirits sealed up in his body.

As Fang Yuan rushed into the fog, his smile widened.

"The power of the curse feels so familiar... every time you open a new timeline for me, you give me an opportunity to understand you better so that I can break you eventually!"

Fang Yuan readied himself.

"Double curses! Superposition!"

Boom!

A strange fluctuation had begun to spread outwards. The fog had cleared up.

The surrounding space undulated and the ground became nothingness.

In this nothingness, Fang Yuan saw an 'origin' that was not supposed to exist.

"Indeed, it is hidden inside the spacetime gap..."

Fang Yuan stretched out both of his arms and traced the singular locus as if he was grabbing at his destiny.

"Seal it!"

A swirl emerged from Fang Yuan's chest and sucked the existence of the space-time gap into his body.

"Oh!"

In a blink, other than the explosiveness of the spacetime curse's power, sporadic pieces of memories were rushing at Fang Yuan's consciousness.

"Is this...the final recoil?"

Fang Yuan gritted his teeth and laughed coldly. Given his physical state, the explosion of this Strange level curse could not harm him at all.

What had troubled him was the information he had gleaned from the origin.

It was a purplish-black Green Bronze Door, and there were two ferocious ghosts guarding it. The image of a deadly spirit was embossed on it.

A man had walked up to the door with a look of determination on his face, and proceeded to push it open slowly...

Fang Yuan had watched this memory play in this head when he had first descended upon this world!

Chapter 536: Time

As he sealed up the curse, Fang Yuan also analysed the sporadic pieces of memories that assailed his senses.

The images flashing before his eyes tied in with the vision that he had seen when he had first crossed over to this world!

"No! There is more information..."

Fang Yuan's spiritual will surged and he could see that the scenes lying about in the sea of memories were ever-changing.

Time seemed to be backtracking in a strange manner and an image began to emerge steadily.

It was that of a purple comet with a dazzling crystalline body. It had a long flaming tail, and fell into the Purple Eye Realm without warning!

In other words, it had fallen right into the netherworld of the 'Inner World'!

Boom!

This chaotic and bizarre occurrence had changed the netherworld completely, and it was transformed into a twisted and evil high dimensional space.

At this point, a man appeared.

He was devilishly handsome and radiated extreme power. He also carried within him a strong sense of destiny.

"The netherworld has gone through a large change. As the strongest member of the Tantai family, I have to get to the bottom of the matter!"

Out of a vehement belief in his own abilities and intense love for his family, he broke the greatest law of all — passing through the 'Door' alive into the netherworld!

This man was...Tantai Moya!

Unfortunately, things did not turn out the way he wanted.

When he had first opened the Green Bronze Door with his mortal hands, a law had been broken simultaneously. The chaos and freakishness that had accumulated in the netherworld over the ages were released upon the world. A powerful curse was thus born!

"I will take on the sole responsibility for all that plagues the world, but the matter of the origin in the netherworld must be resolved!"

Determined, Tantai Moya fought his way through the netherworld, deep into the high dimensional space where the great purple crystalline body laid.

....

The vision ended there and then, but Fang Yuan could guess what happened next.

"This Tantai Moya... was a man destined for greatness. Perhaps he was representative of this world's attempt at rebellion?"

Evidently, Tantai Moya's efforts had come to nought in the end.

He had not only fallen in the netherworld, but his obsession with protecting his family and saving the world had morphed into a curse that had taken root in Ghost Sealing Village and eventually devastated the Tantai Family!

It was a huge irony, to say the least.

Not to mention that his actions were eventually misunderstood by his descendants, and his name had subsequently become taboo.

"Let me think..."

Fang Yuan's mind was whirring.

"From the beginning, it was the purple comet that crashed into the netherworld and changed the nature of the place. That was how all the chaos and curses were born and bred. Was Tantai Moya's birth the world's attempt at salvaging itself from the potential mess?"

The World's Will was a rigid entity. In the face of complex situations like these, it could only deal with them in this manner.

Unfortunately, in utilising human beings, there would always be human error.

Although Tantai Moya grew in strength quickly, it was not enough to counter that origin in question.

Not only that, but he would have been exploited, and his opening of the 'Door' was akin to opening a Pandora's box of evil, a necessary step in cursing the Outer World!

"Firstly, it was the act of opening the 'Door' that subjected the Tantai family to the Curse of the Door. Next, Tantai Moya's name itself gradually turned into an unspeakable curse... the survival of the Tantai family is truly miraculous!"

Fang Yuan clenched his fists.

"Now that I know what is behind that 'Door', I will deal with it!"

At this point, he had been expelled from the spacetime gap and had returned to the real world.

"It has been sealed up... my fourth curse!"

Fang Yuan muttered to himself.

This Strange Level curse was rooted in Tantai Moya's strength and determination and had been distorted by the power of the purple crystalline body. It had become a freakish entity that was capable of manipulating time and space with its ferocious power!

The benefits Fang Yuan got out of sealing up the curse were excellent:

"Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 50.0 (100)

Spirit: 50.0 (100)

Magic: 50.0 (100)

Profession: Exorcist

Techniques: Exorcism (Peak), Pharmacy (Peak), Eagle Claw Grappling Technique (Peak)

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Spirit Sealing Body (4th Grade)]

Spirit Sealing Body (3rd Grade): Your body is a weapon which is able to seal evil ghosts. You will be able to seal any ghost that you come into contact with into your body! You have activated the 4th Grade, and the capacity for sealing evil ghosts: 4! You can choose to release the ghost!"

"After this increase in my stats, will I still have the ability to manipulate spacetime?"

Fang Yuan released the seal slightly.

This unspeakable curse might be the strongest among the Strange Level curses, but only had a minimal effect on Fang Yuan when released. With that, his hair colour turned into a frosty silver.

"The fusing of the 3 Strange Level curses is almost complete!"

Fang Yuan was satisfied with his progress.

"In five years time, even if I only seal one per year, I will be able to seal up that purple crystalline body completely when the 20-year cycle comes round again!"

He strongly suspected that the purple crystalline body was something that a higher being left behind in this realm, which had been brought over from the Demonic Heart Realm.

Only something left behind by a higher being that defied laws of nature could bring about such widespread desolation to the world.

"This is... Ghost Sealing Village?"

Fang Yuan looked around at the silent greenery and realised that the original village was in ruins.

After Fang Yuan dealt with the cyclical curse, the spirits in the village would have disappeared. The timeline would have also switched back to when he first arrived at the village.

"I wonder how Jiese and the rest are doing?"

Fang Yuan frowned. He had already resolved the curse and as long as they could hang in there up till that moment, they would be safe.

"Hmm? Who's that?"

Fang Yuan ran in pursuit of the disturbance.

In the village, what was once Madam Donghua's house had become a pile of rubble.

"Amitufo... do accept my condolences, Miss Ma. Mr Fang has sacrificed himself to break the curse in this village and has salvaged dozens of souls in the process. He would have accumulated much karma and must have ascended to the lands of paradise after his death!"

This was a familiar voice. It was definitely Jiese the Monk, but yet it sounded much deeper.

"No...I believe that Brother Fang Yuan wouldn't have died so easily. He must be trapped somewhere!"

This was another voice that Fang Yuan was familiar with as well. It was Ma Xiaoling.

'Why is she here? And...why is Jiese so certain that I'm dead?'

Fang Yuan was suspicious and chose not to appear there and then.

"I wish that was the case too. But I've spoken to many experts and they've all told me that since the curse is broken, all the survivors would definitely have returned by now.."

Jiese let out a sigh and took out the incense burner that he had prepared. He lit it up and then proceeded to recite the reincarnation mantras.

"No... no it can't be. It has only been 5 years!"

Taking a closer look, Fang Yuan realised that Ma Xiaoling had shed her adolescent appearance and had become a beautiful young woman.

"That fellow won't die so easily. I don't believe it, even if it had been 10 years, or even 50 years!"

"Sigh... foolish girl. 5 years without any news of him is definitely bad news... with him gone, many people are going to suffer..."

Jiese had finished chanting his mantras and sighed again.

"F... five years?!"

Alarm bells were ringing in Fang Yuan's mind.

"I was gone for 5 years?"

Fang Yuan calmed himself down and examined Jiese and Ma Xiaoling again. He finally knew why they looked so odd to him.

Jiese and Ma Xiaoling looked more mature now, it was as though they had aged 5 years overnight!

"Damn it!"

Fang Yuan understood now.

"It was that spacetime curse! Time was severely dilated in that spacetime gap and it was compounded by the sealing and digestion of that entity in the spacetime gap. Although I did not feel it, 5 years had gone by in the process! It must have been that curse's doing!"

That spacetime curse was unable to defeat him, but it had managed to steal five years of his life!

This was indeed a huge loss to Fang Yuan.

"Sigh... ever since Mr Fang passed on, curses have been activating all over the world. According to the information I have, the Tantai family is facing another 20-year cycle. Even Tantai Guihu could not escape this time. He has already departed for the Tantai residences and is preparing to enter the netherworld... there was a prophecy that if the Tantai family were to fall, true horror would befall the world! There would be hell on earth!"

"My generation of exorcists will do everything we can to brave the netherworld and resolve the crisis!"

A steely look of determination appeared on Jiese's face.

"If Mr Fang is watching over us in heaven, he will help us."

"You are right, monk. I do intend to help you!"

Fang Yuan had suddenly appeared behind the incense burner with a laugh.

Jiese immediately retreated back several yards and adopted a defensive stance.

"Hai! What kind of monster are you?"

"Ah!"

Ma Xiaoling screamed and threw the contents of a potion bottle towards Fang Yuan.

"I say..."

Fang Yuan waved his sleeves casually and deflected the potion from his body. He looked slightly annoyed.

"You don't believe that I'm dead and yet you throw potions at me upon seeing me. What do you want exactly?"

"Amitufo, are you human or are you a ghost?"

Jiese stood up ramrod straight and asked gingerly.

After all, Fang Yuan was very formidable back when he was still alive. If he were to be dead, he might have become a more frightening entity than the spacetime curse!

"Of course I'm human!"

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes.

"It was just that I spent quite a while in the spacetime gap dealing with the curse. Has it really been 5 years? Who are the other survivors?"

"Are you really Mr Fang?... Back then, I was dragged into another space and was forced to deal with countless of ghost swarms. I was so close to meeting the Buddha....."

Jiese was unsure of whether to believe Fang Yuan and decided to tell his story.

"Fortunately, the ghost swarms vanished at the last minute and I was taken back to my original position. Later, I met Tantai Guihu at the village entrance. By then, everyone else from the village had disappeared without a trace...For 3 months, the two of us stayed at where we were to wait for you, but to no avail. Finally, we gave up and left."

Chapter 537: The Netherworld

"Afterwards... I've also got a few fortune tellers and all of them had confirmed your death... I only accepted this fact after 3 years!"

Jiese the Monk explained.

"Fortune telling..."

Fang Yuan smirked. Looking at his Spirit Sealing Body, if the 4 curses in him were not considered inauspicious, what could possibly be?

No matter how powerful or revered the fortune tellers were, it would be almost impossible for them to predict Fang Yuan's predicament.

After sealing the 4th curse, Fang Yuan now had the ability to 'detect his name'. That is, within a certain area, if anyone were to speak about him or anything which he had cursed, he would be alerted and be promptly apprised with the conversation! He could then strengthen the curse if he wished to do so!

Such an ability would make him no different from a god!

If Fang Yuan was willing, he could easily turn his name into a spoken curse to kill those who had heard of it before.

"Strange Level curses have unique and unparalleled abilities..."

Fang Yuan took a quick shut0eye and a scene started to appear in his imagination.

It was a creepy looking front yard. Tantai Guijing and Tantai Juexin were all there and appeared frail. "If Tantai Mieming is still not around, I'm afraid none of us will be able to survive the next incoming 20-year cycle..."

The imagery stopped. Fang Yuan could only continue to watch on if he decided to curse them with his curse.

'The power of a curse... It's too strong. To be able to distort spacetime, search for souls, control the spread of information and sense such things... This sounds like a god in the legends indeed...'

Fang Yuan silently thought to himself but on the surface, he continued to probe further. "Does this mean that in that expedition 5 years ago, the Chen siblings are confirmed to be dead?"

"That's right!"

Jiese the Monk nodded his head solemnly. "I've gathered this accurate information."

Fang Yuan nodded his head but did not respond.

To speak the truth, they were fortunate enough to have 3 survivors after being plagued by a Strange Level curse.

Of course, Fang Yuan speculated that if he did not find the source of the curse so quickly, Tantai Guihu and Jiese the Monk would not have survived too.

...

"According to you, the 20-year cycle is about to repeat itself once more?"

After understanding all that had happened in the past 5 years, Fang Yuan continued to gather more information from Jiese the Monk.

"That's right!" Jiese the Monk placed his palms together. "Furthermore... This time, the curse seems to be much more dangerous. Even Tantai Guihu took the initiative to enter the Netherworld. There's a prophecy that as soon as the bloodline of the Tantai Family stops, calamity will strike the world!"

"Although I don't really believe in that, since this is so, I shall take a look in the Netherworld for myself!"

Fang Yuan rubbed his own chest.

His Tantai blood started to surge in him as he began to feel excited.

'Indeed... the cycle is about to repeat itself once more!'

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened with excitement. "20 years ago, I've run away from home. I wonder how the Tantai Family is now!"

Regardless, Fang Yuan knew for himself that he was powerful! Very powerful! He was more powerful than any being in this world.

Even so, Fang Yuan still did not feel confident about dealing with the Green Bronze Door and the source of all these troubles.

"Jiese the Monk... Bring Xiaoling with you!"

Fang Yuan tilted his head and was deep in his thoughts. "I shall enter the Netherworld now!"

The Netherworld he was speaking of was the core of the real world, fused with all the darkness that ever existed in the world!

To many, it was an arduous task to enter the Netherworld. However, to Fang Yuan, who had the ability to traverse spacetime, it was an easy task.

Furthermore, by entering from the Ghost Sealing Spirit, it might possibly be even easier than usual.

"Amitufo! Don't worry!"

Jiese the Monk nodded his head.

"Nooooo!"

Hearing this, Ma Xiaoling shook her head in disagreement. "I want to follow you!"

"Be good! Listen!"

A red glow flashed across Fang Yuan's eyes and Ma Xiaoling fell into a trance.

Even though she had trained hard and had become an elite exorcist, she was still nothing in front of Fang Yuan.

"Your actions are out of goodwill but it is a little too..."

Jiese the Monk shook his head and seemed speechless.

"Monk, take my advice. You don't have to enter the Netherworld. The teachings of the Golden Mountain Monastery cannot end at your generation..."

Fang Yuan smiled and paid no attention to Ma Xiaoling. Instead, he continued to advise Jiese the Monk. "Furthermore... since all of you are not top-notch exorcists, you will only burden me if you follow me. Wait for my good news here!"

Fang Yuan was busy calculating his odds of being able to successfully deal with the unknown in the Netherworld.

"3 Strange Level curses... they should be enough!"

Previously, the Icy Zombie itself was powerful enough to stall time against the curse of the Green Bronze Door.

Now, with the combined power of the 3 Strange Level curses, Fang Yuan had the ability to go head-on against the curse of the Green Bronze Door. With such a foundation, it would be much more convenient for Fang Yuan to do whatever he wanted to.

"As long as I can touch the purple crystals, I will be confident of sealing it..."

Fang Yuan started to mumble to himself. "Of course... If those purple crystals are the source of all these, then the final curse will not be the Wuyin level which I have predicted, because it ultimately has a source!"

"Amitufo!"

Jiese the Monk was clueless about Fang Yuan's thoughts. He could only force a smile after hearing Fang Yuan's rude comment. "I shall escort Miss Ma back and wait for your good news!"

Although Jiese the Monk knew that he was rather powerful, after the few occasions of combining forces with Fang Yuan on their expeditions to deal with ghosts and curses, he no longer had the pride and self-esteem. He knew that Fang Yuan was chasing them away out of goodwill.

"Alright!"

Gazing at the silhouette of Jiese the Monk and Ma Xiaoling, Fang Yuan took another look at Ghost Sealing Village and remained silent.

"The door to the Netherworld exists in the overworld all along! Furthermore... it lies in Ghost Sealing Village!"

According to his memories, he promptly made his way to an open square in the village.

"Last time... Tantai Muye broke the promise and entered the Netherworld with his mortal body. With that, he created chaos in the overworld and resulted in the occurrence of curses... From then on, the door to the Netherworld had changed and disappeared from sight... At the same time, it had left behind a curse on the descendants of the Tantai Family!"

As Fang Yuan casually strolled in the square, a golden hue flashed in his eyes. "Previously, the door had disappeared from here... Entering the Netherworld from this point will make things easier. I might be able to gather a clue about that door at the same time!"

Ghost Sealing Village was obviously a connection between the Netherworld and the overworld. In here, the spacetime gap between the two worlds was at its minimum. If not for this fact, the door of the Netherworld would not have existed here previously in the first place.

Fang Yuan was prepared to take the shortest route to see if he could rush and make it in time for the final battle!

"At most, I would fall into a void.... Powerful ghosts all have this ability! Furthermore, the Netherworld has become more accessible with the appearance of curses."

Fang Yuan's hair turned silver and the space around him started to vibrate. In an instant, holes started to appear and spread around him as though space was corroding.

The holes merged together to form a huge glow, engulfing him in within.

With that, Fang Yuan could detect the arrival of the Netherworld's spiritual aura!

...

In the Netherworld.

Within a dark valley, an ancient looking mansion stood tall.

Around the mansion were many black flowers in full bloom. They were growing in odd shapes but had a mystical aroma.

Outside the mansion, a stream of light was flowing calmly.

On closer inspection, one would realise that the glowing entities in the stream of light were spirits dressed in white!

They were all emotionless and there were more than a billion of them. This scene was a suffocating one.

"20 years is about to be up!"

In the mansion, Tantai Guijing held a black crutch and sighed.

He as skinny as a pile of bones wrapped in skin. With his white beard drifting through the wind, there were flames of passion burning in his eyes. "Did Tantai Juelie fail again?"

"That's right... From his Soul Lantern, his fire is about to be extinguished. He should be dead!"

Tantai Juexin spoke softly. He slung a dagger by his waist.

The elders of the Tantai Family appeared frail looking and there were only about 7 to 8 of them left.

All of them seemed to be in bad condition.

"The Netherworld... the home of the dead spirits!"

Tantai Guijing chuckled. "Forget it... Let it come once more!"

The elders seemed indifferent. All of them had a rotting stench coming from them and they seemed as though they couldn't care less about the curse of the 'Door'.

"Father... We still have a chance. We can escape from the Netherworld and return to the overworld!"

Tantai Juexin clenched his teeth.

He knew what laid in the Netherworld!

Poisonous river water, bone-chilling air and all sorts of weird plants, coupled with spirits all around! All of these would be a living hell to a human!

If not for the strong and hardy bloodline of the Tantai Family and the fact that they had supplemented themselves with food and clean water from the surroundings, the entire Tantai Family would have been dead.

Even so, living here for 20 years had already resulted in changes to their bodies. None of them would consider themselves alive.

"Escape?"

Tantai Guijing coughed and his voice turned hoarse. "It's useless... I've used the 'mirror' to take a peek into the future. The outcome of this cycle would be catastrophic. In fact, none of us might make it out of here alive!"

"The outcome of the 20-year cycle..."

All of them remained silent.

In the Netherworld, they had to go through industrial processes to purify and disinfect their food and water. The only real terror here was still the curse of the 'Door'!

Initially, the Tantai Family's worst experience was the first few days after arriving in the Netherworld.

Now, 20 years had passed in the blink of an eye.

The real terror was about to arrive!

"Reporting! Elders, elders!"

At this point in time, a member of the Tantai Family hurriedly rushed in. "There's a trace of an.... Exorcist!"

Chapter 538: The Current Situation

"Finally... I've returned..."

Tantai Guihu looked up towards the Tantai Mansion and was overwhelmed with emotions.

Although it was no longer on the original piece of land it once stood on, the mansion was still the same old one. Within moments, his mind was filled with memories of his childhood.

"Daoist, is this the Tantai Mansion?"

Beside him stood a daoist and a monk.

The daoist appeared well-groomed and his long beard swayed in the wind. Draped in a daoist robe, his energetic outlook made him seem like a deity.

On the contrary, the monk standing next to him was skinny and had a sorrowful look on his face. He was wearing black monk robes.

The daoist was Sanmu while the Monk was Kuhai. Both of them were top exorcists in the trade and were recruited by Tantai Guijing to enter the Netherworld.

It was not the most accurate to say that Tantai Guijing had recruited them. They themselves had also sensed the seemingly approaching doomsday and had taken the initiative to help Tantai Guihu.

"We've long heard that the Tantai Family was the most prominent among the exorcists... Never would I have thought that I would see the actual mansion of the family... in the Netherworld..."

Master Kuhai gazed at the mansion and remained emotionless.

Hearing this, Tantai Guihu felt a tinge of regret but did not respond.

It was almost an impossible task for living humans to enter the Netherworld and there had been no cases of humans leaving the Netherworld alive in history. Therefore, the exorcists who dared to enter the Netherworld had already resigned to their fate.

"Clang!"

At this moment, the door of the Tantai Mansion opened. Tantai Guijing and a group of elders walked out to invite them.

"It's Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai!"

It seemed that Tantai Guijing recognised these two exorcists. As soon as he noticed Tantai Guihu, he grunted.

"Brother!"

Tantai Guihu walked up and called out softly. He was wearing his mask and therefore, not many of them could recognise him.

"Hehe... My greetings to you, family head!"

Daoist Sanmu paid his respects. "20 years had gone by just like this. It is our fate to be able to meet here today..."

The Netherworld was too huge. Even though the 3 of them had attempted to enter the Netherworld from the location where the Tantai Mansion once stood and had made use of Tantai Guihu's bloodline to search for the mansion, they were lucky to complete the treacherous journey to the actual mansion.

"Amitufo!"

Master Kuhai maintained his sorrowful look even when greeting others. "The both of us have come here because Deity Yigua had made a prediction... If the bloodline of the Tantai Family were to disappear from the real world, the entire world will be destroyed!"

"Deity Yigua? That quack?"

Tantai Guijing scoffed as though he had a grudge against this person. "Why don't he predict his own life? Hasn't he died yet? How's he doing?"

"After making that prediction, he had died of exhaustion!"

Daoist Sanmu calmly reported.

"Dead?"

Tantai Guijing seemed stunned. "Our generation is slowly dying off... Did the both of you make the trip here just because of this prediction?"

"A few hundred years ago, the entire realm changed and was being cursed. We must put an end to this!"

Master Kuhai spoke with a monotonous tone.

With their seniority, they already understood most of what had happened to the realm and were extremely close to finding out the truth.

"Even so... Why did you let him come back?"

Tantai Guijing glared at Tantai Guihu. "If we allow the Tantai bloodline to remain out there and if we survive through this time, wouldn't the prediction be false?"

"It will be good if everything is so simple!"

Tantai Guihu sighed and stretched his right hand out before rolling up his sleeves.

On his arm, a dark palm print could be clearly seen.

"I have an ominous feeling... This curse will not let any member of the Tantai Family go! Furthermore, by staying in the overworld, we will be scrutinised, just like what I experienced... I've been attacked once in the overworld. Even with Master Kuhai and Daoist Sanmu's help, I only barely escaped! On the other hand, after entering the Netherworld, I feel less watched..."

He concluded with a deep voice. "Therefore... We might stand a chance if we directly go against the curse. If we try to escape, we would undoubtedly die!"

"Is the Tantai Family bloodline... really going to end here?"

Tantai Guijing shut his eyes and the entire mansion was filled with desolation.

This cycle was very different from the previous few! It was targeted at every single descendant of the Tantai Family!

Tantai Guijing could vaguely sense that ever since their ancestor had made the mistake resulting in the curse, the entire world seemed to have entered a different phase!

Regardless of the future of the world, the Tantai Family would not be fated to be part of it.

As the both of them were at their wit's end, none of them had recalled that there was still the existence of the mutant-like Fang Yuan.

To Fang Yuan, in his current state, other than the Curse of the Door, any curse which could traverse space could do nothing against him. He was untouchable.

However, since Fang Yuan promised to return, he would deliver his promise and return.

After all, he knew that he was not totally helpless against the final curse.

"Right, since the three of you have come from the overworld, have any of you gotten news of Tantai Mieming?"

Tantai Juexin walked up and looked towards his uncle, who was around the same age as him.

"Tantai Mieming?"

With this, Tantai Guihi was stunned before nodding his head. "I've seen him! He is indeed a talent! Unfortunately... He had already died under the curse."

"Died?"

Tantai Guijing and Tantai Juexin exchanged looks and shook their heads. "It's impossible!"

"I've asked Deity Yigua about this. He was facing a huge calamity... At that time, he was trapped in a time loop for many years..."

Tantai Guihu felt a little confused. As he spoke, his expression slowly changed. "Wait a minute... could it be... the family's Soul Lantern?"

"Hehe... He is such an important member of the family! How could we not make a Soul Lantern for him?"

One of the elders interrupted. "His Soul Lantern is still burning brilliantly and shows no sign of being extinguished. It seems that this evil boy is still alive in the world!"

Every single one of them in the Tantai Family had the right to feel a grudge for Fang Yuan.

After all, to them, they had 'created' Fang Yuan!

However, at their weakest moment where they needed all the help they could get, Fang Yuan had betrayed them. He had betrayed his own family!

If the Tantai Family hated Tantai Guihu with a score of 10, then they would hate Fang Yuan with a score of 100! Or even more! Nothing could ever make them forget the grudge.

"If this is true, then Fang Yuan is still alive!"

Tantai Guihu was jubilant. "Considering his personality, he will surely take the initiative to enter the Netherworld. We have hope!"

"Has that brat become that powerful?"

Hearing Tantai Guihu, Tantai Guijing's eyes glistened.

On the other hand, the other elders were raging. "Damn it... Fang Yuan! He doesn't even want his own surname! This person is guilty of betraying his family! The next time we see him, we shall take him under control and use him to shield against the Door!"

Although they could not stop scolding him, all of the elders started to sound more energetic.

After all, they had entered the Netherworld 20 years ago and the ones with weaker willpower had already died or committed suicide. The remaining ones would do anything they could do to survive.

Only Tantai Juexin felt conflicted among all of them.

By now, it seemed like the fate of the entire family was in Fang Yuan's hands!

"Alright, please come in!"

Tantai Guijing was all smiles as he invited both Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai into the mansion. He also seemed to have forgiven Tantai Guihu.

After all, the members of the Tantai Family had to stand united if they wanted to survive. They could not afford to have any more internal conflicts.

"Prepare some meat and drinks and serve the guests!"

As soon as they entered the main hall, Tantai Guijing hobbled around with his crutches and members of the Tantai Family started to serve trays of food and drinks.

"There is still food... in the Netherworld?"

Tantai Guihu, Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai had a tough journey before they arrived here and their rations were almost depleted by now.

Seeing the food on the trays, they could not hold back any longer and started to feast.

"Although the Netherworld is a restricted place to living humans and is filled with ghosts and curses, we are fortunate enough to have the protection of this mansion. It is able to protect us just enough for us to survive... This meat is from the White Bone Bird. Only a small amount of meat is edible from a single bird. As for the water, the water from the rivers in the Netherworld is not potable. This water is purified from a poisonous spring nearby and is also extremely scarce..."

Tantai Guijing smiled as he introduced the food and drinks that were served.

As for Tantai Guihu, he felt a little uncomfortable to eat as he noticed the many pairs of eyes glaring at him.

Years ago, they had sacrificed many members of the Tantai Family in the process of testing if the food and drinks were edible.

"Initially... We have stored these reserves for almost half a year already as we prepare to tide through the disaster seasons of the Netherworld... But now, it seems like there is no need for it any more."

Tantai Juexin commented.

The Netherworld had harsh environmental conditions and normal humans would find it hard to even survive. Occasionally, they would even be black hurricanes which would destroy almost everything in its path.

Facing such situations, even the Tantai Family could do nothing else but stock up on food supplies and rely on their hardy mansion to forcefully tide through it.

"Sigh..."

Tantai Guihu let out a long sigh.

After knowing all the hardships his family had gone through all these years, he felt bad. "After spending 20 over years here, have you found traces of the 'Door'?"

As soon as he mentioned the Door, every single member of the Tantai Family started to appear solemn.

"We've found it..."

Tantai Guihu's voice became hoarse. "But... It's not appropriate to say that we've found it. This is because we were not the ones to find it. Instead, it had taken the initiative to find us!"

"Oh? Where is it?"

Tantai Guihu was shaken.

"Within the deep parts of this valley..."

Tantai Guijing started to seem uneasy as he struggled to smile. "In fact... In the past 20 years, we've benefited from it! If not for the fact that it had deterred the ghosts, the Tantai Mansion would have been overwhelmed by ghost swarms!"

"This is impossible..."

Tantai Guihu was in shock.

How could the Green Bronze Door help them if it had cursed the family all this while? This was a joke!

Chapter 539: Appearance

"You are saying that... the 'Door' is protecting us?"

Tantai Guihu looked at Tantai Guijing incredulously.

"Back then...the whole Tantai residence had been afflicted by the curse and was pulled down to the netherworld. It fell directly to somewhere near the Green Bronze Door and was met with the curse over there!"

Tantai Guijing went on composedly.

"Although many in the Tantai family have died, everything will go back to normal when the day comes...anyway, with the existence of the Green Bronze Door, no ghost swarm or powerful spirit would dare to come anywhere close to this valley. It protects us. Of course, no Tantai would dare to approach the Door either. Those who have tried are now dead!"

"In my opinion, the 'Door' did not save us. We are but the sacrificial animals it has chosen, or the prey that it has rounded in. Hence, it will not allow any other 'predators' to come close..."

"The whole Tantai family, are....sacrificial animals?"

Tantai Guihu's voice was quivering with resentment.

"All this...it is all because of the Curse of the Door! And the rash actions of our ancestor..."

Tantai Guijing shook his head. He still had no idea of the truth about Tantai Muye!

"No matter what...we must face this curse! That Green Bronze Door... can it be destroyed?"

Tantai Guihu gritted his teeth.

"Of course we've tried it before. Unfortunately, all the elders who have approached the Door triggered the curse and combusted spontaneously... the area deep within the valley is now restricted to all of us."

Tantai Juexin shook his head.

"If only that person was still alive..."

He thought about the last 20-year cycle and about how it was Tantai Mieming who managed to damage the Green Bronze Door, giving them valuable time to recharge their strength. If he was still around, they would no doubt have a chance at succeeding.

"Immeasurable heavens!"

The Daoist Sanmi and Master Kuhai had heard of Fang Yuan too. As they looked around at the bewildered faces of the Tantai elders, they did not know what to feel.

This Tantai Mieming was more remarkable than they had expected!

At the moment, however, they were stuck in a difficult situation.

They did not know whether they should gather all of their forces and mount an assault on the Green Bronze Door, or defend passively and await reinforcements.

Unfortunately, even with the protection of the Curse of the Door, they could not guarantee that Tantai Mieming would return in time or at all.

"We are 3 days away from the activation of the curse! We can only wait till then!"

Finally, it was Tantai Guijing who spoke up definitively.

"If Tantai Mieming still cares about us, he will return!"

Looking at him now, one would have thought that he was an elder who cared about the welfare of the younger generation. No one would have guessed that he had callously employed his own grandchild as a tool back then.

"Knock knock!"

At this moment, dull knocks suddenly rang out. The sound struck deep into everyone's chest cavities and everyone could feel their hearts pounding with every blow.

"It's...it's that 'Door'!"

A Tantai elder announced in a quavering voice.

"It...has come!"

"How is that possible? It isn't time yet..."

Tantai Guijing and the rest walked out into the yard and saw the image of a huge door flickering over the horizon. They were all at a loss for words.

When the curse had activated back then, it had left a deep impression on them.

At that point, the netherworld was the home ground of the opposing forces. Without Tantai Mieming to restrain them, they were more powerful than ever!

"Juexin, open the temple!"

Tantai Guijing gritted his teeth.

"We'll fight!"

"Yes, sir!"

Tantai Juexin sped towards the temple purposefully.

There were two important buildings in the rear premises of the Tantai residence. One was the sacrificial hall and the other one was the temple.

The sacrificial hall was where the Tantis sealed up objects and worshipped supernatural beings while the temple was a resting place for the Tantai ancestors, many of whom were elite exorcists!

The temple had defence mechanisms guarding it and Tantai Juexin took out a piece of jade which ensured his safe entry.

When he pushed open the door, rows upon rows of memorial tablets greeted him.

Behind the memorial tablets laid a hidden chamber.

Tantai Juexin took a deep breath and entered the place just as he had many times before.

It was a gloomy space peppered with the dim glows of spirit lamps. They illuminated the place like millions of fireflies.

Rows of figures sat upon armchairs and stared down sternly from their positions on the altar.

"My forefathers!"

Tantai Juexin fell to the ground and kowtowed unhesitantly.

"Your descendant Tantai Juexin prays for your help!"

These seated figures were the ancestors of the Tantai family, some of them from the time of the migration. The founders of the Tantai residence were all skilled exorcists and were highly cultivated. Even in death, their bodies did not decompose nor reek.

After doing his bow, Tantai Juexin got to feet and looked at the magical equipment lying on the altar.

'The ancestors are long gone and have no interest in our prayers...but rituals have to be observed anyway...'

As Tantai Juexin caressed the magical equipment, he felt as though his ancestors had turned their heads and were now staring at him.

"As long as they did not die as a result of being cursed, the ancestors would come here to pass away...this would allow them to consolidate their cultivation and spiritual will such that a powerful curse is created... this is the final asset of the Tantai family! A slight divergence back then had created Tantai Mieming!"

A slight divergence had created a Strange Level curse. If Fang Yuan found out about this, he would take a great interest in this place.

Nevertheless, he was too young back then and given the naturally guarded behaviour of Tantai family members, he would not have found out much.

In truth, this was a source of sorrow for the Tantai family too!

To deal with the curses and ghosts, they were forced to create curses of their own in order to pass on their powers to their descendants so that they at least had a fighting chance.

"Right now... this can't wait anymore!"

Tantai Guihu gritted his teeth and picked up a little bronze knife and a magical bell from the altar.

Woowoo!

As he held onto these two tools, Tantai Juexin saw an ocean of blood before his eyes. He was experiencing a vivid illusion.

Dozens of hands were grabbing onto the tools he held and transmitting power to them.

"This is truly the ultimate weapon of the Tantai family! The power it has is unrivalled by any other magical tool!"

As Tantai Juexin held onto the bronze knife, he suddenly understood how to utilise it. When he took a swipe at the air in front of him, a wormhole appeared.

Tantai Juexin stepped in unflinchingly.

Boom!

His surroundings changed.

The many Tantai elders were combating the great flickering vision of the Door with their skills in exorcism.

What a door it was.

A great door cast in bronze, it was a peculiar purplish-black in colour. On its sides were two huge ghostly figures guarding it.

Key to its appearance was the vivid and intricate carvings embossed on it. They were of the many Tantai family members who had been killed by the curse, and their souls had been trapped by the Door.

This was the embodiment of generations of Tantai sweat and tears, and now, it was biting them back.
Even Tantai Guihu could not control his emotions upon seeing the Door before him.

Gash!

The mask with a crack on its face that Tantai Guihu was wearing suddenly split apart and fell to the ground. Fresh blood oozed out from its remains.

Tantai Guihu screamed. He had been disfigured.

"Impossible...the ghost mask could withstand the force of the spacetime curse...why did it fall apart this easily?"

Tantai Guihu slashed open his palm and subsequently understood the difficulties of dealing with the Door.

"This is only an image of the Door...how would we possibly deal with the real Door?"

Buzz!

The Green Bronze Door let out a roar as the two ghostly figures began to open it. A strange sound split the air.

As the sound waves hit them, some of the Tantai family members grabbed at their necks as their blood vessels exploded. They had become profusely bleeding corpses.

Simultaneously, wispy figures rose from their bodies and rushed collectively into the Green Bronze Door.

As the Tantai people died, one could see that more carvings of figures with bloody tears had been added to the Door.

"Immeasurable heavens!"

"Amitufo!"

In this critical moment, the daoist and the monk joined forces. A bolt of light rushed up into the skies.

Purple symbols appeared in the void and entered the bodies of everyone present. The effects were beneficial to them.

"It is the most powerful curse indeed!"

Even though they had deflected the blow for the time being, Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai were troubled.

"Dealing with the Door already creates this much trouble. What about the things that lie behind the door?"

"Set!"

Tantai Guihu had acted as well. The image of a mirror materialised and gave off a fiery light that enveloped the Door.

In this light, the flickering image of the Door seemed to solidify.

The real Green Bronze Door had appeared!

This was the first thing that Tantai Juexin saw as he rushed over.

"Help me, my forefathers. Slash!"

Without hesitation, the bronze knife in his hands flew out and turned into a ray of light. Bringing with it the strength and conviction of a kamikaze warrior, it embedded itself firmly into the Door.

"The generations of Tantai blood tears, and all that I am burdened with, is because of you!"

Blood flowed out of Tantai Juexin's nose and mouth. Wielding the bronze knife had not been an easy feat. Still, he was intent on resolving everything today!

No matter how terrifying the curse might be, it would be a victory for the Tantai family if they even managed to damage the Door slightly.

Then.

Bang!!!

Chapter 540: Pinpointing

Pinpointing

The crisp ring seemed to carry with it the wails of a thousand ghosts.

Sparks flew.

The bronze knife exploded into rays of light that shot out in all directions.

A deep gash slowly appeared on the Green Bronze Door.

"Success!"

Tantai Juexin clasped his hands firmly.

He had given his all in order to deal this blow. So what if he was on the verge of dying from exhaustion and had lost a powerful magical weapon in the process?

They had managed to inflict damage on the Door, which meant that it was entirely possible to destroy it!

Ding Ring Ring!

Tantai Juexin took out another magical tool: the magical bell.

The loud and clear rings of the bell had a healing effect. Everyone found themselves regaining energy. Before long, most of them had their health restored.

Pale white figures suddenly appeared. All of them dull expressions on their face, and looked like the preserved corpses of the Tantai ancestors in the hidden chamber.

This was a curse that the Tantai family had been breeding for countless years through the generations with great effort. A curse that targeted the Green Bronze Door!

At that very moment.

The two ghostly figures guarding the Green Bronze Door had opened it slightly. They began to shriek again.

A distorted and savage force field began to expand. In no time, the entire sky had become greyish white.

"The power of this curse..."

Every living human being in the vicinity had become hurt. The curse was attacking their bodies viciously.

A dark red liquid gushed from the area surrounding the gash on the Green Bronze Door. It was like the blood of Green Bronze Door and the liquid patched up the gash as it flowed. The Door was whole again.

The Tantai ancestors who had been summoned lined up with blank looks on their faces and walked up to the Green Bronze Door. One by one, they entered.

Witnessing this sight had devastated Tantai Juexin and Tantai Guihu.

"This curse...this curse..."

Humans beings were not strong enough to challenge ghosts.

Thus, the Tantai family had created this ungodly curse against all odds and turned the elite exorcists into malevolent ghosts temporarily in the hopes that they could destroy the Green Bronze Door.

But this development had shown that the opposing forces were able to counter the curse devised by the Tantais!

This Green Bronze Door was perhaps the source of all curses!

To fight a curse with another curse was an impossible venture! It was like using a meat bun to hit a dog, defeating its purpose!

Buzz!

The Green Bronze Door let out another roar and became bigger every time it swallowed up the malevolent ghost of a Tantai ancestor. It gradually attained the size of a mountain and looked like a pillar between heaven and earth.

"The Door...it grew by leeching off the Tantai bloodline...Tantai ghosts are even more beneficial to it!"

Tantai Guihu's blood ran cold.

'What if...this decision by the Tantais played right into the door's hands?! Could all those years of sacrifice and struggle be in vain?'

He was usually a cold-hearted man, but now, he could not help but be despondent.

He had become even more mortified by the Door. It had played a psychological game with the Tantai family and had bewitched them such that the family had become its accomplices!

Despair...was impending!

Knock knock!

Knock knock!

Knocking sounds rang out again. Tantai family members fell to the ground with every knock.

"The purge has begun! Haha..."

Tantai Guijing laughed out loud and the mirror in his hand smashed to pieces.

"If that is the case...you can have my old bones too!"

He seemed to have a fervent death wish and sped towards the Green Bronze Door.

Bang!

"Dad!"

"Mr Guijing!"

The Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai were both shocked.

Suddenly, a dark shadow flitted by and Tantai Guijing was thrown backwards forcefully. A new figure had appeared.

"Seems like...I made it just in time!"

Fang Yuan scanned his surroundings. His black robes flapped about in the wind and his hair was silvery-white.

In a short time, the Tantai family members had mostly regained consciousness and found that the effects of the curse on their bodies were wearing off.

"You are...Mieming?"

Tantai Guijing's stared at Fang Yuan with his clouded eyes. Suddenly, they gleamed.

"Tantai Mieming?!"

"Is he really back?"

The Tantai family members were all experiencing mixed emotions, especially Tantai Juexin.

"Amituofo...it's Mr Tantai Mieming!"

Master Kuhai and Daoist Sanmu were elated.

"Guihu has told me a lot about you..."

"I have an announcement to make. I have changed my name to Fang Yuan. From today onwards, I will have nothing to do with the Tantai family..."

Fang Yuan gave a wide smile, revealing his gleaming white teeth.

He had rushed here only for the sake of fulfilling the promise he had made before.

"When I break the Curse of the Door for you people, I will cut my ties with the Tantai family and leave this all behind!"

"Cut your ties with us?"

Tantai Juexin looked aggrieved and nodded slowly.

"So be it..."

In his heart, he did not believe that this fellow could deal with the Curse of the Door.

After all, the counter-curse of the Tantai family and their two prized magical weapons had been soundly defeated by the Door!

"This curse was a splinter from the Tantai curse and has taken on a physical form..."

Tantai Juexin looked on as Fang Yuan strolled towards the Green Bronze Door and felt a great pressure coming down on him. He was unable to move.

"Against the reincarnation curse, I'm afraid that...."

"Juexin..."

Tantai Guihu let out a sigh.

"Let me tell you this now...Something had happened during the cursed ritual back then. That curse might have succeeded, but it might also have failed..."

"What?"

Tantai Juexin's expression changed.

"If that's the case...then he..."

He shook his head.

"Whatever the case, Suxin will never forgive me."

Knock knock!

Knock knock!

Following Fang Yuan's arrival, the knocking sounds from the Green Bronze Door became more frenzied.

The Tantai family members felt their bodies go soft and they all fell to the ground once more.

Even Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai were struggling hard to resist the curse and looked as if they had one foot in the grave.

"We finally meet the original Door in the netherworld!"

Fang Yuan pressed his hands together and a strange power radiated outwards. He had full control of his immediate surroundings and had cut off all of the Green Bronze Door's possible escape routes.

"You are the thoroughfare between life and death, the passageway for spirits...you are a gift from heaven to earth, untainted by the Inner World!

By right, the Door guarded by the Tantai family was not an evil object, but a core entity of the world!

When the purple comet had crashed down onto the earth, the whole Inner World was thrown into chaos. It was the 'Door' that kept the mess from spreading to the Outer World.

However, everything changed after Tantai Muye has broken the rules. From the moment a living man barged into the netherworld, the world would never be the same again!

Curses had streamed endlessly into the Outer World, bringing along with them all the hatred, fear and bloodlust that would gradually befoul the Door.

The Door eventually fell to the netherworld and its nature was changed forever!

"If Tantai Muye had been able to destroy the purple crystal, he would have been worshipped as a martyr even if the evil forces had seeped out into the world! But he had failed! Not only that, but his gamble had resulted in dire consequences...thus, it would not be unfair to blame him for the curse afflicting the Tantai bloodline!

Fang Tuan strode towards the Green Bronze Door.

The Door roared on and its shape kept on flickering. It was...trying to escape?

"You are no longer the original Door, and it is impossible for you to escape my grasp!"

Fang Yuan said as a matter-of-factly and proceeded to step forward.

Boom!

The Door reverted back to its solid form.

"Woowooo!"

Numerous ghosts crying tears of blood surfaced from the Door. They were all dead Tantaïs and surged collectively towards Fang Yuan.

The two ghostly guards opened up their jaws and let out unholy screams.

"Hmph!"

Fang Yuan stretched his fingers.

Zoom!

The world went quiet, and the power of fire and ice was unleashed.

The Tantai ghosts barely had enough time to put on stunned expressions before they were incinerated by Fang Yuan's curse.

"Impossible..."

"This Door..."

"It can't be real..."

Tantai Juexin and company had their mouths agape as they watched Fang Yuan mow down the ghosts of the Green Bronze Door. They were all dumbfounded.

"Maybe...we were all wrong!"

Tantai Guijing sighed for the umpteenth time with a fiery look in his eyes.

"Back then...if only we had treated him with more sincerity and given him 20 years, he would definitely be much more powerful than he is now. Mieming...he is the one real hope of the Tantai family!"

Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai rolled their eyes.

If only.

Dong!

The Green Bronze Door shook violently and the power of another one of its curses diffused outwards in black ripples.

Even the top exorcists would have their flesh and bones melted down and die horribly within a hundred metre radius of this curse.

Fang Yuan, however, was unfazed.

After the storm of fire and ice that Fang Yuan had unleashed, the Green Bronze Door was frozen firmly to the spot together with its two ghostly guards.

"I understand now..."

Standing in front of the Door, Fang Yuan could feel a dense and familiar power lurking behind. He let out another sigh as he comprehended even more.

"So that purple crystal did come from a higher power originating from the Demonic Heart Realm. Its radiation alone is able to wreak havoc in the netherworld....however, a higher power can only exist in a higher plane. When Tantai Moye had opened the Door and let out the curses from within, the Door was tainted in the process and transformed into a protective shield for the purple crystal instead...from the Purple Eye Realm, a higher dimensional world of the same level as the Outer World was born! To become a power bearer!"

This was not a spatial illusion conjured up by a ghost, but an entire world!

"A little dose of energy radiated energy could achieve this?"

Fang Yuan looked towards the great Door, his eyes gleaming.

