

Mystical 151

Chapter 151: The Chase 1

"They've started fighting!" Joseph said, "Su Lin, those two freaks are fighting!"

"One of them is my friend...", Su Lin corrected him, "could you please not call him a freak?"

"Oh...I'm sorry, I was too excited."

The two of them could see Duskdune Shura leading with Garen in the chase as they dashed into the formation of the Werewolves. Like two bulldozers, where they hit the formation, Werewolves were sent flying. Even someone far far away could hear the sunken footsteps.

Very quickly, they disappeared into the shadows.

Soon, a small group of people emerged from the tomb entrance. First off it was the three strangers who had just entered, then there was the bearded man and Beo, everyone in this group looked like a pile of mess.

Upon seeing what had transpired outside the entrance, the group quickly ran to stand with Celine, in anticipation of an attack from the Werewolves.

What was interesting however, was that only a few Werewolves attacked them, while the majority instead were headed towards Flamingo.

At this moment, Flamingo was attracting everyone's attention.

He seemed to be chanting something, and as he did, he would stroke his sword ever so softly, and wherever his fingers touched the sword, it would glow in red. In total, nine runes started glowing bright, lava red.

Bang!!

Garen and Duskdune Shura's arms hit each others, some bits of loose cloth was sent flying.

The both of their arms kept colliding, as the fought furiously, letting out sounds like thunder each time their arms collided. As they fought like a hurricane, they slowly pushed their way out of the Werewolves' formation as well.

"You cannot kill me," Duskdune Shura suddenly produced a hand knife technique with his right hand, which was blocked just in time by Garen.

"How can you be so sure if you don't let me try?" Garen smiled.

Pow!!

The both them retreated away from each other, creating a small distance between them.

"First Dan!"

Garen put his foot down, and the ground shook violently, his body suddenly expanded. He gestured his right hand into a hand knife and went straight towards Duskdune Shura.

Bang!!

His hand knife hit a tree instead, littering wood shavings all over the floor. The tree shook slightly, and the top of it started slanting by a bit.

Duskdune Shura had evaded his attack by moving to the side, his face was hit by one of the bigger splinters, and it was obvious he was hurting a little from it. This made his expression change.

"Increase in speed seems to have also increase your strength. If that's the case..."

He too put his down onto the floor, drawing a weird curve shape with it, he was neither quick nor slow, but just fast enough to evade Garen's second hand knife attack.

He turned around, and revealed his right palm, which by now had some sort of a black mark on it in the shape of a V, like someone had painted it on with ink.

"The first Dragon's Gate!"

Bang!

Garen's face dropped, he thought he had evaded it.

He was certain he had seen himself evade it early, but still somehow he got struck. He felt a his right waist going numb, just like the time he first got hit by a palm technique.

"Fuck!" Garen didn't want to believe in this witchcraft, so he returned with another palm, "I refuse to believe you hit me!"

Since he couldn't evade it anyways, he decided to repay pain with pain, and released his fury onto Duskdune Shura.

However, he only managed to hit the seams of his clothes.

"Second Dragon's Gate!"

Again it came, when he heard Duskdune Shura's voice, Garen hastily retreated.

"Serial Swing Form!"

Both of his palms rapidly drew up a circle.

However, once more, Garen saw his Serial Swing Form hit nothing but air!

Just as he was about to hit Duskdune Shura's arm, his opponent suddenly twirled downwards, and sneakily evaded the collision, then lightly slapped Garen's stomach.

Pow !!

"What is happening?!" His pupils dilated, he could only feel numbness in his waist and nothing else, his internal energies were also starting to get messed up.

"Third Dragon's Gate!" Duskdune Shura announced, with a quick turn of his feet, he was suddenly behind Garen, with his back against him, he hit Garen's tailbone with his right palm.

"Second Dan! Rush Form!"

Garen scrunched up his face, his body expanded even more now as it started turning into a sinister green and black colour. He rushed forward with his shoulders, aiming directly for his opponent's chest.

But that weird, sinister feeling from earlier came back once more. Duskdune Shura evaded Garen's attack with a simple turn of his feet, and hit Garen in his tailbone again.

Bang!

Garen staggered forward a few steps, where his foot had stepped on, he raised grass and wood shavings into the air, creating an opportunity for him to pull his distance away from his opponent.

The two of them now once again stood facing each other in the same distance as before.

"Final Hit!" Duskdune Shura rushed towards Garen, his body now turned into a black shadow, his arms were like electric from an eel, the speed much much faster than the previous three hits.

"Bring it on!!" Garen bellowed, sounds of a python hissing suddenly started appearing around him, he tried to block with both of his arms.

But they were no good, the opponent's palms easily slipped past his Red Jade Palm's protection, and made their way towards Garen's chest.

"Double Shots Form!"

At this moment, Garen focused himself, both of his palms shot out like lightning and went straight for Duskdune Shura's chest. The breeze around them shifted from a soft blow to a loud tear in the sky.

Since he couldn't evade it anyways, might as well stop trying to evade and just return pain with pain.

"It's useless," Duskdune Shura, barely flinched, and continued forward.

Bang!

Duskdune Shura somehow evaded Garen's attack again, he now landed both his palms on Garen's chest. As the force and shockwave settled into Garen's chest, he paused for a moment, then he was sent flying backwards.

Sensing the response from his palms, it wasn't enough! Duskdune Shura focused his sights on Garen.

Without a moment of hesitation, Duskdune Shura jumped up in a split second and was suddenly flying in parallel with Garen's backwards flying body!

"Go back down onto the ground!"

His gestured to elbow Garen with his left hand, as it expanded and turned black, like a concrete pillar it hit Garen in the abdomen.

Boom!

Garen was sent straight to the ground, forming a crater around where he landed.

"The Fifth Dragon's Gate! It is finished." Duskdune Shura lifted his right palm.

Garen was not done.

[I refuse to believe I can't hit you!]

"Red Jade Palm!"

Bang !

The pine forest was filled with the sound of strong winds rushing through them, in between the leaves rustling and trees moving, there were still the occasional tweet from a bird or two.

Everything seem to have sunk into silence in a sudden, leaves from the pine trees fell like rain.

Meanwhile in the crater.

Garen and Duskdune Shura's right palms met each other, but neither were moving.

Suddenly, both of their bodies started shaking violently, the vibrations were being sent back and forth each other's bodies, this was a highly advanced technique of defensive vibration only mastered by the greatest warriors.

Duskdune Shura's face paled, he suddenly took three steps backwards.

Bang, bang bang, each step he made left obvious footprints in the ground.

The edge of his lips opened slightly to let out a small streak of blood.

"Fuck me...."

Garen slowly got up, his face now forming a sly smile.

"How is this possible?!" Duskdune Shura's eye opened wide in disbelief. "How could you... how could you still move?!"

After being hit by his first four out of seven Dragon Gates, no matter how strong one's Body Hardening was, it would still require at least ten plus minutes to get up, let alone move like this! He simply couldn't comprehend what was transpiring before his eyes.

"It's quite disappointing," Garen moved his body like nothing had hit him, "in reality you only managed to seal two of your palms. My second Dan can manipulate all of my inner energies, creating a high speed metabolism to tackle arteries that are sealed. Plus a little bit of assistance from some blood boiling. Not to mention, you didn't use enough energy..."

Garen pulled the remaining cloth on his upper body with one hand, revealing his statuelike muscular upper body.

With his long purple hair casually draped over the shoulder of his muscular body, Garen's both eyes suddenly glowed a bright red.

"This.....is the real 'finishing'"

Bang!

Before his last word dropped, Garen made a strong stomp on the crater, and dashed towards Duskdune Shura in a split second.

The both of them collided into each other, their arms exchanging attacks, releasing loud bangs over and over again.

Duskdune Shura was visibly moving backwards, as he tried hard to defend against Garen's endless attacks.

Ka Cha!

One of the pine trees was chopped by Garen's hand knife, like a thin bamboo tree's stem being sliced, it fell onto the next pine tree.

The both of them fought while moving about the pine tree forest, as they moved further and deeper into the forest.

"Red Jade!"

Garen's two palms suddenly glowed red, and moved in parallel towards Duskdune Shura.

With a loud bang, Duskdune Shura's both arms tried to block the attack but he was still pushed back for ten plus steps. By the end of those ten steps, he spat out some blood.

With his back against a nearby pine tree, Duskdune Shura could only feel a strong burning sensation from the parts of his arms where he had used to block Garen's attacks. As he lifted them up close to inspect, he noticed that they had started to form blisters like they had been burned by fire.

"This is...Firestream Fist??!! You...you...were able to master hardening techniques and still perfect this level of Second Secret Techniques!!??" Duskdune Shura's face was filled with disbelief.

Garen smiled a little.

"You were actually able to recognise it," since the opponent had mistook his Red Jade Palm for Firestream Fist, he decided to play along. It was true that Red Jade Palm had absorbed the attributes of Firestream Fist and Dark Iron Palm, in fact it was an enhanced version of both.

"Again!"

"Red Jade, Single Shot Form!"

Garen dashed forward, his right palm extended.

His entire right palm glowed red, releasing a great amount of heat, like iron burned to red, it aimed straight for his opponent's chest.

"Dragon Overturns Ocean Technique!!" Duskdune Shura yelled at the top of his voice, his face flashed a bright red, obviously showing he had used some sort of secret technique to trigger a hidden ability.

A low rumble started ringing in Garen's head, as if a massive masculine lion had appeared in front of him and was about to prance on him.

"Bravery Repression technique? I know that too!" Garen scoffed, suddenly a strong aura of courage appeared around him, the formless energy concentrated to form a massive white elephant charging towards the lion.

Bang!! Both apparitions disappeared at the same time.

Duskdune Shura fell backwards like a kite that just had its string cut, his mouth still spitting a massive amount of blood mid air, as his face turned a deadly pale.

Da! Da! Da! Da!

A string of gunshots echoed, a massive amount of bullets landed on Garen, creating a ton of sparks, forcing him to take a few steps back. This machine gun's bullet felt weird, it was incredibly strong, and even when it hit the body of Garen it felt like a string of needles had stabbed him.

"Run!" A sound came out of nowhere.

While Garen was still suppressed by the machine gun, Duskdune Shura immediately made a roll as soon as he landed and got back on his feet to run towards the depth of the pine forest.

When the gunshots finally stopped, Garen got back to his senses and noticed Duskdune Shura had ran, he quickly made chase.

"Running away already? You aren't even done letting me experience all the forms of Seven Dragon Gate!"

With one running and the other chasing, the both of them ran even further away from the Werewolves' formation, the elevation around them increased, it seemed they were headed uphill.

Chapter 152: The Chase 2

It was hard to determine how much time had passed beneath the blazing sun. Garen, who had just increased his speed, was slightly faster than Duskdune Shura's secret method. Their journey eventually took them to the edge of a sheer cliff.

At this point, they were so far away from their initial location that it was impossible to tell just how far they'd traversed.

The cliff shot up from the earth below, a face of white contrasted against a surface of dense, dark green pine trees densely clumped together.

Both of them stood firmly on the rocks found in between those pine trees.

Duskdune Shura was standing up above cliff with Garen just below him.

"Not running away anymore?"

Duskdune Shura wiped a blood stain off his cheek.

"Do you want the Blood of Eternal Life?"

Garen was taken aback at the sudden comment.

Duskdune Shura laughed and said.

"You and I both stand at the edge of body hardening technique. In this world, how many others are there just like us? Why must you fight me?"

"You almost killed my friend's family, as well as I. This is my reason." Garen shook his head as he explained. "We hold no grudges against each other. Perhaps we can even be friends in another world. If only..."

"Yes... If only..." Duskdune Shura sighed in accordance with him. He then raised an arm and revealed the blisters that covered all over his hands. It was the effect of the Red Jade Palm. "Have you met Palosa?"

"What about him?"

"The current you reminds me of him in the past." Duskdune Shura brought past memories to mind. "Palosa was like you before he became the Saint of Fist Technique, undefeated among the younger generation. He was not much weaker than the Grandmaster of combat of the older generations as well. Unfortunately..."

"Unfortunately what?" Garen stared at him calmly.

"Unfortunately you're not as magnanimous as he is."

Garen's eyes narrowed.

"Are you implying that I'm taking advantage of your injury? Isn't it logical to make good use of an opportunity presented before you?"

"You'll never surpass him." Duskdune Shura said with a gentle smile, pointing his toe and leaping backwards, landing on the very edge of the cliff.

"It's plain logic to grab hold of any means to an end. If that were not the case wouldn't have become what you are today.." Garen followed him closely upward. "That was your friend was it not? I'll send him to your way once I've finished dealing with you."

"You don't understand." Duskdune Shura shook his head slowly. "That is the difference between you and I."

His head tilted to look at the vast blue sky.

"The undefeated and the unconquerable. No one is a match for him as long as he lives, be it the top of this generation or the next. I look forward to our next encounter."

He smiled and fell backwards, disappearing beyond the edge of the cliff.

Garen, in shock, swiftly rushed to the top, his gaze following the sheer drop.

His eyes met Duskdune Shura gripping his black sword with both hands, blade sliding down embedded into the cliff wall. A deep gash followed his wake as he screeched downward.

There was another black knife further down the cliff. Mimicking his previous action, Duskdune Shura swiftly went down the sheer cliff of a few hundred meters. Two jet black horses met them on the cliff floor.

The person in a black coat on one of the horses looked up and stared at Garen.

Garen could see his opponent's face from afar.

It was the face of a beautiful woman, an eyepatch covering one of her two eyes.

"King Charlotte the third... " Garen muttered. "It must be you in the forest just now. Unfortunately, you're too late. How much can Duskdune Shura recover with his current age?"

Duskdune Shura had heat injected into his body by his Red Jade Palm. In a further aggravation of his injury, he did not have the time to treat his wound as he was being pursued for an extended period of time. It would definitely leave a mark for someone his age.

Garen started toward the way back, as he knew it would be pointless to keep up the pursuit.

He needed to get back to Celine and Su Lin immediately. Although the werewolf clan's target was Flamingo and not them, there was no guarantee that they would escape the crossfire unscathed.

Garen put his hand into his pocket and fiddled with the Golden Sword Throne along the way back. This item the size of a pen holder was unharmed during the intense battle as he was keeping an eye out to ensure it was kept out of the way.

Garen's mind flowed like a pleasant, incessant breeze into his mind.

His attention was on the attribution table, which was shaded in maroon while on the journey back.

His attribute points kept increasing at a steady pace. Although it was not as fast as the time he touched the Antique of Tragedy, it was still a considerable rate.

After the intense battle with Duskdune Shura, his potential stats were at 200%

'Strength 2.66, Agility 1.82, Vitality 2.15, Intelligence 1.53, Potential 214%.'

"It looks like I wasn't even strong enough to keep a heavily injured Duskdune Shura. He must have been horrifyingly strong in his prime. He is indeed the best in his generation." Garen felt a twinge of helplessness in his stomach.

"Should I increase my attributes first or my secret technique?" He hesitated. He currently had two secret techniques, the Mammoth Secret Technique and the Red Jade Palm. The remaining secret techniques had been absorbed by the two primary techniques for an enhancing effect.

"With the Red Jade Palm, I can barely manage to injure Duskdune Shura if used as a surprise attack. However, even so the damage isn't heavy enough to determine the battle's outcome. It could be used as a normal combat technique with an additional effect. If I can amplify the Red Jade Palm, its effect should be much stronger than the Mammoth; the only problem being that the remaining training lies with Celine. It might be troublesome if she finds out that I mastered the Red Jade Palm in such a short amount of time."

Garen hesitated.

He felt the limitless flow of energy emanate from the Golden Sword Throne.

"Whatever. I should stabilize my injury first. I definitely had some internal injury from Duskdune Shura's last punch after he sealed me with two of his Seven Dragon Gate punches.

He quickly focused his vision onto Vitality in his attribution stat.

0.3 points of Vitality were added instantly, jumping from 2.15 to 2.45.

His whole body temporarily numbed. He started feeling an itch within his bones and a cold breeze flowing out from his brain onto his whole body. It felt as comfortable as taking a cold bath in a hot sunny day. The internal injury he had on the palm of his hand quickly faded as well.

"There are a few points left." Garen felt the increasing flow of potential flowing but didn't use it after some deliberation.

There was no difference between adding the attributes and improving the body's potential in the long term. He will definitely become stronger and stronger in the future. He would be extremely powerful even in his normal state.

Increasing the skill level of a secret technique grants the practitioner an immediate boost in strength. However, the power of the secret technique is not limitless, and once capped would be very difficult to increase any further in the long run. Though secret techniques could be combined to achieve an even greater effect, realistically, the power level was fixed, and one would be less than powerless when stripped of his secret technique.

The main point was that with good innate talent, one was able to surpass a majority of fighters, no matter the secret technique. The foundation of one's body surpasses that of any secret technique.

The increment of the secret technique might improve the body's quality but it could be limited as it was still dependent on the prowess of the secret technique itself. It would only see a dramatic increase in its early stages.

One was preparing for the long run, one was preparing for what was ahead.

"I'll think about this once I collect more points." Garen resisted his impulse in using the attribute points as he sprinted into the Pinehill forest.

Soon, the grave of the ancient ruins behind the abandoned village crept up from the horizon. The innumerable corpses of the werewolf clan began to come into view.

The leader of the werewolf with the black mane could be seen hanging above a big pine tree with a silver sword nailed into its body.

The landscape was showered with blood; the ground a blend of crimson and grass green.

Blood was prevalent across the scene. Werewolf corpses were strewn across the ground, Some beheaded, corpses still. Yet others were split into half from head to toe, and some were cut clean from the waist. The ways that the werewolves died rivaled their many corpses.

Death reigned the field.

Garen felt like he was stepping onto a thick wet carpet as he trudged onwards. His boots would ripple with the sound of water as his feet made contact. It was none other than the sound of blood.

The smell of it was so strong that Garen furrowed as he walked past through the sea of corpses to the entrance of the grave.

It looked like it had been caved in; the entrance was blocked with gravel.

"Su Lin!!"

Garen shouted.

"Celine!!"

His shouting continued as he walked towards the village's houses.

"Su Lin, Celine! Are you guys dead yet?!"

Soon, Garen went back to the building that they were hiding in. It was completely silent inside. He trotted towards the staircase and went upstairs.

He went up to the second floor, and then the third floor and finally to the room they were all initially hiding.

The door creaked as he opened it.

On the ground laid three bodies. Celine and Su Lin were among them. There was another young man who seemed like the policeman that he met from the Demon Hunters.

All three of them were supine; whether they had any injuries was a mystery.

Garen knelt down to examine them closer. They were merely unconscious, and apart from torn garments, there were no physical injuries at all.

He was relieved to see they were unharmed. He walked to the far end of the room and began kindling a fire with several pieces of wooden furniture and a piece of flint he had in his bag.

He used a metal can to boil some water as the fire burned.

He sat silent, waiting for the trio to come to.

After a while, with a painful expression on her face, Celine was the first one to moan as she slowly got up from the ground.

The first thing this fellow checked was her shirt when she got up.

She had the same white tee shirt and jeans as Garen, except it was torned and holes could be seen everywhere.

"When did you return?" Celine looked at Garen who was sitting in the corner.

"Not long ago." Garen poured out the hot water into a paper cup and blew gently as he waited for the water to cool down. "We'll wait for the other one to wake up and leave. The werewolves will never stop now that so many of their kind had died. We better not get caught up in this."

He noticed a few fresh cuts from Celine's shirt and asked, "You fought?"

Celine rolled her eyes. "Of course I did! Those two would be dead otherwise! That sword wielding Flamingo person is too strong..."

Traces of fear still lingered as she recalled her fight.

"His sword technique was inhuman!! There were red beams coming out from his sword as he simply waved the sword around. The red beams cut down whatever was in its path! It was horrible." Celine caressed a single mark on her supposedly white belt.

"This was where I managed to block Flamingo's sword strike. We were lucky he did not use that crazy sword technique often and used ordinary sword techniques most of the time."

Chapter 153: The Journey Back 1

"What of the werewolf clan?" Garen asked as he drank the hot water he had poured "What of the werewolf clan?" Garen asked as he drank the hot water he had poured out a while ago.

"A lot of them died. In the end there was a white werewolf with claws that were a meter long, which looked like some sort of a weapon. He fought with Flamingo, but the both of them took it somewhere else not long after. I used up my remaining energy bringing these two here after that and passed out. I don't know what happened after that"

She gave the two fainted men a few quick presses as if she was trying to relieve their dizziness. She then got up and sat beside Garen.

"Oh right. The white werewolf was really strong! He was standing toe to toe with Flamingo. He should be the leader of the werewolf clan. I've heard that highly skilled werewolves are going after Flamingo as he had killed an important figure in the clan."

"Flamingo was heavily injured." Garen shook his head, "The white werewolf might have noticed this and didn't want to retreat because it would be hard to have his revenge if Flamingo fled."

At this moment, Su Lin and Joseph were slowly coming to.

"Alright let's go. This place is reeks with blood and will definitely attract a lot of people. We should leave immediately." Garen calmly said as he stood up.

"Where are we going?" Celine jumped and landed her small, dollish body on Garen's shoulder.

"Please stop sitting on my shoulder all the time." Garen frowned.

Celine's pants were tattered, and exposing a good half of her hips and buttocks. It felt completely different when she sat onto her shoulder with her bare skin touching him.

He would have felt nothing if she really had been a young girl. This girl however obviously wasn't; and on top of that she had an amazingly hot body when transformed.

"Don't tell me you're interested in this young girl's body?" Celine smiled slyly. "I might be able to satisfy that.. since it's you we're talking about~~"

"I see you're still talkative even when heavily injured." Garen shook his shoulder and Celine almost fell down as she weakly moaned in pain. She had a severe internal injury, so severe that she had trouble balancing herself.

"My body is weak and small, please be gentle with it, now~~" Celine quickly balanced herself and spoke in a weak voice.

"Keep this up and I will throw you off my shoulder." Garen was tired of her fussing and started to pack up his things. Celine decided to hold her tongue from then.

Su Lin and Joseph were still lying on the ground, still disorientated. Garen walked towards the duo and scooped them both up with one hand, and proceeded to leave the room thereafter

Both of them were clearly confused, it was as if they weren't fully conscious.

"Hey! What the-" Su Lin struggled drunkenly as he tried to release himself from Garen. However he couldn't move an inch under Garen's clamped hand.

Garen ignored their writhing and quickly went down stairs, as he looked at the grave's direction that was bathed in fresh blood.

"We should get ourselves a souvenir since we're already here."

""What kind of souvenir are you looking for?" Celine asked curiously.

Garen didn't reply her. He walked back to the battlefield filled with werewolf corpses and stood in front of the black werewolf leader.

The black werewolf was nailed onto the tree with his chest wide open, revealing solid, black muscles.

Garen put down both of them and reached his hand out towards the black werewolf's right claw and pulled it. With a click, the black werewolf's claw was torn from the body. Garen carefully put it away on his person.

"A sharp claw from the black wolf and the sprite's wings. I should find a collection room to store these things. Not everyone comes across these everyday." Garen smiled. "Let's go."

At this moment, almost sober, Su Lin and Joseph saw again the desolate, blood soaked scene, limbs and body parts strewn everywhere. Both of their faces went pale, even though they had just seen it awhile ago.

"Let's go to the nearest city from here, Pinehill City. Duskdune Shura managed to escape. How are the people from Slash doing?" Garen asked as he lead the way.

"The Slash team should be heading back now. They took the opportunity to escape amidst the werewolf clan's fight against Flamingo. They ran faster than us." Celine said, her voice slightly down "So, we just head back?"

"Do you have a better idea?" Garen replied coldly. He climbed one of the village's buildings and looked toward the horizon, trying to figure out which way was the way back.

"I really don't get why we came here in the first place." Celine said helplessly.

Su Lin smiled wryly as he looked at Joseph who was just beside him.

"What do you plan to do now?"

Joseph mimicked the smile on his own lips.

His original plan last night had been to disrupt the werewolf clan's hunting ceremony and end it for good. Never in his dreams did he expect to be involved in this strange incident. He felt like he became a main character after being an observer for the past twenty years.

"Let's talk about it when we go back. My family and friends are all in Pinehill City. No matter how powerful the werewolf clan is, I doubt they would attack the city when the Demon Hunters and garrison are on the watch.

"You never know." Su Lin shrugged his shoulder. "It's impossible to distinguish between a normal human and a werewolf before they transform. No one would be able to expect their ambush from within the city. In either case, we need to head back now. Come to the federation when you get the chance. Don't go bailing out on me now!"

"I know. I know."

They walked into Pinehill forest. through Dahl the Falls in the direction of Pinehill City. Celine was in charge of looking out for danger from their surroundings.

Garen was silent all the way through as he felt the endless flow of energy enter his body.

They managed to arrive Jiu Gu Clan's territory in dusk.

The clan's female leader greeted them with much hospitality as she let them rest after the long journey.

However, they kept pressing on shortly after, arriving at a hotel in Pinehill City sometime after 9pm.

The next day, dawn.

Garen was sitting on a sofa on the second floor of the hotel, which was beside a small red table. On top of it was a cup of black coffee.

Garen had sat on the sofa after a shower. He then poured a cup black coffee for himself and knocked it back swiftly.

Knock knock.

"Come in; it's unlocked."

The door slowly opened as Celine, in her white pyjamas, came into the room rubbing her eyes and yawning at the same time.

"Where is Su Lin?"

"He went to the telegraph station early in the morning to arrange a flight for us from the Federation. Right now's a good show of just how important he is. We would have had to take a flight from the nearest big city away Pinehill City if it were not for him, but with him around, we leave this place whenever we want."

Garen drank his warm, bitter coffee again. The concentrated aroma of the coffee dissolved across the room it disappeared past his lips.

There was a T-junction just outside of the hotel, pointing at Pinehill City. The sun was still in slumber, and yet a blend of horses and carriages rang through the streets.

"We met sprites and demon hunters yesterday, and right after that is a normal day. It felt like I was in a dream." Garen shook his head as he spoke.

"Do you feel uncomfortable seeing normal people with special abilities everywhere?" Celine pulled a stool in front of Garen and sat down on it.

"I can manage that, but that Joseph from yesterday had a strange look on his face when he returned. It felt like he had got a new life or something." Garen recalled that man's strange expression the day before.

"Looks like the clan of werewolves have something restraining them from revealing their identities to ordinary people. But what could it be." Celine was slightly curious.

"That's not our business in any case. Duskdune Shura was heavily wounded by me, and he won't be at his peak anymore, even if he recovers. But even that might not be the case, what with that Blood of Eternal Life he was talking about.." Garen didn't know what it was.

"Don't worry so much about it. We didn't come here specifically to kill Duskdune Shura." Celine curled her lips. "That's the Federation's job. All we need to do is stand by the sidelines and wish them luck."

"That's true. Well, whatever. That's the end of that."

"Indeed it is." Su Lin barged into the room. He was dressed in a white shirt with a black windbreaker and black trousers, carrying good amounts of swagger with his eye catching red hair that complemented his handsome face and golden earring on one of his ears.

What's even more shameless is the cologne he had on. It's strong smell invaded the room as he entered.

"What do you think about Suyu's number thirteen blue demon aroma series I just got from the perfume store?" Su Lin asked with a charming smile on his face. He could have seduced many a girl with that.

"It's disgusting." Celine replied as she immediately covered her nose.

"No way..." Su Lin's expression immediately disappeared. "Alright alright. I've received news a while ago; we'll end the Duskdune Shura operation here, as another international criminal was involved in it: Flamingo. Flamingo's threat level is one step higher than Duskdune Shura's, and this incident had shocked the whole International Police Joint Organization. They've sent a team to investigate this matter yesterday, and confirmed that Duskdune Shura was heavily injured, whereas Flamingo sustained minor injuries. The pair was confirmed to have accomplices with them.

"Does that mean the International Police Joint Organization is going to handle this situation for good?" Garen whispered.

"Yes, our Slash team from the Federation will only provide support for them. Our focus now has shifted beyond just Duskdune Shura, but also an even more dangerous criminal, Flamingo." Su Lin answered solemnly. "You may not know this, but Flamingo is that guy with that sword that emitted red beams. He was involved in a major crime in the Republic of the Tulip a long time ago, where he murdered three generals, twelve field officers and almost the whole army's upper echelon in a single night. The Republic of Tulip has been trying to kill him for the past thirteen years, but to no avail."

"That ferocious!" Celine was shocked. "The Republic of the Tulip is the country with the strongest military in the world, and they still couldn't do anything about him?"

"Nothing. Rumors say that he once destroyed five tanks with just his sword." Su Lin shook his head.

"Tch..." Celine was speechless, but suddenly turned her head and looked at Garen.

Garen then shook his head. "Even I can't penetrate through a tank's steel armor. It's much easier for him since he uses a sword."

"Both of you are monsters. Although you're weaker than him, you're not that far off." Celine started to laugh. "Well, I'm counting on you to protect me, then. You are Erudas' mentor, surely you wouldn't let him die while you watch from the sidelines."

"Speaking of which what have you done? What's the connection between Erudas and the Poker Organization? Are you planning drag me into this without any rhyme or reason? That's not happening" Garen said as he scowled.

"It's not a big deal, really. I foiled one of the Poker Organization's plans in Weisman and saved Erudas. They have been trying to kill us ever since. That's it." Celine summarised.

"I will deal with the Poker Organization. I haven't repaid them for attacking us yet." Su Lin started sneering. "Be it from the organization or a household's point of view, their actions are obviously blatant provocation."

He paused.

"I have already arranged for a direct flight back to the Federation in the afternoon. At least we didn't go home without gaining something; we have learnt about demon hunters and the like."

"Then we shall take a good rest and leave in the afternoon." Celine took up the coffee pot and drank directly from it. Garen wanted to stop her but wasn't able to in time.

"Would you like some?" Celine asked innocently as she deliberately licked the coffee pot with her tongue.

"Forget it. Go ahead..." Garen gave up on the idea of having another cup of coffee.

"It's an indirect kiss you know~~~" Celine tempted him.

"Not interested..." Garen stood up and walked to the window and left her to her own devices.

"Oh right Garen, The federation started their exam yesterday." Su Lin butted in, seemingly out of nowhere.

"Exam?" Garen was slightly stunned. "That fast..."

"Yeah, and we've known each other for nearly two years..." Su Lin nodded his head.

Garen was staring at the intersection street below and didn't reply.

The Federation exam was equivalent to the college entrance examination which was one of the main examinations for college students who were keen on entering university. His sister, Ying Er was participating in the exam today.

"We should be able to get back in time. Don't worry about it, I've arranged for the fastest airplane we have." Su Lin walked over and patted his shoulder.

Chapter 154: The Journey Back 2

Garen shook his head and smiled wryly. "I can't believe I've forgotten about this..."

Su Lin didn't say another word. He stood there beside him and watched the intersection traffic below the building together.

The room gradually became quiet, only the sound of Celine blowing at the coffee pot could be heard.

A long while later.

"What do you plan to do once you go back?" Celine asked the two of them from behind. "Su Lin, if you can help me sort out the Poker Incident and help me recover my body, I promise I will help you twofold, no matter what it is."

"Are you serious?" Su Lin swiftly turned around and asked her. He knew exactly how strong Celine was. Although she was not as strong as Garen, she was not that far behind. He estimated that she was as strong as Yoda.

"Of course."

"Alright. I'll arrange for everything once we get back." Su Lin nodded.

"My injury is very tricky to handle, and I'll need to borrow your father's authority." Celine was being serious, which was a rare in itself.

"Don't worry about it." Su Lin smiled.

Garen knew everything about Su Lin, as both of them were members of the Golden Hoop*. Su Lin was actually the general manager of the Golden Hoop group of the southern region. He even had the final say in the decision of the examination tasks. Garen smiled once he heard him, as Su Lin could probably solve the whole thing by just making use of the Golden Hoop's resources.

*Refer to Translator's Note

"Speaking of which, what should I do with my examination task..."

He looked at Su Lin. His mind couldn't escape the issue; his entrance to the Golden Hoop would concern his power and authority, and was the only way for him to not rely on Su Lin in this aspect. It would also have benefits for his dojo, obtain protection for his family members, not to mention a fixed amount of salary annually as well.

"It's alright. You've been a great help to me this time round, so I'll just accept this incident as the examination task instead." Su Lin replied readily. "You should wear the golden ring at all times for ease of recognition once you have officially joined us."

"No problem." Garen nodded.

Celine didn't ask any questions, though the two hadn't seemed to plan to hide it.

The three of them were shooting the breeze inside the room. Su Lin's perfume was scathingly criticised by the other two, and Garen avoided mentioning the Golden Sword Throne at all, as if he had already forgotten about it.

However, Garen understood that Su Lin had deliberately chose not to mention the Golden Sword Throne as he had already figured out that Garen really needed it.

"The item is in my care. Is it alright if I return it to you a year later?" Garen initiated the topic. He estimated that he needed a year to absorb all the potential from the Golden Sword Throne.

"You decide on that, since you're the one who fought for it. That thing is no longer important anyway, it was only meant to be a research object for the officials." Su Lin shrugged his shoulder since he didn't care much about it.

They chatted a bit more, and before they ran out of time, Garen went out to an art shop and bought gifts for his sister, parents and uncle.

Sin Gerro produces a myriad of ores and gems. Garen picked a blue jade gem for each of his parents, as there was a lasting superstition that it had properties that relaxed one's body. He picked a amethyst corsage for his sister for its minimal design and elegance.

As for his uncle, he went with a model of a wooden ship with two masts. The work towards the model was detailed and of high quality, which set him back twenty-something thousands dollars. After that, he simply bought a bunch of snacks as souvenirs for everyone remaining.

The three of them then gathered back at the hotel in the afternoon and headed straight to the airbase nearby via a shuttle carriage.

It took them only 8 hours to get back, even though it took them close to 2 days when they came rushing to Sin Gerro. They laid over twice and finally arrived at the Huaishan City Airbase in Galantia Province.

Garen got down from the airplane, while Celine and Su Lin continued their journey to their manor in Harmony City, since he still needed to heal Celine and sort out her incident with the Poker Organization.

Garen arranged for himself military transport and went back to the city area.

It was already 10pm when he arrived home.

The clouds swallowed the moon, leaving behind a pitch black sky. The whole of Huaishan City gradually settled down into peace and quiet.

A black carriage slowed down near the front of a residential area in the bluetree district and came to a stop.

It was marked with a black bird, its wings spread wide. It was the emblem of the flag marking it as a military carriage.

The driver was a young female soldier. She went to the back and knocked on the carriage frame after she had halted the two black horses.

"We have arrived sir."

"Oh. We have?"

Garen carried his baggages of varying sizes and got down from the carriage.

"Thank you very much, Sergeant Anli."

"It's nothing. I shall pardon myself now."

"Right."

The carriage took a U-turn and rushed off where it came from, and soon disappeared into the darkness of the unlit street. The faint light of the horse carriage was the lone visible thing in the distance.

Garen turned around and walked towards the gate, and saw a drunk, bald security guard sleeping soundly on a chair in the security booth.

He walked along the familiar community area and he could occasionally still spot a few homeless men snoring just beside the walls under the yellow street light. There were also people who were busy commuting to their night shift job.

He walked towards the building into the staircase and started climbing up a floor at a time. Occasional arguments from within apartments and music leaked out of the walls as he climbed. He stood at his house's front door after reaching the fourth floor.

A nameplate could be seen hanging at the side of the copper red metal door stating: Eisen Lombard - Jody Vania.

Garen rummaged through his person for his house key and realized that it had already dropped at some unknown location during his journey.

Knock Knock Knock.

He had decided to knock on the door instead.

"Coming! Just a minute!" His sister Ying Er's voice came from inside the house.

Then came the rapid footsteps.

The door was opened after a period of silence.

"Brother!" Ying Er obviously had seen Garen through the door's peephole as she embraced him the moment she opened the door. She was hanging onto him by the neck. "When did you come back?"

"I came here the moment I got down from the car. Alright, don't mess around anymore, I'm still holding my luggages." Garen's big and strong body was the size of two or three Ying Ers. It didn't matter to him at all that she was freely hanging herself by his neck.

It was just that her body had started developing, and he could feel the tenderness of her still developing, petite breasts as they squeezed against his body.

With Ying Er hanging onto him, Garen took off his flip flops and entered, closing the door behind him⁴.

"Where's mum and dad?" Garen asked as he placed the luggages at one corner of the living room.

"Mum and dad got promoted to the management level in the company. The situation is a little bit tense lately and dad says that the rubber industry will be impacted by it. There is a sudden surge in order to and from the military, and both of them are busy dealing with it."

Ying Er was unusually hyperactive and it took her a while to get off Garen.

"Brother, didn't you enrol in Mantra University? Where do you find the time to come back? I heard that there's still quite some time before the holidays." Ying Er asked curiously.

"I finished my courses early and I didn't have anything better to do afterwards. So I decided to apply for a school leave. Don't worry about it."

"Is university exciting?"

"It's alright..."

Both of them were sitting on the sofa as they started having a conversation. Ying Er was saddened when Garen asked her about the college entrance examination.

"It's finished. I flunked my first mathematics paper..." The little estrangement she felt with Garen over a long time apart was gradually washed away. Ying Er frowned when the examination topic was brought up.

"If only I was admitted under the university's recommendation like you were..."

"Recommendation... Uh..." Garen almost forgot how he was admitted into the university. He was recommended by the university because he had specialised knowledge in identifying antiques. However in actuality, everything was Su Lin's arrangement and Garen was in the dark.

Ying Er kept the conversation flowing endlessly, as if she was getting more and more cheerful lately. She told Garen everything, big or small, after he left the house.

From Ying Er's account, Garen had come to find out that there were more guests than the last time he came back. His parents were promoted and had befriended a few big shots of the industry. They even attended the city's upper class banquet parties in certain occasions.

"How is my master doing?" Garen asked.

"Dojo Master Fei was getting better. Everyday, he is conscious for a short period of time. Mum, dad and I had visited Dojo Master Fei too." Ying Er answered readily. "Oh right brother. Dojo Master said that you should go and visit him once you returned as he had something to tell you."

"Oh?" Garen frowned a little bit. "I will visit him tomorrow then. I went overseas with my friends for a short trip before coming back here, and I've gifts for master and you guys."

"A gift?! I like the sound of that!" Ying Er swiftly ran towards the luggages. "Which one is mine which one is mine?"

"Let me get it for you." Garen walked there and handed out an oval shaped box which was wrapped in a black fur.

"This is for my dearest sister Ying Er." Garen smiled as he placed the box into Ying Er's hand.

"Thank you brother!" Ying Er blushed as she tiptoed and gave her brother a good kiss on the face out of the blue. Garen couldn't help but to feel stunned as the lady's tender lips brought upon a faint body fragrance.

"Alright alright stop fooling around."

"You're not that much older than me. Why are you behaving ahead of your age?" Ying Er wasn't aware that Garen had become more and more matured as time passed. He wasn't like his old self, where he would submit himself to her and let her bully him. It was a sudden ,unknowing change.

When Garen treated her like how other elders treated her, she couldn't help but to feel annoyed.

"I wonder when you became like this." Ying Er pondered.

Garen looked at her acting mischievously and pulled her cheek with an outstretched hand.

"Where is your mind wandering? You should go check out the gift in your room."

"Stop pulling! No one would want me if I became fat!!" Ying Er quickly struggled. "I'll hold you responsible if no one wants me!" She carried the small box and entered her room after she struggled out of Garen's grip.

The living room quietened down and he could hear her sister's faint humming in the bedroom.

Garen sat down on the sofa and closed his eyes, wiping his face with both of his hands.

"Su Lin's matter regarding the Celestial Circle Gate Black Mark Association's foreign aggression should be taken care of by now."

"It's time to take care of the internal issues." A cold gaze radiated from his eyes.

Chapter 155: Minor Changes 1

The senior sister apprentice rebelled, the elder and second master were missing. The White Cloud Gate broke down because of one person's rebellious intent. Garen had decided to resolve this issue once and for all, bearing to the fact that there was no more foreign aggression.

However, he had to check out the city's mess before anything.

He could take it slow, since he had obtained the Golden Sword Throne. This meant that his strength would increase over time, and he could use this time to deal with his internal affairs.

Sitting on the sofa, Garen unconsciously recalled the words Duskdune Shura said at the cliff.

"The undefeated and the unconquerable. No one is a match for him as long as he lives, be it the top of this generation or the next." The words which were spoken by Duskdune Shura kept floating in his mind.

"What I lack..." Garen placed his palms together at his forehead and went into deep thought.

"Brother?"

"Ying Er's voice came from ahead.

"How do I look?"

Ying Er was in a black dress with an exquisite purple flower brooch. The dress showcased her hourglass body as she spun in circles on one spot.

Garen raised his head up.

"Very beautiful." Garen laughed, "What paper are you having tomorrow?"

"Physics, and I'm very confident about it!" Ying Er smiled proudly.

"You should sleep early since you have to wake up early tomorrow. Have you showered?"

"All done!" Ying Er hummed as she hit her chest with the back of her hand. Although the exquisite purple flower brooch was not eye catching, it had a faint beauty about it. It was a perfect match for her.

"Go ahead and rest early." Garen pinched her cheek.

"Okay~~~" Ying Er went back to her bedroom with a sweet smile on her face.

Garen sat on the sofa alone and waited for his parents to come home, as he pondered on Duskdune Shura's words in his head.

A short while later, the sound of a car engine came from below. The sound disappeared after a while, followed by the sound of ar doors closing.

After a few minutes, the sound of keys clinking behind the door.

Garen stood up and walked towards the door as his parents came in.

"Dad, mum."

"Garen?!!" Both of them were stunned and surprised.

"When did you come back?" Mother went closer and pinched Garen's face with both her hands, "I think you've got thinner..."

Father Lombard was slightly butthurt as he saw Garen's arms as thick as a leg and his strong, muscular chest.

"This guy grew at least 10cm! In which part is he supposed to be thin?! His chest and arms are all muscles!"

"Is that so?" Mother Vania became suspicious.

"Let's come in and talk." Garen closed the door as he took the baggage from his parents hands and placed them in the living room.

"How's life in university? Are you used to it? Do you need more money to support your lifestyle? And how is your relationship with the lecturers?" Mother immediately bombarded him with questions the moment she entered the house.

Since Garen hadn't been to the university at all, he had no choice but to describe his university life on Earth. He couldn't tell it in detail however as he did not want to be seen through.

His parents finally let him go after he fed them a bunch of nonsense.

Garen took the opportunity and asked about his master's condition.

"Dojo Master Fei..." Father Lombard frowned. "Things don't look good according to all of the experts from Yang Liu."

"What's happened?" Garen was stunned as even the experts Federation's Yang Liu City couldn't do anything to improve the situation.

"You'll understand when you see him tomorrow." Lombard shook his head. "It's not something you can imagine if you don't see it with your own eyes. Sigh... Dojo Master Fei was very wise... I hadn't expected this at all. We hadn't known at all at first, but we now know that the dojo master of the white cloud is considered a very strong person in this city."

"Alright let's not talk about this any further. Let our son visit Dojo Master Fei tomorrow since he gave his all to cultivate our son." Mother Vania butted in. "Oh right Garen. Are you and Mr. Bouvini's daughter considered close friends? You should thank her father on behalf of us for helping your father out. If her father hadn't lent a helping hand, your mother and I would not be promoted; it's all thanks to him."

"Mikaela? Bouvini?" Garen understood. "Okay, I do know Bouvini. I got to know him before Master was in trouble. I'll visit them after visiting master. Don't worry about it."

"Alright. Speaking of which, we've met Mikaela before as well. Although she is not too beautiful, she is quite elegant. If you're interested...." Mother Vania's eyes were beaming with light as she talked about it.

"Eh, forget about it." Father butted in. "Mikaela is only ten years old. Isn't it a little bit too soon..."

"Who says it's too soon! It would be over if they engage earlier. What are you worried about? Even Mr. Bouvini pushed his intention to us. We're just commoners, and there's nothing that they can gain from us. Furthermore, there are a lot of twelve year olds getting married as well and they can go to the church in a year or two!"

Garen started breaking into cold sweat as he listened. Twelve years old! Getting married at this age was definitely too young even if it's the tradition of this era. Garen couldn't believe what his mum just said.

"Let's be patient. I have to visit Mr. Bouvini in a few days, and there would be complications in giving birth since their daughter is too young."

Vania put off the idea of engagement after some persuasion from both father and son.

Being engaged to a 10 year old girl...

Garen was covered in goosebumps as he thought of it, since he was not a pedophile. In addition, the first person that appeared in his mind was Celine. Although both of them have the body of a young girl, Celine would be a better choice since she had a great body when she was grown up.

After a casual conversation with his parents, he passed them the gifts and went to take a shower. After wiping his body, he proceeded to change into his own clothes that he had brought.

As his body grew bigger in a short time span, all his clothes in the cupboard were too small for him. Fortunately, he thought of this beforehand and bought a few clothes while he was shopping for gifts.

He went into the room, turned off the light and laid on the bed.

The watch bell and the sound of a train departing could be faintly heard in the distance outside.

It was the new train tracks nearby.

Garen slowly closed his eyes and went into deep sleep.

He then woke up from his dream in the middle of the night.

Garen blinked a few times as he got up. He looked outside the window and saw pure darkness. It was still midnight.

He took off his blankets and sat by the bed wiping his face. He was restless, Duskdune Shura's words still pervasively invading his mind..

He instinctively felt that Duskdune Shura did not say those words baselessly.

He wouldn't have pursued the heavily injured Duskdune Shura if he had been completely unharmed.

"White Bird Holy Fist..." Garen muttered. He went back to bed after he took a deep breath, while the energy of Golden Sword Throne inside his pajamas kept flowing into his mind.

The root of his talent was located on his head, a special ability that only a small handful amount of people have. According to his own estimation, it would be rare to find a single digit amount of people among the billions on Earth who had similar abilities.

According to his speculation, this special ability was formed based on his spiritual structure, body structure, the arrangement of the nerves etc. No one would have the same special abilities, just like how there wouldn't be two exact copies of a single leaf in nature. There would be a great difference for every small small deviation.

He still was not sure whether if it's this special ability that allowed him to maintain this spiritual bridging, or if it was the bridging that caused him to obtain his special abilities.

"These questions are just dogs chasing their tails.." Garen thought as he focused his vision on his own attribution and skill panes.

"Strength 2.66. Agility 1.82. Vitality 2.45. Intelligence 1.53. Potential 1256%.

Secret Martial Art.----

Mammoth Variation: Explosive (Maximum Level), Epidermal Hardening Grade One (Iron Body), Blood Qi Stabilization Grade One (Boulder Martial Art).

Red jade Palm: Learned (Mastered Grade One), Burning Strengthen Grade One (Dark Crimson Technique), Vitality Enhancement Grade One (Dark Crimson Technique)'

"I have so many points already..." Garen was stunned as he realized going overseas was a worthwhile trip. The Golden Sword Throne had lived up to its name and it was worth the risk entering the ancient ruins.

He carefully felt for the rate of the potential flow from the Golden Sword Throne and even though it was much weaker than last time, he would still gain something every week which was much better than nothing compared to last time.

"12 points..." Garen had never obtained so many points at one go.

"Should I increase my attribution or max out my Secret Martial Art first?" He was in a dilemma.

With this many points, he could either push one of his Secret Martial Art to the limit, or pour everything into the attribution pane. Although it was limited to the user's body limit, it should be enough to increase his attribution to an appalling height.

He remembered that he would kept spending all the points on attribution when he was still practising the Mammoth Secret Martial Art. He had at least spent 12 points on attribution and not only did it give him major special effects for his secret martial art, it also gave him a complete combat skills to face every complicated situation.

If he poured all his points into attribution and added nothing in his secret martial art*, it was estimated that it was highly likely that any normal martial artist with a powerful weapon could beat him down.

*Author probably reversed attribution and secret martial art.

"It's unfortunate that there are pros and cons in increasing the level or martial arts... If only it could break the limits of the user's body. I should just max out my attribution first."

Garen first focused his vision onto strength.

Unfortunately it had already reached its limit, as it wouldn't budge. He then moved on to agility.

One point of attribution was converted into 0.3 and added onto it. Two points added. Three points added...

Agility increased steadily and stopped at 2.72. It had reached its limit.

Next up is Vitality.

It increased from 2.45 to 2.65, which was less than one attribution point. Garen had no choice but to add the remaining 0.1 point into intelligence.

He continued increasing his intelligence attribute.

It increased steadily from 1.63 to 1.93, 2.23 and finally hovered 2.53.

Just like that, all of his attribution had reached his body's limit. He had 5 points left as he used up 7 points to max out his attribution.

The attribution pane had become larger as well as if it had been upgraded.

'Strength 2.66, Agility 2.72, Vitality 2.65, Intelligence 2.53, Potential 556%.

Chapter 156: Minor Changes 2

Garen was too tired to continue racking his brain, and due to the huge increment to his attribution, especially agility and intelligence, he felt like his whole body was burning up, and he felt a pain which could be described similar to being penetrated by countless of needles in his muscle as they contracted. His vision was clouded as he felt his brain was on fire as well.

He was drowsy as if he was inside the hottest sauna in the world. The weird thing was that he was not sweating at all. His muscles were stronger than ever, and there was no major change in his body figure either. However, cackling noises came out from his body as his body figure started to become more and more symmetrical and streamlined.

Garen woke up after some time had passed.

Thy sky outside had already turned into a bright gray.

He laid on the bed with his eyes open and noticed his long dark purple hair had been untied, spreading over the pillow like black lines of silk, bright and flowy. The whole room was faintly covered in a funny smell.

Garen slowly got up and gently moved his body. A string of snapping from all over his joints could be heard as he shifted.

He opened the window to let in some fresh, cold air from outside after he got up from his bed.

His mind was as clear as if he had just chewed on a mint, and all his thoughts were as fast as the flash from an electric spark, having no delay at all.

"All the attributions are at its limit... and I'm left with 5 points. Now I need to figure out how to go beyond the limit." Garen's mind was never this clear before.

"Going beyond the limits has always been the goal of every fighter. The White Bird Holy Fist, Palosa of the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate is the strongest in this aspect. Perhaps I can learn something from him. I will visit the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate once I've dealt with my internal affairs."

Determined, he immediately walked towards his study desk and absentmindedly picked out a science textbook. He started experimenting the changes of his body, especially in the intelligence aspect.

After half an hour, he roughly had a clear idea of the effects of his maximised intelligence.

"Logical thinking is much clearer, memory capacity has increased dramatically, reasoning and analysis have become much stronger as well. The main effect of the intelligence attribute has on the body is the short-term memory. Usually, a normal person can only memorise five to seven lines of sentences in a short amount of time and this is without the effects of any enhancement in memorization. However, I currently..."

Garen opened a random page and scanned through its content. He then closed his eyes and he could clearly see the whole content that was in that page.

"10 lines... It's a very strong effect! Furthermore, the contents from the short term memory can be converted into long term memory in an instant due to the fast reasoning speed. I can now remember and understand everything even if I skip the typical learning conditions." One page of information was quickly understood and stored into him as long term memory.

"There's also the ability of calculation..."

Garen noticed that he could easily solve complicated mathematical questions with ease. Answers would simply float in his head as he immediately understood the question when he saw it.

He picked out a simple mathematical equation which contained four fundamental operations, with the exception of the equation being undetermined or divided by zero. His brain would immediately calculate the question as he glanced at it and he was able to calculate the last five digits of the answer every second. He managed to do so purely by brute force mental calculation, without any other instruments or techniques.

This ability could be improved tenfold if he did make use of some simple mathematical techniques.

"Intelligence mainly improves the reasoning, memory and calculation of the user. As for creativity... nothing much has changed." Garen understood that creativity was based on the amount of content in the memory and the frequency of the sparks that could be produced from as information colliding into each other.

"In short, I have a photographic memory and react faster than normal people. I can easily grasp the important points of a question and solve it with a strong logical reasoning. This is the effect of increasing the Intelligence." Garen concluded.

"Next up is Agility."

He moved his body for a while and pulled out a punch out of nowhere.

Bam!

A low pitched noise was cracked from the compressed air. His right knuckle was moving in and out swiftly like a snake.

"What amazing speed! This far surpasses Duskdune Shura's attack speed! It's even slightly faster than Andrela's normal attack speed." Garen compared to his past opponent, Andrela, who was the fastest among them.

Andrela's blink gave him a lasting impression. None of the grandmasters of combat were even close to his attack speed, including even Duskdune Shura or Flamingo. Although Andrela was not stronger than these two, he was the fastest in speed.

"Maybe if I were to compare it with Blink, I am still slightly behind. It must be the kind of secret art that heavily damages the opponent in a short amount of time."

Garen felt his body was more agile as he raised his hands and feet. He was sure that his body could react faster compared to last time. It was obvious that Agility had greatly increased his body's speed.

Huff...

He gently exhaled.

"I am now.... Much stronger!"

He was at least twice as strong as his former self! He wasn't physically stronger, but stronger in terms of speed and intelligence; this would allow him to make the best decision and react in the shortest amount of time.

"I have the confidence to go against Duskdune Shura even when he is in his prime now!" Garen assessed his current state and concluded that he was better than ever.

As he wore the dark red shirt and jeans that he had brought back, Garen suddenly realized a pendant was hanging by his neck.

It was a pendant shaped like an open book and it was as warm as the human body.

"The old man's pendant..." He frowned as he walked towards the mirror and stood in front of it.

His dark purple hair which was at shoulder length was like lion's mane when it was messy. His dark red eyes were sharp as a knife, exuding a sense of aggression. His simple facial features had become charming.

His body was as strong as ever, but was more symmetrical now. His dark red shirt was tighten by his muscle profile. Garen adjusted his gaze to give more gentleness and less aggression.

He tied his hair up into a pony tail with a black rubber band that he found. He immediately looked much less aggressive with these small touches.

After getting used to his body in the room post-attribution-increase, Garen soon heard footsteps coming from the living room.

As he opened the door, he saw his sister Ying Er busy wiping her face with a bread between her lips, as she chewed and tied her shoes by the doorstep.

"I'll send you." Garen quickly washed his face and brushed his teeth in the washroom.

"It's okay. I have to go now and the school bus is here to fetch me." Ying Er jabbered as she chewed her bread.

"It's alright. I will go with you." Garen spitted the foam out of his mouth and quickly wiped his mouth clean as he walked towards the doorsteps. On his way he picked up the things that he brought back. "I have to go out as well. I'll send you there."

"Alright then. It's so rare for you to be so proactive." A hint of joy flashed in Ying Er's eyes as she looked at her recently grown up brother Garen in fascination.

Garen was the brother that had belonged to her alone before. However, the current Garen was the brother that was no longer hers anymore, but he became better and more reliable than before. He was concerned about Garen regarding his sudden change but she eventually accepted it.

Two of them greeted their parents who just came out of their bedroom and went downstairs as they locked the door.

The other occupants downstairs were not awake yet as it was still early.

Ying Er walked at the front while Garen followed behind as both of them quickly walked down the stairs.

"There should be a lot of parents in the school bus. There will be some of my friends as well..." Ying Er couldn't help herself but glanced at Garen. She looked like she wanted to continue speaking but had decided otherwise.

"I'm ok with that. What are you worried about?" Garren replied helplessly. "Let's walk faster. You'll be in trouble if you miss the school bus."

"Right, right." Ying er sped up as well.

Both of them walked out of the residential area coming out from the staircase, where a black bus waiting at the entrance. The words Shengying Nobles Academy were written on the side of the vehicle.

The girls on the bus were wearing the same outfit as his sister; a white, short sleeved shirt combined with a super short skirt and black pantyhose. On the other hand, the boys were wearing white shirts and black jeans paired with leather boots. The attire was the same as what Garen wore when he woke up in this world.

It was the same view when he first got up the school bus.

Garen covered his sister as they got up the bus. There was another guy in the Shengying Nobles Academy attire who got up the bus in this district area as well.

There were about at ten students in the bus. Their respective parents, or cousins were accompanying them.

"Ying Er! Here!" A female voice came from the back seat. It was a girl with a red ponytail hair with a middle age woman beside her. The young lady had her bag placed on the seat beside her.

"Xiao Ling!" Ying Er quickly went to the back of the car as she pulled Garen along.

""Good day President Ying Er." "Good Morning President Ying Er." "President."

Almost half of the students knew Ying Er as they stood up and greeted her with respect. Everyone looked curious as they saw Garen standing behind her.

"President?" Garen looked at his sister skeptically. This was when he realized his sister was not a timid and lovable little woman that she had portrayed in the house. She had a cool and confident aura around her with a soft and gentle smile.

With just a simple change, she looked sharper and faintly dominant.

He had to reassess his sister's social standing.

Her waist length dark purple hair was silky smooth and there was no split ends at all. The freckles on her oval face had long disappeared, leaving behind white, tender skin and a sharp chin. Her dark red, crystal gaze was calm and confident, but cold at the same time.

She gradually evolved into an hourglass body figure, as well as a pair of long and slender legs. Although she was much shorter than he was, she was considered tall among people her age.

Ying Er stood out inside the bus.

Ying Er blushed as she noticed her brother's gaze and felt shy in front of her peers. It was a rare scene.

"I became the President of the Bowmanship Club two years ago." Ying Er explained softly.

"That's very unexpected." Garen shook his head. Judging from the student's respect and admiration, it seemed like Ying Er had did well for the past two years.

The duo walked to the back of the bus and Ying Er sat beside Xiao Ling whereas Garen sat on an empty seat in front of her. He politely nodded at Xiao Ling's mother as a greeting.

Conversations regarding his identity could faintly be heard among the students in the car.

As Garen looked out the window, he realized that Huaishan City had slightly changed within the past two years. A few new buildings had been built, and the familiar jewelry shop he always saw had now become a pie shop.

After a while, the bus stopped and four students came up with their parents.

One of them, a handsome boy with gold hair, scanned the bus with his eyes and stopped at Ying Er.

"President Ying Er!" He quickly walked towards her as he grinned. One of the female students naturally got up and gave up her seat to him.

"Nesari." Ying Er frowned slightly as she calmly smiled. "Are you not commuting via your personal car again?"

"The car is still being fixed." The golden haired boy sat beside her with admiration written all over his face.

Chapter 157: Traitor 1

"Your friend?" Having understood the boy's intention toward Ying Er, Garen turned to her and asked.

"Yeah, he's a classmate." Ying Er smiled at Garen apologetically, not wanting him to misunderstand.

Nesari did, however. He shot Garen a look steeping in jealousy. "And this is?"

Garen glanced at him. "So I heard you're Ying Er's friend? I don't think friends of opposite sex should sit too close to each other, don't you think so?" He subtly switched his gaze into a darker undertone, slowly piling a veil of intimidation onto the boy.

Nesari shuddered uncontrollably. His face paled abruptly and moved beyond paleness into shades of emerald. Struggling to speak, he find himself making creaky sounds, but no words came out, causing him to go into panic mode as his tears and snot dripped wildly. It was embarrassing to say the least.

"What have you don-" Nesari's middle-aged bodyguard scowled and stood up, trying to block Nesari from Garen's direct line-of-sight and to stand off against Garen.

"Yes, what are you trying to say?" Garen interrupted him.

The bodyguard couldn't finish his sentence, as his heart jumped and he started sweating like a sinner in church. He felt goosebumps creep down his spine and torso. It felt as if he's wobbling on the edge of a cliff, the fall happening at any second. His senses of danger and crisis seemed almost real.

"We... we're sorry!" The bodyguard forced the words out and pulled Nesari out of his seat. They escaped to the front of the bus, not even attempting to look back.

Ying Er and another girl Xiao Ling stared at Garen curiously.

Garen shrugged.

"That kid decided to turn over a new leaf after our lovely talk."

"As if! Don't bully people just because you know a little martial arts." Ying Er guessed the truth.

"Doesn't matter, if the boys who want to be with you can't get past me, how can I trust them to take care of you?" Garen smiled gently.

Ying Er blushed into a sakura pink and lowered her face.

Xiao Ling beside her curiously eyeballed them both one after the other.

All the other students in the bus stared at Garen in a gossipy manner, guessing the relationship between him and Ying Er. Soon, his identity as Ying Er's brother surfaced. More and more student got on the bus on the way to school, and this incident spread like wildfire.

The strong-headed and cool Ying Er, as the president of the Bowmanship Club, was very eye catching, the difficulty of capturing her heart is unusually high. Furthermore, it was rumored that she has an obsessive admiration for her brother. Now that her brother finally appeared, people finally realized Ying Er's strong-headedness is like a delicate dandelion when compared to Garen. When both of them sat together, it's as if one is a boulder, the other is a flower.

Ying Er's brother sat on his seat casually, but he gave out an air of a dangerous beast ready to attack. His imposing frame might as well be a blind, shielding Ying Er and everyone behind her.

Every time someone glanced at the back, his commanding figure would be the first one they gazed at before darting away in fear that he notices.

Xiao Ling leaned against Ying Er, she felt the suppression as much as the others do.

"Oh no oh no... Ying Er, your older brother looks too fierce, none of the guys who came in after us dared to even wave at the people in the back seats..."

"Really?" Ying Er looked confused, "My older brother is very mellow." She didn't even noticed anything wrong, she only felt that everyone in the car were behaving really strangely.

Accompanied by the quirky atmosphere, the bus finally arrived at the examination hall, it was the school area of a vocational school.

After everyone alighted the bus at the examination hall, Garen waited outside the cordon as he watched his sister enter the hall. It was only after that he turned around and walked to the White Cloud Dojo.

Compared to Harmony City, Huaishan City is too small. Before half an hour was up, Garen already arrived at the entrance of White Cloud Dojo.

The clock tower at the side is still standing strong, the archway underneath it still receives countless pedestrians everyday.

The bakery opposite of the dojo is still there as well, with its bald owner crouching and writing the menu for the day on signboard.

At the entrance of the dojo, a pupil with yellow shirt was sweeping the ground before noticing Garen.

"Excuse me, who is it that you are looking for?" The male pupil looked about 15 or 16 years of age and was still quite new, he didn't recognize Garen.

"First senior brother! First Senior Brother Garen!" A voice exclaimed behind Garen, stunning the pupil sweeping the ground.

The pupil abruptly snapped out of his trance and greeted Garen.

"Simon, it's been a while." Garen turned around and saw a guy stepping out of a red car.

Simon kept a buzz cut and looked fit, it seemed he recovered quite well, one wouldn't be able to tell which arm he even fractured.

Meeting Garen again, Simon was ecstatic, he hastily got in front of Garen and stood still.

"Welcome back!" He eagerly bowed at Garen.

"Where's Corinne*?"

"She's still at the hospital, we are taking turns to take care of Master." Simon scratched the back of his head. "In case Black Mark Association decided to harm him."

"Good job," Garen patted him on his back, "I'll take over the situation now that I'm back.

"Yessir!" Simon looked like he had been relieved of a huge burden. Garen's return gave him a huge boost of confidence. As of now, the whole of White Cloud Gate is supported by Garen's fame alone, otherwise any sect would be able to challenge and kick the White Cloud Gate to the ground.

In Garen's absence, Simon and Corinne handled all the general affairs of White Cloud Gate, although the stress has constantly made them feel like they couldn't breathe. If it wasn't for the growing fame of their Senior Garen who even got invited as Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate's Sky Warrior, White Cloud Gate probably wouldn't been able to last this long.

Even then, a lot of the peripheral forces of White Cloud Gate had broken away, preferring to go under under sects.

After all, having a strong fighting ability doesn't equate to having strong managerial skills and resourcefulness. Garen is a young man who's barely even 20 years old, no one was confident about his ability to manage the business. Some former business partners of White Cloud Gate thought of that before they decided to secede.

In short, White Cloud Gate was much weaker than what it used to be, but because of that, it's also more refined and simpler, having been supported solely by Garen's fame.

"Do you wanna talk in the dojo?" Simon produced the key to the dojo from his pocket.

"No need, let's go to the hospital in your car. I wanna check on Master." Garen declined the offer.

"Okay."

They turned around and went in the red car.

Simon started the car, still rambling on about the current events from when Garen left.

"...and so I wanted to get even with Bouvini, but Corinne said he turned over to the light side, everyone makes mistakes after all. And about the thing with the governor, they were doing this civility spot check, the dojo's business was affected as well. If it weren't for Third Senior Brother Joshua's contact through his father, the dojo would probably still be under seizure..."

Simon's mouth was like a loose tap, spilling the news and gossips without stopping.

Garen, on the other hand, didn't even need to talk. He only needed to respond once every so often so Simon to spill everything.

The two managed to recap almost everything recent during the drive.

"Oh right, the people from Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate came looking for you. I heard it's about the division of jurisdiction areas."

"Jurisdiction areas?" Garen furrowed his brow, "Let's talk about this another time."

From the side windows, a huge white building stood in the middle of a row of houses. A signboard, The Anning Mann Hospital.

The two mixed in with the crowd entering through the hospital gate. Simon lead Garen to the second floor with relative ease into a pale blue corridor with a peaceful and sterile atmosphere. Walking to the other end, Simon knocked softly on the door on the right and entered.

"How are you back here? Aren't you supposed to open the dojo for the day?" A girl in the room stood up, surprised.

The girl is tall and had a sunkissed tan, she's not gorgeous, but she's surrounded by a heroic air. She had a luscious figure, with a well-endowed chest that bounces with her movements. She gave off an almost indescribable allure.

Her long black hair was tied into a ponytail, hanging behind her. Most obviously, a thin red scar lashed across Corinne's right cheek, adding to her ferocity.

"Corinne, First Senior Brother is here!" Simon chuckled and stepped aside, letting Garen in.

"It's been a long time." Garen entered the room and looked at Corinne by the bedside.

Corinne's eyes reddened. She stood there stunned, and immediately covered her mouth, sobbing uncontrollably.

"You've done a great job..."

Garen understood the amount of stress the two had to endure since his absence. He approached Corinne and ruffled her hair, feeling slightly apologetic.

"Master... Master is..." Corinne was so upset, she couldn't talk.

Garen saw the condition Fei Baiyun was in since he entered the room.

Fei Baiyun's whole body was covered with a white blanket with only his head poking out, but even from his head Garen could tell he wasn't doing well.

His body that used to be healthy is now skinny and bony, and looked like a skeleton wrapped under a layer of skin who's sleeping on the bed.

Hearing the noise in the room, Fei Baiyun struggled to open his eyes. Seeing Garen at the side, a sign of excitement flashed in his eyes.

"Garen... you're... back..."

"Master," Garen crouched at the side of the bed. He noticed Fei Baiyun's ailing condition and felt slightly downcast. "I'm back."

"Good..." Fei Baiyun wrestled with the words, "You've grown... stronger..." He raised his scrawny arm toward Garen's face.

Garen grabbed his arm promptly.

"Master was holding out for your return all this while. Now that you're back to tie up the loose ends, he'll be glad." Corinne stood beside Simon, her eyes still red from crying.

"If there's... a chance, go to the East... That's where White Cloud Gate's... root lies..." Fei Baiyun uttered slowly and with a lot of pauses.

"Yes, Master." Garen nodded, his hands still clutching Fei Baiyun's. "Rest, Master, don't speak too much."

"I know my own condition... I don't have much longer." Fei Baiyun's speech started to become smoother, as if he's experiencing a terminal lucidity*. "White Cloud Gate is now under your care. The Elders are gone, the two other... disciples I had were not... dependable. I didn't think it would come down to my youngest disciple..."

Chapter 158: Traitor 2

"What are you trying to say?" Garen didn't show any sorrow in his eyes. Life and death, old age and sickness are normal for human being. He had already experienced it once in his past life, and after experiencing Old Man Gregor's death, he only felt calmness this time.

Suddenly, Fei Baiyun grabbed his hand and started to tremble violently, as if he was hit by a bout of hysterics. Even the bed started to shake.

Trembling, he stuffed a Blackwood Ring into Garen's palm.

"Master!"

"Doctor! Doctor!"

Worried, Corinne and Simon rushed outside to get a doctor.

Fei Baiyun did not care much for his health, his gaze toward Garen was as sharp as a knife and as bright as the sun, and his hand gripped Garen's with the strength of an iron plier.

"Rosetta... Find her... Kill her!"

Fei Baiyun forced out the sentence before he tremored fiercely and jerked backward. Eyes rolled back, he fell onto the bed. Dead.

Garen gently closed his eyelids with his palm and stood up.

"Don't worry."

He looked at Master Fei Baiyun, who no longer have a pulse, feeling a dark calmness wash over him.

"I will avenge you."

When Corinne and Simon returned with a doctor, Fei Baiyun had completely flatlined with no possibility of resuscitation.

Corinne and Simon went silent, grieving. In the period when they took care of Fei Baiyun, it was hard, but whenever he's conscious, he would give them nuggets of guidance which helped a lot.

"Any news about Rosetta recently?" Garen asked suddenly.

"First senior brother's friend had news of First Senior Sister Rosetta.* She was spotted at the Swan Lake in Lake Shore West City." Corinne answered with her eyes reddened by grief.

"Let's go, it's time for White Cloud Gate to clear out the bad seeds."

Garen marched out of the hospital room, his face projecting a dense killing intent.

Simon and Corinne glanced at each other, and followed closely.

The burial for the Founder of White Cloud Gate, Fei Baiyun, was held in modesty. There were only a few older visitors, including some master pugilists of yesteryear with better relationship with Fei Baiyun. The rest were comprised of Garen's associates, Su Lin's people, representatives of The Golden Hoop, Seven Moon Group, Circling Dance Gate and others.

At the burial ground, the sky gloomed, and the rain poured heavily.

The coffin was transported to Huaishan City Cemetery.

Garen was dressed in a black suit, he held an umbrella above him, watching the burial ceremony in silence.

The invited nuns from the monastery sang their requiem resoundingly while two strong men lowered the coffin slowly into the tomb. A bunch of white lilies were placed on top.

Rain clattered on the black umbrella.

Garen held a taut expression on his face, the free hand was inside his pocket, softly caressing the Blackwood Ring.

Corinne and Simon stood behind him, holding an umbrella each.

Third Senior Joshua was there as well. He looked remorseful. It was not clear when he arrived, but he stood there, wet, without the intention to get an umbrella. He looked at the coffin quietly.

"Third senior brother." Garen looked at Joshua.

Joshua nodded, took a step forward, took the shovel that was handed to him, and walked to the side of the tomb in the rain.

Shrrt!

He shoveled some dirt and slowly drizzled it onto the coffin.

Garen noticed Third Senior Brother Joshua's left arm was slightly crooked, as if he was hurt. He also knew about the damage Joshua suffered in his absence, when he protected the White Cloud Gate, against the wishes of his family, and was surprised by a sneak attack during a fight with the Black Mark Association. It was still healing.

After the first shovel of dirt, the people around the tomb started filling up the hole shovel by shovel.

White Cloud Gate's members watched in the rain, utterly silent. Farther away, there were the plump Bouvini and his gang, the branch manager, the main hall's pupils, and some newly signed up disciples of Simon and Corinne.

Even farther away were the other guests who came for the funeral.

Garen watched as the dirt rained on the coffin, his heart calmer by the second.

"The airplane you wanted is ready," The representative from the Golden Hoop whispered behind Garen, "This is a public resource. On a separate note, your authority allows you to mobilize up to fifty men from any nearby army camps, as well as firepower below Grade C."

He passed an identity document to Garen.

"This is yours, please take care of it. Use public resources reasonably to strengthen your influence. Your strength will influence the strength of the Golden Loop."

The old man with a hooked nose bowed slightly to Garen before stepping aside. He placed a bouquet of white roses in front of the tomb, gave it a salute and left.

The other funeral guests would offer a word of comfort to Garen without exception.

Garen peeked at the identity document, it was a document secured with a piece of crystal. In the middle of the black hard cover, there was the national miniature bird emblem engraved.

Flipping open the cover, the inner pages were padded with black felt.

The page on the left was the national emblem and the logo of the National Security Division.

The page on the right was his half body shot, as well as a serial number: No. 9.

Keeping the identification hidden, Garen stood on the side, observing each guest as they pay their respects.

I wasn't long before Su Lin's people was up next.

She was a young and beautiful, yet cool-looking woman. She dressed like an office lady*, her long blonde hair flowing past her shoulders, her body curvy where it needs to be.

She approached Garen and shook his hand.

"The news you asked for. Rosetta is still at the Swan Lake."

"Thank you." Garen murmured.

"You're welcome."

Lake Shore West City, several hundred kilometers from Huaishan City, Swan Lake.

The sun was setting, painting a dark golden shine on the irregularly-shaped, jade-colored lake.

Scattered around and in the lake were bunches of golden reeds and weeds, a few white swans lazed around on the surface of the lake.

At the bank by the shore, a man and a woman in police uniform squatted awkwardly, drinking the lake water with their palms. Their faces were muddy, their faces unrecognisable.

In the woods not far behind the two stood two other people in black cloaks. At the back of the cloaks, a white arc arching upwards were sewed in.

"How are we dividing for this mission?" One of the black cloaks was a woman.

"We get one half each. After that we'll take another mission, I should be able to get what I wanted." The other cloaked figure is a man. "Of course, if you become my woman, I can give you half of what I own."

"This is the Lake Shore West City, your old nest. If anyone from the Crimson Sand Sword found out, you'll run home crying." The woman teased, unamused.

"They won't be able to catch me anyway. Better take care of your own problems. White Cloud Gate is not far from here. Sky Warrior Garen, tsk tsk, that's an incredible title." The man retorted, unwilling to lose. "Maybe then you'll even accept my offer, one night for every help."

"Hmph." The woman did not say anything more, "The stuff is on their hands?"

"Maybe they're going to get it somewhere."

"Now if the Immortal Palace Alliance look the other way, every other people has been dealt with, no one would help them stop us Behemoth Gate." The woman spoke in a low voice. "Following them would lead straight to the thing."

"Anyone who tries to stop us, we'll kill them." The man said unaffectedly.

Before he finished his sentence, the two police seemed to have drunk enough. They stood up and took off speedily, anyone would know they're trained in martial arts.

The two black cloaked figure immediately chased after them.

After Garen meted out some issues with White Cloud Gate, his return forced some of the less stable forces into hiding, the stress Corinne and Simon faced decreased dramatically.

He explained to his family about taking over the White Cloud Gate now that he is officially the new Master of White Cloud Gate. His family didn't feel much of a difference, but they were curious how the youngest Garen could take over the dojo. They got the news later and didn't show up at the funeral.

No matter what happened, Garen seemed less and less familiar to them. From not realizing the importance of White Cloud Gate, they slowly resorted to a stunned silence after learning about the guests at the funeral.

White Cloud Gate, more specifically Garen's influence is far too much for them to handle, it surpasses the definition of a mere dojo caretaker.

Suddenly, they realized, like Garen's uncle, couldn't see through Garen at all.

But no matter what, after being exposed in the funeral, Garen's name spread throughout the Huaishan City, becoming a fad of its own. Anyone who knows anything about the modest funeral talked about how it's simple, but full of surprises.

Garen who was in the lead became famous overnight, even the Governor noticed and paid attention on this event, sending someone to deliver a wreath and a eulogy.

Following the funeral, anyone who paid attention would have known that Garen's social network even extended beyond Huaishan City, as even influential organizations from nearby cities sent representatives to attend the funeral.

His network radially covered over half of the Galantia Province, even the powerful son of the Seven Moon Group, Rampas, came to grieve Fei Baiyun's death after.

Because of the Seven Moon Group's misdecision after Garen and Andrela's battle, the board of directors unanimously voted to release the former chairman, Great Elder, from his duties, and elected Second Elder, Rampas' father to succeed him. The Seven Moon Group's reputation dropped significantly in the martial arts community. Fortunately, their businesses had a strong foundation and were not affected considerably.

The election of Rampas' father elevated Rampas' status, and as Rampas was already siding with White Cloud Gate, his naturally has to appear in person to grieve.

However, to the people who don't know about the martial arts community, his appearance was more than shocking.

At this turn of event, Ying Er's admiration to her brother only grew. Shengying Nobles Academy even listed Garen on their Wall of Fame, and even wanted to invite him to give a speech. However, this all happened during Garen's flight to Lake Shore West City on the military plane.

Along with him, Garen brought Corinne, Simon, as well as Third Senior Brother Joshua. Aside from the core disciples whom Garen personally picked, two sharpshooters were arranged to take care of Joshua's safety, one of whom reminded Garen of Yoda.

Who's Yoda? He was the best gunman of the generation!

It just happened that he was planning to talk to these two about the level classification of marksmanship in the plane.

Chapter 159: Prodigy 1

The buzzing of the aircraft echoed unceasingly in the cabin. On the side, a constant tapping signified the constant working of the telegram machine.

Garen sat on the starboard-side of the aircraft, wearing a golden earring on his left ear. It was snapped onto his earlobe, as the pins on it were not able to pierce his skin.

He touched the earring, it was engraved with a number 9 as an indication of his status in the Golden Loop. Whenever he accesses Golden Loop's resources, he'd need to show the symbol before his subordinates can identify and follow his orders.

The aircraft wasn't large, it's only enough for a dozen people to fly in.

The pilots were two Golden Loop members in black, they also wore the golden earrings, but the numbers engraved on them were three digits.

Third Senior Brother Joshua sat beside Garen, both his bodyguards sandwiching him from his front and back, protecting him.

The other people from White Cloud Gate like Simon, Corinne and other core members sat at the back. Between the core members, two figures were extra noticeable.

A lady with a girly youthful appearance, Cynthia, wore a simple T-shirt and jeans. She let her hair down to her shoulder length and sat by the window, humming. Sitting beside her was Jack.

Both of them were beaten by Garen in Huaishan City when they were still Manuyllton's lead captain.

When Garen was absent from the city, even though they didn't join the dojo, they regularly interflowed with Simon and Corinne, even some pivotal information were provided by them.

Bringing them on this trip was to enlist their help to protect the newly formed core disciples of White Cloud Gate who had never seen firearms.

"Third senior brother, do you know anything about Gun Arts?" Garen turned toward Joshua. He had always been curious about Yoda's discipline.

"Gun Arts?" Joshua frowned, "The Will Brothers my mum hired for me were experts in Gun Arts, it'll be better if you ask them, I don't know much about Gun Arts."

He paused, "Are you saying that traitor Rosetta may use Gun Arts against us?" His face darkened.

Garen looked at Joshua and knew, all his focus was set on seeking revenge from Rosetta, the First-senior-sister-turned-traitor. Everything he came across, he would associate it with vengeance, so Garen stopped asking. He turned to the sharpshooter who reminded him of Yoda.

The sharpshooter is a bald man with a deep tan complexion, he wore a pair of silver framed glasses which makes him look a little like a professor.

"I'm Morden Will, my friends call me Morden."

Garen nodded, "Okay then, Morden, about the Gun Arts, how do you manage to train yourself to such degree of skill? Skip the denial part, I can tell, you already attained a high level of expertise."

A look of surprise flashed in Morden's eyes, he grinned.

"You have a good judgment, sir. Actually, I've had a breakthrough only recently, and it felt like I went in an unknown, uncharted territory. I didn't know you could recognize it."

He contemplated for a while, looking for the right words.

"How do I say this? Gun Arts is actually similar to Martial Arts, the only difference is we lack the defense module, focusing instead on the attack and evasion modules."

"Can you describe what it was like when you train?" Garen's curiosity was piqued.

"Of course," Morden paused. "In the beginning, we practiced with static targets. It's those with bullseyes that are not moving. When we're practicing, we also look for the guns that are most suitable to us. It could be standard issue guns or customized guns, the only thing is that it should fit you like a glove. After having found the gun you are most suited to, as well as achieving 90% accuracy with a static target, this is level one."

"Level two is next. It's about getting used to the maximum firing range of your gun. If you're able to keep half your accuracy while aiming at maximum firing range, and separately hit a moving target with 90% accuracy, you'll be in level two."

"Level three is when you find what you're best at. With the foundation you had in the previous two levels, you will develop your evasion skills, until you are able to avoid at least half of the bullets from gunners of level one and two. At the same time, you will learn about all the qualities of all firearms, the strength and weakness, bullet trajectories from all kinds of bullets, identifying bullet marks, the different usage of different gunpowders, you'll learn it all. You will also have the ability to customize bullets and modify your guns.

In this level, your gun will become even more suitable to you, its abilities easier to wield and allows the gunner to excel." Morden had a sense of pride on his face. "I'm in this level. Even if there was a hail of

bullets, as long as there aren't any stray bullets or too many people, a level three gunner wouldn't have too much of a danger. Of course, there will be degrees to which you are proficient in level three. Different firearms will produce different effects in different environments, in addition to the number of guns you're dodging, your familiarity with the environment, and your willpower, tactics, reaction speed, all these can become a vital point to winning a battle.

"Just like Martial Arts, right? Is there a higher level?" Garen inquired calmly.

"There is," Morden nodded, "Level four, that is a legendary state. Controlling multiple guns at the same time, having 360-degrees vision with no blind spot, being able to swiftly attack enemies before they've even moved. This level, is when you can fight a Grandmaster of Combat head on. One of the strongest was a Gun Arts Master who appeared a long time ago - Yoda, the Eight-Arm Dragon King. It was said that he was able to use Gun Arts against a Grandmaster of Combat. Unbelievable."

"A Gun Arts Master who fought against a Grandmaster of Combat... That really was something." Garen nodded.

"You're not a gunner, you wouldn't understand." Morden shook his head, "The ability to fight a Grandmaster of Combat head on, it means that the gunner must be able to keep up with the speed of a Grandmaster of Combat. As you would know, a speed-focused Grandmaster of Combat can cross a dozen meters in a blink of an eye. Without the speed to match, your head would roll before you could set up your gun."

"In other words, the Eight-Arm Dragon King at least has the eyesight and the speed of a first rated Grandmaster of Combat? That Yoda is not a Grandmaster of Combat, how did he acquire an eyesight and reaction like that?

"He must have a series of secret training method." Morden admitted his ignorance on the subject. "This is only an example of a single person against a Grandmaster of Combat. Of course, Grandmasters of Combat are strong, but they still wouldn't be able to take on multiple firearms by themselves. I think you should train for a little Gun Arts, combining that and your Martial Arts, you would be a lot stronger.

Everyone was silent for a moment.

Garen glanced at everyone around him.

"How long did it take for you to reach level three?"

"Three years if you're talented, but everyone has different limits. The heights to which everyone can reach is different." Morden said with a cocky air. "If you're not talented, then you'll need time and loads of bullet. Usually about twice the time, at least six years."

"Are there a lot of level three gunners?"

"One in a thousand."

Garen was deep in thought, it's not that the ratio was low, on the contrary, the ratio was too high.

If it only takes several level three gunners to mob a slower Grandmaster of Combat to death, there are a hundred and fifty thousand soldier in the Confederation, how many gunners would there be? Amongst those, how many are level four?

This is an unknown.

Garen can now understand how Duskdune Shura was hurt badly by the Slash Brigade.

This is the power of the government.

If there's an unknown number of Gun Arts Experts in the Confederate Army, what about Martial Arts Experts? How many are there in the world?

A silence lingered in the cabin for a while. Everyone was plunged into a muted poignancy. This is the tragedy of Martial Arts.

Firearms are superior in destructive power, compared to Martial Arts which is difficult to master, firearms are far more common and easier to learn and use.

The rest of the journey was spent in silence and contemplation.

By the time the aircraft arrived at the Lake Shore West City, dusk has fallen.

The Golden Loop arranged for everyone to rest in a luxurious hotel, it even had a Practice Room for people to train their bodies.

Thud!

Cynthia's foot landed on Garen's torso, dispersing a cloud of white dust. She tried disengaging, but her right leg was caught with a slap from Garen.

"The first thing you need to do when practicing Mammoth Secret Technique... is get used to beatings!" Calmly, Garen swung Cynthia's leg to the side.

Bam!

Cynthia was flung across the room and crashed onto the wall.

She grunted. After regaining her balance by stepping backwards, Cynthia charged forward fiercely, a small blade shot out from below the sole of her foot, and kicked upward.

With a shwing, the blade grazed in front of Garen's nose, missing by a mere inch. Slashing air, Cynthia was suddenly hit by a sense of dread. Sure enough, her inner thigh was met with a great force. Her whole body fell backward.

Thud!

She sprawled on the ground lined with a rubber mattress. Struggling to get up, but her body didn't seem to obey.

She looked up to see a sneaking Jack being thrown beside her, landing heavily and unable to move.

Both of them were glistening with sweat and looked awkward, their clothing drenched.

Garen slowly approached them.

"Not bad, you're so much stronger than you were before. With firearms, you should be able to take on fighters below the level of a Grandmaster of Combat."

Cynthia hadn't given up trying to stand up, but her control over her body was minimal.

"Weren't you worried that I will surpass you if you keep letting us do sneak attacks? I will still kill you!" She stared at Garen, her face lined with defiance. "You are only older than I am by a little. If you can become so strong within that time, I can too!"

"Under the same conditions, I will not lose to anybody!" Garen stated matter-o-factly, "This was the words you once said, which is why I promised to give you the best conditions to train, even the supplements and resources... If you really can do it, then do it. I will be waiting for you to achieve that. But, as long as you have not reached that goal, you will be my subordinate."

"Rest well. We will depart tomorrow morning."

He strolled past the duo by their side and exited the room. The suffocating ambience that was permeating the training room disappeared alongside him.

Chapter 160: Prodigy 2

Cynthia gasped loudly, and finally started to pant. Her sweat slowly dripped from her temples.

"Garen is becoming more monstrous day by day," Jack on her side expressed with a wry smile, "Even looking into his eyes would scare me. I didn't even feel that when I faced a fort full of machine guns, let alone standing up to him like you did."

"He's not that much older than me!" Cynthia squeezed her words out resentfully, "I can't forget the way he forced me into desperation! No matter where, I will be number one! The assassination training camp, the intensive training camp, even in the company! We're the same age, why does he get to be so much stronger!"

Recalling the speech she heard on the plane, her hope reignited.

"You heard the guy, as long as we reach level 4 in Gun Arts, there will be a chance for us to harm a Grandmaster of Combat. If I combined Martial Arts training with Gun Arts, my power will increase exponentially!"

"You..." Jack didn't know what to say, so he laid on the floor, letting his sweat drip on the ground.

Lake Shore West City, Red Sand Sword Gate main branch.

An ancient oriental quartet yard, surrounded with brown walls and covered with cinnabar red roof.

In a wide wooden training hall, five people in red were lighting the incense at a drawn picture with utter respect.

The leader was the current Red Sand Sword Gate's Master, a handsome man with his red hair hanging past his shoulders. After offering the incense, he caressed his sword by his waist, and turned around to face the four Elders by his side.

"Elders, the traitor is back."

Out of the four Elders with white hair, one immediately gnashed his teeth in anger.

"That traitor dared...!"

The other three Elders, two older men and an older lady, didn't wear any expressions on their faces, the ambience of the room was extra heavy.

"Who will fight against him?" The Master gave each Elder a once-over.

The Elder who spoke earlier shut up.

Silence.

The four Elders didn't dare to speak.

The Master sighed, "Don't you all hate him to his bones? Now that he's here, why are you quiet as a mouse?"

Again, silence.

The Master looked aside in disappointment, not knowing what to say.

"Master, Clark is too dangerous. I recommend we should kill him together, no need to follow whatever duel commandments." An elder murmured.

"Elder Kane is right. We should all join forces and utilize all the power we can get, we must keep this disgrace here!"

"I propose to have five of our finest disciples join the mission. We'll also get the chairmen from the branches to help, us Elders will support from the sideline."

"We can set up an ambush with firearm squad."

Each of the Elders started to discuss with vigor.

"Stop," the Master beckoned helplessly. "What about Beo?"

"Still at bedrest. He was hurt quite badly in this mission with the Confederation." An Elder answered.

Clark. The disgrace and blemish of Red Sand Sword Gate.

He was the strongest prodigy Red Sand Sword Gate! With only three years, he managed to grow into a Grandmaster of Combat from someone who has no foundation.

He was revered as the Palosa of Red Sand Sword. His seniors and elders gave him full attention, determined to make him the best that he can. When his fame began to rise, Andrela was still in his fundamental studies.

Clark laid a strong foundation for Red Sand Sword Gate's growing influence and power. He mastered the strongest Secret Martial Art of the Red Sand Sword Gate, the Red Silk Secret Sword Technique* and brought it beyond the limit to a new heights. With that, he surpassed his elders and became the strongest person in the whole of Red Sand Sword Gate!

He had led the disciples of Red Sand Sword Gate into conquest battles, no matter head-on attacks or ambushes, he was able to come out victorious. Clark's fame had reached its peak in history by that point.

Regretfully, Clark, at his peak, hadn't been able to go further, he can no longer see a better future if he stayed in the Red Sand Sword Gate.

The repetition of leading conquest and gaining fame was wearing Clark off. Finally, that weariness exploded. One day, five year ago, he defected.

Under the persuasion of the Behemoth Gate, he killed his master and his beloved senior sister. Anyone who tried to stop him, whom he loved, he killed them all.

That's the motto of the Behemoth Gate - Unfeeling, Uncaring.

The first condition was to defect. The second, to kill someone they loved.

These are the conditions to joining the Behemoth Gate, there was no turning back.

Red Sand Sword Gate changed in a single night. Everyone who went after him were either killed or badly hurt. The whole sect fell off its throne and was eventually succeeded by the Celestial Circle Gate.

"No one was able to kill him." Recalling his own memory of chasing after Clark, an Elder's face switched between helpless, sorrow, pain, and fear.

"That's right." The Master also sighed, "He had already surpassed me, he only defected because he wanted to pursue a path to power. I have no idea how strong he has become."

"We can ask Celestial Circle Gate for Andreia's help." An Elder advised.

"It's too late, he won't be able to make it in time. Moreover, Andreia is strong, but still not Clark's opponent." The Master shook his head. "Even I wouldn't be able to guarantee victory, let alone him. I know Clark, he's the type of prodigy who would look for your weak spots, even the Secret Martial Art of Celestial Circle Gate has been cracked by him. Not to mention our own Secret Martial Art, he knew it like the back of his hands, he won't have any problem dealing with it."

He paused. "After his disappearance, I thought he died. I didn't expect... Never mind, mobilize every single captain, we'll defend the main branch.

For a moment, the air in the training hall was unbelievably dense.

The next day.

Garen and his team split up to look for information. The Eighth Hoop was in charge of the Golden Hoop in this city, who is the pale man who invited Garen into the Golden Hoop then. After meeting with Garen, he agreed, with alacrity, to supply manpower to help looking for Rosetta's whereabouts.

All of a sudden, the gangsters on the streets, the hidden goons in various companies, even some bosses and workers in shops were all assembled by the Eighth Hoop.

At the same time, at the outskirts of Lake Shore West City.

Two black cloaks stood, hidden within the poplar woods. They watched the two police dashed into an area belonging to Red Sand Sword Gate. The ray of dawn spilled onto their cloaks, revealing its unique scale-like shine. The white arc symbol at their backs were also illuminated.

"As expected, they went to the branch of Red Sand Sword. This city is the old nest of Red Sand Sword Gate, they must be seeking protection from them." Rosetta peered at the buildings standing beside the lake from afar, and glanced at her companion with curiosity. "What do you plan to do now?"

The other black cloak pulled his hood off, revealing his short white hair, smooth face, and a pair of rare plum-colored eyes.

"Red Sand Sword Gate? That brings back memories." He said softly. "They look like they were delivering the thing to Red Sand Sword for its protection. Ah well, it's been awhile I haven't gone back to check them out. After so many years, I wonder if the Master is still as indecisive as before."

"You wanna go back?" Rosetta asked, bewildered. "There were so many masters in there, yet you still want to trespass?"

"I just wanna see if they've grown after all these years." Clark said expressionlessly.

He smiled and slowly shifted toward the entrance of the branch, not bothered to hide himself.

Rosetta hesitated, and followed.

"They were looking for something?" Garen frowned. He was seated opposite of the Eighth Hoop in a tea room, sipping black tea with music flowing through the record player on the table.

"Yes. They were not planning to hide their paths. Just an hour ago, the Red Sand Sword branch at the outskirts caught on fire, no one was spared. The dozen of martial artists and disciples were all killed." The Eighth Hoop sighed, "This former strongest prodigy, he's not the strongest for nothing*."

"What were they looking for?"

"I hear it's a scroll leaked from the Behemoth Gate about a Secret Martial Art. Behemoth Gate investigated with a lot of their members and found out there were a lot of copies everywhere. Right now, they were sending people to recover all those scrolls." The Eighth Hoop giggled and sipped his black tea.

"Behemoth Gate." Garen was deep in thought. "Can you locate them?"

"It's difficult. However," The Eighth Hoop laughed, "I checked Clark's details. He will definitely infiltrate Red Sand Sword's main branch by tonight. You can go there."

Garen gave it a thought.

"Thanks."

He stood up and exited the tea room.

"No problem."

The Eighth Hoop smiled, looking at Garen's back.

Red Sand Sword's strongest prodigy in history, Grandmaster of Combat Clark, has now joined the Behemoth Gate for five years. So much stronger, to what end?

Garen, on the other hand, is a rising star, they called him Number One Youth Grandmaster of Combat of the South.

"Heh heh, this should be fun." The Eighth Hoop took the teapot and poured himself another cup of tea.

Garen left the tea room. Corinne, Simon, Cynthia, and Jack were all waiting on the streets.

"Are the core members ready?"

"I left Karina in the hotel." Corinne nodded.

"Okay on my side, everything's ready." Simon nodded excitedly. "My disciple is proficient in arrangements like this!"

"Both of you will stay." Garen said calmly.

"What! Why?" Corinne exclaimed.

"There is no 'why'." Garen turned toward the car.

"Calm down Corinne, he's only looking out for us, it's too dangerous." Simon started to console Corinne.

Cynthia and Jack followed Garen into the car, Cynthia even made a face at Corinne.

"Why can they follow?" Corinne whined.

"Because you're weak." Cynthia started to hum.

"Let's go." Garen ordered calmly.

"Yessir."

The chauffeur immediately started the engine and started driving.