

Mystical 101

Chapter 101: Change 1

In the middle of a vast lush grassland, a white train was moving forward slowly along the tracks; it looked like a white thread in the middle of a green handkerchief.

In a carriage in the middle section of the train, light was almost nonexistent; only traces of white light shone in through both sides.

A one-eyed man with long hair down to the waist was silently standing in the dark.

"Silvard once told me: give up your eyes for a broader world," the man said in a low voice as if he was talking to himself. He had a black eye patch over his left eye, while a sparkling glow faintly reflected on the dark golden eyelashes of his right eye.

"My heart will tell me what higher realm I intend to pursue..." he inexplicably muttered.

"Andrela." With a bang, the carriage door opened. An old man with green eyes and white hair stood at the door. "Still contemplating? You have reached the level of Grandmaster of Combat for more than a year now. Dealing with an average guy doesn't require such extensive preparation."

"It's alright. I don't underestimate any single opponent, that's my principle." Andrela gave a warm smile.

"Your characteristic is having the fastest speed and strongest penetrating power, which by chance neutralizes the strengths of that Garen. No matter how you see it, you have much better odds of winning." The old man shook his head and continued, "Fine, it's up to you. Oh yeah, the fine metal blocks for testing that you requested have arrived." He turned around and left without closing the door behind him.

Soon, more than a dozen people gradually carried in five black metal blocks and laid them out one by one in front of Andrela to form a straight line.

Each metal block was cast from fine iron and extremely tough, all half the height of a person.

After laying down the metal blocks, they silently exited the carriage of their own accord and gently closed the door.

Andrela slowly unsheathed a fine sword from his waist.

Shiiing!

A silver strand flashed in the dark then instantly vanished.

The five metal blocks were punctured in the middle with round holes. The round holes pierced straight through all five fine metal blocks. The edges of the holes were rounded and smooth, and still had a faint redness on them.

Heat waves gradually dispersed in the air: it was the residual heat created from piercing through the metal blocks at high-speed.

Andrela looked at the metal blocks calmly. No one knew what he was thinking, but he seemed to be deep in thought.

Outside the door, the green-eyed elder stood by the carriage window. He quietly watched the grassland scenery passing by rapidly outside. A girl in a crimson dress silently stood behind him.

"Even though we have confidence in Andrela, but for the sake of precaution, we still have to be well prepared. Are the people from Manleyton Corporation ready?"

"Yes. According to the report that came back to us, they are ready and have probably gained the trust of the kid from White Cloud Gate," the crimson-dressed girl replied in a hushed tone.

"That's good. Prepare them to take action and administer the drug in batches. This drug can lie dormant for three days, that's when we'll arrive. Moreover, there will be no signs of the drug after the fact. We

can't lose this time. Defeating White Cloud Gate is beside the point. The main issue is that old geezer from Seven Moon Gate. Andrela needs to conserve his energy. Unfortunately, I'm too old, I can't personally participate. Otherwise, I could have cleared the path to make it easier for him." The old man sighed with regret.

"You've done enough," the girl said softly.

"Grace? Why are you here?"

They were in the train station in Dinah City by a busy platform with the crowd coming and going.

Garen frowned as he looked at Grace in front of him. She hung her head low and was carrying a black handbag with both of her hands; the way she dressed made her seem like a traveling college student. Her white sweater and white jeans accentuated her high breasts and slender legs. Long light blonde hair casually draped over her shoulder, tied with a black hair band in the middle. This was a change from her cool and alluring style; it was now replaced with an air of innocence with a hint of sexiness.

"I just wanted to follow you..." Grace calmly replied. "After all, you'll need someone to help you deal with sundry matters."

"Have you arranged with the others?" Garen helplessly massaged his temples.

"Yes, all done."

"Let's go then."

Garen was speechless. Since she had already come over, he couldn't possibly send her back.

Based on the address that Rampas gave them, they hailed a horse carriage, negotiated a price, then stepped into the carriage and rushed straight towards the headquarters of the Seven Moon Group.

When they arrived at the headquarters building, there were already people stationed in front of the entrance. Apparently, as a local, Seven Moon Gate was very good at obtaining intelligence: Garen was discovered as soon as he had arrived.

The people stationed at the entrance escorted them into the building without wasting any time and led them straight to Rampas, who was training hard in Secret Martial Arts.

"I thought, Senior Brother Garen, that you would have come sooner. I didn't expect you to be late." A white towel draped over Rampas' shoulder; his body radiated heat as he walked out of the room. He sat across from Garen. The attendant on the side served some aromatic milk coffee.

"Miss, why aren't you sitting?" Rampas looked at Grace; he didn't know what her relationship with Garen was.

"It's fine. I'll just stand," Grace declined respectfully. She silently stood behind Garen and insisted on not sitting down.

After dismissing the attendant, Rampas sat up straight, picked up the coffee and took a swig. Compared to when he was fleeing danger, now he seemed more confident and had the relaxed and calm manner of a master.

"Apologies, Senior Brother Garen. All the other elders of the Gate are busy entertaining the masters and representatives from other sects. Now, most of the strength of the whole Southern Twelve Gates is gathered here at Seven Moon Gate, so they're a little preoccupied to receive you. And since you saved my life, and we're both familiar with each other, it has fallen to me to entertain you. I hope you don't mind," Rampas explained apologetically.

"Not at all. Receiving guests is merely a formality. In these pressing times, I don't really mind." Garen smiled. "Just that this time I'm here, I'd like to take a look at some low-level Secret Martial Art collections from Seven Moon Gate. We've been fighting all the way back. I want to see if I can read more on other Secret Martial Arts to broaden my martial arts perspective."

"This Secret Martial Art..." Rampas seemed to be put in a tough spot. "Senior Brother Garen, you should be clear that Secret Martial Arts, albeit at low levels, are the foundations on which sects are established. On this matter... I'm afraid I can't make the decision."

"Just tell me outright what conditions you have," Garen said calmly.

"I need to consult the Elder Deputy Sect Master. Please wait for a moment." Rampas didn't want Garen to go home empty handed either. After all, he had witnessed Garen's powerful true strength along the journey. A Secret Martial Art practitioner with such great potential, the only option was to stay on his good side, particularly in such critical times.

"I'll wait for you here then," Garen took a sip of his coffee.

"Alright. I'll be back in a moment." Rampas stood up and left from the side door.

"He's just a junior. For the fact that he escorted the Sect Master back, we'll give him some money and have him on his way. These small sects keep coming to us for refuge and support. What support? It's just money they want. Do they think money falls from the sky for the Seven Moon Group? Just a few words, open their mouth and they can get a few million? What a joke!"

"But Elder, Senior Brother Garen isn't here for money..." Rampas frowned as he tried to draw a distinction. He found Great Elder Cayman resting in the conference room. It was obvious that the Great Elder had been angered by someone; he was furiously chugging his tea.

"Not money? What then?" the Great Elder was curious, and immediately stopped what he was doing.

"Senior Brother wants to have a look at low-level Secret Martial Art..."

"What? Secret Martial Art! Ask him to get lost right now!" the Senior Elder stood up at once, infuriated. "Have him leave immediately! Secret Martial Art? Is that something to be requested by a small sect like White Cloud Gate?! Forget about having a look, they don't even have the right to think about it! What

does White Cloud Gate think it is anyway? Nothing but a puny third-grade sect. How dare they threaten us at this hour? They think we can't fend off Celestial Circle Gate without them? What a joke! Any random Secret Martial Art from Seven Moon Gate would be far more powerful than their Secret Mammoth Technique!" The Great Elder trembled with fury.

"Great Elder—" Rampas wanted to keep arguing but was cut off by the Great Elder.

"Say no more. In this incident, the Sect Master was heavily injured and is now unconscious, but I see that you're safe and sound. Good for you! Very well done! I still haven't disciplined all of you for that. Now you're asking for a favor on behalf of someone else?" The Great Elder stood up and furiously walked out the door. He passed through the corridors and was soon out of sight.

Rampas hastily got up and gave chase, persuading him all the way.

In a corridor connected to this corridor, Garen walked out of the room with Grace, a terrible expression on his face.

The conference room that the Great Elder was in was not far from the previous room. With his current physical fitness, having attained the powerful hearing of a Grandmaster of Combat, he could naturally hear every word being said.

"Let's go. I thought Seven Moon Gate needed my help, and we could join forces to defeat Celestial Circle Gate, but it seems that they couldn't care less about a mediocre sect like ours. " Garen said in a calm tone, then turned to leave from the way he came.

Grace followed closely behind him.

Not long after Rampas gave chase, he got wind about Garen and Grace's departure. He instantly knew that this spelled trouble. Apart from overhearing what they had said, there was no other reason that Garen would have left abruptly without saying goodbye.

He guessed it immediately: Garen must have been impatient when he didn't return, so he walked out of his room and overheard the conversation in the conference room.

"Great Elder!" he roared as he couldn't hold it in any longer.

The Great Elder walking in front turned around in shock.

"You're... shouting at me?"

The more Rampas thought about it, the more he got angry and felt offended. His face was red with anger as he stood panting in the corridor.

"Great Elder! Senior Brother Garen has left. Are you happy now?"

"What gives you the right to shout at me?" The Great Elder's expression turned somber. "What does it have to do with me, whether he's left or not?"

"Senior Brother Garen saved the Sect Master and all of our lives! Is that the way Seven Moon Gate should treat him? Very well! That's amazing!" Rampas had always thought that the Great Elder had a hot temper but was still good-natured. He didn't expect him to not know right from wrong in this matter and act out impulsively like this.

"No one needs his saving! Who begged him to save anyone? What a joke! Saved the Sect Master? Saved all of you?" the Great Elder sniggered. "I'm telling you Rampas, Celestial Circle Gate is powerful, but Seven Moon Gate is no lightweight either. Even without that Garen, would they dare touch any of our people? Even if the Sect Master is unconscious from the challenge, would Celestial Circle Gate dare touch him even once? You know nothing, and yet you dare shout at me?! Do you even know what the true assets of Seven Moon Gate are?!"

Chapter 102: Change 2

Rampas was trembling in fury. He didn't want to argue with the Great Elder anymore, so he turned around and stormed off. His father was the Second Elder; his authority within the sect was only one rank below the Great Elder. He wanted to see his own father.

Unfortunately, regardless of whether it was his father or the other elders he was close with, they were of the same attitude: to ignore without exception. They felt that this was only a minor issue. Garen of

White Cloud Gate threatened to obtain the Secret Martial Art collection but failed, then left in anger. Such display was not rare among the many small sects.

Representatives or Sect Master of these small sects often come over and take advantage of the times when Seven Moon Gate was in need of strength. Money, Secret Martial Art, precious herbs, power and resources, and so on; they've requested all manner of favors.

Initially, Seven Moon Gate received them with the intention of making more friends, but their demands became more and more outrageous as time passed. The whole sect gradually became more indignant and agitated about it.

Garen and Grace walked out of the Seven Moon Gate building with somber expressions. It was then that they saw a few other people walk out of the building furiously, obviously suffering the same fate as them.

"Seven Moon Gate, they're too much!" A fit old man was panting in anger as he walked out of the building accompanied by his two disciples.

"They are financially sound and have substantial power and true strength. They don't need common Secret Martial Art practitioners like us. Let's just pack and leave. The whole Southern Twelve Gates only needs Seven Moon Gate, the other sects are redundant," a group of brawny men said in an off-tone. "It's not just our two sects that have been driven away these few days. Of the Southern Twelve Gates, only Red Obsidian Gate has been shown meticulous hospitality, whereas the rest... hehe..."

Garen shook his head, speechless. He led Grace to the side of the road, ready to hail a ride.

"Senior Brother Garen?!"

Suddenly, the cute voice of a girl sounding surprised came from his left.

"Is it really you, Senior Brother Garen?"

Garen and Grace turned around. They saw a pretty girl dressed like a high school student carrying a small white satchel rushing towards them.

The girl was one of the members of Circling Dance Gate they met on their way back. Even though Garen didn't have any recollection of her, it was apparent that she viewed the strong and striking Garen with great admiration.

The girl ran to them. When she saw their somber expressions, she instantly guessed the situation.

"They are too much! They've even rejected Senior Brother Garen! Seven Moon Gate is really..." The girl was indignant.

"You're from Circling Dance Gate. You're..." Garen hesitated. "Sorry, I have a poor memory..." He smiled in embarrassment. On that journey back, everyone from Circling Dance Gate—from ordinary disciples to the Eldest Senior Sister leading the group—completely didn't register with him.

I am Imogen Lilliette from Bodia. I'm a fifth generation disciple at Circling Dance Gate, ranked second! I'm twenty-one this year," the girl patted her chest as she introduced herself with pride. Only when she approached did he realize, her height was only up to Garen's chest; she looked like a young teenage Lolita, only about 120cm tall.

Seemingly aware of Garen and Grace's strange look in their eyes, Imogen Lilliette anxiously emphasized at once, "Twenty-one years old!"

"Yes, we know you're twenty-one years old..." Garen was speechless.

"Fine. I'm used to it anyway," Imogen Lilliette said helplessly. Her expression returned to normal and said, "Senior Brother Garen, you're here for...? Anything we can help you with, Circling Dance Gate will be behind you in full force!"

"Initially, I wanted to take a look at the low-level Secret Martial Art collections of Seven Moon Gate, as reference material. I didn't expect them to refuse me, so I just left," Garen shrugged.

"If you don't mind, you are free to refer to the Secret Martial Art of Circling Dance Gate, including the hereditary Secret Martial Art of our sect," Imogen Lilliette said solemnly. "We've heard about the situation at White Cloud Gate. If you need funds, we've just raised two million on our end. You can have it to tide you over."

"You have the authority?"

"I do! Because this is my mother's intention," Imogen Lilliette chuckled.

"This is our first meeting. Thank you so much, Mr. Garen, for escorting my daughter safely home," a calm female voice came from behind them.

Garen was stunned. He didn't notice anyone approaching him from behind. He frantically turned his body sideways to look behind him.

Suddenly, he saw a beautiful blonde with a calm temperament standing behind him. Her smooth blonde hair draped over her shoulders. She had delicate skin and features, and blue eyes as clear as the sea. She was a beauty who constantly radiated a cool temperament.

Garen was considered calm compared to Grace. She jumped in shock and almost twisted her ankle.

"Apologies." The blonde lady smiled apologetically at both of them, but it seemed as if she was not used to smiling; her smile gave an odd and awkward impression. "I am Imogen Lilliette's mother, Jaimea Lilliette, also the current Great Elder of Circling Dance Gate."

"Why are you all here at Seven Moon Gate..." Garen was confused. His nose caught a hint of fragrance, and out of courtesy, he distanced himself away slightly.

"The headquarters of Circling Dance Gate and Seven Moon Gate are both in Dinah City," Jaimea Lilliette explained. "My daughter and I were just out to buy some sundries and coincidentally passed by. We didn't expect to meet the two of you from White Cloud Gate. Even though we're insignificant compared to Seven Moon Gate, but if you don't mind, why not come over to Circling Dance Gate for a while?"

Garen quickly thought about it, then accepted the invitation.

"Yes, that sounds lovely. Just as well we could pay a visit to the headquarters of Circling Dance Gate."

Jaimea Lilliette had a cool temperament and was somewhat blunt in the manner she spoke, but the way she looked at Garen and Grace was indeed sincere.

Even though the influence of Circling Dance Gate wasn't as strong compared to Seven Moon Gate, they didn't seem weak either. Soon, two slightly old black cars drove over and stopped next to where they stood.

Garen and Grace stepped into the car at the back, while Jaimea Lilliette and her daughter sat in the car in front. Both cars slowly drove towards the other end of Dinah City.

Half an hour later, Garen was sitting face to face with Jaimea Lilliette and Eldest Senior Sister Vicard in the middle of a wooden dojo.

The dojo was a rectangular structure, made entirely of wood. It was slightly dilapidated. The entrance was to the left. On the walls at both ends hung two white paper banners with the words "Martial Arts" and "Dance" written in black ink separately.

The reddish-brown wooden floor boards were neatly arranged and well-polished, but defects could be seen in some parts of the floor, giving the sense that it was timeworn. Despite being slightly dilapidated, the entire dojo was filled with a faint scent of incense, and there wasn't a trace of sweaty odor; it was clearly well maintained.

In front of Garen was a glass teacup filled with Rainflower tea. The reddish-pink tea in the cup looked exquisite. Bits of flower petals were floating in the tea like watery red crystals and the tea had a delicate floral aroma: it was an exceptionally pleasant aesthetic experience altogether.

"Senior Brother Garen, thank you for your care before." Vicard was the Circling Dance Gate leader that Garen escorted. She looked dainty and adorable now.

The hosts were both clad in black robes and long black socks. Apparently, it was the standard attire here.

Jaimea Lilliette motioned to Garen to drink his tea. "Mr. Garen, you saved our Sect Master and several of our disciples, including my daughter. Even though we are a small establishment, we are clear that gratitude should be repaid as much as revenge should be exacted. Secret Martial Art and funds are not a problem. Whatever else you need, feel free to ask for it. I will fulfill your request to the best of my abilities on behalf of Circling Dance Gate."

Garen was undoubtedly touched.

"How did you know I needed Secret Martial Art?"

Jaimea Lilliette calmly explained, "Most people who have visited Seven Moon Gate of late are primarily after these two things. I apologize if I have offended you, but I am only telling it as it is."

"It's fine."

Garen could tell that Circling Dance Gate was not doing very well itself. Despite the fact that the dojo was huge, it was dilapidated to the extent that they didn't even have the funds to properly maintain and repair it. Even White Cloud Gate was much better off. When he thought about how the headquarters of Circling Dance Gate and Seven Moon Gate were both located within Dinah City, the answer was obvious: the former must have been harshly oppressed by the latter.

In a case where they were not well-off but displayed generosity out of gratitude, such an attitude was in stark contrast to what Garen experienced at Seven Moon Gate.

Garen actually felt somewhat ashamed. He didn't pay much attention to Circling Dance Gate at the time, but just helped them out incidentally. He didn't expect that it would be this humble female sect that could help him out right now.

"Actually, we have no need for funds," Garen carefully thought about how to phrase it. "We at White Cloud Gate are not facing a huge problem with funding." This was the truth. The dojo account had tens

of millions in funds. These were the sect funds voluntarily passed on to Collin and Simon by the stout Bouvini in charge of finances. Garen wasn't short of money.

Upon hearing that they didn't lack funds, the two from Circling Dance Gate were immediately relieved and felt even more grateful to Garen. It was apparent that they were extremely tight on funds. They haven't been able to cover their cost in recent years, with the dojo income decreasing rapidly. If it was money that Garen requested, they would have given it to him, but that would have put them in a tougher situation.

"I'm here not for money or whatever else. I'm here for Secret Martial Art," Garen said formally.

"No problem. Including our hereditary Secret Martial Art, you are free to study and record all the Secret Martial Art within our library," Jaimea Lilliette nodded in agreement.

"Hereditary Secret Martial Art is the foundation of a sect, I don't want it, and I have no need for it. I am merely looking for some low-level Secret Martial Art to broaden my martial arts perspective, for reference," Garen promptly explained.

"Regardless, I'll take you to the library at once. How does that sound?" Jaimea Lilliette resolutely stood up and asked.

"Uhh..." Garen didn't expect her to be so eager. "No hurry. Let's have a chat and rest for now."

"Very well." Jaimea Lilliette felt that she was slightly overeager, and slowly sat down again. "Excuse my manners."

And then it became a question and answer session between the three.

Garen asked, and they answered.

They were the type who wouldn't speak when not questioned and seemed as though they didn't interact much with people; their tone was somewhat blunt.

By casually asking a few questions, Garen gathered a general idea of Circling Dance Gate and understood the types of characters within it.

There was a total of twelve people in the sect, external disciples included. The modest and austere style of the dojo business made it unattractive. Coupled with the fact that they were oppressed by Seven Moon Gate, the entire operation was bleak, and they could barely make ends meet.

The dojo master in charge of the day-to-day was Jaimea Lilliette's father, a headstrong man advanced in years. He was adamant in preserving the estate inherited from their ancestors, unwilling to sell the current headquarters and dojo. This didn't help their poor financial situation.

Everyone in the dojo, including Jaimea Lilliette—regardless of their external personality— were tough and headstrong characters, all bent on preserving the dojo.

Originally, as a Secret Martial Art sect and one of the Southern Twelve Gates, they were entitled to a fixed income and certain benefits. This was the key reason Circling Dance Gate joined, and it was this fixed income that kept the dojo in business. But now Lucene Brotherhood, the strongest of the Southern Twelve Gates, has been obliterated. This sect was the leader and organizer of the Southern Twelve Gates. They were in charge of distributing the annual benefits and funds. Without that income, it had become more difficult for them to keep the dojo running.

Chapter 103: Variation in Secret Martial Arts 1

While the three of them were chatting, Grace, Imogen Lilliette, and another girl were preparing sweets and lunch in another clean white room.

"Grace, you go get some rest. We can handle it here, so it's fine!" Imogen Lilliette persuaded multiple times, but to no avail.

"It's alright. This is part of my duty anyway." Grace gave a weak smile. "But it does seem that there's nothing for me to do to contribute here. I'll just go out and buy some daily necessities for the next few days."

"Don't worry, just go. But don't forget the way back. Or should I accompany you?" Imogen Lilliette offered as she peeled a small potato.

"No, it's fine," Grace declined.

"You be careful then."

As she flicked away the water on her hands, Grace walked out of the kitchen. A trace of gloom flashed across her face.

She quickly walked out of the corridor into the courtyard, heading straight for the entrance.

She had barely walked out of the door when a small blue shadow dashed into her arms. She was surprised to find that it was a little blue bird with a white paper bag tied to its foot.

Grace quietly removed the paper bag, looked around, and gently let the little bird fly away.

The blue bird was swift and silent in flight, disappearing into the sky in the blink of an eye.

Grace opened the paper bag. There was a packet of white powder inside, with some inscriptions on the packaging paper. Her face went ice-cold after reading it.

In the afternoon, the sky gradually darkened. With only dense gray clouds and no sunshine, it felt heavily depressing.

Garen quietly sat in a bedroom at Circling Dance Gate. In front of him was a low square table with five thin manuals laid out on the white surface. There were no names on the manuals. A faint fragrance of ink emanated from them.

"I can't believe they've gifted me with their entire treasured collection. This is really..." Garen didn't know what to make of it, but he felt appreciative.

These five Secret Martial Arts manuals were the secret books that he just got from Circling Dance Gate's underground library. Initially, he had picked out a few to carefully study, but he didn't expect them to simply hand over all the secret books to him. He further selected a few from the timeworn library and, without discovering anything more, he finally brought all the Secret Martial Arts manuals back to carefully study them in the room that they had arranged for him.

The entire process took him just over an hour.

"Of these five Secret Martial Arts manuals, three are Secret Martial Arts tailored to women. I'll give up on those, but I might still be able to derive something in terms of technical attacks. The remaining two..." Garen's gaze fell to the two books on the right.

Boulder Martial Arts and Augustus's Two-Handed Ancient Sword Technique.

"Boulder Martial Arts..." Garen felt that this name was similar to the names of Eastern martial arts. He picked up the secret book and started reading meticulously.

The image of a white lotus was printed on the pale yellow cover and the words "Boulder Martial Arts" was handwritten in Confederation text on the edge.

He turned over to the first page.

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"Boulder Martial Arts originates from the East and is a common, highly popular Body Hardening Technique. Upon mastery, it will inflict the powerful effect of anti-Vibration on opponents."

Garen continued turning the pages. What followed was a concise and direct description of the specific postures for the technique as well as preparation and practicing times. There were no external drugs needed as supplements, but it was very strict regarding practicing times. It started from one o'clock midnight and ended at three in the morning.

There were three specific levels: they were merely three strange poses. However, the method and route of blood and Qi circulation, as well as the breathing technique, were enlightening.

On the other hand, the two-handed ancient sword technique book was a martial art that relied on vocalized practice. It had typical domestic characteristics.

"Too bad I left the Weeping Sword in the main dojo and didn't bring it here. Otherwise, I could carefully study the features of a martial art involving vocalized practices." Garen gently put down the two books.

Knock knock knock.

Light knocks on the door were heard.

"Please come in." Garen slowly closed his eyes and put his hand on the two secret books, deep in thought.

The room door gradually opened. Grace came in with two cups of coffee.

"Garen, I've brought you some hot coffee."

She wore a short white dress. The thin black stockings under her short dress vaguely revealed the white underwear between her legs and her high breasts exposed a wide area of fair skin.

She gently laid down the saucers on the table by the secret books and sat across from Garen. When she saw that Garen's eyes were closed, she could not help but show a trace of disappointment on her face.

She reached to pull her dress down a little to cover her underwear, then put the coffee in front of both of them.

"Please drink."

"Leave it there for now," Garen said casually.

The atmosphere in the room settled down. Garen was pondering a problem, but Grace started to feel restless and uneasy.

"Grace," Garen suddenly spoke. "Back then, what was the reason that made you decide to follow me?"

Grace was silent for a while. "Because of the corporation, and also probably because you spared my life."

"And mostly because my master was the Sect Master of White Cloud Gate?" Garen asked bluntly.

Grace paused. "Yes."

Garen opened his eyes and calmly looked at the seductively dressed girl in front of him. There wasn't a hint of desire in his eyes.

"Your family is one of the major families in Huaishan City with great influence. Was it what your corporation wanted or what your family requested of you?"

Grace widened her eyes in shock. Her expression couldn't help but finally change and her breathing started to become heavier as well.

"How did you notice?"

Garen smiled. "When you found me at the station, I noticed that your heartbeat was very fast. You didn't do any strenuous exercise and you were calm on the surface, but still your heart raced faster in front of me. If it were ordinary girls, I would probably guess that they fancied me, but not you."

He watched as Grace sat there stone-faced, then continued, "Also, when you came in with coffee, the two coffees had different smells. My cup is obviously impure."

Grace felt a chill in her heart.

She looked at Garen smiling kindly in front of her and suddenly felt that everyone had probably underestimated this ordinary 17 year old youth.

This drug powder was clearly declared by Celestial Circle Gate to have an undetectable scent that could not be sensed Secret Martial Arts practitioners, but it was easily identified by Garen.

"His true strength... what level has it actually reached..." Grace was in a panic all of a sudden. She looked into Garen's clear, deep, red eyes and bit her lower lip. "How... how do you plan to deal with me?"

"Your heart rate is fast again." Garen took a sip of the coffee without the drug powder. "You're afraid? What are you afraid of?"

When Grace recalled the information that her family had obtained, she suddenly felt that she had been too naïve. Originally, she had thought that the information about Garen was exaggerated and she had not witnessed it personally, so she did not take it to heart. However, from the looks of it now... Killing dozens of people along the way—all of them elite fighters—it must have been true!

Garen let out a sigh of disappointment.

"Actually, if not for the fact that I never fully trust anyone, the chances that your plan would succeed were great. But unfortunately..." He shut his eyes as a trace of fatigue showed on his face. "Leave."

Grace's eyes opened wide as she looked at him in disbelief. She seemingly could not believe what he just said.

"You're... not going to do anything?" Suddenly she recalled the manner in which Garen usually handled things: even though it was not cruel, it was not peaceful either. She did not expect him to let her off on this.

"Just leave. This marks the end of our relationship. Don't appear in front of me again. I won't be so merciful the next time we meet," Garen said calmly.

Grace's pale face regained some color. She slowly stood up. When she saw that Garen remained seated, she was delighted.

"What an idiot! Who lets an enemy who tried to poison them go? No wonder you've come back in this sorry state after just one trip! Obviously your stupidity is the cause." She started to relax. Although she did not care for Garen's compassionate gesture, she only dared to think of some ideas in her head and did not dare to make any wrong moves. Her life depended on it, after all.

"Celestial Circle Gate is very powerful! You be careful," she said, faking some guilt before leaving.

She did not wait for a reply. Gently closing the door behind her, she hurried towards the courtyard. It was only after she exited the entrance of the Circling Dance Gate dojo that she let out a quiet sigh of relief.

"Even though the plan failed, at least I managed to keep my life. I need to report back immediately. There is a great discrepancy in the information we have on Garen!"

She quickly hailed a horse carriage taxi and stepped on.

Departing from the main dojo of Circling Dance Gate, she reached a remote corner in the suburbs a dozen minutes later.

After paying for her ride, Grace stepped off and walked into an alley filled with filthy and smelly homeless men.

"Get out of the way!" She kicked aside the thigh of a homeless man blocking her path and walked onward with a look of disgust. "Who sets such a place as a contact point anyway?"

Under the greedy gaze of this group of homeless men, she flashed the silver handgun on her waist and succeeded in frightening the ones with malicious intentions.

She was muttering as she walked into the depths of the alley. She retrieved an engraving dagger from the corner of the wall and forcefully carved an inverted "V," then stood up and turned around.

"You!" Blood instantly drained from her face as she backed up a few steps and hit the wall.

It was unclear when Garen had appeared behind her. He had looked at her with mild interest as she carved the mark.

"This is your secret contact code?" He walked over and touched the wall. Suddenly a layer of white stone powder showered down. The mark was easily erased.

"Grace, I treated you as a friend. What a pity..."

"I thought you said you'd let me go..." Grace's heart was beating fast and her entire body was sweating slightly.

Wham!

Garen grasped her neck tightly with one arm and held her to the wall. He applied a light pressure.

Crack.

With her neck broken, the glow in Grace's eyes slowly faded away. Her initial violent struggle gradually weakened, before finally ceasing.

Without a sound and without alarming anyone, she died straightaway in silence.

"Indeed, I did not intend to kill you earlier," Garen said calmly. "It would be inappropriate if you were killed in the Circling Dance Gate dojo. After all, it's someone else's place."

Unconsciously, after killing so many people along the way, his heart had become oddly calm.

Chapter 104: Variation in Secret Martial Arts 2

"I've caused danger to my master and the other disciples by letting them stay at the secret villa that Grace prepared. Someone needs to take responsibility for everything."

For a while, Garen still had slightly complicated feelings. After all, Grace was someone who had followed him for so long. The feeling of killing someone he was familiar with was different from killing a complete stranger.

Using his empty hand to search Grace's body for a while, he found a set of keys, a black leather wallet, a silver handgun and some documents.

Grace's figure was so curvaceous that even Garen could not help but grope her large breasts a few times, just to feel even more disappointed. He thought it was a waste that he had to kill such a capable and beautiful woman.

Fortunately, he was not some sort of perverted noble. Otherwise, he might first rape Grace before killing her, or even keep and train Grace as a sex slave after capturing her.

He carried her corpse to the dumpster on the opposite side and stuffed it inside. Taking out a lighter from his pants, he lit it up and threw it into a huge bag of shredded paper that was inside the dumpster.

The dumpster quickly caught on fire that slowly grew larger as white smoke gradually drifted into the air. Then the red flames lit up Grace's clothes and completely enveloped her corpse within the fire. The fair and delicate skin of her corpse started to turn yellow as oil seeped out from her skin, then her corpse turned black and completely turned into coke.

The air was filled with a strong smell of burnt meat.

Garen silently watched as Grace's beautiful face was completely burned beyond recognition before he slowly walked out of the alleyway.

There were several vagrants lying in the alleyway and were all knocked out using small stones. With the current strength of Garen's Vibration that came along with the Mammoth Secret Technique, it was an easy matter to completely knock all of them unconscious.

The smoke in the alleyway was getting bigger as Garen left. He quickly returned to Circling Dance Gate using the same route he came from.

He only spent half an hour to go there and back.

A young girl was holding a broom and cleaning the yard when Garen returned. After politely greeting her, he went back to the room that was arranged for him and sat down at the table with the precious Secret Martial Arts manuals.

For now, he had to put aside the situation in Huaishan City. Since Grace was a traitor, Celestial Circle Gate definitely knew where he was. He had no intentions of fleeing either. With so many people from the Southern Twelve Gates gathered here, it might be the best location to confront the Celestial Circle Gate and that mysterious organization. If he were to flee to another location, he might jeopardize his master and fellow disciples in Huaishan City. This upcoming war was inevitable.

The current situation was very simple. As long as he could block Andrela and protect White Cloud Gate, everything would be fine. The other factions would not behave like rats leaving a sinking ship. However, once he—the final hope of White Cloud Gate—was defeated, then they would be a sitting duck for other factions.

Putting aside Grace's matter, he moved the cooled coffee to one side and started to carefully open the secret manual of the Boulder Martial Art.

At the same, the Boulder Martial Art selection gradually appeared within the Skill Pane in his field of vision.

"Boulder Martial Art: Uninitiated (Three levels in total), Learning Requirement: At least 1.00 in Vitality, Strength, and Agility."

This particular Secret Martial needed at least fifteen years to complete each level. It took a lot of time and the initial learning requirement was high. It was also the main reason why low grade Secret Martial Arts were disfavored.

On the other hand, the main problem for Boulder Martial Art was that the learning requirement needed Vitality, Strength, and Agility to be at least 1.00, and that was the average for an adult male.

This meant that only the body of an adult could satisfy the basic requirement for learning this Secret Martial Art.

The fact that every level needed fifteen years to complete was another important reason. If a Secret Martial Art needed fifteen years to get to the initiated stage and was only an inferior martial art, nobody would be stupid enough to practice it.

Garen took another look at the description of the result after mastering the Boulder Martial Art.

"When the Boulder Martial Art has been mastered, the body of the practitioner will be as hard as a boulder. Qi and blood will continuously circulate throughout the body, putting the body in the strongest defensive state all the time. Body speed will uniformly experience a significant growth. This Secret Martial Art was derived from the indestructibility of boulders in mountain ranges. After mastering the Boulder Martial Art, Qi and blood will blend together and become abnormally hard, while tranquilizing the mind. It will have a positive effect on irritable practitioners as well."

Garen suddenly remembered Jaimea Lilliette. Her cold appearance might have been caused by practicing this Secret Martial Art. He guessed that it might not be entirely from it but could have learned from it.

"Could this really aid growth in body speed?" Garen was feeling slightly expectant.

Garen immediately stood up and took a pose according to the first diagram. At the same time, he followed the breathing instructions and the method to adjust his Qi and blood. His mind gradually entered the calm state mentioned by the secret manual.

However, ten minutes later, Garen suddenly felt a slight itchiness in his chest and abdomen, as if his organs were itching. Soon after more than ten seconds later, his skin and muscles were starting to slightly itch as well.

It was not really itchy, but was just a slight feeling.

The situation was similar to what was described in the secret manual. The Secret Martial Art would only consider to be initiated when the itchiness appeared, grew stronger, and finally subsided.

However, the current itchiness was very weak. Garen came to conclusion that he was practicing at the wrong time. There must be a reason that the secret manual stated that the Boulder Martial Art must be practiced in the middle of the night.

Dinah City railway station

In the dead of the night, a white, luxurious train gradually stopped at the empty railway station.

The middle door of the carriage opened and a series of passengers wearing various kinds of casual clothes got off the train. Some of them looked like students, while others looked like tourists and there were even workers and intellectuals among them. There were all kinds of attires, but all of them had one thing in common, and that was they were all wearing a silver cross star symbol on their chest.

After most of the passengers got off, but three men and two women slowly alighted.

Among the five of them, only one man was an elderly in his sixties, while the other four were young.

A long-haired young man was leading the other three as they quietly and slowly got off the train.

"We've finally reached Dinah City. If we didn't receive the news that Garen came over here, we wouldn't have to switch to another train halfway through." The long-haired man was slightly shaking his head in

frustration. His left eye was covered by a black eyepatch while his right pupil was a rare dark golden. He had waist length hair, wore a black coat and had a mysterious aura.

"How is it? Andrela, Dinah City is the territory of Seven Moon Gate. Are you confident?" The old man raised his head and looked at the sign—that displayed the station name—hanging above them within the train station.

"I'm fine." Andrela smiled and lightly touched the slender sword hanging at his waist that was hidden by his coat.

"Speaking of which, you've been at the Grandmaster of Combat level for quite a while. This time, you might be able to find an opportunity to advance." The old man was feeling slightly emotional and expectant.

Andrela only smiled. "Grandmasters of Combat are far more superior than normal people and are no longer afraid of guns and bullets. It's even classified as a non-human realm. There are even some Grandmasters of Combat that believe that they're no longer mortal and view normal people as ants. Even though that kind of path was powerful, it is not the path I want to walk. That's why I've stopped progressing for so long."

The old man was slightly surprised. This was his first time hearing this head disciple of Celestial Circle Gate voice out his opinion. "Then what kind of a path are you trying to walk?"

"Grandmasters of Combat are classified into Righteous and Immoral, and the difference lies in the fighting styles. A Righteous style doesn't hide its moves and uses momentum to pressure opponents. An Immoral style uses endless amounts of secret techniques. They each have their own merits. I have not figured out my third path. However, I feel that it's close... Grade D... is not the end..." Andrela's eyes were flashing with an indescribable gaze. "Martial arts should be endless."

"That's our hope as well." The old man patted Andrela's shoulder with a hint of gratification in his eyes. "To be unburdened by unnecessary emotions, as expected of my disciple!"

Andrela slowly shook his head. "Master, there are some people and things that were only buried in history. I am not the first Grandmaster of Combat that has walked on this path."

"I know." The old man nodded. "Let's go, bring along the glory of Celestial Circle Gate. Nobody will be able to stop you in this war of unification!"

"That's what I thought as well." Andrela smiled as he strode out. The other three followed after him, as if they were bodyguards protecting him.

Late at night

Circling Dance Gate

Garen was sitting cross-legged in the center of the cold dojo.

The muscles in his entire body were slowly wriggling around, as if there were countless earthworms crawling all over his body.

"Even though I've become a Grandmaster of Combat, I still don't understand true meaning of it." He was constantly adjusting the Qi and blood within his body and also his condition by following the method provided by the Boulder Martial Art.

"Su Lin once said that a Grandmaster of Combat is a Martial Adept that has reached the limits of the human body in a certain aspect. Their skills have been thoroughly tempered and they no longer have any fatal flaws.

"However, is it really true that the limits of the human body were just this low? Even though I can withstand a bullet, I am helpless against bombs and artillery shells." Both of Garen's hands were slowly raised above his head.

Hah!

With a low roar, all of the muscles in his body suddenly expanded. It was not the expansion of the Mammoth Secret Technique, but a very little amount of muscle expansion instead.

"A Martial Adept that has reached the limits of the human body and is also the number one expert of the younger generation, Andrela." Garen's eyes were faintly filled with a trace of expectation. It was a kind of a true expectation toward an opponent of the same level.

Suddenly, within the Skill Pane in his field of vision, the Boulder Martial Art selection slowly changed.

"Boulder Martial Art: Rudimentary Level (Three levels in total)"

Suddenly, he thought of something.

Garen slowly stood and slowly performed the Four Major Forms of White Cloud Combat Arts. He was entirely immersed within the limit state of the Mammoth Secret Technique. However, he was not using the special breathing technique of Mammoth Secret Technique, but the breathing technique of Boulder Martial Art.

It was as if the Boulder Martial Art and Mammoth Secret Technique were reacting to each other. Garen was entirely immersed within the casual execution of the chain combination of the Four Major Forms.

The Boulder Martial Art selection, that was just displaying Rudimentary Level, immediately started to slowly disappear.

The strange part was that the Mammoth Secret Technique was slowly disappearing as well. They were replaced by an entirely new Secret Martial Art and a symbol slowly appeared behind it.

"Mammoth Variant Secret Technique: Explosive Level."

Garen looked toward the symbol behind it.

"First level of stabilization of Qi and blood: The integration of Qi and blood within the body can reflect damage back to the opponents. Originated from Boulder Martial Art. Can advance to higher levels through training Boulder Martial Art."

Reading the meaning of the symbol, he was slightly surprised. "The main effect of Boulder Martial Art is the powerful defense. I didn't think that its effects could actually stack with the Mammoth Secret Technique. However, the text behind states that it can advance to a higher level through training Boulder Martial Art. However, why isn't there any reaction from Iron Body? It should be combinable as well!"

He slowly recovered his posture and focused his attention on the Iron Body selection.

He suddenly thought of something and slowly performed the Iron Body as he executed the Four Major Forms.

After a few minutes, Iron Body slowly disappeared as well.

Then, the symbol behind Mammoth Variation Secret Technique slightly changed. It changed into two: one of them was stabilization of Qi and blood, the other was hardening of the epidermis.

"First level of stabilization of Qi and blood: The integration of Qi and blood within the body can reflect damage to opponents. Originated from Boulder Martial Art. Can advance to higher levels through training Boulder Martial Art."

"First level of hardening of the epidermis: Hardness of the skin rises and is capable of resisting injuries from highly sharp weapons. Originated from Iron Body. Can advance to higher levels through training Iron Body."

All of his Secret Martial Arts that were Body Hardening Techniques were fused together and he was only left with a variant Secret Martial Art.

Chapter 105: One Battle! 1

Garen slowly lifted up his hand and looked at his palm. His slightly enlarged palm was faintly glimmering with a black metallic luster.

He felt that the Blood Qi Ball within his body had not release any Qi and blood to assist in the expansion of his body.

"This feeling is different from when I was using the expanded form of Mammoth Martial Art, but it is still slightly stronger than normal. Since the degree of expansion is not large, I'll consider this as the first form."

Garen forcefully waved his arm around, and felt that the hardness of his skin was around half of his defense when he was at full power. At the same time, it was around twice the hardness of his normal state. After mastering Mammoth Martial Art, his defense when using all of his power was four times that of normal situations. This sort of terrifying Body Hardening Technique allowed him to block the attacks of most martial artists using only his eyelids.

Slowly relaxing his body, Garen's gigantic body gradually shrunk like a deflated balloon from 1.9 meters to 1.7 meters. Under his normal state, he looked just like an ordinary person that was slightly muscular. It's just that his powerful physique made him seem more like an adult than a seventeen year old teenager.

Boom boom boom! Boom boom boom!

Suddenly, the sound of urgent knocking sounded out from the door of the dojo.

"Senior brother Garen! There's trouble, the people from Celestial Circle Gate are here!" Imogen Lilliette's voice came from behind the door.

"Celestial Circle Gate! Is it Andrela?" Garen walked over to the locked wooden door and opened it.

Standing at the door, Imogen Lilliette looked frantic and was still wearing black pajamas.

"Calm down, what's the situation?" Garen softly asked.

"I don't know, almost everyone from the Celestial Circle Gate is staying a hotel near the railway station. However, their leaders, Andrela and a few others, were nowhere to be found. What should we do, senior brother Garen!?" Imogen Lilliette was slightly at a loss.

"The Southern Twelve Gates are all targets of the Celestial Circle Gate. Don't forget about the Seven Moon Gate and the Red Obsidian Gate that joined them. There two sects are definitely not pushovers. Let's take a look at the result first. There's no need to hurry." Garen smiled as he comforted Imogen Lilliette, while gently rubbing her head.

Feeling Garen's unworried and relaxed mood, Imogen Lilliette began to relax as well and became less anxious.

Actually, she had no idea why she was so anxious either. When she heard that Celestial Circle Gate had arrived, she immediately panicked.

"The Celestial Circle Gate is walking the just and honorable path by fairly challenging each sect to a duel. If they want to unify the entire southern martial arts world, they need to comply with the rules or it will all be for naught. So we'll only need to face them head on and not have to worry about them playing any tricks. After all, the Celestial Circle Gate is very confident of their abilities..." Garen simply said. "If my guess is right, Andrela is currently already fighting with the Seven Moon Gate."

He was faintly looking toward the direction of the Seven Moon Gate headquarters as an inexplicable gaze flashed in his eyes.

Da da da...

A series of rapid footsteps rang out as a three-storey hotel near the railway station was completely surrounded.

The surrounding area was completely quarantined by numerous police vehicles.

Under the night sky, there was a cold-looking young man wearing black leather clothes. With shoulder length silver hair, a beautiful face, thin waist, and long legs, he expressed an androgynous beauty. If it was not for the fact that he had an adam's apple and no breasts, no one would believe that he was a man.

The man was slowly putting on a black and red gauntlet—with brutish spikes on it—with a calm gaze

"Commissioner Karanan, I am relying on you to help out in the quarantine this time," he simply said.

The middle-aged man with a potbelly standing next to him nodded while smiling. "Chairman Shia is being polite. The fact that I am able to help out the Seven Moon Group is a great honor for me. Not to mention that the governor specifically mentioned that I should fully support the Seven Moon Group in all of your activities. This is also part of our duty as the Metropolitan Police."

The beautiful man called Chairman Shia nodded. Then without saying anything else, he beckoned with his hand.

The men dressed in black outfits in the area immediately created an opening for him to pass through.

Shia walked into the encirclement and looked up the small white building toward the window on the third storey.

"Shia Ludanni from Seven Moon Gate is here to welcome senior brother Andrela from Celestial Circle Gate. Please come out to meet me."

His voice was androgynous and was a mixture of women's softness and men's rigidity, giving a strange sense of indifference and severity.

There was no noise at all. Although there were over a hundred men dressed in black surrounding the small building, there was no sound coming from the building at all. Even the policemen outside the perimeter were affected by the nervous mood and lowered their volume.

There was only silence in the small building and no one replied.

A sneer appeared on Shia's face.

"During the exchange gathering, we really owed it to Celestial Circle Gate. This time, since senior brother Andrela has come to our Dinah City, it's only natural that we, as the host, should properly take care of the guests. Could it be the fellow disciples from Celestial Circle is unwilling to give Shia this honor?"

There was still no reply from the small building.

Shia's face slightly contorted in anger.

"Since senior brother is unwilling to come out on your own, then I'll just have to personally invite you!"

A few of the men dressed in black slowly drew out black daggers as cruel sneers appeared on their faces. They were the most elite of the core teams within the Seven Moon Gate. The reason why the Seven Moon Gate was able to develop so much and obtain the best territories in the entire province was due to the efforts of teams like theirs.

As the sound of light and hurried footsteps rang out, more than a dozen men dressed in black charged toward the entrance of the small building. Before they could reach it, a silvery flash of light suddenly appeared, drawing a semicircular arc in the air.

The men all groaned at the same time and flew backward. There was a slit that was sliced open on each of them, but it was only their clothes that got cut and not their bodies.

At the entrance of the small building, a man with reddish purple hair slowly walked out. He was wearing a white outfit with a silver cross star symbol on his chest.

"If you want to see our senior brother, you need to get past us." He calmly stared at Shia who was standing at the front as a trace of severity flashed in his eyes.

"I am one of the Four Circles of Celestial Circle Gate, Xin Luo," He slowly announced his name. Immediately after, two other figures slowly walked out from behind him. One of them was a tall woman and the other was a short and thin boy.

"Xin Luo?" Shia's eyes narrowed into a straight line and his entire being was both sharp and cold. "I've long heard that the Four Circles of Celestial Circle Gate has always been four people. Why is one of you missing?"

He knew very well that the Four Circles of Celestial Circle Gate were the four strongest disciples below Andrela. They were also the most promising candidates to vie for the position of senior brother and were definitely not weak.

The moment he mentioned that matter, the faces of the three turned slightly ugly.

"Tenstar Ni getting killed was his own fault for being unskilled. Since you dare to speak that way about Celestial Circle Gate, let's see how strong you are!"

Before Xin Luo even finished speaking, he applied force to his legs and started spinning to the left—like a spinning top—into the surrounding teams of men dressed in black.

Ding ding ding!!

A series of clashing between metal sounded out as half of the men in black were injured by the black shadows of the sword. Only a few veterans were able to timely parry the thin sword.

More than a dozen of the men dressed in black did not retreat, but attacked instead. They were unafraid of getting cut by the thin sword as they stabbed toward Xin Luo with a dagger in each of their hands.

Ahh!!

One of the men dressed in black suddenly retreated while clutching his right hand and screaming in pain. His right palm was sliced off at the base of his wrist and blood was rapidly spraying out like a fountain. Two men from the back immediately arrived to take care of his wound.

"Step aside! Let me do it!" Shia's expression went cold and he suddenly rushed out. The gauntlets on his hands drew a dark red line in the air.

At the same time, the men dressed in black suddenly spread out, creating an opening in a well-trained manner that was just enough for one person to enter.

Shia punched toward Xin Luo's chest with his right hand that was clenched into a fist, while silently aiming for Xin Luo's abdomen with his left hand formed into a spear-hand while hiding it behind his right hand.

This was Seven Moon Gate's most famous Yin Interception Finger. Once it made contact with a person's body, it would cause the blood vessels to burst and create an internal hemorrhage, while the skin remained unharmed.

Shia's fingernails on his left hand were slightly purple and gleamed with a strange luster. Hidden below the gauntlets, they were like a venomous snake hiding in the shadows and were both malicious and covert.

The two of them instantly collided together.

Kacha!

The black shadow of the sword clanged as it struck between the spikes of the gauntlets and was twisted into pieces by the spikes.

Shia's Yin Interception Finger—that was aiming for Xin Luo's abdomen—missed as it was parried away by a knife hand from above.

Both of them each took a few steps backward as a fearful expression flashed across their faces.

"No wonder you dare to show up with so few people. Very well!" Shia's expression did not look well. Even though he had the upper hand, Xin Luo was only weaker than him by a tiny amount. They were

both stuck at the level right before Grandmaster of Combats and there were two other exponents at the same level as well. Not to mention, there was still Andrela after them.

He was originally planning to quickly get rid of these people and directly recruit Andrela. He did not think that...

"As expected of the Celestial Circle's Four Circles! Attack them!"

He suddenly beckoned and the hundreds of men dressed in black in the surrounding immediately surged forward.

Puff...

Garen heavily breathed out.

Ever since he returned to Huaishan, he had been thinking about how to perfect his martial arts system.

He had always been walking the route of focusing on strength and defense. However, this type of route lacked speed. Once he met an opponent who was much faster than him, he would be stuck in a situation of getting beaten up. Even though he had yet to meet such an exponent, it did not mean that it would not happen in the future.

A perfect martial art system should be able to deal with any kind of situation. An excessive shortcoming was just a fatal flaw.

When faced against Sylphalan's illusionary power previously, he did not have any way of dealing with it either.

This was his weakness and weaknesses needed to be overcome.

"Speed..." Garen was sitting cross-legged in the dojo. The morning sunlight was gently beaming on him, plating his topless upper body with a layer of light golden glow.

He got up early in the morning and started to adjust his condition. Since Celestial Circle Gate had already arrived, a battle could occur at any time. This was a battle in front of everyone and if he lost, it would imply that the White Cloud Gate that he was representing had lost.

Chapter 106: One Battle! 2

For a martial arts sect, reputation was extremely important. Losing signified lesser skills, and practitioners naturally gravitated toward stronger martial arts, rather than picking weak ones. In the case that the reputation of losing was to spread, White Cloud Gate would be finished.

All sects, regardless of size or strength, would not generally want to compete throughout the entire sect to conclusively determine the stronger sect. If met with such a situation, someone must be picking a fight.

The real strength rankings may be an open secret, but publicly determining it would be interfering with the livelihood of other sects. Such an action would invite lethal revenge.

So, Andrela instantly led some people over after Ni Tenstar was killed and challenged the headquarters of the Lucene Brotherhood to restore the reputation of Celestial Circle Gate. Externally, they could claim that Ni Tenstar was not fully trained in his martial arts and then prove that it was not the martial arts of Celestial Circle Gate that was weaker than the opponent's martial arts. Instead, it was due to the practitioner's own insufficiencies and inability to fully absorb his teachings.

Garen was clear about the consequences of this duel, but the other side must have learned the whereabouts of his family members and his master: it was an invisible threat. Killing a spy from the Manleyton Corporation was nothing since the whole company was merely their tool; it would not help solve the plight.

This was the power of Celestial Circle Gate: to be able to force their opponents to wait in place and accept the challenge.

"A sect which was able to survive until now must have challenged many other sects. That was probably how they obtained their collection of rare Secret Martial Art tomes. The low-grade sects which lost

these challenges could not carry on locally, so their only choice was to leave their base and continue surviving somewhere else."

Garen recalled several things that his master Fei Baiyun had mentioned when he was giving him guidance in martial arts. One of them was about the reason the ancestors of White Cloud Gate moved overseas to the Confederation. After being challenged by a local expert and suffering defeat, all they could do was move away to a place where no one knew them and start from scratch. There was no way to keep the original dojo running once their poor reputation spread.

"If you want to break the reputation of White Cloud Gate, you'll have to get my permission first." Garen closed his eyes and started thinking about measures to counter a faster opponent.

"When he has attained a qualitative boost in his speed, my speed wouldn't be able to keep up. All I can do is maintain the status quo. As long as I determine the opponent's target of attack, regardless of how he changes, all I need is to protect myself. Defense is simple, but to be able to successfully attack the opponent will prove difficult. I can't keep up because he will be too fast and I can't enhance my Speed with Attribute Points anymore..."

Garen began envisioning a high-speed opponent attacking him from all angles and imagined possible counter moves and ways in which he could successfully attack his opponent.

"The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. And that aspect... Maybe I can figure out a way from these two aspects..." He moved his body slightly, then fell into deep thought again.

After a while, he got up and walked out to the yard. He stood silently still in front of the rockery pond.

Seven Moon Group.

Andreia calmly stood in the pale gray ring. The fine sword in his hand gave off the crisp sound of tinkling silver bells. The tip of the sword was vibrating swiftly and this created a sound like chimes fluttering in the night wind.

He quietly looked across at the group of people holding up the old man, who was dealing with his wounds.

"Seven Moon Gate, let me face your true expert. I have no patience to waste time with you."

"You!" Pffft!

The old man spat out fresh blood as he pointed at Andrela, trembling in fury.

Shia was supported by two disciples clad in black. He had blood all over his face and his right arm dangled gingerly from his shoulder as he stared fiercely at Andrela. Around him were Rampas—his face white as ash—and a group of middle-aged men and women clad in red. This group of people came from Red Obsidian Gate, had just arrived, and looked nervous. Some of them, who wielded daggers in their hands, were trembling slightly. They rushed over after they had gotten wind that Andrela had appeared to challenge, but the scene that greeted them was of the Seven Moon Gate Great Elder being stabbed by Andrela.

Everyone heard a clear ringing, followed by a flash. The Great Elder groaned as blood spurted out from his right chest and he collapsed to the ground. They did not even see how Andrela retracted his sword.

"Our strongest expert is Great Elder Kudo Slant! You are strong Andrela, far beyond our expectations. But if you intend to humiliate us with such a crude reason, we at Seven Moon Gate would rather fight you until the end than see you prevail!" Shia, the strongest of the younger generation at Seven Moon Gate, roared in fury.

"Humiliate?" Andrela waved his sword and the ringing stopped. "The path to the Dao is so difficult. Do you think I would devote my time to humiliate garbage like you?"

His looked like his usual self, with a serene glow in his eyes. But in a moment like that, serenity merely conveyed an ice-cold impression.

"Seven Moon Gate... What a disappointment..." He leapt out of the ring. Xin Luo and the other two stepped forward to keep up. "Forget it. I have wasted too much time. Let's go straight to Circling Dance Gate."

Pffft!

The Great Elder spat more blood out from his mouth. He initially wanted to say something, but was hindered by blood flowing back into his throat. He was so enraged that he fainted straightaway.

The faces of the Second Elder and the others were livid. Some were firmly held back by their peers, who were afraid to let go lest they walked to their deaths.

Andrela and the other three walked out of the Seven Moon building. An Elder from Celestial Circle Gate was waiting for them with some men outside.

"Settled?"

"Settled." Andrela grinned.

"They were not comparable. Eldest Senior Brother settled it in minutes. Such garbage is only a waste of space," the girl beside Xin Luo said in contempt.

"Weren't you injured earlier, Iona? If Eldest Senior Brother hadn't interfered... Heh," a short boy snickered.

"At least I held my ground for a bit. What about you? A midget is indeed a midget. One blow and you were out of the ring."

"Let's go. Off to Circling Dance Gate." Andrela did not say more. He turned around and went into the car.

He held more and more sway now. One sentence and both of them were silenced. They separately got into the black car.

The onlookers from other sects waited until the car from Celestial Circle Gate drove off into the distance before starting frenzied discussions in clusters.

At the same time, a large group of people poured out from the entrance of the Seven Moon building. Shia, Rampas, and the rest were carrying the Great Elder who had just regained consciousness. There was also the group from Red Obsidian Gate led by their Sect Master.

"Come, let's go to Circling Dance Gate!" Shia snarled as he watched the black motorcade drive away.

Seven Moon Gate was different from other sects because they had a solid foundation as a group and would not be annihilated merely by a fall in reputation.

A white motorcade arrived and they boarded.

Rampas sat with his father, the Second Elder.

"Rampas, you were one of the disciples at the exchange gathering. What did you think of Garen from White Cloud Gate?" The Second Elder was a stern-looking middle-aged man with short black hair and white sideburns. He looked deeply troubled.

"Senior Brother Garen, he's a very powerful person," Rampas candidly recollected. "He has a strong Physique! He's the type that uses Strength as an advantage."

"The type that uses Strength as an advantage?" a trace of regret flashed across the Second Elder's eyes. "Unfortunately, I didn't take it seriously when you came to me, but Seven Moon Gate is not a plain martial arts sect. This defeat would cost us some loss at most, yet it wouldn't affect us too much. We don't rely on martial arts to support the entire group. Forget it. Since we've offended him, even though it's our fault, let's just put the matter to bed."

"But...!" Rampas seemed to want to continue, but was halted by his father.

"We at Seven Moon Group can't possibly humble ourselves and apologize to a plain martial arts practitioner. You do not understand the Great Elder. If it were up to me, I would be willing to do it. But

the Great Elder has the authority now. Even if he knew that he was wrong, he wouldn't apologize," the Second Elder sighed. "He is a man who would rather die than admit fault."

Rampas was speechless. A surge of indignation pent up inside him without release.

Horse carriages from other sects trailed the Seven Moon Group motorcade. Everyone knew that the decisive battle between Celestial Circle Gate and the Southern Twelve Gates was at Circling Dance Gate. This decisive battle was a golden opportunity to openly witness Andrela's true strength. Celestial Circle Gate had no intention of stopping them either: this was a golden opportunity for them to showcase their true strength.

Andrela had defeated Seven Moon Gate effortlessly. Red Obsidian Gate was too scared to even make a move. Celestial Circle Gate's foundation of power was firmly established.

The final step was to settle the score with Garen from White Cloud Gate.

The mighty motorcade formed a long chain and stopped in succession in the open spaces and streets around Circling Dance Gate.

The locals in Dinah City thought that some official had come for an inspection and a crowd of onlookers formed in the periphery. The city police sent a large number of officers for security. They put a cordon around the area and refused to allow non-martial arts practitioners within 500 meters of the Circling Dance Gate premises.

Only residents within the cordoned zone who were already at home had the opportunity to witness what happened inside.

The black motorcade of Celestial Circle Gate slowed to a stop at the entrance of the Circling Dance Gate courtyard.

The reddish-brown wooden door was shut tight.

With the sound of car doors closing, Andrela and the rest stepped out of their cars.

He looked up at the black plaque above the courtyard door. The words "Circling Dance Dojo" was clearly visible on it, but some black paint around the edges had come off, exposing the brown wooden material underneath.

Andrela had changed into a new set of clothing, wearing a black shirt and long trousers. His long hair reached his waist and he had a grin on his face. If not for the fine silver sword at his waist, he did not appear like he was here to challenge anyone and looked more like a visiting friend.

He gently pressed the eye patch over his left eye. With a creak, the courtyard door opened.

Beyond the open door, he instantly saw Garen standing in the courtyard, with his back to him.

Garen shut his eyes tightly, mildly conditioning the muscles of his entire body. He was in a peculiar subtle state and in the best form he had ever been in his life.

"Andrela of Celestial Circle Gate?" he asked softly.

"Garen of the Southern Twelve Gates?" Andrela asked in soft tone too.

Without the slightest hesitation, he unsheathed his sword and transformed into a black shadow rushing towards Garen.

Garen turned around and opened his eyes. His stature rapidly expanded.

Both approached each other at breakneck pace. Suddenly the sounds of wind bells chiming and a mammoth bellowing could be heard.

In that moment, both their faces lit up with a smile. It was anticipation!

Chapter 107: Victory! 1

A huge crowd gathered around the courtyard of the Circling Dance Gate; some martial artists had even jumped onto the walls for a good spot to watch the fight from. Others who were watching the fight were the inhabitants of the tall residential buildings in the vicinity.

The members of the Celestial Circle Gate stood in front of the courtyard, and following behind were the Seven Moon Gate and the Red Obsidian Gate.

The few girls of Circling Dance Gate stood at the entrance of the wooden door of the dojo.

Everyone's sights were nervously pinned on the two people in the middle of the field.

Andrela rushed towards Garen, his figure creating black lines. He plunged his sword in.

Ding ding ding! A series of metallic clashes rang out violently. In a flash, numerous sparks erupted from the rapier on Garen.

Hu!!

Andrela did a backflip and jumped away, narrowly missing Garen's hand chop. The green and black arm, as thick as a concrete pillar, crashed onto the earth on the ground.

Bham!

The fine, grey dirt exploded violently, as though a bomb had gone off. The huge amount of grey dirt, under the intense force, turned into countless of shrapnels which flew ruthlessly towards Andrela.

With another rain of little tinkling sounds, a big mound of earth and mud had all come before Andrela and defended him...

A silver mirror seemed to have materialized in the air before him in that instant. Blocking all the finely crushed dregs.

Chik!

The silver mirror disappeared, turning into a rapier pointing towards the ground.

Having had their first turn against each other, they resumed their positions, a few meters away from each other.

Garen lowered his sight to look at where he had been stabbed. Dabs of blood had appeared indistinctly on the skin there. Clearly, some tiny blood vessels had been cut.

"You are able to hurt me, surprisingly... Not bad... You are indeed the opponent I have been waiting for!" The corners of his lips curled into a deeper grin unconsciously. A surge of turbulent emotions shook in his chest, ready to erupt at any time, like boiling hot lava.

Andrela held his sword, as though he had yet to make a move, standing in his original position, his long hair flowing.

"One who can receive a full-strength blow from my sword in my normal state. You are definitely the person who killed my brother." He spoke slowly, in a low voice, but his tone did not weaken and was heard by everyone clearly.

"Tenstar Ni is your brother?" Garen was stunned but he immediately recovered. "No wonder you have come in person, I see that this is the reason. As for killing Tenstar Ni, I do not regret it. It is difficult to avoid getting hurt or dying in a contest of combat. If you wish to avenge him, I stand here. Come and kill me yourself, if you can."

There was a flash in Andrela's eyes.

"Life and death are inevitable on the path to the truth. What a pity. If we had not met under such circumstances, we could have been really good friends... Although now, I still do not wish to kill you..."

He lifted his rapier; a greenish black piece of muscle, shaped like a cross, protruded suddenly from the back of his hand, exactly the same as had happened with Tenstar Ni.

"Big brother is using his secret weapon already?" At the Celestial Circle Gate, Xin Luo exclaimed, somewhat astonished, "He should not be needing to use this against Garen, right? Even if he can't pierce through the other parts of the body, but he should be able to pierce through the ears and the eyes, no?"

"What do you still not understand?" The Elder, standing on the side, said in a deep voice, "Take a closer look at Garen's stance."

Xin Lo and the other two took a moment to look over, with fixed concentration.

Garen's entire body had formed a strange V shape; at the same time, both his arms were slowly moving, continuously in a gentle motion. His entire body had blended into one harmonious figure.

Wisps of white vapor were released from his nostrils, surrounding his body in vague, blue forms, flowing slowly. From afar, he looked as though he was shrouded in the body of a huge, white elephant. Every slight movement he made came with the faint sound of a mammoth's neigh.

The expressions on the three people shifted slightly.

"Such powerful bravery!"

The Elder nodded, looking grave and solemn.

"His secret weapon is to unite his body into one; the blood qi of his entire body becomes incomparably sensitive. No matter which point you attack him at, it will be deflected easily by his excellent combat skills. After all, however fast you are, can you be faster than that slight move of the shaking of his head?"

He watched the strong and ferocious Garen from afar: "Looks like everyone underestimated this young lad from White Cloud Gate!"

On the other side of Circular Dance Gate, a few people, including Jaimae Lilliette and Imogen Lilliette, had become solemn after seeing this scene.

"These two people have such strong bravery!" There was an uncontrollable shock on Jaimae Lilliette's face. "Indeed! Garen has indeed become an Ultimate Adept of the Grandmaster of Combat!"

"Mummy, what is bravery? Senior Brother Garen looks so powerful, but that Andreia does not look weak either. Will Senior Brother Garen be alright?" Imogen Lilliette asked in a small, anxious voice.

The other disciples also looked to the dojo master doubtfully.

"Bravery is the combination of a martial artist's physique, technique, spirit, released as a single aura. Or, it can also be called a sort of threat! A sense of danger! You should know, every living being has natural responses to danger. As for elite martial artists, they have a method to blend everything in and of themselves together, giving off a fierce, threatening feeling. This method is called bravery. When you see a venomous snake, would you feel that it is dangerous, highly toxic? Your entire body would then be nervous. This is a similar principle."

Jaimae Lilliette watched the two people in the field, with mixed emotions reflected in her eyes.

"As for excellent martial artists, having such an ability lets them display their strength, and can even achieve an exaggerated effect without having to resort to battle, making their opponents desist from having thoughts of retaliating! This is to achieve victory without having to fight. Look closely at that Andreia."

Imogen Lilliette and the rest paid close attention to Andreia for a moment, and indeed, vaguely discovered that his long black hair was flying all around his body; there was a delicate sound of windchimes echoing slowly around his entire body. At the same time, both his arms were raised up before him, making a strange hand gesture. It gave them a very weird feeling.

"It looks a bit like a black cross!" Imogen Lilliette blurted out.

The two people in the courtyard, one a giant, white elephant, and the other a black cross, were facing each other; a huge horrifying and threatening aura was spreading out, unrestrained. Some martial adepts nearby had a momentary misconception, as though even with the great distance between them, they were still in danger at any given time. They automatically retreated, one after another, only relaxing when they had backed off quite a bit.

The members of the Seven Moon Gate, furthest in the back, were the ones watching the confrontation between the two people in the field with unusually mixed feelings right then.

The Second Elder, leading the team, stood at the forefront. Next to him were Shia and Rampas.

"This is bravery...!" His voice was dry, "Bravery that only an elite martial artist can have."

It was not only him; all the other higher-ups of the Seven Moon Gate had complicated looks in their eyes; they were all the higher-ups whom Rampas had pleaded for mercy before. Now, looking at Garen's terrifying and humongous bravery, they were momentarily rendered speechless by an indescribable, mysterious feeling.

"That's Senior Brother Garen! No wonder the news from the exchange gathering states that he is the most powerful one amongst all of us in the Southern Twelve Gates!"

"With him, we the Southern Twelve Gates will not sink!"

"Senior brother Garen!" A disciple shouted.

"If only I can be as strong as Senior Brother Garen!"

Most of the disciples of the Seven Moon Gate were ignorant, and were still exceptionally excited, all looking proud of Garen.

"Elder, why didn't Senior Brother Garen rest with us at Seven Moon Gate when he came to Dinah City? After this contest is done, how about you invited him over to give us some tips on martial arts?"

"Oh yes, Elder, it's not every day that we Southern Twelve Gates has a master who can fight the number one of Celestial Circle Gate. We must invite him to be our guest at the Seven Moon Group!"

The emotions of the disciples, who had been shamed by Andrela, had burst out all at once; now seeing that Garen could face off directly against the Andrela who had defeated even their Elder, their excitement was on fire, as though it was a senior brother from their own Gate who was in battle with Andrela.

Seeing the excited disciples, the Second Elder and a few of the higher-ups were temporarily speechless, unable to voice out their concerns.

Were they supposed to tell these disciples directly that, this Senior Brother Garen of yours had actually come over to the Seven Moon Group before, only that we had completely disregarded him and chased him out the door as though he had been a beggar?

If this got out, not only would their reputation crumble in an instant, but even the image of the entire Seven Moon Gate would receive a great negative impact.

Rampas watched the excited looks of the fellow junior brothers and sisters around her with an emotional heart; even the strongest Junior Brother Shia was gritting his teeth and staring at Andrela, and at the same time, giving Garen encouragement.

There was an unspeakable surge of emotion in his heart, for a moment; it caused his eyes to tear up a little.

"Shut up!!"

There was a sudden roar.

The entire Seven Moon Gate immediately fell silent; everyone's sights were set on the Great Elder on the stretcher at the back.

The Great Elder had changed into a set of clean, white clothing, and at the moment he was so angry that his face was completely red, and his beard was shaking.

Shiang!!!

With a loud crash, a terrifying, great howl sounded out from the Circling Dance Gate courtyard.

It was like the howling of a mammoth into the skies.

The Great Elder was shocked by the sound; he had initially wanted to speak, but instantly, a gulp of air got stuck in his throat as his eyes rolled over and he fainted.

Every martial artist in the area had their eyes focused on the two people in the courtyard.

The crazy howl of the mammoth was still erupting and had not stopped. Those were the fierce noises made by Garen's arms and entire body piercing through the air.

Garen stood, unmoving, his white, strong upper body surrounded by a black flow of air which was swirling around him wildly. That was the optical effect caused by Andrela being too fast.

The two of them, one unmoving and one striking, were in a crazy tangle.

Every stab of Andrela's sword landed clearly on Garen's body, but at most had drawn only a bit of white mark. The attacks occasionally went to his eyes and ears but were easily deflected or blocked.

Furthermore, Garen's body now was slowly swelling up; although it had not reached its full strength, it had reached a point where the Boulder Martial Art was about to burst out. His height, which had originally been 1.7 meters, was now almost 1.9 meters. His entire person had become stocky and imposing, like a beast; just moving simply about was enough to move the airflow and disturb his opponent, and at the same time, he could even hit out a noise not unlike the roar of a mammoth.

But he was completely unable to catch up with his opponent's speed, and could only tightly cover up his vital points. As for the other parts of his body, he depended on the hardening of his skin and the stabilizing his blood qi to harden himself up. It was all he could do to forcefully maintain this condition, undefeated but also unvictorious.

The clear sound of the wind chimes rang faintly in the midst of the roar.

This deadlock was not maintained for long; the black lines drawn by Andreia instantly pounced off, and landed on the rockery of the courtyard, crouching down. His long black hair fell gently onto the greyish white rock, like a satin cloak. The silver rapier was pulled to his side.

The calm fire in his eyes had increased, which was unusually conflicting.

"Looks like ordinary swordsmanship has no effect on your body's defense now. Be careful, this next sword is one of my three great secret swords. I hope you do not die to this..."

Garen moved both his arms, and once again, subtle airflow roars began to permeate around his body. "Three great secret swords? You are indeed the number one of the young southern generation! Definitely much stronger than the typical garbage!"

The corners of Andreia's lips curved up gently again. His long rapier moved steadily, seemingly slow but actually rather quick, and drew the silver outline of a fan.

"Celestial Secret Weapon..."

He jumped up lightly and flew towards Garen.

"Bright Moon!"

Clang!!!

Immediately, silver moonlight shone in between him and Garen.

The silver moonlight was so bright and glaring, that all light in the area seemed to be sucked in, condensed together before erupting in a flash.

All the spectating martial artists were speechless; they dared not even breathe heavy, afraid of breaking the beautiful, silver-white crescent moon in the courtyard.

Two crescent moons flashed in both of Garen's eyes momentarily; the silver light pierced his sight. He was completely unable to see.

Instinctively, he raised up both arms before his head.

An extremely sharp, icy cold breath hit him outside of his arms. In that instant, Garen felt a sharp pain in his arms. He did not even think.

A roar erupted from his throat.

Roar!!!

A violent howl exploded instantly.

The courtyard was shaking, the ground was also shaking! Every martial artist was shaking, and even the dojo house began to make a creaking sound, huge clouds of dust fell with a swish.

Chapter 108: Victory! 2

Everyone at the place, including the people from Celestial Circle Gate, Red Obsidian Gate, and other Martial Artists around, felt the ringing in their ears. They were suddenly paralyzed and lost all their strength.

Waves rose in the pond, and several red goldfish jumped out of the water.

BOOM!

The two in the courtyard separated.

One man was blown away toward the wall at a high speed, but he quickly shifted his position mid-air, landing on his feet against the wall to reduce the impact. He reached the top of the wall and stood on it firmly.

It was Andrela, a sword held in his right hand, which was trembling. Blood was dripping down its sleeve, and it fell to the ground quietly.

"They don't call you the strongest Martial Artist of the Southern Twelve Gate for nothing." Andrela's voice was low, and he sounded excited.

"You are pretty good too." Garen stretched his arms. There were two narrow sword cuts on the outer side of his arms, and blood was spurting out of them in two red lines.

"Secret Sword Art Bright Moon, huh? Impressive." Garen licked the blood off his arms with a ferocious expression on his face. "I am surprised... However, it's not enough."

"True." Andrela smiled. "You are a worthy opponent, and I will show you the second skill of my Secret Sword Arts."

The people watching the fight were still in shock. The fight between the two were on a different level, a level that human beings could not even imagine. Garen's body was incredibly strong, while Andrela's Secret Sword Arts were terrifying. In addition, the two's speed was so fast that the crowd could barely see their actions.

Everything happening in the fight was new to the Martial Artists here.

They heard the two's conversation and realized that they hadn't yet shown their true power. Even though, the skills the two displayed made most of the strong Martial Artists here speechless.

"They are... so strong!"

"I thought I was strong, but I never knew there were Martial Arts with such power!" Seven Moon Gate's Shia looked at the two, and the passion in his eyes could almost melt iron.

"Those are the Grandmasters of Combat." The Second Elder spoke in a light tone.

"Shia, Rampas, you two are the hope of the Seven Moon Gate. Watch how they fight carefully, and I am sure it will help you a lot in the future."

In the courtyard.

Andrela slightly swung his blade.

It suddenly started to vibrate, many silver light dots appearing at the point of the blade, and they were bouncing in the air. Andrela jumped off the high wall and charged toward Garen. He was slower than before but still much faster than Garen.

There were many silver light dots floating around Andrela, and as he charged forward, those silver light dots started to gather together. They converged at the point of the blade and became three large silver dots.

"Three Star Convergence!"

The three dots at the point of the blade became one, and the final dot was flashing. Andrela stopped charging when he was two meters away from Garen. Strangely, the silver light did not stop and went straight toward Garen.

A silver tiny light dot appeared on Garen's chest and disappeared in a second. Andrela's attack penetrated his skin and muscle, a drop of blood appeared on Garen's chest, but started to flood with red right after. Garen held the wound with his hand, feeling a severe pain coming from his chest.

"What a strike..." Garen looked surprised. "I didn't even have time to defend. The burst of speed at the last second was unbelievable."

"Unfortunately... It is still not enough..." Garen inhaled deeply and a great amount of heat started to come out of his body.

His body was getting larger, and taller!

His height increased from 1.9 meters to about 2.3, and he was much taller than Andreia after the transformation. Some of his muscles changed to black, while the rest became green. He turned into a giant within seconds, and his arm had the size of a normal person's leg.

Veins twisted in his body, and they looked like numerous venomous green snakes.

After seeing Garen's transformation, everyone's expression changed.

The Martial Artists, girls from the Circling Dance Gate, and people from the Red Obsidian Gate, the Celestial Circle Gate, the Seven Moon Gate, were all staring at the horrifying black-green giant, Garen.

"This is the Master level of Body Hardening Techniques... I only heard about it from the tales..." One of the Martial Artists in the crowd said in a shaky tone since not many people in the world could recognize the changes happening to Garen.

"Changes like this will only happen to people that master Body Hardening Techniques!"

"Garen from the Southern Twelve Gates! This battle will become his masterpiece!"

The crowd got noisy and excited.

The Three Circles and Elders of the Celestial Circle Gate looked nervous. They thought that the one from the Seven Moon Gate was strong and Garen was just an average Martial Artist, but they did not expect him to be so strong.

"Master level in Body Hardening Techniques! We are in trouble!" The Elder said and stared at Andrela.
"Andrela... How are you going to deal with his legendary Body Hardening Techniques?"

"Senior Brother will never lose!" A tall girl of the Three Circles said in a serious tone.

"Fight! Senior Brother!" Xin Luo yelled.

The Second Elder of the Seven Moon Gate was surprised, but he looked full of excitement.

"Master level in Body Hardening Techniques. I didn't expect that..."

"Let's see what Andrela is going to do! Garen is invincible!" The Junior Brothers, Senior Brothers, and the Elders were all surprised. Rampas finally felt elated.

At the entrance of the Circling Dance Gate, several girls just recovered from the shock and saw Garen's changes.

"Get him! Garen is the best!"

Imogen Lillette yelled excitedly.

"What are you going to do now? Andrela." Jaimea Lilliette was looking forward to seeing Andrela's next action, so she stared at him.

Everyone at the place was staring at Andrela, wanting to know what he was going to do next.

Andrela was wearing black, and he looked like a kid in front of Garen. It was like a kid trying to fight an adult: weak.

Although the sword in Andrela's hand was about 1.5 meters long, but it looked like a toothpick when compared to Garen's body, about to break at any moment.

Bam!

Garen clapped, creating a loud sound. He was also staring at Andrela, looking forward to his opponent's next skill.

"This is my true form, Andrela! Come get me, for your brother, for the fame of the Celestial Gate, and for the Extreme Martial Arts you're always pursuing!"

Andrela had a surprised look on his face, but unlike the others, he did not fear Garen, not at all! He was just surprised and excited to see something he had never seen before.

"The Master level in Body Hardening Techniques... Garen... Your name will be heard in the whole Southern Martial Artist World!

"You are right. Even though it's a pity, but one of us has to die today. It's either you or me." Andrela calmed down. "I thought I'd never meet a worthy opponent, and then I met you..."

Andrela raised his sword in the air.

"I will show you the strongest Sword Art created by myself!"

"Secret Sword Art!"

"Blink!"

Chi!

After hearing the light noise, Garen felt pain coming from his back, and Andrela had disappeared from in front of him.

He turned back immediately and saw Andrela standing there firmly. Andrela lowered his sword slowly, and there was blood on the point of his blade.

"Such speed..." Garen's pupils constricted. "My eyes can't catch movements like that... but I don't think you can use that skill with ease."

Garen could still feel the pain coming from the centre of his back, but it was not a big deal.

"If you'd used it on someone else, he would be dead for sure. Unfortunately..."

"... it's you." There was a bitter smile on Andrela's face.

Garen nodded. "When I'm in this form, any damage I take will be partially reflected. Your Blink was done at full speed and strength, so the reflected damage must be high. I guess your wrist bones have already fractured a bit, right?"

Andrela's bitter smile disappeared. "I can still try one more time."

"Your last attack was at full speed and strength, but it barely hurt me, and you want to try again?" Garen looked at Andrela calmly. "Also, I can't promise you will survive my next attack when I'm in this form. Each of my attacks come with vibration, and it is the essence of my Mammoth Secret Technique."

Garen shook his head. "Stop. I don't want to kill you."

"It's fine. I'm willing to give up my life as long as it's worth it. The Extreme Martial Arts are the purpose of my life." Andrela raised his sword again, and Garen could see the passion in his eyes.

"I will respect your choice." It was the first time Garen had met someone who would give up his life to pursue the Extreme Martial Arts.

Garen closed his eyes, and his body started to tremble. It looked like he could move to any angle he wanted, and he was trying to prevent Andreia from attacking his weaknesses, such as ears and eyes. He focused his defense on those parts.

"Secret Sword Arts... Blink!" Andreia disappeared with the last word.

Garen's muscles suddenly retracted and became very dense. He also raised his arms.

"Consecutive Swing Form!"

His body started turning, and his arms were swinging like a wheel. He was chopping at all the angles with his hands.

Chi!

Andreia's sword appeared in front of Garen's eyes and ears, but he did not find any chance. He then aimed at Garen's right armpit, trying to stab his sword into it.

Boom!

At that moment, Garen hit Andreia's left shoulder with his hand, and Andreia was blown away by the impact.

"Celestial Circle Gate lost!"

Everyone had that one thought in their mind after seeing what had just happened.

Chapter 109: Farce 1

Wham!

Andrela's body hit the half-open door hard, and with a 'crack' he broke the wooden door and skidded far across the floor. He finally stopped after almost hitting the martial arts practitioners watching the fight.

Garen stood silently in place; his scarlet eyes seemed to emit a fluorescent glow. He silently looked at Andrela who was lying on the ground in a distance.

He had already tried to restrain himself as best he could. Unfortunately, he was completely out of form and his strength was too violent. Even if he only struck a shoulder, the force would be enough to cause turbulent shocks.

This was the essence of the Secret Mammoth Technique: explosiveness.

He looked around him. The whole room was quiet. Any martial arts practitioner who met his gaze would subconsciously look away.

His gaze swept from the martial arts practitioners on the fence, to Circling Dance Gate, then to Red Obsidian Gate, and finally fell on the group from Celestial Circle Gate.

Those from Celestial Circle Gate fell into a dead silence. They had a blank look on their face, as if they hadn't managed to process their Eldest Senior Brother's defeat. Only Xin Luo and the other two disciples rushed to support Andrela up from the ground.

The Elder who led the group stared fixedly at Garen without avoiding his gaze. There was no hatred or anger in his eyes, just slight disappointment.

"Do you know the real purpose of our trip, Garen of White Cloud Gate?" he suddenly said aloud. His voice seemed to stand out distinctly in the sea of silence.

"Our trip here was to..."

"Master!" Andrela's voice cut him short.

He stood up with the support of his Brothers, and maintained his balance by using his sword as a crutch. Even though he looked pale, apart from the wound on his shoulder, he didn't seem to be too severely injured.

But everyone knew that he was merely putting up a strong front. After being struck by Garen who had transformed into such a terrifying size, no one would have been able to withstand it.

"A victory is a victory, and a defeat is a defeat. There is nothing more to say." Andrela clutched his shoulder with his other hand, and was prodding around the circumference of the injury with his fingers in a compact and swift manner; it looked like a type of healing Secret Martial Art. It was apparent that after his continued prodding, the injury and pain on his shoulder seemed to gradually reduce. Even the way he spoke seemed more relaxed.

"I can't believe you actually showed mercy, Garen." He calmly looked at Garen in the courtyard. "About my brother's death, I won't pursue it further. I owe you a life. You've killed Tenstar Ni, so we're now even. Next..." He turned around slowly—unexpectedly with his back to Garen—to face the crowd behind him.

"We should carry out the real purpose of our trip."

Members of Seven Moon Gate blended in the dense crowd. The Second Elder, Rampas and the others were surprised to discover at this point that Andrela was facing in their direction!

"Young man, you've got some nerve."

A thin and short figure gradually emerged from the crowd of members from Seven Moon Gate. The strange thing was, before he walked out, no one actually noticed him standing in the crowd.

He was a skinny old man in dark green robes, a bamboo hat covering his face. His height merely reached the chest-level of everyone around him, but he exuded an air of violence and danger.

When he walked out, everyone around him instantly crowded backwards, as if they had encountered a poisonous snake. Some who had weaker willpower even looked terrified and were screaming in fright.

Just as the old man emerged, the Great Elder from Seven Moon Gate followed closely behind. His injuries seemed to have been alleviated; he looked healthier.

"Since you made a formal challenge based on the rules of the martial arts world, I'm following the rules too. Hmph! You've injured so many of our people, do you think you can leave Dinah City just like that?" Sarcasm was written all over his face.

"Regardless of whether it's the Secret Martial Art world, or the sway that Celestial Circle Gate holds in the military, this is Galantia Province, not your own neighborhood. You think you can be as rampant as when you were at the exchange gathering?"

Everyone was baffled; they had no clue where this old man came from. Even the people around Seven Moon Gate were confused, but based on the look of the Great Elder, obviously this old man was a secret force within Seven Moon Gate.

And from his Bravery, it was apparent that he was a Grandmaster of Combat from the previous generation.

But everyone understood the motive of the Great Elder of Seven Moon Gate now: he brought a group here to stir up trouble. And they purposely waited for the moment when Garen and Andrela were both injured to take advantage of the situation.

"Mr Mallone, I'll trouble you to handle these people from Celestial Circle Gate," the Great Elder calmly said to the old man in a hushed tone.

"You're too modest, General Bert," the old man replied the Great Elder in an oddly polite manner. "You helped me out a great deal the last time. This is just a small matter in comparison. As Grandmasters of Combat, I'm interested to see what experts have emerged from the next generation."

His gaze shifted to Andrela who was barely standing.

"Kid, seen as you've just dueled with someone and lack strength, I'll make the first move. I'm telling you in advance, this move is a simple move I created by casually observing the cosmos; I'll just be using ten

percent of force. If you can't even withstand it, I'll have to take your title of 'Top Youth Expert in the South'."

Upon those words, without waiting for Andrela to respond, the old man Mallone took a deep breath, dug out a red pill from his pocket and put it in his mouth. He chewed a few times and swallowed it. At the same time, the violent Bravery on his entire body became stronger, and everyone could faintly hear the hissing of a poisonous snake.

He bent his knees slightly. His face was pale then red intermittently; his hands were swollen to a larger size and were a bloody red. There was a faint revolting stench in the air.

"Red Python Fist! Poisonous Bite!" His figure approached Andrela at a moderate pace. At every step forward, the stench from his fist became noticeably stronger. His face was reddening too; apparently it was the embodiment of an extreme flow of Qi and blood.

Shameless!

This was the thought that crossed everyone's minds at that moment.

Putting aside the fact that he took advantage of Andrela when he was heavily injured, he found an excuse to make the first move as a pre-emptive strike, and even increased the power of his fists. And yet he claimed that it was merely a simple move, and that he's using ten percent of force!

Also, youth, it's YOUTH! How could you claim to be a youth? Look in the mirror, you're way past 50!

"Fuck! This is his idea of a simple move? Only someone retarded would believe that!" a crude martial arts practitioner couldn't help but curse out loud.

"Could you be anymore shameless? Ten percent of force? Red in the neck and face and you claim it's ten percent of force? Who are you trying to fool? Fuck, I can't believe there's a freak like you at Seven Moon Gate!"

"I know that pill! It's Blood Surge Pill, a high-grade secret medicine that can increase the strength of the fists and speed within an hour!"

"Shameless!"

"Scum of the martial arts world!"

Everyone around couldn't stand it any longer, and started berating him.

Even members of Seven Moon Gate bowed their heads and gave way, their faces feverishly red.

Rampas and the Second Elder were traditional martial artists. When they saw how shameless the man that the Great Elder had invited out was, they were humiliated; it was a complete disgrace to Seven Moon Gate.

The old man Mallone was unfazed, and kept walking towards Andrela menacingly.

Of the Celestial Circle Gate members, three slowly stepped forward and shielded Andrela. They looked at the old man Mallone, expressionless.

"Move aside. You can't shield him." Andrela had figured out his opponent's true strength; he was equally a Grandmaster of Combat, and not a low level one at that. This person was one of the true hidden strengths of Seven Moon Gate, and also one of the targets of his trip. It's just that he didn't expect himself to be injured to this extent from his fight with Garen.

"It's alright! Eldest Senior Brother, you have a rest," Xin Luo whispered. "We'll handle him for you." He had always been the leader among the few of them, and this time he was the first to reply too.

In that moment, on the grounds:

"Does Seven Moon Gate only know such despicable tactics?" the Great Elder of Celestial Circle Gate sneered.

"At least it's better that Celestial Circle Gate drugging opponents." The old man Mallone chuckled a couple of times, then didn't speak anymore.

"Drug?" the Great Elder of Celestial Circle Gate was surprised. But before he could react, the old man Mallone accelerated instantly—leaping every few steps—and dashed towards Andrela.

Wham wham wham!

Three consecutive 'whams' and the three members of Celestial Circle Gate were struck aside. They rolled over sideways, their faces red. It was a sickly purplish-red; obviously they had been poisoned.

The old man started sniggering, and motioned his palm to strike Andrela's chest. The poisonous snake hissing which surrounded him became louder, and brought with it a gust of revolting stench.

Chhh!

A dart flew towards his neck.

"Nuisance!"

A murderous gleam flashed in Mallone's eyes. He hit the dart mid-flight and sent it propelling back towards where it came from.

One of the three members of Celestial Circle Gate—the short youth—let out a dull cry. His left arm was pinned to the ground by the dart.

Andrela looked on calmly as Mallone's scarlet palm approached. He raised his sword. Although he was weak, he strenuously traced three specks of silver light with the tip of his sword then made them converge.

Crack.

He heard his own shoulder fracture; that was the side effect of forcefully using a secret sword.

"Three Star...Convergence!"

He thrust the sword forwards and directly stabbed Mallone's red palm.

With a 'creak', the sword was instantly bent.

"You can't even withstand a random move of mine, what 'Top Expert of the South' are you?! Looks like today is the day that I, Red Python Fist Mallone, make a name for myself! Hahahaha!" Mallone was finally unable to restrain himself and started laughing maniacally.

Suddenly his expression changed. He sensed something from his front left flying towards him at a high speed. The force of it brought about a sharp whizzing sound. Hastily, he shifted his palm to block in that direction.

Wham!

A dull thud.

"What the..! What was that?!"

Mallone's body flew backwards diagonally, his scarlet palm blocking a small white pebble.

The pebble was rotating at a high speed in the middle of his palm. The violent friction gave off a burnt smell. The immense force caused his body to skid backwards for a dozen steps before stopping.

His feet had created two visible black skid marks on the ground.

"A pe...pebble?!"

Mallone was stunned. He clutched the pebble in his hand, incredulous, and quickly looked towards the direction where it came from.

In the courtyard, Garen's eyes were shut, and a wisp of green smoke was rising from his right hand. It was obvious that the pebble was thrown by him.

"You're a Grandmaster of Combat too, right?" Garen put down his hand, "Just happens that the last duel didn't cure my itch for a good fight. Come, fight me."

"Kid! Do you know who I am?!" Mallone threw away the pebble in his hand, and a sneer showed on his face. "I am the legendary unbeaten Red Python Fist Mallone!"

"I was merely out of form earlier. Forget it. For Celestial Circle Gate Master Lourdannon's sake, I'll spare you this time. Don't let me see you again! The next time we meet, don't blame me for being merciless!"

He scoffed twice, then leaped into the crowd and disappeared.

Garen's face twitched; he wanted to say something, but couldn't manage a word.

"Mallone...So that's him!" the Great Elder of Celestial Circle Gate was speechless. "His nickname had always been Dwarf Red Rat, since when did he become Red Python Fist? No wonder he looked familiar."

Chapter 110: Farce 2

All the martial arts practitioners were in a bustle.

After witnessing Seven Moon Gate's hidden force being a despicable Grandmaster of Combat like Mallone, they started to look at members of Seven Moon Gate strangely.

Disciples and students of Seven Moon Gate wanted to hide their faces in shame; they were red in the face and ears and hung their heads low.

Even the Second Elder and several senior officials from the corporate group couldn't stand the shame, and turned to leave with their people.

The Great Elder had green veins popping out on his pale face. He was a retired confederal general—not one of those casual officers—but a real military commander with widespread influence and immense power. When he came into contact with Mallone and other martial art practitioners, hearing how Mallone toots his own horn, he didn't think much of the other so-called "Grandmasters of Combat". He had a Grandmaster of Combat by his side too, who was the strongest of them all, the unbeaten Red Python Fist Mallone.

Just from his title you could tell he was powerful. Coupled with witnessing Mallone easily defeat competing martial arts practitioners, including two famous ones, the Great Elder who initially had doubts became more confident, and didn't doubt the veracity of Mallone's title.

Now, he couldn't believe that Mallone actually fled on his debut!

Suddenly gazes of disdain were directed at him from all around; the din of chatter sounded like buzzing bees.

Puff!

The Great Elder spit out a mouthful of blood, and fell over backwards.

"Spitting blood again... This old man only knows how to spit blood!" the elder from Celestial Circle Gate was speechless. "If not for my martial arts being abolished, I wouldn't be able to help myself in giving him two good slaps!"

"Elder, I think he won't make it this time..." Xin Luo, who had just gotten up, whispered beside the elder.

Sure enough, the disciples from Seven Moon Gate all rushed over in panic.

"The Great Elder has passed out in shock! Quick, get him to the hospital!"

"Send him to the military zone general hospital! Who has any acute medicine? Quick, someone perform CPR!"

"Apply pressure to the heart, quickly!"

In the commotion, members of Seven Moon Gate finally carried the Great Elder—who had temporarily regained consciousness—and made a swift exit.

Rampas anxiously stayed by the Great Elder's side. Even though he had an altercation with the Great Elder because of Garen, the Great Elder had always taken good care of him.

Before he left, he turned around to look at Garen who was standing silently in the courtyard; there was a complexity in his gaze.

The Seven Moon Gate who had arrived aggressively suddenly became a farce.

Everyone's gaze quickly fell back onto Andrela and Garen.

"I owe you my life," Andrela took a deep breath, swiftly took a pill handed to him by the girl from the group of three Celestial Circle Gate members, and swallowed it.

"Rest assured, in my honor, my faction in Celestial Circle Gate won't find trouble with you from here on out. Also, I will give you a full explanation. You have to be careful, the Black Mark Association and the Gate Master won't let this go peacefully. Finally, this defeat, I will claim it back."

Garen didn't say anything. His body relaxed, and he gradually shrunk to his normal state.

He looked on as members of Celestial Circle Gate gradually left carrying their injured. He walked to the pond in the courtyard; the goldfish in the pond were swimming about without a care in the world.

Jaimea Lilliette and the others from Circling Dance Gate walked over. Taking in the messy courtyard, they didn't say anything, but merely looked at Garen.

Phew...

Garen let out a long sigh. Suddenly he felt an immense sense of relief.

The spectators gradually dispersed. The Master of Red Obsidian Gate begrudgingly led his disciples back.

The unification plan of Celestial Circle Gate and Black Mark Association had been completely halted by Garen.

As long as Garen was at Southern Twelve Gates, it wouldn't be so easy for Celestial Circle Gate and Black Mark Association to unify all the forces. After this battle, Garen had become the emblem of Southern Twelve Gates. The leaders of the sects that left had a clear idea of the situation now; they had only two choices.

One was to maintain the existence of their sect and align with Garen for refuge. The second was to dissolve their sect and merge with the Black Mark Association.

No one wanted to dissolve their sect and merge with Black Mark Association to be managed by someone else. After all, these were martial arts inherited through the years. Each sect had their own beliefs and ideals, which was not something they would simply give up over some benefits.

Now, as long as Garen didn't fall, Southern Twelve Gates would not completely fail as the obstructive force against unification.

As time passed, the crowd dispersed from Circling Dance Gate. Even the police maintaining security had left in their police cars. The lockdown on the area had been lifted and traffic resumed.

The girls at Circling Dance Gate bolted the broken door in the courtyard. Garen retrieved a checkbook from his room, wrote a number on it and handed it to Jaimea Lilliette.

"This is for the damage caused to the site during the fight. Take it."

Jaimea Lilliette wasn't sanctimonious. She really needed the money now. She received the check and looked at the number on it: one million!

"How generous."

Garen smiled. "This matter with Celestial Circle Gate is temporarily resolved, I should return." He had slowly been removed from the sphere of an ordinary high school student. Coupled with the fact that his mental age was far beyond the seventeen years of a high school student, there was no point in going back to school anymore.

Moreover, there were loose ends that needed tying up. Celestial Circle Gate and Black Mark Association had merely retreated temporarily. The matter with Sylphalan remained unresolved. Members of the Immortal Palace were unusually mysterious; they were untraceable.

Garen was sure that Sylphalan didn't intend to kill him, but he seemed to have taken something from him in their previous encounter. He checked for a long time, but didn't discover what was missing. All he could do was keep wondering.

He didn't know why Sylphalan wanted to draw him out. It could be part of Black Mark Association's plan; it could be something that he had on him; it could be some other reason.

What he could sense, was the complex and inexplicable attitude Sylphalan had towards him.

Then there was the issue of supporting Southern Twelve Gates, and Su Lin's matter.

Apart from those two things, there was still the matter of relying on Detective Dale to track down the Antiques of Tragedy. Dale Quicksilver and the others were still in Blue Gulf City, Evenia Province investigating this case.

These three aspects of matters seemed independent, but had a common thread.

That is, Immortal Palace seemed to be involved behind the scenes in all of them.

What Garen needed to do was investigate each matter thoroughly, and in the process, continually search for Antiques of Tragedy to enhance his true strength.

That was his current purpose.

"Are you going back?" asked Imogen Lilliette, a hint of disappointment in her voice. "Can't you stay for a while longer to give us guidance?"

"Next time, hehe," Garen detached from the mode of Grandmaster of Combat, and replied with a grin.

"So when are you leaving?" Jaimea Lilliette, in contrast, asked casually.

"I'll need to trouble you to help me buy some clothes." Garen awkwardly pointed at his bare upper body; even his white pants were soiled. "Walking out like this doesn't seem too appropriate."

"Yes, indeed." Although Jaimea Lilliette still maintained an unusually cold attitude, but the way she looked at Garen had very much softened.

The battle at Circling Dance Gate shocked the entire martial arts world in the South.

The principal person at Celestial Circle Gate, Eldest Senior Brother Andrela, had been defeated by Garen of White Cloud Gate in a direct confrontation. This meant that the momentum in unifying the Southern martial arts world had been halted.

There were currently seven major sects within the Southern Twelve Gates. Apart from Seven Moon Gate which had suffered a drastic decline in power due to the plunge in their reputation, the other five major sects combined with the rest from Southern Twelve Gates had spontaneously formed a coalition organization to counter the rise of Black Mark Association. This organization held the top expert of the

South, White Bird Holy Fist Palosa as their leader, and was acknowledged by Palosa. Coupled with the reputation of Garen of Southern Twelve Gates defeating Andrela of Celestial Circle Gate, the fame of both Palosa and Garen gathered a large group of people with noble aspirations who had long resented Celestial Circle Gate, Black Mark Association and Crimson Sand Sword.

Moreover, this organization had inadvertently obtained a 'no-intervention' policy from Celestial Circle Gate and Crimson Sand Sword. Under the situation where external forces maintained a neutral stance, the battle with Black Mark Association was extremely intense. Formal martial arts challenges between the two sides constantly emerged, but none at the level of Grandmaster of Combat. However, both sides kept urging companions to join in the fight, making the scope of the battle larger and wider, and the intensified conflicts elevated.

After a period of stalemates, the organization officially announced the establishment of a unified force named 'Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate', implying that it was the supreme fist arts sect of the South.

While Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate and Black Mark Association were battling, Garen returned to Huaishan City to handle things at school. He applied for a temporary suspension and started sorting out the affairs of White Cloud Gate. But the first person he had to face was the person in control of the assets of White Cloud Gate, Bovini.

Huaishan City

At a building downtown.

In an extravagant room.

Garen and Bovini sat across from each other, a cup of hot coffee in front of each. The strong aroma of coffee slowly filled the air.

Garen didn't speak. He was invited by Bovini to come.

Sitting on the couch, he recalled his time since transmigrating here. He had experienced an infinitely more interesting life than in his past life on earth. It was no longer dull, no longer boring, no longer repeating a mechanical, monotonous life, and was no longer submersed in the monotony of life to the state of depression, deterioration and finally, rot.

He ran his fingers on the delicate texture of the white porcelain cup; he could only feel the slight warmth of the hot coffee through the wall of the mug.

Garen snapped out of his thoughts, and looked up at the bald stout man sitting opposite him.

"Mr Bovini, you've invited me here to...?"

Bovini had a relaxed smile on his face. He took out a document which he had put to a side and placed it on the table beside Garen.

"Mr Garen, these are the various properties transferred to your name, with asset valuations by the valuation company on the side. Please have a look."

"Transferred to my name?" Garen was slightly stunned.

"Of course." Bovini slowly took a sip of coffee. "You have been through hell and back for White Cloud Gate and made such a huge contribution. Transferring some properties to your personal name is no big deal. I imagine even if Master Fei woke up, he wouldn't blame me for such a trivial thing."

Garen instantly understood what Bovini meant.

All the properties of White Cloud Dojo were under Fei Baiyun's name. It didn't mean anything to him. It was his master's assets, he couldn't utilize them, and didn't even have the right to manage or intervene. Now that White Cloud Gate was withering, he was the only one left to call the shots. Bovini's intent was to invite him to the dinner table splitting the assets of White Cloud Gate, and shut his mouth by offering him some practical benefits.

"Mr Bovini, I think you have misjudged me," Garen couldn't help but laugh, and shook his head slightly.

Bovini's expression remained unchanged; he maintained a passive smile.

"It's alright. We can discuss this slowly. We'll find a common point of exchange eventually."

He calmly took out a stack of documents from the briefcase by his side and put them in front of Garen.

"Please have a look first."

Garen picked it up and glanced at it. The documents were the asset transfer agreements for the casino, factory and antiques trading company under White Cloud Gate respectively, all effective upon his signature. Attached were the asset valuation report and a Confederal Industrial and Commercial Bank check—the amount written on it was 20 million dollars.