

Mystical 141

Chapter 141: Night 1

After filling up their stomachs and the fuel, Garen and the team continued their journey tracking Duskdune Shura through his scent.

The White airplane flew above the sea of a forest for at least 2 hours until a white road could finally be seen. The number of lanes gradually increased until it's so complex that it looked like a spider web.

The sky was slowly getting darker.

The plane descended slowly as it followed the directions from the airport's control tower and approached a gray, oval-shaped airport.

"This is the place. Duskdune Shura landed here!" Celine said with affirmation.

Garen and Su Lin looked down at the airport and saw seven to eight airplanes of different sizes parked. Four of them were small airplanes, one of them was pure blue in color whereas the rest were either brown or white.

Celine pointed at the blue airplane.

"That's the plane. He must have left less than half an hour ago!"

"Let's land here and we will tail him right away!" Garen said.

Without any hesitation, Su Lin quickly lowered the plane. At the same time, there were already people at the airport waving a white flag to indicate the landing position to Su Lin.

Sin Gerro

In the forest of the Pinehill City's suburbs.

Night.

Noises among the trees could be heard periodically coming from the forest. An owl's hoot came from the distance and the crescent moon was silently sitting in the sky, bathing the place in soft moonlight.

The dark green pine trees stood as tall as towers. Even the shortest one was about twenty to thirty meters. They stood pencil straight, like sticks protruding from the earth.

Although it was very spacious between the pine trees, the whole area was covered with dense, greenish yellow weeds.

Inside the forest, there were three dark figures wandering about carefully, going deeper in.

"Be careful, hold my hand Annie. And don't step there! You'll leave a footprint." A male voice whispered.

"Joseph, what does this place have to do with the incident at central building?" Another man out of the three figures asked.

"We can't stop them if we don't come here." Joseph looked his partners and continued, "The beasts will perform a hunting prayer, and the central building is the location for the hunting ceremony! We need to destroy their altar after they leave this place!"

"Altar?"

"Yes. Their ritual will be broken once the altar is no more. Hence it would be meaningless for them to keep hunting!" Joseph said with confidence, although his voice was shivering.

Annie held his hand tightly.

"Don't worry Joseph, we will be fine..."

In truth, Annie and Johnson did not believe anything about the hunt or the prayers. They only believed in Joseph and followed his leadership. Although they didn't believe in the beasts, they knew something was going to happen, looking at Joseph how sure Joseph was.

This was because Joseph was different, he was special.

Hoo!!

Out among the dense forest, a bonfire emerged in the spacious clearing between the pine trees. There was a big cattle skull on top of the bonfire. It was about four to five meters high and three two four meters wide. It seemed to be created from a multitude of bones.

The bonfire was getting stronger and stronger, it was so huge that the flame shot almost three meters high. There were fuzzy figures surrounding the bonfire; tanned male and females who were tall and muscular.

The males were bare from the waist up, whereas the females had a black cloth covering the chest. They wore black jeans below their waist, where long hairs spread wildly. Black marks could also be seen on their face.

The fierce fire reflected a similar expression on each of them. They took turns stabbing their own arms with a small knife, and smeared their blood gently onto their face.

After they had finished smearing their faces.

"It has been five centuries since the hunting tradition had been passed down before us." An old man who stood by the bonfire whispered. "Do not forget our ancestor's pride. Remember what I have just said."

"Elder, where are the damned hound bugs? I smelled their scent behind earlier." A strong man with braided hair asked.

"They have left, which is why I took this opportunity to organize the hunt, so that we will not be disturbed." The elder replied.

"I would have killed all of them if not for the holy water! These damn bugs!" The braided man replied gloomily.

"Who is it!! Who's there!" The Elder's nose twitched as he smelled something. His head was facing at where Joseph and his two colleagues were hiding.

Bam!

A gunshot rang across the forest.

One of the figure beside the bonfire went down, but the rest of them spread out and came running towards them.

Bam Bam Bam!!

Three more gunshots were heard. However, it hadn't come from Joseph's party, but from the other side of the forest. In an instant, more than ten people with black coats came rushing out of the forest.

In their hand were hand grenades. In quick, swift motions, they kept throwing the grenades towards the bonfire.

Boom~~~!!!

The man who was initially shot stood back up all of a sudden, as his body started sprouting large amounts of black fur. In a blink of an eye, it had become a humongous wolf. The black wolf howled and ran towards the people with black coat in a rage

The crack of gunshots rang again and again, but the black wolf managed to dodge a lot of the bullets.

Ah!!

One of the man with the black coat was taken down as half of his body was ripped apart by the black wolf's claw. As the wolf sunk his teeth into his victim, the man's grey matter was torn open.

Soon, chains of howls rose through the forest floor. The remaining people near the bonfire had transformed into werewolves, and all of them rushed towards the men black.

"Damn! It's the Thukk Tribe!!" The leader of the black coat panicked slightly.

Soon more people in black were shredded into pieces by the werewolves. At the same moment, others started screaming as black smoke rose from their bodies. They shrivelled and dried rapidly; some fell off and died with teeth still sunk deep into flesh, and became a puddle of black water.

"It's the Thukk Tribe! Everybody retreat!!" The leader of the black coat started to panicked as he shouted. They hadn't enough holy water. The Thukk Tribe is much more resistant to the holy water compared to other similar species. The amount of holy water needed to purify one Thukk Tribe members could purify three other ordinary werewolves. These beasts' true potential would be unleashed once there was no holy water nearby. They would be twice as strong! The Thukk Tribe was unstoppable once they were not restricted.

"Retreat! Retreat!" The group of men in black fired their guns as they stumbled backwards Under the lead of the braided werewolf, werewolves continued their onslaught. Both parties were at war inside the Pine forest with both parties sustaining heavy casualties.

On the other side of the pine forest.

Garen and Su Lin were following Celine closely as they moved deeper into the forest. If not for the night sky, the three of them would have looked like tourists with their attire.

Celine kept sniffing with her nose as she lead the way.

"Duskdune Shura went through this place. He must be right in front of us."

"You have brought us through a lot of detours already. We'll go directly to the Ancient Ruins tomorrow if we can't find him." Su Lin yawned as he replied.

"Absolutely not. We will definitely lose him if we don't can't find him now. I wasn't sure at first, but I'm confident to say that Duskdune Shura is definitely not heading to the Ancient Ruins. He had other objectives!" Celine affirmed.

"Other objectives?" Garen was confused.

"There's someone in front!" Celine lowered down her voice as she focused ahead.

A man with a black coat walked towards them slowly out of the darkness..

"Who are you people? Up ahead is a protected area of the national security agency. You may not enter." The man said as he furrowed his eyebrows.

Garen and the rest were skeptical. Garen kept took a stepped in front as Celine and Su Lin slowly backed off.

"Did you not hear what I just said? It's very dangerous up front! You may not proceed any further! And you! You too! Leave this place immediately!" The man in black coat said to the big pine tree in front of Garen and his gang.

A humanoid figure slowly came out from the branches of the pine tree. His gaze was calmly focused onto Garen and the gang.

Garen and the gang stared back at him in the same manner.

The four of them did not bother to pay any heed towards the arrogant man in the black coat, as all of their attention was now focused on each other.

"You people are persistent." Duskdune Shura spoke under his cloak. His voice was hoarse and deep.

"Hand over the Golden Sword Throne. Though I know that's probably not happening, I'll say it anyway" At this moment Garen had become the leader of the three man group as his vision was tightly locked onto Duskdune Shura.

This man had once defeated two generals from the federation when he was heavily surrounded. He was at the pinnacle of strength, being able to escape from an ambush from all directions.

Although he had become stronger, he did not dare underestimate his enemy.

"You're here for the Golden Sword Throne as well?" Duskdune Shura was amused, "Do you think you can stop me all by yourself?"

"I won't know if I don't try." Garen replied.

"Hmph!"

Duskdune Shura sighed before he pointed his toes and swiftly leapt backwards, disappearing into the darkness.

Garen immediately went after him. With his speed increased by 0.3 points, he was as fast as Duskdune Shura.

Celine and Su Lin were not slow either. They followed Garen closely from behind and disappeared into the darkness with him.

The man with the black coat was left alone in the dark, in a rage.

"A trained fighter? Does being a fighter make you all that? This is no longer my business. You guys are the one who did not heed my warning. Even a fighter would have the same fate if you do not have holy water! These beasts had already killed dozens of fighters! You guys are digging your own grave!"

Deep inside the Pine Forest.

Joseph's party watched the battle between the men in black and wolves in terror. Blood was shed from both parties. It was a scene of horror. This was especially so for Johnson and Annie, having not seen anything like this in their lives. They were so rooted in fear they failed to move even an inch from where they were.

"Jo..Joseph.. Tell me... What... What is going on?? Am I dreaming?" Johnson stuttered as he asked.

"This is reality Johnson. If I'm not mistaken, these men in black coat are there Demon Hunters. The enemy they are facing now are the legendary werewolf clan."

Chapter 142: Night 2

"Werewolves!" Annie and Johnson had thought about that possibility, but it was still hard for them to accept that fact.

"Werewolves are strong and resilient, and their ability to kill is terrifying. Humans were once their slaves in the Ancient Era, and were only kept as livestock. That is until we discovered Holy Water." Joseph explained, "Holy Water greatly weakens the werewolves, reducing their strength and vitality to a level us humans can handle."

"You mean... this?" Annie held up the pouch Joseph gave her earlier.

"Yes, that's it, keep it safe. Now that you've seen all these, won't you believe me?" Joseph wanted to let his close friend and girlfriend truly believe in him. Only after seeing it with their own eyes will they believe in something this ridiculous. The Demon Hunters¹; well, that was a coincidence.

"The strength of humanity comes from our ability to utilize tools." Joseph whispered, "Okay, now that the Demon Hunters are here, we should retreat."

It was Johnson and Annie's first encounter with so many corpses at the same place, both of them were pretty shaken up, so they didn't protest.

Slowly, the trio started pulling back.

In that exact moment, a silhouette charged past them toward the battlefield between the werewolves and the Demon Hunters.

In the blink of an eye, another silhouette chased after the first one, dashing past the three.

"You want the Golden Sword Throne? You'll have to catch me!" A deep, gravelly voice challenged. It was from the first silhouette.

"Hmph!" The second silhouette snorted with disdain, then accelerated abruptly.

"Oh? You're faster than the last time we met!" The man with the gravelly voice had a hint of surprise.

Joseph and his companions looked on, stunned by the two silhouettes who rushed toward the battlefield.

"Are they Demon Hunters too?" Johnson asked, as softly as he could.

"No, they're not. They don't have the fragrance of Holy Water on them! They are human fighters." Joseph furrowed his eyebrow.

Aroooooooooo!

A werewolf with black fur howled and glared at the newcomers, Duskdune Shura and Garen.

"Fighters? Heh heh, I haven't had fighter flesh for a long while now! You must have a death wish to come near here without Holy Water." The werewolf blitzed toward the two fighters.

In the same moment, Garen caught up with Duskdune Shura.

They collided and dashed forward together.

Thud!

Garen parried Duskdune Shura's attack with his arm.

"Single Shot Form! Swing!" Garen shot his right arm, aiming at Duskdune Shura's chest, like a cobra lunging for its prey. As soon as he closed in, Garen's arm jerked upward into Swing Form, stabbing at Duskdune Shura's chin with five fingers kept straight in the shape of a cleaver.

Slap!

Duskdune Shura diverted the attack with a slap, and returned an attack with his other palm, to which Garen met with his own.

Thud!

Garen grunted and fell back, just as the black-furred werewolf pounced at him in a bloodlust.

"Out of my way!"

Thud! Rip!

The black-furred werewolf was torn into two halves, spilling blood all around the ground. Without wasting a breath, Garen rushed at Duskdune Shura again.

A sound of a heavy thump echoed. Both Garen and Duskdune Shura landed on a patch of grass. After regaining their balance, they hacked at each other again, echoing thuds and thumps and thwacks, like the sound of shotgun blasts reverberating throughout the woods.

The battle between Demon Hunters and werewolves was stopped by the two newcomers in the centre. There were stray bullets that hit both of them, but every single bullet was repelled, creating golden sparks.

Every creature around the area was astonished beyond comprehension.

The werewolves stopped attacking, as did the Demon Hunters. Including Joseph's group, all three parties were blankly staring at Garen and Duskdune Shura's fight.

The two people in combat ignored everyone else, fully focusing on attacking each other. Whatever that got in their way was destroyed.

One by one, pine trees thicker than a human's embrace fell, leaving behind holes and craters of different sizes, as if it had been hit by bombs.

Thwack!

A figure got hit and swooped across a tiny glade, only dissipating his momentum after he hit another pine tree. It was Garen. His shirt was torn and shredded, and even the trunk of the pine tree he landed on cracked, but he looked as if he wasn't hurt at all.

Scoffing defiantly, Garen leapt toward his opponent. The two engaged in another round of combat.

Whenever Garen hit anything, he would leave behind rips and intense shaking, meanwhile Duskdune Shura would slash everything he touched in half. When they clashed, it's as if they were armored to the teeth, wielding extraordinary weapons of their own.

"Excellent! You deserved your title as the Champion of the era! I approve of your strength." Duskdune Shura leapt backward and landed softly on a fallen tree trunk more than ten meters away.

"If you want the Golden Sword Throne, come to the Dahl Falls. I will be waiting for you there."

"Don't you dare run away!" Garen's eyes were wild with excitement. During his battle with Duskdune Shura, he felt his mastery over Red Jade Palm growing. If he had continued using it for the fight, he has no doubt he can master it in no time. Granted, the fact that he had affinity to special abilities on top of his understanding in Grandmaster of Combat techniques helped, but undeniably, only actual combat experience can deepen his mastery over combat abilities.

Without hesitation, he dashed toward his enemy.

Duskdune Shura promptly dropped into the crowd of werewolves.

Whack! A soft clap.

A werewolf stumbled out toward the pursuing Garen. Even he was in bewilderment about his action.

Wham!

The werewolf was whipped away with a Swing Form and fell at least ten meters away, half his body was torn apart, leaving his flesh and blood in a gory mess. The werewolf could only whimper on the ground.

The werewolves, and even some of the Demon Hunters shuddered.

"Do you really think you can stop me with this pile of garbage?" Garen had a flash of fury in his eyes.

Garbage?!

"How dare you!" The werewolves, and even the elder werewolf was angered by this show of arrogance.
"Without Holy Water, you are but-"

He couldn't finish his sentences as Garen shot him a glare. He only felt a pressure made of fear forced upon him.

Garen's eyes flashed red, the space around him bent, unfolding a gigantic red-eyed mammoth tens of meters tall. The air around him wheezed loudly, as if it was going to swallow everything within dozens of meters.

The elder werewolf turned pale and trembled uncontrollably, unable to hold his werewolf state, he collapsed on the ground kneeling.

"We are... the great... Thukk Tribe!" The elder struggled, trying to stand up, but he couldn't move a single hair. His bones cracked under the pressure.

To other people, Garen only glanced over at the elder, and he immediately reverted to human form and kneeled on his own, as if he's being bound by some invisible force. He looked like he's trying to get up but completely lost his strength.

Duskdune Shura hid underneath his cloak, shielding his facial expression. He kept lobbing werewolves after werewolves toward Garen, like they were cargo unworthy of cautiousness. At the same time, he's swiftly retreating from the battlefield area.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Garen kept swatting werewolves aside, growling, trying to give chase, but at critical moments another werewolf would appear in his path, significantly slowing him down. In addition to that, he was already slightly slower than Duskdune Shura. It wasn't long before Duskdune Shura completely disappeared into the darkness.

"Grr!" Garen hit a tree with his palm out of frustration. The trunk crackled, and without a warning, wooden slag started pouring out as though it was sand. A white notch appeared on the thick tree trunk where Garen hit it, and it started to lean toward the other direction and fell with a loud bang.

Most of the Thukk Tribe was hurt in Garen's pursuit of Duskdune Shura. As werewolves, they have accelerated healing, so by now, some of the lightly wound had already healed. Silently, they retreated to the far end of the woods, taking the elder werewolf and the bodies of the other werewolves with them.

At some point during the chaos, Celine and Su Lin sneaked beside Joseph's party, stayed till the aftermath of the battle.

Gawking at Garen from afar, Su Lin smiled wryly. "Garen is even stronger than before, he wasn't that fast just a while ago."

"He's a monster!" Celine is speechless.

"Duskdune Shura seemed to have acknowledged Garen's capability as a fighter; none of them used their full power though. Who would win if they did, I wonder?" Su Lin shook his head.

Joseph and his companions dared not move, in case they were found out by the two newcomers. They were so shocked at overhearing Su Lin, Joseph even swallowed his saliva.

"If this isn't their full power, what is?"

Joseph lightly kneaded the water pouch they brought, questioning the truth of the world for the first time.

"Didn't granddad say it was impossible for humans to fight the evil creatures without Holy Water? Was I hallucinating or has the world gone mad?"

"You three have been observing for a while, didn't you? Don't you want to come out and say hi?" Su Lin turned toward Joseph unexpectedly with a knowing smile.

Most citizens from Sin Gerro and some smaller countries around it commonly use the Confederation language, barring some minute differences in accents and dialects. To be more precise, the Confederation language is the lingua franca of the whole Stonecliff Continent.

Joseph finally stood up, forcing a smile to his face. Johnson and Annie followed.

Once Garen accepted the fact that he wouldn't be able to keep up with Duskdune Shura, he unwillingly turned back heading toward Su Lin.

He wasn't expecting to keep Duskdune Shura down anyway, he just wanted to test his improvement in his fighting ability.

As he thought, if he weren't using the first and second stages of Body Hardening Technique, instead relying only on his normal state to fight Duskdune Shura, he would have been at a disadvantage, but not hurt. Red Jade Palm made up for the weakness in his fighting technique. Even if he couldn't use the more precise skills during the fight, he was starting to get a grasp on the technique used against him.

Frankly speaking, if he decided to kill Garen, Duskdune Shura would not be able to get away unscathed.

Duskdune Shura was also aware of this fact, which is why he left as soon as possible.

More importantly, Garen finally confirmed that the Golden Sword Throne was indeed with Duskdune Shura, as well as the many potential uses the Antique of Tragedy has! Garen completely verified that in this battle.

Chapter 143: Coincidence 1

Garen restrained his overflowing Bravery and returned to Su Lin with haste.

"He's truly a Master, that Duskdune Shura, even at my current level, I still can't beat him." He sighed, "Oh right, what were those monsters called? Werewolves?"

"They are. Have you seen them around?" Joseph answered timidly. His two companions were so intimidated by Garen's show of power, they subconsciously took a step back.

Garen quickly scanned through the three strangers slightly warily. He was going to question them when Su Lin interrupted and introduced them.

"They were going to launch a sneak attack on the werewolves' altar to prevent them from completing the hunting ritual. These people were innocent."

"Werewolves? They really are werewolves?" Garen's eyebrows furrowed. Now that he knows werewolves exist, it would be a sensible opinion to conclude that vampires and other evil creatures exist as well. If vampires exist, what could be next? Holy churches like in those fantasy novels and movies on Earth?

A series of thoughts came to him almost simultaneously. Back on Earth, he has had his fair share of movies consumption.

"What? Have you met them before?" Joseph was slightly taken aback by Garen's seeming nonchalance. He still held himself quite well against Garen compared to his other two companions.

"Nah, I've only heard about them. Let's look for a place to talk, I need some answers from you guys." Garen noticed the people in black cloaks heading toward them. "Actually, maybe it's better for me to ask them."

The black cloaked leader took off the hood, revealing a middle-aged lady with scars on her face.

"Brave fighter friends, we are of the Jiu Gu Clan¹ from nearby forest. May we have the honor to invite you for a brief conversation someplace else?"

Everyone, including Su Lin, Celine, as well as Joseph and his companions turned to Garen, who raised his eyebrows out of curiosity. "Lead the way."

The leader nodded, "Please, this way."

Half an hour later, in a manor near the pine woods.

In a dimly lit room with a minibar, the scarred lady stood behind the redwood bar counter, expertly mixing cocktails with a shaker.

Garen's group and Joseph's group took their own spots in front of the counter, some of them standing and some sitting. Joseph and his companions sat separately from Garen, talking to a young and pretty woman.

The flames in the fireplace crackled, sending warmth to every corners of the room.

"In other words, you don't know anything about any non-human races other than the werewolves?" Garen asked with a slight disappointment.

"Exactly that." The middle-aged woman nodded, "Call me Yarmdo, by the way. Our clan has been in a feud with the werewolves for a really long time. Most of the time clashes only happen within the Sin Gerro area. I'm not sure about other places though. Within these woods, according to our correspondence with the other gathering spots of our clan, there have only been werewolves. The other creatures probably only exist in mythology..." Yarmdo the clan leader looked at Garen with intrigue.

Garen nodded, unsure of how to respond.

He assumed vampires, dark sorcerers, or holy churches exist, like those stories he had heard on Earth. He didn't know there were only two forces fighting against each other.

One side of that is the werewolves who hunts humans for food. The other side is the Demon Hunter clan, fated to put up resistance against the werewolves.

Both sides have been in a feud for so long, no one remembered what fuelled the initial battle that became the current racial war.

Sensing no response from Garen, Yarmdo continued.

"The Jiu Gu Clan were divided into three subclans, each fighting a werewolf tribe at different places. But the werewolves are powerful. The ones that we encountered today were only a really small pack. They were having a hunting ritual, which is their counterpart for coming of age ceremonies, so those were mostly underage werewolves. Even so, we were having a hard time defeating them."

Yarmdo stared at Garen earnestly, and glanced toward Su Lin and the Joseph trio.

"If you would allow me, I'd like to formally invite you to join our Demon Hunters clan with my utmost sincerity."

"I'm really sorry, but we were only passersby to this country, pursuing a wanted criminal. We can't possibly stay to help with your battles." Su Lin noticed a slight frown on Garen's face and immediately understood his concerns. In addition, their original plan did not include stopping a god-knows-how-long feud. He stepped in to reject Yarmdo's proposition.

"Without our means of concealment, the werewolves will hunt you down. Only by laying low in here can you get rid of the scent they track with." Yarmdo explained, "All those werewolves Mr. Garen killed had left him with their scents. If he returns to the woods now, the werewolves will be able to track it and send much stronger adult hunters after him."

She looked into Garen's eyes directly.

"Mr. Garen, I know you are capable, but you are only one person. The werewolves are strong beyond your imagination. They have two High Elders, not the kind you met today, who are truly at the prime of their hunting years. Their strength is far beyond your standard werewolves, and they also have the Wolf King Worthman. Our clan had been oppressed for far too long because of those werewolves. Right now, they are hiding in the human society, we can't even track them if they don't show up during certain times. They have acclimated to the human society so well that all of them are masters in assassination."

"I'm truly sorry, we really have our own mission, so it's really impossible for us to stay here longer than necessary." Garen shook his head.

"A mission? Do you mind telling us about it? Maybe we can help with the information you need."
Yarmdo knew she wouldn't be able to convince Garen right now, no one would offer help with nothing to gain.

"Do you know about the Golden Sword Throne?"

"Golden Sword Throne?" Yarmdo shook her head, "It's my first time hearing about it."

"What about the Dahl Falls?" Garen asked

Yarmdo's eyes widened. "Dahl Falls?"

"You know about the place?" Garen wasn't expecting a reaction like that.

"Yes, um... That's the hunting ground of the High Elder Vitar. Please wait a moment, I'll go get a map. That place is hard to get to for normal people." Yarmdo swiftly poured out the cocktails into several shot glasses and moved them over to Garen's trio. She left the room with vigor.

Garen and the other two took the cocktails. Su Lin took a whiff but didn't drink, Celine on the other hand sipped it slowly.

"It was not bad." Celine commented, slightly bored.

Garen walked over to the walls, inspecting the weapons and armors hanging on the blackstone wall.

These are tools the Demon Hunters employ to fight against the werewolves.

"In the movies on Earth, demon hunters² would normally use silverware to fight werewolves, apparently silver suppresses their ability to heal. I wonder if it's the same here."

He recalled the little information he had while removing a black crossbow to examine.

The crossbow was black all-around and has a T-shaped body. The grip was wrapped with a yellowing white cloth, giving it a rough finish. Through the cloth Garen can feel the coolness of the crossbow wood. It was not loaded.

Garen turned it over to look at the bottom part. There was some symbols engraved on the foregrip that Garen is not able to recognize.

"That's the Ancient Endorian language. According to hearsays, these Ancient Endorian scripts have the ability to summon mystical forces, so a lot of religious texts would make a reference to it." Su Lin explained softly.

Garen nodded and put the crossbow back on the wall.

The other weapons on the wall are mostly strongbows and firearms, there's no sign of any silverware at all.

Garen sighed regretfully. From the looks of it, the werewolves here were not weakened by silver.

He had always been interested in these mythological creatures, but right now, his main mission was to recover the Golden Sword Throne from Duskdune Shura. When he was extended the invitation to join the Demon Hunters, he had thought about it, since Yarmdo was being nice. Considering the long history with the clan, he might even get a good treasure with Potential.

One by one, Garen started examining the items on the wall. Of all nine items, most are decorative, there was none that he can find Potential in.

"What do you think of these weapons?" Yarmdo was back with a map made of sheepskin leather.

"They were alright. They should be pretty powerful, combining firearms and ancient knowledge."

"They would be decent if they were used against humans," Yarmdo shrugged. "But they don't seem to do a lot on werewolves. Even High Elders would be too much for us to handle, not to mention the Wolf King Worthman. Fortunately for us, they had some infighting problem and got hurt, that should set them back a few years to heal."

"Don't werewolves heal fast?" Celine interrupted.

"Not when it's hurt with the claws by one of their kind." Yarmdo explained.

Garen nodded.

"I was wondering if your clan collected any antiques from all these years battling the werewolves. I mean, I had some experience appraising antiques, and am interested with what you have. Is it okay if I take a look?"

Sensing Yarmdo's confusion, Garen added, "Anything from old equipments, trinkets, to things taken from the werewolves for keepsake will do."

"Of course. Sometimes we do loot the werewolves we kill for keepsakes. Sort of like a collection. We have a lot of those." Yarmdo agreed without hesitation.

"This is a map of the areas nearby, think of it as an appreciation for helping us with the wolf pack just now," She held the map out toward Garen.

"Mr. Garen, it is my duty to warn you, even though you are stronger than any of us, you shouldn't underestimate the capabilities of the High Elders. If there's anything we can do to help, just come to us Jiu Gu Demon Hunters."

"Thanks." Garen knew this was an attempt to gain his favor, but he played along just to be nice. At least he'll have the locals' help.

Checking the map, Garen learned about the situation in the nearby Pinehill City from Yarmdo. After receiving a bagful of trinkets, Garen's trio was eager to start chasing after Duskdune Shura to the Dahl Falls.

On the other hand, the other three, Joseph, Johnson, and Annie, built a solid connection with the charming young Demon Hunter, and were not planning to leave anytime soon, especially when they've just experienced a bloodshed. Without a proper ability to protect themselves, they severely lack security for their safety. Therefore they'd decided to stay the night instead, waiting to be sent home by the Demon Hunters in the morning.

Joseph stared at Garen's silhouette in the night and pondered. "Don't they feel just a tiny bit of fear against the werewolves? The leader killed so many of them, the werewolves must be huning for him everywhere."

"No idea, but they were much stronger than we are, maybe that was the source of their confidence. The leader probably as strong as my grandmother," The young Demon Hunter admired, "I wish I could be as strong as that someday."

"What were they thinking, leaving so late?" Annie asked, whispering, "However strong they are, they are only three people, can they even fight against so many werewolves at once?"

"Who knows." Joseph shrugged. Gawking at the three leaving shadows, a curiosity grew inside him.

He shut his eyes and started to listen carefully.

In the darkness, an image of the outer world slowly emerged in his sight. He zoomed in toward the departing trio, and focused on Garen alone.

"I want... to hear his past... his thoughts..." Joseph concentrated on his intention.

Boom!

A deafening toot blared as if it was right beside him. A gigantic red-eyed white mammoth appeared beside Garen, roaring loudly.

Joseph shuddered in fear, his connection with the Garen severed.

Chapter 144: Coincidence 2

Night time.

In the woods.

Garen stopped advancing. He frowned and checked out the area.

"What is it?" Su Lin asked in puzzlement.

"I think someone's spying on us." Perplexed himself, Garen answered with uncertainty, "Let's go. We have to catch up with Duskdune Shura. Celine, can you lead the way, please?"

Celine nodded and started pacing.

All of them are able fighters, even if Su Lin, as the physically weakest person in the group, may not be able to beat Grandmasters of Combat, but he definitely can hold his own weight against normal combat experts. And with Celine, even Garen wasn't completely sure what her trump card is, given her many talents.

Within the group, Celine was leading the path, Garen was cross-referencing the map with the environment with Su Lin's flashlight, adjusting their directions whenever needed so they won't run into a dead end.

After leaving the manor, the trio followed the shortest path, heading straight to the redwood forest outside of Pinehill City.

Right after they have left the woods, a few brown wolves slowly emerged from the woods and smelled the grass patch.

"They're out from the Demon Hunters' area." A brown wolf growled in perfect Yalu language with a Pinehill accent.

"They certainly ran pretty fast. Continue after them. The High Elder gave his order, no matter who they are, if they ruined the hunting ritual, they must pay the price with their lives!" A larger wolf replied with ferocity.

The brown wolves disappeared into the wilderness, heading directly opposite from the one Garen picked.

A person with black cloak stepped out of the woods, his hand still holding an emptied small vial, he obviously helped Garen redirect the pursuing werewolves.

Garen was holding the sack with one hand and taking out the trinkets one by one.

A white necklace made of wolf teeth, a werewolf claw, a pair of wolfskin gloves, a wooden wolf sculpture, a nude sculpture of half beautiful woman, half wolf...

Garen speechlessly threw that away.

"Okay, gross." Su Lin is as speechless as Garen.

Garen pulled out a wolf penis next...

"Okay, why do I even bother hoping for good things anymore..." Su Lin covered his face with his palm. Some things are better not seen.

Again, Garen threw it away and started digging through the sack. At least this one is less inappropriate. It's a stone slab drawing of a giant wolf. Garen perused it with the flashlight.

Every body part of the giant wolf was annotated by lines.

"Would be nicer steamed... Needs pepper..." Once Garen made out the words, he rolled his eyes and flung the stone slab as hard as he could. There wasn't much left in the sack.

"No wonder they bagged it with a black sack instead of a translucent one, it's so embarrassing!" Su Lin teased.

"I'm bored anyway, might as well go through it for fun." Garen shook his head as he suddenly touched something chilly. A strong gust of energy flowed in through his index finger.

Garen shuddered and went wide-eyed.

It's an Antique of Tragedy! It's full of Potential energy!

This Potential flow only sustained for a few seconds before dying down and disappearing.

His grabbed the item, it felt like a box, and fished it out of the sack. At the same time he glanced at his Potential Point at the bottom of his field of view.

‘Potential 105%’

"I got another stat point!" Garen felt a rush of euphoria. He had just earned a point not long ago, he wouldn't have expected to earn another point so soon after. "No wonder they always said to go out more!" Without hesitation, he added it to his Agility.

With the extra 0.3 in Agility, Garen's body felt so much lighter, he can feel the changes in his body. His brain produced a cool breeze toward every nook and corner of his body, lightening his movements.

He raised his arm, it felt much lighter than usual.

Right now his Agility stat is 1.82, Potential Point is down to 5%.

"My speed earlier was still slightly slower than Duskdune Shura, but now I'm confident to be as fast as he is!" Garen inspected the changes within his body with satisfaction. While the breeze from his brain stopped after a while, his body felt as if he's floating, like he had dropped off a heavy load.

Keeping the box that gave him Potential in his pocket, Garen touched the two remaining items. No response. He lobbed them aside.

"What's that?" Su Lin noticed the box Garen had kept.

"Not sure. I think it's a jewelry box." Garen took the box out and examined it again. He shined the flashlight at it, revealing patterns that look like scribbles children made.

"The craftsmanship is bad, but it feels like treasure of some sort."

"Better than nothing."

"True." Garen smiled playfully and threw the box to Su Lin, "Take it, I think you'll find it interesting."

"Sure," Su Lin caught it. He opened the box, it didn't make any sound, "It doesn't look like a jewelry box," Su Lin pondered, "There was nothing in there."

"The treasure is the box itself, so it doesn't matter what's inside." Garen shrugged nonchalantly.

The pair didn't say anything more, and chased after Celine.

Celine paced speedily while sniffing, occasionally she would make a turn. The trees got progressively shorter and more concentrated.

The three shuttled through the woods, noticing the gradual reddening of the woods. The leaves on the ground were either yellow or pale red.

Moving a little further, even the leaves on the branches turned red. At this point, only rarely would they see some dark yellow among a layer of red leaf litter. The rising sun slowly scorched the eastern clouds, burning through it, and blessed the woods with beams of morning ray.

The spot where Garen cast aside the black sack.

Several brown-furred werewolves leapt out of the trees, landing beside the discarded sack.

A werewolf grabbed the bag and sniffed.

"They got away again! Humans are so cunning."

"I refuse to believe that I can't catch up to them! Those damned foodbastard, how dare they stop the hunting ritual of the Thukk Tribe!" Another werewolf grunted. "According to where teams One and Two, they seemed to be heading toward the Dahl Falls!"

"Very likely. If these outsiders dared to even step foot in High Elder's hunting ground, there's only a certain death for them. What good is being strong alone, we can mob them to death! Gather all the hunters nearby! We're swarming them at Dahl Falls! They will not be spared!"

In the Redleaf Woods.

Garen was speeding away from Dahl Falls.

"Celine, are you sure this is the way to the Falls?" Garen raised his suspicion.

"Trust me, it is!" Celine replied calmly.

"But why do something feels wrong?"

"Well my nose was filled with too many smells and I can smell very well now, but my direction is definitely correct!" Celine announced proudly.

"Okay." Garen decided to trust Celine, she lead them straight to Duskdune Shura after all. Compared to the map, he trusted Celine's olfactory sense better.

Su Lin only shrugged, expressing his indifference.

The trio disappeared into the woods.

Two hours later...

In the woods surrounding Dahl Falls.

"How are they not here yet?"

"No idea, but patience is key. According to their paths earlier, they are no doubt heading this way." Two brown-furred werewolves conversed softly in the bush.

"Tell the others to be patient too, they will appear sooner or later, this is after all their destination."

Two hours later...

Garen and the other two stared at the muddy marsh in front of them, speechless.

"What is this place?"

"I think... we are lost..."

Su Lin's eyes twitched.

"It's not my fault! It's Duskdune Shura! It has to be him, he was worried the werewolves might catch up to him, so he used some sort of powder to lure them away! I got duped!" Celine protested. As soon as she realized they were lost, she had a possible explanation.

"So what do we do now?" Garen asked Su Lin, defeated.

"We look at the map, find ourselves." Su Lin shrugged.

Three hours later...

Dahl Falls.

"Leader, how are they not here yet?"

The leading brown-furred werewolf thought really hard. He froze as realization washed over him. Slapping his knee, he groaned, "Fuck"

"What is it, leader?" The werewolf beside him asked, worried.

"It's a trap! They must have tricked us, leading us here to Dahl Falls while they escaped the other direction!"

"So what do we do n-"

"Everyone go after them, now! We have to catch those cunning bastards!" The lead werewolf sprung up.

In just a minute, a huge swarm of werewolves dashed out of their hiding place, surging toward the opposite direction of the path to the Dahl Falls.

Not long after they were gone, in the hidden path of the woods near the Falls, three people appeared.

"Finally... I can hear the Falls..." Celine exhaled feebly, "That sly fox Duskdune Shura, he anticipated our every move..."

"Not only us," Garen examined the pawprints left by the werewolves, "It's too much of a coincidence, these werewolves only left a moment ago."

"This is not a coincidence." Su Lin frowned, "He figured out how Celine tracked him. This is a setup, he lured the werewolves away so we would go in alone. He doesn't want to expose the secret in here!"

"How do you know?" Garen asked, baffled.

"Precisely because there's too much of a coincidence, Duskdune Shura used something to lure those wolves away." Su Lin explained with a serious look on his face.

Garen scowled, looking around cautiously. "Looks like he did set this whole thing up to make sure we enter. What is he trying to achieve?"

"Your guess is as good as mine." Su Lin shrugged, "Let's go then. The Falls is right in front, let's find out how he planned to usher us, shall we?"

Garen nodded, the three of them slowly approaching a tiny waterfall within their sight.

The waterfall was like a quadrilateral white silk embedded in the middle of a vast green made of grassy fields and pine forests, on its right was a ruins full of oval white stones.

Grayish-white stone houses splattered all over the ruins. Destroyed walls and thriving weeds formed a harmonious concerto of gray, white, and green.

The trio walked past the waterfalls to slowly make their way up to the ruins. Garen replaced Su Lin as the group's pathfinder.

He looked around, none of the three-story houses were spared from the destruction. All the windows lead to separate pockets of gloomy lifelessness.

"This used to be a small town... from decades ago, it seems." Garen muttered, "You can tell by the weathering of the structures and the density of the weeds."

"That's right, more specifically, about fifty to sixty years ago." Su Lin pointed out.

Garen peered at him, "You can tell?"

"Don't underestimate me. I'm a genius with five university degrees!" Su Lin beamed.

"Now that we're here, what's next? Duskdune Shura wouldn't leave us hanging if he went through all that trouble to lead us here." Celine interrupted the banter, "Let's split up to look for clues?"

"Not necessary." Garen turned toward a small alley between two houses on his left. The alley was dim and muted leading to the unknown. The only things visible at the other end of that alley were sinopia-colored boulders and mossy grass.

"Can you smell anything?" Garen inquired from Celine.

"Nuh-uh, still too mixed up to tell." Celine shook her head.

"This layout... it looks like the Ancient Endorian's. A town that was only abandoned several decades ago, using Ancient Endorian infrastructure? Smells fishy." Garen mused.

"Duskdune Shura lead us here, so it must be one of his schemes," Celine speculated, "Do you think the secrets of Golden Sword Throne is hidden in here?"

"Beats me." Garen was not convinced, "What has Golden Sword Throne, from the Nabudas Empire of the Fivestar Continent got to do with Ancient Endorian civilization of the Stonecliff Continent?"

"Let's search for more clues." Su Lin suggested.

"Like you said, the infrastructure here is similar to the Ancient Endorian's. If it really is connected to the Ancient Endorians, we'll need to look at the layout of the whole town." Garen recalled. "I need more information to identify the important areas in the town. Can you two do me a favor by counting the number of buildings in town, as well as finding a pattern of their distribution?"

"Sure, let's split up." Su Lin nodded, "Be safe, Celine."

Celine retorted, "I can easily beat two of you, Su Lin. You're the physical weak link, remember?"

Speechless, Su Lin partitioned the town into two parts, and went in different ways with Celine to check out the geography of their areas.

Garen stayed back to scrutinize the details of the infrastructure.

He pressed his palm gently against the wall, against the weird grayish-white moss. They feel damp, and slightly cooling.

Returning to the ruins, it was pin-droppingly silent now that both Celine and Su Lin have gone far.

Garen strolled torpidly. "If it's following the Ancient Endorian layout..." He recalled the knowledge about ancient architecture he learned from the old man Gregor, deep in thought. "Maybe... over there!"

He sauntered along the path between houses and circled the ruins from outside until he arrived at a clearing with a collapsed metal fence. It was filled with platinum gray rubble. Weeds with different shades of green sprouted between the rocks, filling the area with a barren tranquillity.

Garen entered the clearing through an opening, stumbling ever so slightly every now and then.

The stones on the ground were extraordinarily smooth, only some crumbled and some fallen.

Garen took another few steps, as if to triangulate the clearing, and finally stopped beside a crooked gray stone.

Before he could crouch down, he hesitated and glanced toward the town ruins.

Both Su Lin and Celine were hustling toward him.

Celine was the first to arrive, and reported, "There were twelve buildings here."

"It's a triangle, a very proper triangle. Isn't that spooky?" Su Lin continued, clearly in discomfort.

Garen nodded, his eyes glazed as a donut, and stood there motionlessly.

A few minutes passed before he finally recovered.

"I get it now." He looked down in search for something. Not long after, he stood in a tiny clear space devoid of rocks and rubbles.

He crouched and started grazing the ground. Finding something, he pull it free of the grass.

Snap!

In Garen's palm there was a black metallic ring, attached to something before being pulled free.

"According to the Ancient Endorian style," Garen tried evoking his knowledge. It's only after the old man Gregor's death that he realize that the knowledge the old man gave him were all hidden secrets that no one will ever find in bookstores. Those are the knowledge no other appraiser will find out on their own.

He perused the very fine script on the ring, stood up, walked for about ten paces, and stood still.

"This was a graveyard." Garen whispered to Su Lin and Celine. "Follow me." Both of them were already heading toward him as he said that.

The trio arrived at the edge of the graveyard, beneath a tree.

Grazing the ground once again, Garen dug out some dirt, exposing a rectangular stone tablet with words engraved on it.

‘Eyham Vent, May Your Spirit Rest In Eternal Peace. 2867.3.1’

"This is someone's tomb from Year 2867, we are in Year 2987, this was buried 120 years ago!" Su Lin frowned disapprovingly. "What on earth are you doing Garen?"

"This is the key to this riddle," Garen held both sides of the tablet, "I wanna open it." He forcefully lifted the tablet and set it aside.

Garen peered into the casket. It wasn't a human remains as they thought it was, but a hole leading deep into the earth. Chilly air and odor poured out of the dark rectangular hole. It smelled like rotten eggs.

"Wow, you're good at this appraisal thing!" Su Lin whistled, "You found the ruins of an ancient civilization!"

"Meh, this is just a traditional tomb from a long time ago, they used to store the deceased in a tomb cellar like this." Garen explained, unamused. "A long time ago, it was also very popular in the Stonecliff Continent. People believed that even after death, the souls would still need to perform daily routines, so they would base their tombs on a cellar for the living, they even have living rooms, bedrooms, and storage rooms."

"Tsk, I thought there was a huge discovery," Su Lin said dejectedly and pulled out his flashlight, "Lemme see."

He stood in front of the hole and shined his flashlight into it, causing some of the mud and dirt to fall in. Su Lin cautiously leaned over and looked down into the hole.

Srrrt!

From within the hole, a black thread shot unexpectedly toward Su Lin's face.

"Watch out!" It was too late for Garen to block it due to its speed. It was a black thorn with three sharp edges, spinning at high speed aiming for Su Lin's forehead.

Garen tried to block it with his own body, but it was too late.

Gah!

Su Lin stumbled backward and fell sitting on the ground. His hands were covering his face, panting heavily.

"What... what on earth!" Even his speech slurred. Just that instant he thought he was going to die.

Having realized that Su Lin avoided a death trap, both Garen and Celine sighed in relief.

Releasing his hands, a red scar emerged beneath Su Lin's right eye, adding a sense of allure to his already charming face.

"Thank goodness I had a hunch and evaded, or else I'd be dead by now." He was still trembling, the red scar beneath his eye slowly faded away.

"As long as you're okay. What's that under your eye?" Garen inquired.

"It's a Cryptic Secret Technique that I learned, it has a little side effect, so I can't use it so often." Su Lin smiled wryly. "It's just the beginning! I can't believe they made me use my trump card already."

"Cryptic Secret Technique? It's the kind that simplifies some of the application method in some Secret Techniques for normal fighters. A lot of stronger non-Martial Adept fighters will learn a little at some point." Sensing Garen's confusion, Celine explained. "Of course, these sort of Secret Methods are less powerful than the full version, and most of them will have some sort of side effects."

Comprehending, Garen nodded, "Alright, if I'm correct, this tomb should have a lot of Ancient Endorian secrets. I think Duskdune Shura lead us here to make us solve the mystery of the Ancient Endors."

He raised his arm toward the black hole and felt a cool draft from inside the cave.

"This is not just a normal tomb, it probably have other entrances. Usually a tomb would only have one entrance."

"You're saying this is an underground pass?" Celine's eyes widened with glee.

"Very likely." Garen tossed a stone into the cave, and swung his arm on top of the entrance. After confirming that there's no further traps, he declared, "Okay, it's safe now. The poisonous gas should have dissipated about now."

"Are we going in?"

"We have to. If my assumption is correct, this entrance will have a Testament of the Dead who entered the Ancient Endorian ruins." Garen replied. "It's the law of the Ancient Endor."

The three people carefully shined the flashlight into the cave again, revealing a silvery gray staircase which extends downward.

On the right side of the staircase, there was a white stone pillar, with oval red stone in an exquisite stone bowl. The stone is as huge as a fist, with carvings of symbols and fine patterns.

"That's the one, I'll recover it." Garen carefully stepped onto the stone staircase, advanced toward the pillar, and reached for the stone bowl.

Ding ding!

Two clear dings echoed as something struck the back of his palm, two thorns like the one that attacked Su Lin shot down from above, hitting the back of Garen's hand and made a golden spark.

"What a force!" Garen focused and continued reaching his hand over to grab the bowl.

Pssst!

Garen withdrew his hand by instinct, his index finger started to smoke, releasing a odor of burnt skin.

He looked at his finger, the pulp of it was charred, as if the whole area has been broiled with high temperature.

Chapter 146: Twist of Fate 2

"What is that? How's your hand?" Su Lin turned his attention toward Garen at the same time with Celine.

"Some kind of strong acid..." Garen shook his head to indicate that he's okay, then exited through the entrance. "Didn't think this Testament of the Dead would be so hard to recover..."

Garen's face scrunched up and turned to the west side of the town. Celine and Su Lin stood up at the same time, facing the same direction.

"Duskdune Shura. He's here." Celine sniffed the air and murmured.

"They're not trying to hide. Here they are." Garen stated calmly. "Take care of yourselves."

Two silhouettes with black mantle appeared from the pine forest in the west. They stopped after arriving at the outskirts of the graveyard, silently observing Garen and the others.

"Duskdune Shura," Garen stepped up and asked, "Care to tell me your true intention? What secrets exactly does the Golden Sword Throne hold?"

He can sense the immense Bravery these two people possess. Duskdune Shura is, without a doubt, a powerful force, but what's surprising is the other person also has power comparable to him. Garen didn't have a good feeling about that.

Now that his speed has vastly increased, he wouldn't have any problem protecting himself, but Celine and Su Lin would be in trouble. If the opponent really wants to harm them...

Synchronized, Duskdune Shura and the other person took off their hoods, exposing their facial features.

Duskdune Shura still looks the same with his time-ravaged features and wrinkles. The other person, however, looks pretty, but expressionless.

"A woman?" Su Lin looked confused, "No, he's just androgynous."

Garen studied the new person. He looks just like the Ice Queen, the only things that gave him away are his Adam's apple and flat chest. He had a rapier at his waist, and his snowy white hair was kept short, his eyes in the shade of lava.

"I am known as the Flamingo." The man said to Garen nonchalantly.

"Flamingo?" Su Lin and Celine gave each other a look, it doesn't sound like a name, more a nickname.

"Duskdune Shura said you are qualified to enter the ruins, so he gave you the exact location." Flamingo explained calmly. "I do, however, require to do a little test on your qualification."

"Test? How?" Garen eyed him suspiciously.

"Defend yourself from me for one attack." Flamingo slowly pulled on his rapier.

A black shine came quickly.

Clang!

Before he finished his sentence, Flamingo appeared before Garen, his black rapier hacked at Garen rising forearms.

Like an electric saw cutting metal, sparks flew and the sound of metal grinding clanged!

Both Flamingo and Garen faced each other, slightly surprised at each other's power.

Flamingo suddenly smirked.

Zing!

The rapier bent and bounced away.

"Rend!"

A black shine.

Bang!

The spot Garen was standing on now has two deep trenches. His right arm was protecting his chest, his left was pushing Su Lin standing beside him away. He himself was pushed a whole two meters back by that sudden attack.

Garen saw very clearly that in the split second, the black rapier had slashed him five consecutive times at the exact same spot. This is about the same level of control as Andreia's Secret Sword Technique. Moreover, this guy's as strong as an ox!

"My turn!" Garen's face darkened with rage. He was readying his attacks when he suddenly lost his enemy.

"Not bad," Flamingo lightly landed beside Duskdune Shura. The black rapier was back in its sheath without anyone noticing. "He definitely qualified."

Duskdune Shura shot a glance at Garen.

"Thanks for this time, you're the only one with some free time after all."

"Don't sweat it," Flamingo said, "I owed you that much."

Flamingo bounded forward, dashing toward Garen again, the golden-redness in his eyes becoming more intense.

He isn't extraordinarily fast, but somehow has a weird tempo to his movement, like the pumping of the heart. With every beat, his body would blur out just enough.

"Step aside!" Garen grunted. He guessed his intention and stepped aside to unblock the entrance to the tomb. Su Lin and Celine evaded as well.

Flamingo no longer acknowledged any of the trio, he jumped and disappeared into the tomb, like a bird in a swoop.

A shadow, Duskdune Shura, darted after Flamingo, and disappeared into the darkness as well.

A third mass disappeared. The Testament of the Dead. Garen felt a slight moroseness he couldn't put into words.

"Flamingo... Another Master like Duskdune Shura... Celine, any idea who he is?"

Celine's face was dark with seriousness, she nodded. "I recognized him. One of the top Grandmasters of Combat from the previous era, same as Duskdune Shura. Him, Duskdune Shura, and White Bird Holy Fist, the three of them were the strongest fighters in the whole Confederate, no one were able to surpass them. The strange thing is, he's almost seventy years old, how does he still look so young? Even the Essence Locking Art couldn't produce such ridiculous effect!"

"Another old geezer." Su Lin had no words. "I heard Duskdune Shura joined a secret group, the Immortal Palace Alliance. That guy isn't one of them, is he?"

"It is possible." Celine confirmed, "I've heard of the Immortal Palace Alliance, there were five of them, every single one of them were abnormally strong."

"Garen, what do you think? Are you confident?" Su Lin turned his attention toward a brooding Garen.

"What he used... what he did, is not only martial arts..." Garen was deep in thought. "And his Bravery is as strong as Duskdune Shura."

"Not only martial arts? What are we even doing here?" Su Lin exclaimed. The two of them followed Garen here to track Duskdune Shura, but they never planned to fight Duskdune Shura directly! Duskdune Shura even had a helper this time!

"Don't be rash to go inside." Garen shook his head. "We'll wait for the Slash Brigade to arrive! If Duskdune Shura wanted to kill me, he'll have a severe price to pay, but since he has a helper of the same level, I have no idea how it would turn out. We're not here to court death."

"Then we should wait. We'll look for a hiding place." Celine suggested, "This is the Werewolves' area, I can find a way to avoid detection, but I need some place clandestine."

"What about the houses in town? We can stay a night over there." Su Lin proposed. "I think the Slash Brigade should be here soon enough."

"I'm fine with that." Garen agreed. He does not fear Duskdune Shura, but it would be tricky with Flamingo on the playing board.

"What do they want anyway? What's the secret behind the Golden Sword Throne? What Flamingo did just now is definitely not martial arts!"

"Celine, does the Neptune Fist have any record on it?" Su Lin looked to Celine for answer. As the last successor of a powerful martial arts school, Celine has the most authority.

"I think so, but I can't recall anything right now, sorry." Celine frowned, "Let's find a place to rest. I might know what they are looking for."

"Oh?" That caught Garen's attention.

With Flamingo's help, his hope of getting his hands on the Golden Sword Throne is even slimmer than before. He could only hope for the Slash Brigade's arrival, and look for opportunities when a fight breaks out.

Now that the two insanely strong people were down there, he dare not be so reckless to go in alone even though there may be Antiques of Tragedy in there.

The trio quickly left the spot, leaving behind the open tomb, and found a three-storied building for the night.

The floor, the walls, the handrail of the staircase, everywhere was covered with chalk and dust, as if it was lined with a furry gray carpet.

They swiftly cleaned up one of the least damaged room in the top floor, prepared the flint and tinder, made fire, heated up the deep fried pancakes, and cooked a meat mushroom soup.

While they are dining, the three of them started discussing about the tomb.

Garon sat quietly while listening to Su Lin and Celine's analyses and guessworks, letting them take control of the tactic discussion.

He sat on the ground, looking into the fire while deep in his thoughts.

"Celine, tell me honestly, monsters like Duskdune Shura and Flamingo, how many are there in the Confederation?" Su Lin sounds as if he's arguing with Celine.

"I counted, including the people from Immortal Palace Alliance, not counting people who wield firearms, not more than four." Celine replied softly.

"'Not more than four', but two were here for the Golden Sword Throne."

"Flamingo, Duskdune Shura, Palosa, these three are from the same era, they must know something between them, about the Golden Sword Throne. That's why they're here together, I suspect they're all from Immortal Palace Alliance." Celine was unusually calm.

"Not necessarily true, Maybe they're just good friends. My father's case shook the whole Confederation, half the higher ups probably already knew about it, it's not that hard to find out. That Flamingo dude must have gotten some news from somewhere before coming. I propose that we leave immediately, if we stayed here it's only gonna get more dangerous." Su Lin frowned.

"You wouldn't know, but Grandmasters of Combat like Duskdune Shura and Flamingo, once they approved of Garen, they will not reject his participation. Moreover, people of their stature and their pursuit of the ultimate, they have their own pride, it is impossible for them to jointly attack a weaker person!" Celine reasoned. "So we're actually really safe."

"It's true that I don't know about their pride. What I do know, is if they actually joined forces, we're dead!" Su Lin disagreed strongly, "I won't bet my life on other people's pride!"

Celine bit her lower lips, it's obvious she's hesitant to leave, but she couldn't find a better reason to convince Su Lin of otherwise.

After a good ten minutes of silence, she spoke again.

"In Neptune Fist, there's an ancient folio with the record of a secret treasure of Ancient Endorian civilization."

"Did you just recalled that, or are you finally willing to share that with us?" Su Lin crossed his arm in front of his chest, not feeling the urge to touch any of the food. He looks upset at Celine's secrecy.

"Secret treasure of Ancient Endor?" Garen lifted his gaze toward Celine.

Chapter 147: Weird 1

Celine nodded her head

"Yes," she said as she bit her lip, as if she was still uncertain.

However as she made up her mind, her expression started to relax.

"Whatever I've told you here, please don't spread it. Regardless if they are your friends or relatives, you mustn't tell anyone anything. Can you do that?" Celine asked sternly.

Garen and Su Lin both looked a little shocked upon hearing that.

"Is it really that serious?" Garen asked softly.

"Of course," Celine nodded, both her eyes still looking weirdly serious.

"Alright, no problem," Su Lin nodded in agreement.

"I also have no issue with it. Alright, now would you please tell us what is the matter?" Garen too felt something was wrong with the way Celine was acting.

"Actually... Duskdune Shura is probably here because of this. The Golden Sword Throne is supposed to be a key, a key whose presence can only denote danger and opportunity."

Celine started to recount from memory,

"This world of ours is incredibly big, bigger than anyone can ever imagine. Even if a man were to take a modern day jet plane, fill it with infinite amounts of fuel, he will still not be able to fly to the end of the ocean. Therefore sometimes it is possible to find some inexplicable places not previously known to anyone before. Found at random, most of these places tend to have existed for a very long time, and within these ruins: sometimes one would find artifacts from millennia ago, or even phenomena not explainable using conventional logic.."

"Artifacts from millennia ago? So what exactly does this have to do with the Golden Sword Throne? Just tell us already," Garen frowned.

Celine nodded, "Alright, I'll skip the unimportant introductions and get down to it. The Golden Sword Throne, is from a mobile ancient ruin that the Ancient Endorian and Nabudas Empire have both explored before. The Golden Sword Throne is actually a relic key retrieved from within the ruin."

"What is within those ruins?" Garen asked directly.

"The legendary Blood of Secrets, some say it is the key to immortality, others say it gives tremendous power. Nobody really knows or agrees on its true nature, but one thing is for sure: this item is incredibly valuable," Celine explained, "The locations of these ancient ruins are usually very hard to predict and pin-point. The times in which they appear are also not set. If it isn't for the Golden Sword Throne, it would be next to impossible to open the entrance to the site."

"What you mean by that is..."

Celine nodded again, "Exactly, there are all kinds of ancient ruins, and each of their contents are vastly different from the other, it's as if every ruin contains traces of the existence of a different civilization from the others. However one thing is for sure, each and everyone of them contain their fair shares of dangers and opportunities. Each ancient ruin contains a plethora of items of different values, we call these items 'Secret Treasures'. The ancient ruin in which the Golden Sword Throne used to reside, was found and explored by the Ancient Endorians a long time ago, only to be explored by the Nabudas Empire shortly after as well. It is believed that the ancient ruins still exist, in fact there is even the possibility that those two great civilizations might have left some souvenirs in there during their time within. But for whatever it is worth, because of their explorations, the Golden Sword Throne became known to be related to the Blood of Secrets. In fact, since then, Ancient Endorian Ruins and the Golden Sword Throne practically became the pronouns for the Blood of Secrets."

The trio fell silent after, as Garen and Su Lin tried to swallow and digest what Celine just told them.

The bonfire continued to burn, as it slowly got smaller and smaller. The room's illumination also started to get darker, the stars in the sky outside the window also started to become visible, as if they'd just woken up.

Celine looked at the both of them,

"Well? Do you still plan to leave?"

The both of them were still silent.

"There might be lethal dangers inside the ancient ruins, but there could also be opportunity. Some say that the ancient ruins hold strange weaponry and armors. You might even find mysterious animals in there. Some people even suspect that these ancient ruins are what's left of a dead civilization,"

Celine added.

Garen stood up, and looked outside.

"Let's wait till the Slash Brigade gets here. I suspect that Duskdune Shura baited us here for something malicious. The Slash Brigadewill definitely find us here eventually, maybe even the werewolves will find us."

"Just count the hours, those werewolves have probably already made out our tracks." Su Lin nodded, "They might just show up anytime now."

The trio then fell silent once more. After they finished eating, they started searching the house for some broken furniture to pile up against the windows. This way, the light from the bonfire would not be visible outside. Then they all fell asleep around the bonfire.

Not sure how long after...

BANG

Garen opened his eyes, half awake, he looked at the bonfire in front of him. He thought he had heard something.

BANG.

The bonfire made a small crackle again, small sparks flew up from underneath it. The bonfire was long out, the only light one could make from it was the soft red glow of hot charcoal.

As for Su Lin and Celine: one of them was dead asleep against the wall, while the other had made a small bed out of some stacked clothes on the floor, she too was dead asleep. Her face illuminated a faint red by the embers.

Garen was the only one awake.

He got up quietly, and went around the furniture, where he then stood beside the window and looked down.

Icy cold winds blew from the jungle outside, and with the winds came sounds from far far away.

Garen tried to look faraway, to the presumed source of the sounds.

Beyond the black ocean of trees, there were some specks of yellow light moving about. Now and then, one would be able to make out the weak banging of gunshots and wolves howling.

"Someone's coming..." Garen frowned, and sprinted back to the bonfire to wake Celine and Su Lin up

"Wake up! Someone is coming, stop sleeping!"

Both already well prepared mentally, Su Lin and Celine darted up awake. Without even saying anything, they both cleared their heads, found their water bottles and took a gulp, then went to the window together.

Celine sniffed the air carefully.

"There's the scent of werewolf, and also the scent of humans. There is also the scent of blood and gunpowder. Looks like they must have started fighting"

"Can you tell what kind of blood it is?" Garen asked softly.

"What do you think my nose is? That I would be able to tell where the blood came from?" Celine rolled her eyes at Garen.

"Leave that to me," Su Lin took out small telescope from her bag and pulled it to look at the source of the speckles of light.

Immediately, her face turned into a whole new shade of seriousness.

"It's the Slash Brigade!" They're fighting with the local werewolves! It seems to be quite a big fight!"

"Let me see," Garen took the telescope from her and took a look for himself.

Within the telescope's sights, he saw dozens of werewolf corpses littered about the light, while the Slash Brigade ran alongside the source of the light. Many amongst them looked like there were injured, obviously from being surrounded and then attacked by the werewolves. There was also Beo in the group. That usually stern cold blue haired genius, it seemed like for once he was looking absolutely miserable, and he definitely looked like he was having a tough time fighting the ambush of werewolves from every direction around him.

"It's the Slash Brigade, they've finally gotten in over their heads, they actually walked directly into the hunting area of werewolves. It doesn't seem like they even thought of approaching it with some sort of strategy or tact, they just overconfidently walked right into it!" Garen shook his head, "no surprise that they would come into conflict with the local werewolves."

"Should we go help them?" Su Lin asked.

"What do you think?" Garen shook his head again, "If it were the werewolves that we encountered earlier, there wouldn't be any need for our intervention, but from what I see here, these werewolves are way more powerful than the ones before."

"You mean they might be in serious trouble then? Sure we don't want to go help?" Su Lin took the telescope and observed the scene once more.

"Not necessarily, they will eventually enter the ancient ruins. The Slash Brigade probably just made a mistake, they'll catch up soon enough, I doubt werewolves would be able to slow them down at all." Garen decided, "When they resume their journey, we will enter right behind them."

"Made up your mind on entering?" Celine didn't seem convinced.

"Mm, I have decided. With the Slash Brigade leading the way, we will be much safer," Garen nodded with certainty.

"I better not go." Su Lin thought, and shook her head, "my presence will just slow you both down. Better if I just wait here until you both made it out and then rendezvous with the Slash Brigade after."

"That works too, who knows what dangers await us within. We might not be able to take care of you amongst all of that," Garen nodded in agreement.

"Then let's wait." Celine said softly.

The trio continued standing beside the window, staring into the distance as the small speckles of light grew brighter as they came closer in their direction.

Slightly over ten minutes, the lights arrived at the outskirts of the village. Everyone in the squad looked like a mess, only three were left, one was missing. In this small squad, two of them were holding torches. It seemed, for now, they had repelled the werewolves.

One of the three who remained cursed the werewolves aloud, while another was using the bark on a tree near him to rub off the blood from his machete.

Under the observation of Garen's trio, the Slash Brigade went straight for the entrance to the tomb.

Very quickly, they found the already opened entrance to the tomb, they hesitated for a second, and then one by one the Slash Brigade disappeared into the entrance along with their lights.

Obviously, they had known about this entrance all along judging by the way they found it without any delays.

"Let's go."

Garen turned and led the way down into the tomb entrance. Celine jumped, and landed right beside him, following him in.

"Please help watch over the entrance for us, just find something to cover it up."

"No problem," Su Lin answered quickly.

Garen led Celine back to the side of the tomb entrance once more, this time without hesitating, they both went down the stairs.

The rocky stairs were long and deep, leading down to a rock corridor that was definitely not a tomb. The corridor was long, dark and tight, every ten steps or so there were opposing holders for torches on the walls.

Garen turned on his flashlight and shone the way ahead. The corridor seemed to lead downwards endlessly, towards an unknown destination.

"Celine, pay attention to the scent of the Slash Brigade in front of us, make sure we don't get too close to them or else they might find out we're tailing them," Garen noted.

"No problem, just leave it to me." Celine nodded, "But why don't we just rendezvous with them?"

"In these ancient ruins where there might be some secret treasures, we cannot trust anyone," Garen shook his head in disagreement.

"I thought you were planning to catch up with them." Celine looked at Garen as she continued to walk.

The duo walked and stopped now and then to make sure there weren't any traps. Sometimes they would find steel needles stuck to the ground, obviously from traps triggered by the group in front of them.

The most well known symbol of Ancient Endorian culture, is their ability to connect earth and hell with their infinite stairs. The duo walked for over half an hour before they finally reached a brown door. It was ajar, and from the dust prints on the floor, one could easily make out a fresh set of footprints.

What was intriguing, was that there were two line of texts carved onto the walls around the door.

Garen leaned closer and shined it with his flashlight carefully.

"Be careful of sprites."

He read it softly, the walls were full of Endorian words, he could only roughly make out these few.

"What does it mean?"

Ra

Chapter 148: Weird 2

Celine shook her head, she didn't understand what it meant.

"Let's go, for whatever it's worth, the folks upfront have already cleared the way by going ahead," Garen walked into the door.

Behind the door was a room about the size of a small house's living area. The walls of the room were decorated with carvings of weird faces, some crying, some in fear, some stern faces etc.

All around the walls of the entire room were filled with these stone faces. It was as if they had protruded out from within the walls and were trying to escape, hundreds, if not thousands of them.

Celine couldn't help but inch closer to Garen as they walked carefully towards a pair of massive stone doors on the opposite side of the room.

The right door was ajar, obviously someone had already walked into it.

As the pair walked into the door.

SHHHHHHAAAAA

Tens of metal needles suddenly shot out from every direction in the corridor beyond, blocking the way forward.

Garen pulled Celine and took a step back.

SHHHAAAAAAA

The needles shrank back into the floors and walls, once again revealing the dark and seemingly endless corridor.

"Be careful, it looks very dangerous," Celine reminded, "I smell a horrible stench coming our way."

"A stench?" Garen was stunned hearing that, and he started paying a lot more attention to the walls on both sides of the corridor.

On each side of the wall was a small hole about the size of a fist. From within each of those holes, a wormlike creature that glowed a dark green hue started to climb out. When both wormlike creatures finally made their way out, they revealed locust-like wings from their body and started flying; then only the duo could make out their full appearance.

These weren't just worms, they were little girl-like things that had dark green skins covered in smooth insect scales. While they had a slender and potentially attractive body shape, their faces were a total turn off as they looked incredibly sly and evil, not to mention the horrible stench.

The worm-girls flapped their wings rapidly, and made insect like noises. They were headed straight for Garen and Celine. As they got closer, they opened their mouths to conjure some sort of an evil smile, revealing a set of saw-like teeth.

"Sprites!" Celine took two steps backwards, hoping to pull away from them, "these must be the legendary sprite, be careful! They have very sharp teeth!" She slowly pulled out her belt, her gaze never straying away from the two sprites.

"Sprites?" Garen was at a loss for words, these abominations looked absolutely hideous, and yet they still had such cute names, surely their appearances did their names no justice.

"Garen you focus on protecting me! Sprites especially like eating little girls, they'll definitely focus all their attacks on me!" Celine yelled in fear.

"Ha?" Garen only just noticed, the two sprites only paid attention to Celine with their gazes of greed and lust.

WHOOSH

The two sprites suddenly pranced on Celine. They didn't even bother with Garen, they just circumnavigated him by flying around his left and right.

SLAP!

Garen reached out his right hand and very swiftly caught one of the sprites. With his left hand, he flicked the other sprite with his finger, sending it on a collision course with the wall.

Grabbing the sprite felt just like grabbing a typical beetle. Their body had no warmth whatsoever.

"Just like a typical insect, so weak," Garen frowned.

"Be very careful, sprites have a really resilient body structure, the Neptune Fist have records about them in their books, documenting how they're very hard to kill!" Celine quickly reminded, "no matter if you burn, drown or stab, whatever you do, you will never be able to completely get rid of them!"

"Wow, that's something," Garen's frown grew deeper.

On the other side, the sprite that had been struck to the wall got back on its feet and was now back in the air. This time, it was onto Garen with deadly speed.

SLAP!

Garen swung his free hand and slapped that sprite to the wall, then he squashed it against the wall to be sure.

BANG!

The part of the wall which met his hand sank in around his palm, a great amount of dust fell from that spot and around the corridor.

As Garen lifted his palm off the wall, the sprite underneath was unscathed, looking only a little dizzy.

"They're really strong indeed!" Garen finally realised.

KA CHA!

He suddenly felt a sharp pain on his right hand, and quickly let go of the sprite he was clenching in it.

As he pulled his palm back, he saw a small wound cut open by the teeth of the sprite. They definitely had some really sharp teeth, seeing how they were able to bite through his tough skin with ease.

"Let's just run! Head straight towards the needles!" Celine drew her belt in one quick motion, whipping the now free sprite, sending it into a dizzy spell like its other half.

Garen followed closely behind Celine, running towards the spot where the needles protruded earlier.

SHHAAAAAAA

The needles protruded from every part of the walls and floors again, but this time, Garen mustered his might and kicked right into one of them. With a loud snap, it broke into half, revealing a small space for the two of them to run through, and away from the sprites.

They sprinted for a while, encountering many junctions along the way, but each time Celine wouldn't even hesitate, she would sniff the air for a split second, then continue forwards.

After a long run, and a few more flights of stairs, they were finally stopped by a massive black arched door measuring at least 10 meters in height. Like the other doors from before, it was also ajar, revealing a spacious black stone hall within.

The black stone hall was brightly illuminated, in its centre, there was a black altar with a silver double-edged sword stuck into it.

The double-edged sword was about the width of a palm, and on it there were carvings of fist sized symbols. On its hilt were two sprites smiling and hugging each other carved into it in perfect uniformity.

Suddenly they heard some low hums and loud banging noises coming from within the hall.

BANG!!!

A massive living thing was thrown against the arch of the door, shaking the ground around the hall as it landed, and raining more dust onto its inhabitants from the ceiling.

When the dust cleared, Garen and Celine finally make out what the massive thing was.

It was actually a giant sprite towering over 5 meters in height!

It looked just like the sprites from before, greenish body, with full breasts and a slender body. All across its naked skin was covered in tough green insect scales, its mouth filled with sawlike teeth and a face that was insidious beyond belief.

SHHHHHHHH

The giant sprite roared, and got back on its feet almost immediately.

Garen and Celine hastily ran into the door.

Within the hall, Duskdune Shura and Flamingo were standing calmly on one side of the altar, Flamingo wielded the black sword, and was fending off combined attacks from Beo and another person.

The three of them were engaged in an intense fight, making sounds like a hurricane had struck.

BANG!!!

Beo was sent flying to the wall after being slashed by Flamingo, as he slowly slid off the wall, he started puking blood, looks like he was injured pretty badly.

Flamingo swung his sword around casually, and a silver circle of light appeared in front of him.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

Another bearded man dressed in military fatigues wielding a short axe stood in front of the silver curve, his body suddenly shook violently, small red spots suddenly appeared underneath his skin, as if he was having a bad case of goosebumps.

"Crack!"

Flamingo rose his sword and slashed it downwards.

BANG!

Another low hum, and the bearded man too was sent flying backwards. He rolled on the ground for a while before finally ceasing and lying flat, his axe flew around and landed in the side of his head with a loud crack.

Garen and Celine also noticed a woman in a suit sitting against the wall in the hall. Her face was incredibly pale, and her chest was pierced through by a dagger, pinning her against the wall as her blood dripped into a puddle on the floor.

Yet despite this, she was still alive, and still struggling to pull the dagger out of her chest.

As Garen and Celine entered, everyone ceased in their steps and took notice of them.

SHHHHHHH!!

The giant sprite flapped her massive wings, with a strong gush of wind she pranced towards Flamingo. She waved about her fingers which were tipped with incredibly sharp nails, almost dagger-like.

CLANG!!

Flamingo's eyes glew a golden red, the sword in his hand didn't even move, but in front of her a silver cross appeared in response to the sprite's attack.

A bright spark bursted between the cross and the giant sprite, sending the giant sprite and Beo flying backwards to the wall again. As they hit the wall, cracks in the stone wall were left in their wake.

The giant sprite was now dizzy, and was unable to get back on her feet.

Flamingo grimaced, and swung his sword in a circular motion with one hand, turning his gaze to Garen and Celine. He had obviously just easily fended off the attacks of Beo's squad, and along with it, conveniently took down a grumpy giant sprite.

Garen noticed that from the beginning till now, Flamingo had not even bothered to take off his black cloak, he's been fighting with only one hand this whole time. In other words, these skilled warriors paired with a legendary being are so powerful that normal folks don't even deserve their need to be serious in fighting them.

"Take care of yourself," Garen said softly to Celine before striding confidently towards Flamingo.

"What's up? Are you here for the Sword of the Sprites and the Blood of Secrets too?" Flamingo looked at Garen doubtfully, "The Blood of Secrets requires a certain brewing process to work. So even if you get it, it'll be useless to you. Only members of the Immortal Palace Alliance have the recipe, therefore only if you join us would you be allowed to use enjoy the Blood of Secrets."

Garen shook his head, "I've only just heard about the Blood of Secrets, I honestly have no full picture of what's going on here." He looked around at everyone in the hall, Beo and gang were either knocked out or heavily injured.

"Then why did you come in?" Flamingo was now intrigued, "You should know that only grave danger awaits you here right?"

"Of course," Garen nodded, "My objective is simple, and since you're a member of the Immortal Palace Alliance, could you please tell me where is Sylphalan?"

Duskdun Shura and Flamingo stood stunned, they exchanged looks and didn't utter a word. Flamingo's originally calm face also suddenly turned distressed.

"Syl...phalan....what business do you have with him?" Flamingo was silent for a while, then said this.

Garen didn't reply, he merely stared at him silently. He knew these two definitely knew the location of Sylphalan. After the many rounds of fighting the group, while Duskdun Shura and Flamingo looked absolutely unscathed, they must have at least suffered some damage or at least exhausted their energy. Hence Garen was confident that if he tried, he could at least inflict heavy damage on them should a fight erupt. Not to mention compared to Beo, right now Garen was closest in terms of skill level to the two of them.

"Screw it, Flamingo." Duskdun Shura suddenly spoke, he slowly walked up to the altar and lightly pulled out the Sword of the Sprites.

SHHHH.....

With a soft sound, the Sword of the Sprites was slowly pulled out from the altar.

"We've achieved our objective for this time, you can have the sword. There isn't what I want here. Let's go."

Duskdun Shura turned around and left straight through the door.

Chapter 149: Secret Sword 1

Flamingo frowned for a bit.

"Hmm, alright. What about the Blood of Secrets."

Duskdune Shura turned the Sword of the Sprites around, and softly popped open the tip of the hilt. Turns out the tip of the hilt hid a small little container, and within it poured out a miniscule amount of dark red blood.

Duskdune Shura skillfully poured the blood into a glass bottle he had in his other hand.

"Here it is. Let's go, I don't think this is enough for us to make one portion."

"That will depend on how pure the blood is." Flamingo shrugged, and suddenly swung his sword around his back, hitting the now recovered giant sprite, sending her flying once more, and half fainting again.

"Have the sword!" Duskdune Shura threw the Sword of the Sprites to Flamingo.

Catching the Sword of the Sprites, Flamingo threw away his original weapon and stroked its length with his hand.

"Worlds Will Moan, Sprites Begone!"

HUUMMMMM

The runes on the Sword of the Sprites started glowing along the path his hand stroked. One by one they glowed a bright red until the entire sword was glowing and shaking, making the sound of a low hum and transforming into a bright red longsword.

The red glow from the sword was so bright it illuminated the surroundings of Flamingo until even Flamingo himself was a bright red.

"This is....!!!" Garen took a few steps back, his face now filled with rare fear. He had seen great warriors like Duskdune Shura, and he has also met skilled swordsmen like the Eight-Arm Dragon King. Heck, he's even met powerful werewolves that were only known to legends; yet now, for once, he was afraid.

Flamingo brandished the sword in his hand like a magical light show, it was of such magnificence that Garen couldn't help but skip a breath now and then. The sight, was truly one to behold, almost like magic!

Flamingo grimaced, and raised the sword high up.

"End!"

The red light suddenly reached a scorching brightness, Flamingo lightly swung it.

SLASH!!!

A bright red curve formed from that swing, and it started to fly towards the giant sprite. The sprite seemed like she was trying to escape, but she simply wouldn't move, and could only watch in despair as the red curve came close and slashed through her waist.

Without a sound, the sprite started falling into two pieces separated between the waistline, and fell onto the ground. The parts where her waist used to be was now two clean cuts, smooth like polished metal.

The red curve also dimmed out and disappeared after the slash.

The Sword of the Sprites in Flamingo's hand also dimmed out. His face looked like he was incredibly tired, it seems that the sword consumes a great amount of energy to wield.

Celine was now completely stunned, she could only stare at the Sword of the Sprites with silent alert.

"Should we still try to pick a fight?" She whispered to Garen

He hesitated, and observed the duo before responding in doubt.

"This is not right."

He walked up and blocked the exit of the duo.

"What? Do you want to fight us?" Flamingo looked at Garen doubtfully. Flamingo didn't look as chill as he was before, his fight with Beo's Slash Brigade trio earlier definitely injured him internally. He's not a user of hard Qi, and had obviously been injured by a good amount of heavy firepower. Not to mention he had just used his remaining energy to use the Sword of the Sprites to rid the giant sprite, he must be heavily injured now.

Garen took a look at the Sword of the Sprites in Flamingo's hand, he was definitely still heavy hearted.

"Well, you seem to have sustained some pretty heavy injuries, so I will not fight you. Duskdune Shura, my request is simple, tell me what's the use of the blood and give me the Golden Sword Throne, it is the relic key for this area."

Duskdune Shura's old face made no expression, "Nice observation skills, I'm surprised you could tell we're heavily injured."

"Just give it to me, I would rather not take advantage of your situation now, but consider this time as a bad miscalculation in your strategy. I'm not sure why you wanted to bait us in here, but this does not affect my need to achieve my final objective." Garen stepped up, his eyes slightly drooping, his body emitted a surge of intimidating energy. He was adjusting his stance and summoning his hardening Qi, he wasn't sure if the Sword of the Sprites in the hands of Flamingo could cut him, but he was willing to try.

Should a fight break out, for sure both sides would end up heavily injured. Garen might be unscathed for now, but he was still outnumbered, so even though the both of them are heavily injured, he still doesn't stand a healthy chance.

Duskdune Shura started laughing.

"I'll let you win this time." He straight took out the palm sized Golden Sword Throne and threw it at Garen, "What a pity, if it wasn't for those rascals messing up my setup outside, perhaps we could have.....Ah screw it, let's not talk about it. We will meet again, goodbye."

"Goodbye." Garen caught the Golden Sword Throne, and smiled for a bit. He gave way and watched as the two of them left in a single file.

"Let's follow them out," Garen turned around and told Celine.

Celine nodded in agreement.

The two of them turned around to look at everyone around the room, after a short moment of hesitation, Garen lifted a member of the Slash Brigade in each of his hands, and took quick steps to follow up with Duskdune Shura and Flamingo.

"Be careful, if I'm not wrong, coming in may have been easy, going out is most likely going to be tougher." Celine reminded Garen.

Garen nodded, and at this moment Beo and the bearded man in his arms started to come to.

"That rascal Duskdune Shura, I WILL KILL HIM ONE DAY!" The bearded man moaned softly as he slowly awoke.

"You better take care of yourself first," Garen said, "So many of you versus the two of them, not to mention you even had a giant sprite on your side, yet they still managed to leave in one piece."

"Let go of me!" the bearded man yelled, "Who do you think you are? Do you even know how powerful Duskdune Shura and Flamingo are?!"

"What's wrong with you? Garen saved you, and yet you don't even thank him!" Celine glared at him sternly.

"I could've easily made it out with or without his help!" the bearded man groaned. He struggled out of Garen's grasp and took a few clumsy steps away before finally standing straight. Despite his face looking a little pale, he seemed to have regained his mobility.

Garen looked at him with slight, but he couldn't give a damn, and continued walking until they reached the needle barriers where they encountered the sprites earlier.

Now they could only see the corpses of the two sprites, their bodies nicely sliced through the waist like the giant sprite earlier.

Garen knelt down beside the corpses and gently picked up one half of a sprite's corpse.

As he touched it, the corpse instantly disintegrated into black dust all over the floor, leaving only its wings. Each sprite had two pairs of locust like wings, Garen thought for a moment, and decided to take two pairs for himself, pocketing it, he quickly stood up and left.

By this time, the bearded man was nowhere to be found.

"This ancient ruin doesn't look dangerous at all!" Garen said to himself as he rushed out.

Celine jumped and hung onto his shoulders.

"The biggest problem with the sprites' ruins is the giant sprite, but since Duskdun Shura and Flamingo took care of that for us, we should be set. If you tried coming alone it might've been a different story."

"So why did you come here? Don't tell me it's because of pure curiosity."

"Nothing much really, it's just that I've read about the ancient ruins for the longest time, and I really didn't want to miss the opportunity to see one for myself. If I didn't come, I would've never seen things like the sprites, and not to mention that weird magic work of Flamingo's new sword."

"You're right, if you hadn't seen it for yourself, who would've believed that Flamingo would gain abilities like that?" Garen felt a little grateful as well.

The two of them continued to rush ahead, the corridor seemed to pass behind them, as their talking didn't slow them down at all.

"But why aren't the others anyhow interested in the sprites?" Garen was baffled, "And why did they leave so quickly?"

Suddenly his eyes opened wider than before, as if he just had an epiphany, and Celine too did the same, they both looked at each other.

"THE RUINS MUST BE A TRAP!" Celine yelled.

Without another thought or word, the duo sped up and sprinted even faster towards the exit.

With Beo in one hand, and the Golden Sword Throne in the other, Garen felt a cold breeze coming from the Golden Sword Throne, it made him feel incredibly uneasy. The process of which he obtained the relic key was way too easy, from Duskdune Shura fighting with the Slash Brigade, to all the traps and obstacles being removed by them, plus ending up with being able to pick up the Golden Sword Throne without the slightest effort. It was all too fishy. The members of the Immortal Alliance are never this friendly, it seemed like they were intentionally giving the relic key to Garen.

"I hope nothing bad happens."

Very soon, Celine and Garen made it to the very first ghost faced living room.

WHOOSH

Just as they entered, they saw Duskdune Shura and Flamingo leaping to evade a massive blade's slash.

Flamingo held onto the glowing Sword of the Sprites firmly as it glowed a bright red, and he stared sternly at the other side of the living room. It wasn't just him, but there was Duskdune Shura, the bearded man, and some strangers of unknown origins.

Everyone was spread apart, staring at a shadow in the middle of the living room.

"Five more minutes until the ancient ruins collapses! We do not have time, Garen! Quickly come help! Or else we might all not make it out!" Duskdune Shura was the first to notice Garen's trio arrive.

"What's going on?!" Garen turned his gaze to the shadowed figure in the middle, then he was stunned.

That being was about the height of a human, with green scales all over and the looks of a sprite. Except that this one didn't have any wings, and was wielding a green equivalent of the Sword of the Sprites.

By the looks of everyone, it seems like this was a truly intimidating fellow.

As if he could make out the puzzled look on Garen's face, Duskdune Shura explained, "Originally I was confident I would be able to fight these damned sprites, except we got injured by those rascals earlier, now we can only face this ourselves..."

CLANG!!!

Duskdune Shura took a backstep, evading the slash from the sprite, the sword landed on the ground, leaving marks where it meets the ground.

BANG BANG!

After two loud gunshots, the sprite got shot in the head, and its body disintegrated into many little sprites, flying about, and attacking whoever they find in their path.

Garen tried to keep his calm, these little sprites' sharp teeth can easily bite through his hardened skin, if he doesn't pay attention he might lose it.

"Now I've achieved my objective, I've acquired the Golden Sword Throne, there's no need for me to be involved in this; I should find a way out as soon as possible"

He turned his gaze to where the exit stairs would've been. What was weird, was that there was no door now, it was as if the exit never existed in the first place.

During this short time, Duskdune Shura swept his palm and hit two sprites in front of him, Flamingo followed in sync and slashed them into four clean pieces. Their actions drew the attention of most sprites.

The bearded man on the other hand swung his dagger around blocking the attacks of the sprites. His face was a pale white, his arms were also numb from the continuous attacks, but suddenly he had an epiphany, and pulled out a black grenade.

"Fuck this! If I'm dying, we're all dying together!" He pulled out the safety ring and threw the grenade to the middle of the room.

Duskdune Shura and Flamingo rapidly retreated to the corner of the room, Flamingo's Sword of the Sprites kept drawing new red curves in the air, slicing every sprite around him, and making some sort of a half circle defense line between the two of them.

The two of them noticed the bearded man's action, but they stood unfazed, and only smirked.

Instead it was the trio that just got in that were shocked, one of them quickly took out his gun and aimed it at the bearded man, but it was too late.

"You're insane!" Celine was the first to notice this, and quickly ducked to hide behind Garen.

Using a grenade in a crowded and tight room like this, even the shockwave alone will be able to cause serious damage to everyone. The bearded man intends to bring everyone down with him!

"Stay safe now! Duck!" Garen too saw the grenade, he took a deep breath and expanded his entire body, before he reached his maximum expansion, he pulled Beo and Celine behind him.

Chapter 150: Secret Sword 2

RUMBLE!!

A loud crash.

A massive fireball blew up inside the living room, red light illuminated everywhere and everything in an instance. Hot air from the fireball gushed out in every direction.

Garen could only feel the red light as he tightly shut his eyelids, but his ears rung from the shockwave, so he couldn't hear anything. He could only feel a numbness in his head as immense heat wrapped his body and burned him in every exposed spot of skin.

"I'm hurt!!!"

He couldn't spare time to think, so he started rolling on the ground.

When he opened his eyes once more, half of his clothes were still slightly on fire, the smokes from embers on his shirt were rising from as they sought to burn it all.

He quickly ripped his shirt off and stepped on it to put out the embers.

Smoke filled the living room, nobody could see anything clearly. There were two spots on the ground that were still visibly on fire.

"Are you alright?" He turned around to check on Celine and Beo. Save for the dust filled face, Celine looked pretty alright, while Beo was shook awake by the shockwave and stood up with a loud moan.

"I'm alright! That madman! How could he use a grenade in a place like this! While he may not cherish his life, I cherish mine!" Celine said while spitting out dust and dirt from her mouth.

Garen scrunched up his face as he suddenly heard the sound of low rustles coming from the living room.

He looked about the room trying to determine the source and saw everyone as the smoke started to clear.

Duskdune Shura and Flamingo were still standing right where they were before, unscathed and untouched by the explosion.

The trio that just came in were in a worst state, all of them were bleeding from their ears, one of them lost a chunk of flesh on his right arm, whilst all three of them were all still on fire and desperately trying to put it out.

The bearded man, strangely, was also barely injured, he climbed up and looked at everyone coldly.

At this moment they realised the rustling sound was coming from the ground.

A large amount of sprites burnt to black were on the ground, not dead. In fact despite being charred, they got up almost immediately into the air and regrouped into the form of a man sized sprite.

"Everyone be careful! If we don't deal with this fucker we'll never get out!" Duskdune Shura belowed with a serious tone.

"No wonder you baited all these warriors here!" One of the trio, who was a blonde girl, yelled back angrily.

In this moment, the sprite seemed to be fearful of Duskdune Shura and Flamingo, it turned around and instead tried to kill everyone else. This asshole was not afraid of guns or swords, its body was hard beyond belief and even if one were to slice through, it'll just dispersed and reassemble. This was true immortality!

The bearded man had just thrown out a grenade, and was obviously the number one target for the sprite. The sprite ran straight for him, without even much effort it sliced the bearded man's dagger in half. It was only when he cowardly ducked and rolled on the floor was he able to evade their attack.

"If I survive this, I will remember this day where you saved my life."

Beo unsheathed his sword and ran towards the sprite to help the bearded man.

Garen evaluated the situation of his own body, while his skin suffered some light burns, he wasn't hurt too bad that it would affect his ability to fight.

"What now? Even grenades can't touch this fucker!" Celine asked him softly from behind him.

"No rush." Garen shook his head, "For now it is no threat to us, let's just observe the situation."

The sprite was definitely powerful, while it didn't pose a threat to Garen for now, he still had to be careful.

"Garen, are you not going to do anything?" Duskdune Shura noticed his inaction, "If we don't kill it, none of us are getting out!"

Garen squinted his eyes in intimidation and took a sweep looking around the room, "If even you folks can't handle him, how will I stand a chance?"

""As long as we can chop off the Sword of the Sprites from the hand of this sprite, its ability to regenerate will be impeded. We need you to help suppress it, I'm carrying the Blood of Secrets. If I get taken down and this asshole gets its hands on it then it'll be impossible to defeat." Duskdune Shura responded with a stern face.

"Alright," Garen wasn't sure if he was lying or not, but one thing was for sure: they were all stuck here without an exit, and if he's right then this could be a way out. Plus, Garen had long wanted to test the abilities of this fellow.

He stepped up, staring at the human like sprite.

The sprite seemed to have sensed something, it stopped in its steps and turned around, it clenched and unclenched its mouthful of sharp teeth, staring in intimidation at Garen behind it.

"Watch out!" Celine yelled from behind Garen.

Garen nodded.

BANG!

There was a light shook of the ground as the humanlike sprite ran towards Garen, the air around it made a loud hum as it passed through the living room.

WHOOOSH

The loud tear shook the whole room.

Garen dashed right at it, he put his five fingers in his right arm together like a blade and pointed it straight at the head of the sprite. He was mustering such strength that the veins on the back of his palm protruded like steel cables.

"THROW ! !"

Garen's hand blade turned and became a palm facing the incoming Sword of the Sprites wielded by the charging humanlike sprite.

BANG!!

The two of them crashed into each other, the sprite was lifted into the air within a split second and thrown back like a kite on a draft, the great force plus the shockwave made it impossible to disintegrate into little sprites.

"Do it now!"

Duskdune Shura made low growl, and took a step back.

A red line flew from his back and it welcomed the backwards flying sprite coming in his direction.

SLASH!

The body of the sprite was instantly sliced into half, spinning towards the wall on the right.

Ah!!!

The sprite made one last moan in pain, before disintegrating into millions of specks of dust.

With a loud clang, Flamingo sheathed his sword and pulled out the Green Sword of the Sprites from the wall.

Garen meanwhile was breathing deep breaths on the other side of the room.

"Alright, let's go."

He led the way headed in the direction of Duskdune Shura and Flamingo, as the wall behind the duo opened to reveal the exit staircase.

Celine leaped and hung onto Garen's shoulders.

Beo, the bearded man, and the other three were shocked beyond belief.

A monster they had no logical way of defeating, was completely annihilated within a few seconds. Everyone who was able to make it this far was the best of the best, or else they wouldn't have been able to survive till now, however after seeing what happened just now, they were all shook.

That sprite had fought them all, they were very aware of just how powerful it was, and yet Garen had only used one palm technique and he sent it flying across the room, in fact he was able to do it with such skill that it didn't disintegrate. Not to mention the way Flamingo cleaned up the end with a slash of his sword, it was of a whole different level.

"You have become much more powerful," Duskdune Shura said to Garen who was walking beside him now.

"It's just that I became quicker," Garen admitted timidly as he headed straight for the exit, "This time I'll let you go, but next time I will defeat you head on!"

"I look forward to seeing you try," Duskdune Shura grimaced.

Flamingo looked at Garen with suspicion, thinking of something nobody knew. From the moment Garen mentioned Sylphalan, Flamingo has been acting weird, in fact he seemed to have been less cocky since then.

After this whole expedition, Garen felt pretty fulfilled. He had achieved half of his objectives, firstly was the acquisition of the Golden Sword Throne, second was that he was able to indirectly fight Duskdune Shura. Sadly Duskdune Shura was heavily injured this time, so it wasn't a fair fight, and even if he wasn't, he was still covered by Flamingo. With the two of them present, Garen had zero confidence in being able to hold up in a fair fight.

Outside the tomb

Packs upon packs of Werewolves started surrounding the entrance to the tomb. Everywhere around the forest was filled with large wolves and Werewolves. Their leader, a tall and buff werewolf with black mane that looked like a lion's mane, stared at the tomb's entrance with his brows tightly held together, thinking of something.

Not far away, in the village and between the houses, Su Lin had somehow started walking with Joseph and were trying to sneakily observe the spot surrounded by the Werewolves.

"How's the situation like?" Su Lin asked Joseph softly.

"Can't tell, it's too far."

Joseph shook his head, "The wolf kind lost so many of their members, they definitely won't let this go easily, this is a matter of vengeance for them so they seem to have brought a large number and surrounded the perimeter."

"What an annoyance. We don't even know when Garen and the group are coming out," Sulin said as she frowned, "The Immortal Palace Alliance members are just here for the Blood of Secrets, but the Slash Brigade wants to kill Duskdune Shura plus some unknown objective of theirs. What does this have to do with Garen? Did he go in just so he could fight Duskdune Shura? Not to mention Celine..."

Su Lin really couldn't figure out why Garen went in. As for the still mysterious Celine, he even had less of an idea.

Although it looked like Garen was here to settle a score with Duskdune Shura, but in reality it seemed like he had other intentions, and Su Lin knew of this.

Garen that rascal, he went from a mortal to gradually growing his strength level by level, and then gaining respect in the martial arts communities. After which within a short time he started defeating greater and greater opponents, becoming stronger and stronger until he fought Andrela and became affirmed as the champion of the 12 Gates of the South, then recognized by the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate as their official Sky Warrior, he was certainly an incredible force.

He had seen Garen from his early days, and had been there for him every step of the way. In fact, he even managed to get Garen to owe him two favors. This time Garen had invited him to help pursue Duskdune Shura, but by the way things were looking right now, he was just baffled.

"Whatever it is, just don't get in trouble!" Su Lin muttered to himself in worry.

"They've come out!" Joseph exclaimed softly.

Su Lin quickly turned to look at the tomb entrance, the sky was slowly lighting up, and he could almost make out the situation.

At the entrance of the tomb, Garen carried Celine and walked out slowly. He had some burn marks on his, but his expression still looked like he was pretty chill, obviously everything was alright.

As he noticed the surrounding Werewolves, his expression sank, and he just stood there silently.

Very soon, another two more people protruded from the tomb entrance, it was Duskdune Shura and Flamingo, one behind the other, walking out calmly. Their mere presence created a ruckus in the Werewolves.

The leader of the pack howled with his head in the air.

Ahhhooooo~~~~!

The sound was one of despair and anger, it looked at Duskdune Shura and Flamingo with a deadly glare, as if it was about to explode anytime now.

A large pack of Werewolves prepared to pounce on the two of them, the deep growls and howls of the Werewolves filled the air, it sounded and looked like there were hundreds upon hundreds of them.

Garen squinted at the two of them standing beside him, and took a step away so he at least had some distance.

"Looks like their issue with the Werewolves are much larger than mine..." He lifted the side of his lip in a sly smile, looking right at Duskdune Shura.

If given the chance, Garen definitely wouldn't give up the opportunity to kill Duskdune Shura. Although he didn't have any sort of deadly vendetta against him, but Duskdune Shura did try to kill him once, and Su Lin also wanted Duskdune Shura dead for something else.

Not to mention, he was incredibly interested in the vial of Blood of Secrets being held by Duskdune Shura.

Long, despaired howls welcomed the sunrise, Duskdune Shura could feel Garen's uneasy and unfriendly glare from behind him.

"Well this is tricky." He knew that if he gave Garen the right opportunity, Garen wouldn't even think twice about ending his life.

"Flamingo, looks like I'm going to need your help to keep these Werewolves busy. I didn't expect that amongst the Werewolves there would someone who would be unaffected by my tricks," Duskdune Shura said to Flamingo under his breath.

"You sure you can take on the one behind you? In the state that you're in?" Flamingo frowned in response.

"Even if I can't, I must!" Duskdune Shura smiled slightly, "I have not felt exhilaration like this for many many years."

"I'll leave the Werewolves to you." His face resumed its usual demeanor.

"Leave them to me." Flamingo unsheathed his longsword, welcoming the arrival of the Werewolves.

Duskdune Shura turned around and faced Garen.

"By the looks of it you're not going to give up this opportunity are you?"

"I'm glad you understand." Garen smiled.

RUMBLE!!

Both of them took off in a flash, leaving a crater in their wake. Two shadows dashed towards the woods one behind the other.

"Today will be the day of your death!" Garen increased the velocity of his feet, and sped up with a loud bang.