

# Mystical Journey

## Chapter 16: Accident 2

Bam.

The door of the room closed. Ying Er walked in with a look of suspicion, her red eyes scanning the situation inside the room.

“What kind of mischief are you up to again?”

“What mischief? My trousers weren’t pulled up, and I didn’t expect you to be standing at the door, so I just blocked it for a while.” Garen combed his hands through his hair to massage his numb scalp.

“That’s not true! What’s that under your bed?” Ying Er’s sharp eyes immediately spotted the suspicious trace. She walked a few steps forward and stood facing Garen. “Move aside, I want to find out what disgusting things you’ve been up to!”

“What are you trying to do? It’s late, stop playing,” Garen said with a deliberate frown.

“Move aside!” Ying Er was one of those who ignored everything once her temper got the better of her. When she saw that Garen wouldn’t budge, it fueled her suspicion further.

“Stop it!”

“I said, move aside!” Ying Er’s voice deepened as her expression became ice-cold. “Looks like you didn’t learn a lesson the last time...”

Garen’s complexion slightly changed. “The last time” was the previous Garen; he tried to hide his collection of dirty magazines, but Ying Er found them and beat him up till he cried. Even though it wasn’t actually him who experienced that shameful incident, it was enough to make him choke.

But no matter what, the clothes underneath his bed absolutely could not be discovered!

When she saw that he continued to keep silent, Ying Er’s expression turned uglier.

“Looks like this time around, I’ll have to give you a lesson you won’t forget!” She started cracking her knuckles.

“It’s not what you think, trust me!” Garen looked up into Ying Er’s eyes. He had just killed someone by using too much force, and the last thing he wanted

to do now was to fight his sister. He was worried that he might accidentally do it again...

Ying Er stared into his eyes and realized there wasn't a sliver of embarrassment or anger in them for being exposed, but instead a hint of sincerity.

Both stared at each other for a while.

Ying Er slowly breathed a sigh of relief.

"You're sure?"

"I'm sure!" Garen replied in haste. "Apart from this one thing, I'll agree to whatever you want."

"Fine. I'll ask you a few questions. If you can answer me truthfully, I won't bother you about this," Ying Er paused.

"No problem!"

"Do you like dad?"

"Of course I do. That's easy."

"Do you like mum?"

"Of course."

"Do you like uncle?"

"I do."

"Do you like Ai Fei?"

"Of c... Who's Ai Fei?"

Garen took a deep breath. "Good thing my reaction was quick..."

The palpitations that he suppressed earlier resurfaced. Seeing his sister's expression finally turn bright again, he felt as if he just escaped the clutches of death. He would have never thought that she knew Ai Fei, the prettiest girl among the female students around him.

"Alright... I'll spare you this time. But if you bring those disgusting things in here again, don't blame me..." A satisfied smile broke across Ying Er's face.

"Okay, I'll go out now. Rest early."

"I know, I know. Alright, you get some rest too..." Garen breathed a sigh of relief. "See you tomorrow."

“Yup, see you tomorrow... you wish!” Ying Er cried out. She pounced over and slid under the bed in a flash.

Garen hurriedly crouched down and followed suit, reaching for his bundle of clothes.

The bloodied clothes were shoved deeper under the bed by Ying Er’s vigorous movements; he could barely reach them.

“What’s in the clothes? Tell me!” Ying Er squeezed further under the bed, trying to grab the bundle of clothing.

“It’s nothing!”

“If I catch you, you’re dead meat!” Garen clung onto both of Ying Er’s legs while she crawled forward in an attempt to break free.

Garen put his weight on her from behind, but he didn’t dare to exert too much force, so all he could do was keep a light hold on her. Incidentally, he exerted too little force; Ying Er managed to free herself, and she lunged forward.

Bang!

“Ouch! That hurt...”

Ying Er hit her forehead on the underside of the bed, and her body curled back.

Behind her, Garen suddenly felt that his head was stuffy—he was inside his sister’s skirt.

Round buttocks covered by black pantyhose were inches from his face; he could even see a hint of white underneath. His nose almost touched the skin of her buttocks.

The smell of girly fragrance mixed with a hint of sweat wafted into his nasal cavity, instinctively causing him to inhale.

At that moment, both were completely frozen.

In front, Ying Er didn’t dare to move a muscle. A blush spread over her face, neck, and the entirety of her body.

She could distinctly feel Garen’s face on her bottom—he had probably seen everything under her skirt.

Garen’s mind was in a state of chaos. The most attractive part of a girl’s body was all of a sudden right in front of him, and he didn’t know how to respond.

Knock knock knock.

Someone knocked on the door.

“Are you two done playing in there? Time for you to wash up and go to bed! You have class tomorrow!” their father, Eisen, shouted from the doorway.

Both their hearts skipped a beat. It was nerve-racking.

If their father saw them in this state...

“Yup, almost done!” Garen snapped out of it and frantically shouted in reply.

They waited until the footsteps of their father leaving gradually faded.

Garen leaped out from under the bed in an instant.

He was then followed by Ying Er, with her hands covering her buttocks. Her face was red as she hung her head low; she didn't dare look at Garen.

“I'm off to bed,” she mumbled softly, then quickly opened the door and left.

Garen took a deep breath and sat on his bed. At this moment, he felt a strange calm wash over him.

That bout of ambiguous tension had oddly suppressed his anxiety and panic from the previous event of having killed someone.

There was still a faint aroma of Ying Er in the room. Garen sat on his bed until the lights in Ying Er's room went out. He then went out to find a clothes-drying pole and used it to hook the bloodied clothes out from under the bed, then crept into the bathroom to wash them.

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A week later.

“Hey, old man, what's the latest? Any new stock that's particularly good? How about letting me have a look?”

Garen sat bored beside the table, fiddling with a golden button. Apparently, it was from the clothes of the famous Agate Queen who lived three hundred years ago.

“New stock? What new stock? That burglary cleared me out!” The old man was fumbling at the bookshelf. “That's right! I have a book here that you might appreciate. Think of it as the reward for comforting this old geezer in my moment of crisis.”

“What book?”

“You'll see.”

The old man continued rummaging through the bookshelf. Then, he took a stool and stepped on it, pulling out a large black hardcover book from the topmost shelf.

“Here, take it.” The old man struggled down from the stool and handed the book to Garen.

Garen took the bulky black brick from the old man and wiped a thick layer of dust off the cover, revealing some unknown black text.

He turned to the first page.

In that instant, Garen’s pupils shrunk slightly.

A huge gust of cool current poured into his palm and flowed to his head through his arm.

“Potential! It’s Potential! So... so much energy!”

He didn’t know how to react. There wasn’t any indication when he first held the book, but when he opened it, he started absorbing Potential.

His heart beat unnaturally fast. Garen glanced over the rapidly increasing Potential figures at the bottom of his vision and looked directly at the content on the page of the book.

The yellowing pages were crammed with an unknown text. Garen flipped through the book page by page. Some black-and-white sketches were occasionally interspersed in between the text.

The pictures were mostly weird, irregular geometric lines, which looked as much like a design for a mechanical contraption as it did a map for a complex terrain. They were densely marked with text and tiny symbols.

Garen didn’t have a clue what the content meant, but that didn’t stop him from absorbing Potential from the book. Turning it page by page, time slowly crept away.

Half an hour later...

Garen slowly closed the book and let out a long sigh.

“Finished going through it?” The old man squinted to look at the cover carefully; a trace of disappointment flashed over his eyes.

“Yeah, done. This is definitely a precious ancient antique!” Garen definitively said.

“You don’t say.” The old man seemed to relax a bit more, as if relieved of a burden. “Alright, I’m closing early today. You go ahead, I still have something to take care of.”

Garen took a look at the sky outside. The sun had completely disappeared below the horizon, and only a residual trace of red stained the clouds.

“Fine, I’ll be leaving first then. See you tomorrow.”

“Well, beat it kid!” the old man jokingly added.

“Oh yeah, how’s the progress with Detective Quicksilver?” Garen turned to ask.

“There was an explosion in Kyora Town just outside the city, and Detective Quicksilver was injured. He’s in the hospital now.” Old Man Gregor shook his head and sighed. “Even the famous Detective Quicksilver has faced a setback; looks like there’s no hope of getting my belongings back now.”

“That’s not necessarily the case. I looked up Detective Quicksilver, he’s no ordinary guy. The mystery of the stolen million-dollar oil painting in New Zealand, the nine serial killings in West Riyadh, and cracking the case of the torch legend, etc. The guy keeps facing new opponents, and keeps heading to new places to solve riddles; you can tell he enjoys solving cases. From how I see it, this golden bracelet won’t be an exception,” Garen comfortingly said.

“Thanks for your kind words. Get going now, I need to close up.” The old man waved his hand to rush Garen out.

“Alright.” Garen walked out of the store carrying his bag.

He looked at the Potential points at the bottom of his vision.

Potential: 179%. It was around 58% initially, and that was due to the increase after meeting that car on the night he killed someone.

“That book...” Amidst his delight, his eyes showed a trace of doubt.

“Something feels off.”

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After Garen left, Old Man Gregor closed the front door and went back to sitting in front of the bookshelf. He opened the black hardcover and gently caressed the pages as a complicated expression emerged on his face.

It wasn’t after a long while before he finished looking through the entire book.

“I should have known this would happen, but surprisingly I can’t help but want to cling on to something...”

The old man shook his head and slowly closed the pages.

He kept turning the pages until he finally closed the cover. The black text on the cover had turned dark red, as if fresh blood had flowed through each stroke and coagulated.

## Chapter 17: The Gathering

Ever since the day he killed someone, Garen had been waiting for the other person's next move. He remained near the proximity of his home and mindlessly wandered around the school. After he had become completely familiar with the surrounding area, he increased his vigilance. He didn't know when that pair of crimson eyes would appear once again.

After all, no master would let the murder of their men be without consequence.

Ding.

The crisp chime signaling the end of class shook Garen out of his daydreaming.

He sat at his desk, stretching his neck, and looked around.

Most of his classmates sat in place and stretched, some of them walked around the room, and some began to yell at people to purchase items.

The entire class had become raucous immediately after class.

"Are you going to the competition? Garen?" With a brown blazer, Kalidor sat in front of Garen's seat. He pushed a slim boy to the side. "Sorry, let me squeeze in a little bit."

The youth mumbled a bit but didn't say much.

Garen looked at him, speechless.

"It's the archery and sword art competition right? I don't have any plans to compete right now, but my sister will be part of the archery contest. I will be there to cheer her on. Where did Fayne and Jack go?"

"I don't know. Those two were acting pretty suspicious right after class. Who knows where they went?" Kalidor shrugged. Because of his peculiar taste in fashion and carelessness in appearance, not a lot of people enjoyed his company. In a similar vein,

due to Garen's low-income family background and cold personality, only someone as bold as Kalidor got along with Garen.

Therefore, the two had a closer relationship compared to Fayne and Jack. Including Ai Fei, they were a five-man gang. The closeness in their relationships, however, differed.

"I will only be there for the archery competition." Garen didn't give it too much thought. He felt quite distant from the contest at school because of how dull it usually was. Maybe it was because he had already fought someone to the death, but to him, the competitions were as boring as it could get.

Kalidor pouted as he displayed an expression that said 'I knew you were going to say that'.

"Since you have time right now, I need you to help me with something." He looked around and dragged the studying Ai Fei look to the side.

"What are you doing?? I'm studying."

"You'll know once we get there."

The three gathered together and Kalidor began explaining the situation.

Because a friend of his was back in town, he wanted to bring the two of them to their reunion.

Garen and Ai Fei were his close friends at school, so he wanted them to be there. Since Fayne and Jack's girlfriends needed to be at Xu Xiao's competition, they could not attend due to the conflict in their schedules.

"All my best friends are attending the gathering. My big brother, whom I respect the most, is hosting it. You guys have to come this time! Just treat it as a favor for me."

"Why do you need us to be there at the gathering?" Ai Fei was puzzled.

"My family found me a girl that I am supposed to get engaged to. I want you guys to give me some opinions at this gathering..." Kalidor said in a shy tone.

"Engaged..." Ai Fei and Garen were shocked at the news.

"How old are you, to be getting engaged now..." Garen had a peculiar expression.

"16 years old, is there a rule that says I can't be engaged at 16?" Kalidor asked defiantly.

Garen paused for a moment.



He wanted to ask Old Man Gregor to see the book again. But the old man had become increasingly stubborn for some reason, so his answer was always no. The Dojo was about to pay out its student allowance as well as host an internal competition to finalize the standings. He also needed to keep his guard up against the man with the bloody eyes. After all, he did kill someone of theirs.

[The good thing is that there's no news related to the murder that day yet. After the police took care of the crime scene, the detective couldn't find anything useful. The technology is too behind in this world. If it happened on earth, they could easily use surveillance to identify me as a prime suspect.]

Garen was glad that chaos filled this barely industrial world.

[Even on earth, there are still plenty of people who committed murder but still remained free. Without the assistance of technology, who knows how many truths are still hidden in the darkness. No wonder a detective like Dale Quicksilver can have such a renowned reputation here.]

He was not afraid that they would find his family. It was dark that day, so it was hard to recognize his face. Nobody knew that he went to the dojo through that desolated street either. Without a name as their lead, it would be impossible to identify someone in Huais Shan City out of the tens of thousands of people that lived there. It would be as difficult as searching for a needle in the vast sea. There was no way they could trace any of this back to his family.

After giving it a thought, he felt it was necessary to relax for a bit. A gathering of his friends would be an excellent choice. If he continued to suppress himself, he would go insane before the enemy even showed up.

"The competition starts in a couple of days. Let me be clear, I only have time for the archery competition."

"It's only for a few days, don't worry, we won't miss your sister's competition." Kalidor gave Garen an "I understand" look.

"I don't have any problems, let me know when we leave." Ai Fei concurred without hesitation.

"Okay, oh Ai Fei, can I borrow your physics homework?"

"Why don't you ask Garen?"

"His handwriting is horrendous."

"Go screw yourself! Your writing is uglier than mine, yet you don't see me complaining!"

Not only Kalidor, Garen himself also regularly copied homework off of Ai Fei. He didn't know every subject, especially in Foreign Languages. They were learning the renowned ancient Mengdiyan language. The language was incredibly difficult to pronounce with its tongue-twisting syllables. The abrupt tone combined with the peculiar sound made it impossible to memorize.

After attempting multiple times yet still only managing to achieve a score of 30 on his tests, he ultimately gave up on the language altogether. She was the only girl in the gang of five, and was also gorgeous to boot. Ai Fei was the catalyst and core to their desire to study. She could solve any problem they had.

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Three days later.

In nightfall, Garen and Ai Fei followed Kalidor to a hotel in the downtown of Huai sShan City.

"We are here," Kalidor said as he led the way. Behind him, Garen was in a black shirt, and Ai Fei was dressed up in a light pink dress.

Above the hotel, a sign named: Mila's Night Star hung in the night sky. Below the name hung ten incandescent light bulbs. Light bulbs were not too common in this world due to the rarity of thin wiring and cost. Only the wealthy families could afford them.

A continuous wave of cars stopped in front of the luxurious rectangular door as they dropped customers off.

"My brother is a great guy; I'll introduce you guys once he is here." Kalidor looked excited. "He created a business by himself in the Eastern Sea province!"

"Look how happy you are. It sounds like you're going to meet your believed." Garen responded as he followed. Ai Fei giggled beside him.

"Can you say something nice for once in your life?"

A waiter greeted them as they walked through the door. After politely asking for their names, he led them to a grand hall on the second floor.

As they approached the hall, Kalidor waved at the teenagers in the hall. He looked quite popular amongst them.

"Why don't you go and say hi? We'll make ourselves comfortable here." Ai Fei saw that Kalidor was struggling to keep up with all the conversations and understandingly offered.

“Okay, I’ll be back in a moment. There are drinks on the table, make yourself comfortable...” Before he finished his sentence, Kalidor was dragged away by a short-haired man.

Garen shrugged. He started to think as he watched the group of people inside the hall. As soon as Kalidor entered the room, he became the center of attention. His background was not as simple as he had claimed before.

“Let’s walk around. It looks great in here.”

“Mhmm.”

A graceful man was standing at the corner. His flawless skin and athletic figure almost resembled a woman’s. The fit white suit made him look appear extremely delicate and elegant. He casually chatted with the people surrounding him.

“Kalidor, we haven’t seen each other for a while. Why are you not saying hi? Who was the person that consistently yelled ‘brother, brother’ behind me?” The man saw the three of them approach and gave Kalidor a light punch.

His friends around him also giggled along.

“Brother Weimar, I am here. I came as soon as I saw your telegram. I didn’t dare stop for even a second,” Kalidor said with a sour face.

“Okay, stop acting. I know you too well for your tricks to work! Let me introduce you.” Weimar said to the group of friends around him, “Noble Stallone’s only child, Kalidor. The rest are old friends, but let us introduce ourselves to the two new friends here today.”

He pointed at the blond boy and the girl with yellow pupils.

“William; his father, General William, is extremely close with Uncle Stallone. She is Jessie; the Kaifei International Hotel Chain is owned by her family.”

When he introduced Jessie, he winked at Kalidor. Kalidor immediately knew that she was the girl that his family found.

“Since you guys are Brother Weimar’s friend, you guys are my friends as well. If you guys ever need anything in Huais Shan, don’t hesitate to find me.” With a forthright statement, Kalidor pumped his chest.

William nodded without saying a word.

“Then I’ll have to count on you here.” Jessie smiled at him as she returned a wink.

“No problem.”

“Why don’t you introduce your friends to us?” Jessie looked at Garen and Ai Fei in the not-far-off distance.

“They are all my friends from school. The person with purple hair is called...”

“That’s okay, let’s grab something to eat. I’ll have to meet some other friends. You guys keep chatting.”

Weimar interrupted him. Then, with a smile, he walked into the crowd with a blue-colored martini.

## **Chapter 18: The Gathering 2**

Kalidor was stunned. He wanted to continue introducing his friends, but Jessie brought up a new topic to stop him right away. It was quite obvious that none of them cared about Garen and Ai Fei’s names. They could tell that they were not in the same league as the others just by looking at the way they dressed.

Weimar walked up to the stage in the center of the hall and announced the beginning of the feast. He told everybody to enjoy the banquet. All the youngsters raised their glasses of wine or juice and laughed. After some emotional speeches, Weimar got down from the stage and returned to Kalidor’s side. The band took his place.

“By the way, Wei Sijia just left Kinstria. Her flight passed Huaishan City, so she decided to take a rest here. I invited her today; she’ll drive over later. I guess she must be on the way now. Let’s finish eating and then go get her.” Weimar drank some of the Blood Wine in the glass.

“So soon?” Kalidor frowned. “I have friends here...”

“What does it matter? I’ll go explain to your friends and let them go home by themselves. It has been too long since our last gathering. It is such a rare opportunity this time.”

“How about we take them with us? They are all my friends, and we can introduce them to the others,” Kalidor hesitantly said.

Weimar showed an indifferent smile on his face.

“Kalidor, I hope that tonight it will be just a night of old friends. I don’t think it is a good idea to bring others involved.” He saw Kalidor hesitating, so he continued, “I thought you liked Wei Sijia the most? Now that she finally got a chance to come, you don’t even

want to welcome her in person? We only have four cars and we don't have seats for them if you don't come."

"Come on, don't screw it up. If you feel that it's too difficult to talk to your friends, I will do it."

Kalidor was quiet. He suddenly regretted that he had invited Garen and Ai Fei to the party. He didn't know that his Brother Weimar, whom he had always been respecting, would become so unreasonable... Suddenly, the great image about Brother Weimar in his heart started to become dim. But no matter what, they were still friends who grew up together.

"I urh... Let's see what happens next," he answered in a low and hesitant voice.

Weimar frowned as the smile on his face gradually disappeared. He tapped on Kalidor's shoulder and said, "Just think about it."

Garen and Ai Fei had been hanging around the food table and eating since they got in the hall.

They knew nobody except Kalidor in the party. Aside from them, there were also other new arrivals. They were about seventeen and eighteen years old, and always got a warm welcome from their friends in the party.

They were the only two who didn't know anyone else. They just watched as people talked and laughed in their own small groups, causing them to feel out of place.

"Let's just eat since we can't feel at ease. Kalidor's surrounded right now anyway. We can't let him leave all of his friends to just accompany us, can we?" Garen talked to Ai Fei in a low voice, then picked a plate and walked away to get more food.

Ai Fei truly felt uncomfortable just standing there. She listlessly walked to the food table and learned to pick up a plate like the others did. Cautiously, she used a spoon to drink the soup in her bowl.

Except Ai Fei and Garen, everybody was either rich or powerful. All those people in this shiny and luxurious banquet hall were so dazzling.

Compared to them, the two-hundred-dollar dress and the one hundred dollar boots on her were very conspicuous and out of place. She had seen most of the food on the table before at the supermarket. They were very expensive, and any dish cost much more than all the clothes on her.

Hah...

A laugh sounded beside her.

“Dear sister, that soup is not for drinking. It is for rinsing the mouth.” A young girl couldn’t help laughing.

A blush appeared on Ai Fei’s face as she almost choked. She put down the plate and took a napkin to wipe her mouth.

“I... I recognized it wrong...” Even her neck turned red; she kept her head low and didn’t dare to look up at the girl.

“That is such an obvious pot of soup... You do know what a rinsing soup is, don’t you?” That girl laughed again. Another young girl walked over and whispered to her, and then they both laughed while covering their mouths.

Ai Fei just stood there with her head low, her face and neck red, feeling as if she was burning up. She didn’t know whether she should leave or stay, wishing she could just bury herself into the ground.

“What does it matter? Is the rinsing soup so poisonous we can’t even drink it?” Garen walked over and spoke with a frown.

He was also wearing hundred-dollar clothes, but he didn’t feel restrained at all. In his eyes, those young guys and girls were all some little chickens he could easily defeat. After murdering someone, he now had a different attitude towards ordinary people. Especially when he thought of the fact that the price of a life in this world was so low, he settled down a bit. To him, the only thing that mattered was strength.

“It’s just some rinsing soup. I like it too. What’s so funny?” Garen filled a bowl and drank the entire thing in one big gulp. The rinsing soup tasted a bit sweet with a minty flavor, and was not that bad for a drink.

“It’s fine, it’s fine...” When the girl saw that Garen was so at ease about it, she felt that it would be embarrassing for her to continue making a big deal. She looked at Garen and Ai Fei with a strange expression before saying, “Please go on...” The two young girls slowly walked away. They couldn’t help laughing again as they walked further away.

Garen frowned. Once he saw the girls were gone, he looked at Ai Fei.

“Alright, ignore what other people think. Do whatever you want to.”

Ai Fei nodded in silence.

“Should we go to Kalidor and tell him we feel like leaving? It’s a decent place, but the people in it are not,” Garen casually spoke as he shrugged his shoulders.

He looked at Ai Fei, and the latter, still red faced, meekly nodded. She was so embarrassed that she didn't even look up. Speechless, Garen turned around and walked to Kalidor.

Kalidor was talking to a girl with a pair of bright eyes. They were just idly chatting. Most of the time, the girl would be the one to bring up a topic, and Kalidor would just perfunctorily answer her. When he saw Garen walking over, he knew that he was finally about to be saved.

"I may need a word with my friend over there. I think he needs to talk to me. Excuse me." He finally had an excuse to get away, so he said so and walked to Garen.

"Hugh..."

Kalidor took a long breath out as he approached Garen.

"See? That beautiful girl with long dark golden hair is the one I am engaged to. What do you think?"

"Not bad. Isn't she good?" Garen confusedly said.

"She is too good... I feel useless when compared to her..." Kalidor looked frustrated.

"Alright, I am just here to say that Ai Fei and I are going to head out. You should just spend more time with your friends."

"I was thinking about introducing you to..." Kalidor didn't finish. He turned silent for a moment, and then said, "Well then... I will see you off."

"No need, we are good. I'll walk Ai Fei back first. Anyway, I go for a run every night, and I'm used to it. But in reality, you shouldn't have invited Ai Fei and me tonight, right?" Garen said as his voice turned less and less audible.

Kalidor's expression gradually turned dull.

"I am fine, but you know Ai Fei's family; they're even worse off than mine. She was recruited as a special excellence student and being here definitely made her nervous. Just now, she even drank the rinsing soup. She's a girl you know...."

"It's my fault," Kalidor spoke in a low voice. "I thought it was just a few people talking freely. I thought it would be simple, but I didn't expect it to be so big..."

"You shouldn't blame yourself, you're just too kind. Alright, we are off. Enjoy your time." Garen patted his shoulder and ended the conversation. Kalidor opened his mouth as if about to say something, but couldn't manage in the end. He could only watch as Garen

returned to Ai Fei's side before leaving with her through the back door in the small hall. Besides from Kalidor, no one else paid them any attention.

Garen and Ai Fei left the hotel; they walked along the roads of suburbs, beside them were cars running past.

After that humiliation, Ai Fei looked like another person. Along the way, she didn't utter a single word.

"It is fine. Don't think too much about others' views. After today, they will never show up in our sights again, and we will eventually forget each other." Garen was comforting her. "And don't blame Kalidor. He is just a fool. He didn't think about such a situation."

"I don't blame him." Ai Fei tidied her ponytail. "It was my fault for being ignorant. Why should I blame others?"

"Don't think too much about it." Garen tapped on her shoulder. "You are still who you are, same as who you were. Don't let such a tiny thing affect your happiness." The truth was, he had accidentally discovered Ai Fei's secret when he was hanging around in the city earlier.

The stubborn girl had a mother who was seriously sick at home, and her younger sister and brother were depending on her too. Her father left home because of his gambling debt. She had to gradually pay it on her own. Luckily, she won the scholarship every year as a special gifted student in the Shengying Nobles Academy. She could use that money on her family, and she also worked after school to make more. All the money she earned was only barely enough to pay the tuition fees of her brother and sister and the medical fees of her mother.

The girl had been working so hard. For other students, it might be boring to study in school, but for her, it was a god-given time of relaxation.

"Alright, don't be depressed..." Garen was just about to talk when he caught a familiar outline of a figure in his peripheral vision, making him quickly avert his eyes. "Come on. I need to go home after I send you back."

"Don't worry, I can go home by myself. You don't have to come with me." Ai Fei shook her head. Subconsciously, she looked at Garen with suspicion in her eyes. "You can go, I'm fine."

Garen knew that she didn't want people to know the real situation of her family. He had things to do now anyway, so he nodded. "Ok then. You take care of yourself and just go straight home. Don't hang around outside too long. It may not be safe."

Ai Fei quietly nodded. She took a left turn at the corner of the road.



Garen stood behind her watching her off. When he saw her disappear in that corner, he tidied his collar and walked to a dark alley on the street. After a while, he disappeared into the shadows.

## **Chapter 19: Exclusion 1**

After being followed by Garen through the alley for a while, the black shadow in front suddenly turned left and ducked out of the alley.

Garen avoided a puddle and continued his pursuit with light, careful footsteps. No matter what, he had to figure out the background of the person he killed the other day, whether they would be able to trace his identity or not. At this point, it wasn't just about Attribute points but, more importantly, about the safety of his family and himself.

He turned into a dirty alley even narrower than the last one. The sound of a man arguing with a woman could be heard from the apartments above. The whole alley was filled with the stench of rotting food and waste.

The person in front was kneeling beside a garbage bin with his hand inside it, digging for something. There were two homeless people sleeping soundly on either side of him.

Garen quietly stood at the corner of the alley and peered into it, borrowing the faint light radiating down from the block above.

After a while, the person rummaged through the bin and dug out a black leather purse. He stuck his hand inside the purse, felt around a little and pulled out a small bronze key. After pocketing the key, he quickly looked around and continued to move forward.

Garen retracted his head and hid behind the corner wall when the person turned. He slowly stuck his head out again after waiting for the sound of the footsteps to fade away.

Without warning, the moment he stuck his head out, Garen felt a stabbing pain in his waist.

He reflexively swung his right elbow backward.

Bang!

Someone let out a muffled groan. The elbow strike had left them staggering. The person tried to turn around and escape, but only managed a few steps before stumbling onto the ground. They struggled a few times to get up but failed.

Garen's heart was thumping, but it was already his second real fight. Coupled with the changes in his mentality previously, this time was completely different from the first. He wasn't as panicked compared to before.

He suppressed his nerves and took a few deep breaths. He examined his waist where he was stabbed: there was a tear in his clothes, apparently caused by a small dagger-like weapon, but his skin was uninjured.

"If it wasn't for me learning Explosive Fist Arts for self-defense which solidified my body to an extent comparable to the Body Hardening Technique, that stab would have killed me." Garen looked at the tear. It was right at where his kidney was. A shiver ran down his spine.

Garen walked up to the man on the ground. The man held a black dagger in his right hand. His clothes were dirty, as if they hadn't been washed in a long time. He looked like an ordinary homeless person.

"You won't be able to live for long now. Master James will avenge me!" The man let out a low sinister laugh and glared at Garen with his beady green eyes. A trace of blood spilled out from the corner of his mouth, his head bent askew, and he was dead. There was a hint of black in the blood that spilled from his mouth: poison.

The man had committed suicide before Garen could manage to even ask about the situation. Garen crouched to check his pulse and breathing: he was indeed dead.

Garen felt like he had been dragged into a war between two forces. The man had mistaken him for a member of the opposing force, and committed suicide without a second thought just to prevent himself from leaking any information.

The harshness and cruelty of this warrior, so ready to die, made Garen shudder.

"He probably wasn't sent to specifically tail me. The person in front must have come to retrieve something, and this guy here was probably sent to kill me after he realized that I was following that person. He could also be a spy from the other organization... Seems highly unlikely that I've been exposed." Garen breathed a sigh of relief after analyzing the general situation. It was clear that his accidental killing had been mistaken for a deliberate act committed by the opposing side.

"No wonder when I stopped the car the man so decisively ordered for me to be killed. I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time..."

The more Garen thought about the situation, the more he realized that these were the facts.

He looked around him, there was no movement. The snoring of the homeless men and the arguing voices from the block above could still constantly be heard, with some feral cats in heat making mating call sounds from time to time.

Garen bent over to examine the assassin and found a gold coin with black and gold stripes in the inner pocket of his coat. Without taking a second look at it, he shoved the gold coin in his pocket and left the same way he came.

He crept out of the alley when the crowd thinned. He acted as if nothing had happened and went around the city center in circles. It wasn't until the bell tower in the city chimed the end of the hour that he jogged home in a hurry.

Creak... Bang.

Garen shut the front door, changed into slippers and went into the living room.

The oil lamp in the living room was lit. His father, Eisen Lombard, was reading the newspaper on the sofa with his legs crossed into a figure four. He was wearing black pajamas, and there was a slight twitch in his brows.

Eisen was a plump middle-aged man with messy indigo hair and a full white beard; he looked like a passionate football coach.

When he saw that Garen was back, he lifted his plump face and gave him a little nod, but didn't say a word.

"Where's mom?" Garen tried to act naturally as he removed his jacket and hung it on the coat rack by the door.

"Since it's a holiday, she's gone to the block across the street for coffee at Madame Cadney's," Eisen answered casually. "You only came back after the bell chimed. Don't stay out for too long next time, it gets dangerous outside when it's late. There have been a few murders in the city recently. They've all happened in places where there were very few people about. Do take care to avoid such places."

"Yeah, I know. I heard some of my schoolmates mentioning it." Garen nodded.

"Especially you, always running around in places with very few people."

"Okay."

"Be careful when you're walking around. Your sister has just gone to bed. She has preparatory practice for the tournament tomorrow." Eisen put down the paper, finished his coffee and said, "Since you're back, I'm going off to bed too. Don't wait up for mom, she'll probably be out late."

“Alright.” Garen rested on the sofa for a bit, drank a glass of water, and watched his father close the bedroom door behind him. He waited for a while longer until he heard the lights go off inside the room. He then got up, washed up, switched off the living room lights, and went into his own room.

He sat by his desk and switched on the desk lamp. Then, he carefully took out the dark gold coin from his pocket and examined it under the light.

The gold coin was the size of a walnut and was as thick as a normal coin. Engraved on the face of it was a double mast galleon in full sail against the wind. Above the galleon was a snake with its mouth open, ready to bite.

On the bottom of the coin was a number: 1521.

On its flip side was a knight’s suit of armor. A sword ran through the armor from within, angled upwards, and a helmet hung from the tip. A garland encircled the whole armor.

Garen rubbed on the coin repeatedly. He could make out a dark golden color beneath the black paint from a few spots on the flip side of the gold coin.

As he pressed a finger to the dark gold spots, and the Potential on the bottom of his vision jolted.

From 179% to 180.

And then it stopped moving.

“That’s it?”

Garen silently put down the gold coin.

Ever since he’d accrued a few Attribute points at the old man’s place, he hadn’t used any of them, but instead saved them for the time being.

He originally intended to add them to the White Cloud Secret Method, but later considered that it would probably be better to add them to the Explosive Fist Arts. After all, that was the technique that would give the best results in a short amount of time. On top of that, he hadn’t been successful in getting anything out of the book ever since he borrowed it from the old man, which made him even more reluctant to use the rare Attribute points on anything.

“I thought I could find something substantial on him. For a member of an organization that’s stolen so many antiques, all he had on him was a gold coin. Should I deem him a side character in the grand scheme of things?”

He shook his head, then hid the gold coin in the desk drawer.

“Since this is a misunderstanding, it should end here. I can’t keep getting dragged into it.” Recalling how he was stabbed without warning earlier, he broke into a cold sweat.

“If I hadn’t trained in Explosive Fist Arts which hardened my skin, that stab could have killed me. Fortunately, he was weak. If it were someone stronger, and with some poison on the knife...”

When he thought of this, a shiver ran down his spine.

“I’ll just stay focused on going to school and practicing martial arts. This business is too dangerous. It’s better if I just leave it to professional detectives like Dale Quicksilver.”

He made up his mind not to meddle in this matter anymore. The Bronze Cross Emblem was valuable, but there was a new source of Potential from the Old Man. Thus, even though he could no longer get any more regular absorption from it, Garen’s desire to get the emblem back gradually faded.

“I’ll use the last bit of Potential on the White Cloud Secret Method. The sooner I add to it, the faster my strength and physicality can begin to increase.”

He pondered for a second, and finally cast his line of sight onto the White Cloud Secret Method in the Skills pane.

Slowly, the stream of qi from his brain flowed out and entered one of the items under the White Cloud Secret Method.

The words gave a shake and gradually blurred, upgrading from ‘intermediate’ to ‘advanced’.

Snap!

A crisp sound rang through his brain. The ‘advanced’ instantly blurred and reverted to ‘intermediate’. A current flooded back into Garen’s brain.

“What’s going on?” He frowned and carefully reviewed the Skills pane.

A new symbol had emerged after ‘White Cloud Secret Method’.

Even though he didn’t know how to pronounce it, Garen strangely understood its meaning: “Information Incomplete”.

“It seems that the teachings of the Secret Method were incomplete. The key to the advanced Secret Method should be in the hands of the dojo masters and key disciples,” Garen deduced the truth of the matter.

He thought about it, then focused his sight on Explosive Fist Arts. Similarly, after the Attribute points were added to it, the words blurred then reverted to 'elementary'. There was a new symbol after it, the meaning of which Garen again immediately understood.

"Does the intermediate level of Explosive Fist Arts require external drug stimulation as a simultaneous therapy? Otherwise, it would harm the body and mind..." He was well aware that, to have been initiated in Explosive Fist Arts without any assistance, was extremely fortuitous.

It would be the same for the White Cloud Secret Method. The dojo would naturally want to maintain certain core elements within their control. It's not likely that they would give it all away in one go, otherwise they wouldn't be so established.

"So it seems that, to enhance my martial art powers, I have to elevate my status within the dojo." Ever since he transmigrated here, almost all of his time had been spent on his fascination with martial arts. Something that he could only dream of on Earth, he could actually be exposed to here. This had always made Garen excited. And now that he understood the importance of martial arts and the security it provided, his pursuit of it had become more fanatical.

Although he was encountering some problems, he wasn't too concerned. As long as he could participate in the dojo's internal qualifying tournament, he could attain a good ranking and gain the attention of the high-level core figures.

"Since I can't add to Skills, I'll just add to my basic Potentials." He shifted his sight and lingered on the basic Potential pane.

Strength: 0.53. Agility: 0.23. Physicality: 0.33. Intelligence: 0.36.

"I've added to Vitality, Strength and Intelligence before. I should just add to Agility this time, and check out what effect that has." Garen held a "might as well add to it" attitude toward Attribute points.

Compared to his ordinary peers, he would have a better starting point no matter which items he added his Attribute points to.

After all, he had an ordinary body enhanced by Attribute points.

On top of that, the stabilizing effect of Potentials meant that once he reached a certain level of a Potential, even if he didn't really train much, the body could still maintain the Potential at its peak and wouldn't regress. If he didn't practice martial arts to build up his physicality under such favorable circumstances, even he felt that it would be a sinful waste.

## **Chapter 20: Exclusion 2**

“The physical test results are out. The results detail resilience, resistance and physical tenacity. Strength decides explosive power, physical strength, and body shape. When intelligence goes up, it becomes much easier to learn. Now, all that’s left is agility.”

He focused on the Agility icon.

Soon, it jumped to 0.33 from 0.23.

Within the instant during which the number changed, Garen felt his body turn lighter. His sight turned dim, and his brain was blank as if many things had been moved out of his body.

He felt like he had taken off a heavy iron suit. His body became incredibly light, and he felt like he could jump onto the roof with just a single stomp on the floor.

“From what I have concluded, the different attributes of ordinary people should only be around 0.3. Originally, my speed was lower than the others, and that’s why I ran very slowly. These numbers are hard to measure though. It would have been better if all these numbers could be converted with a normal human’s abilities as 1 instead.”

As soon as this thought crossed his mind, the numbers in his sight began to gradually change.

After more than 10 seconds, the numbers had completely changed.

Strength: 1.77; Agility: 1.10; Vitality: 1.03; Intelligence: 1.20; Potential: 80%.

“So the display will change according to the desires I have in my mind. I guess my strength should be over one and a half times the strength of ordinary people. No wonder I could break a thick glass plane and pass the 200-pound sand bag challenge so easily .”

He turned off the light and opened the window for some fresh air, after which he took off his clothes and lay on his bed. With his entire body filled with the feeling of lightness, he eventually stopped thinking and, very soon, he fell asleep.

He didn’t know how much time had passed since he fell asleep. When he woke up and opened his eyes, he suddenly heard the door of his room being opened; a short figure slid in and stood beside the door, quietly looking at him. It was Ying Er.

She was wearing the school uniform, which had a short skirt. On her slim waist was a silver zipper. The skirt was only enough to cover her thighs, and her black pantyhose was obvious.

“Brother, in fact... In fact... I...”

Garen drowsily got up.

“Ying Er? What are you doing here so late?” He looked at his sister on the bedside. Under the moonlight, he felt that his sister seemed to be more beautiful and purer. When she unconsciously grabbed her short skirt with her head low, all he could see was the pink on her face.

“Brother... You... don’t get close to other girls... Can you do that?” Ying Er’s voice was as small as an ant.

“Are you talking about Ai Fei? We’re just friends.” Garen thought about the night when he walked Ai Fei back. With the suspicion in Ai Fei’s eyes while she looked at him, he knew what she meant.

It looked like Ai Fei suspected that Garen liked her, and that that was why he always protected her. Because of that, she didn’t allow him to send her home. It wasn’t simply not letting others know her home address; it was also turning down his pursuit.

“I’ve just been turned down. Now, my sister is expressing her love to me? Ying Er... Only you are so naive to think that your brother is the best. You think all girls will like me, like I will be snatched away from you at any second. Well, not every girl thinks so.” Garen felt bitter in his heart.

“So is it that woman who keeps on pestering you? Annoying...!” Ying Er curled her hand into a fist. “As long as you promise me you will never talk to that Ai Fei anymore, I will... I will stop beating you up.”

Garen twitched his mouth and didn’t say anything. He felt the words “stop beating you up” were so weird when they came out of his sister’s mouth.

Ying Er didn’t get any response. She lowered her head a little bit more, thinking that Garen was refusing.

“As long as you promise... Then I will... I can... I will let you...”

She stepped ahead, took his hand, and slowly pulled it beneath her skirt.

Garen was frozen in place. From his right hand, he felt a warm and moist feeling that engulfed his entire body. His blood began to boil and, with his body’s rising temperature, a thirst overwhelmed him. His private part was as hard as an iron stick, causing him to feel a bit of pain.

Finally, he couldn’t hold it!



“Ying Er!” He finally couldn’t help it anymore. He suddenly sat up and grabbed his sister’s waist with his other hand.

“Bang!”

“Ouch...”

Garen opened his eyes.

“Which ceiling is this...” He looked confused. He reached out his left hand and found his fingernails were bloody. “No... It should be a familiar ceiling, the new me is just still not used to it yet...”

“So it was a dream... I was wondering how Ying Er’s personality changed so much. She actually came to me late after midnight.” He looked at the ceiling, a red background with black lattices. He felt so lazy that he didn’t want to move, and he was also a bit disappointed.

While the cold wind blew into the room through the windows, his bed felt warm and cozy. Inside and outside were two seemingly different worlds.

“I guess I have been infected by this world... In this world, relatives further than three generations could be married. Let alone Ying Er, my sister who is not actually my real sister. It is quite normal that I imagine something about her.”

He slowly took away the quilt and looked at the nightstand. On the edge of the table was a scratch; it must have been his nails that made it.

He got up from the bed, grabbed his clothes, and put them on. He added a cotton underclothes under his shirt; it appeared a formal suit of long pants and black coat.

“Mom, there is a hole in my clothes. What should I do?” There came his sister’s voice from the living room.

“Take it to Mark the tailor. Your brother’s clothes were ripped yesterday. Get them done together.” The voice of his mother, Vania, sounded.

“Nia, hurry. We have to go. The company car is about to arrive,” his father urged.  
“Where is my tie? My red one!”

“In the closet.”

“It isn’t there.”

“Then use the black one!”

“Fine, so be it. Move faster!”

“Ying Er, please come and help me with the zipper on my back. It’s jammed!”

“Okay, mother.”

Garen opened the bedroom door and stood beside it.

In the living room, his father, Eisen, was busy with his tie, and his mother was putting on a long dress with his sister’s help.

“Are you up, Garen? Our breakfast is bread, milk and an egg for each of us. If it’s not warm enough, put it into the oven for a few seconds. We’re leaving now, we’re going to be late.” His mother zipped the dress and tidied it up. She rushed out through the door with her bag in hand.

“Hurry and eat, then go to school. I’m off!” Eisen left too.

Bang.

The door was closed.

His sister took a breath out and turned around to look at Garen.

“Hurry up and go wash yourself. We’ve got a bus to catch after breakfast. It is almost seven!”

“Okay.” Garen walked to the washroom. He twisted the faucet and splashed some cold water on his face.

The water made his skin tense up. He didn’t feel sleepy at all anymore.

“Today is the day of my competition. Promise me that you will come and see me,” Ying Er shouted from outside the washroom as she dressed up. “If you dare go watch the girls’ swimming game like you did last time, I’ll make you beg for mercy!” She raised her fist and shook it.

“Alright, alright...” Garen helplessly shook his head. He had been living for dozens of years, so how would he be controlled by the emotions of a young boy? The dream must have been a reflection of a memory from his past.

Hmm, it must be.

Facing the mirror, he tried to convince himself.

In that mirror, there was a young man who had dark purple hair and red eyes. His skin was pale and exquisite. There was nothing like a pimple on him. He was also emitting a natural sense of confidence and vigor.

“Come on, stop it. Let me use it!”

Ying Er brushed up close to him from his right. She moved her head so that both she and Garen could use the mirror at the same time. She cautiously tidied her hair before looking at Garen’s face. All of a sudden, a blush appeared on her face.

“That face in the old days was a lot safer...” she murmured.

“What did you say?” Garen didn’t hear what she said.

“Nothing, hurry up.”

It was still the same life: catching a bus, attending a class, and eating. There would be a competition in the afternoon, so the classes were cut short.

Garen followed the students in the school to the outdoor shooting field.

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Students from different classes gathered together and formed groups one after another. Some of them even raised their hands holding wooden sticks with banners saying “XXX Go For It”. Some of them actually started yelling like a cheer squad.

The shooting field had two parts: the arrow targets and the shooting fence. The participants needed to shoot from the fence while aiming at the target on the other side. Their scores depended on the rings they would shoot.

Garen found a place on the left to watch the competition. There were some students and teachers around.

The sunlight seemed pale, and the temperature wasn’t too high.

Garen waited for a while. After three groups of people, it was finally Ying Er’s turn.

She was wearing a clean white shooting robe with a black pant-skirt. It looked like an ancient Chinese dress with black and white colors. She was wearing a pair of yellow gloves and, with one hand, she held a brown wooden bow which was over a meter long.

She slowly walked to the other two players; both of them were standing still on three shooting spots. They put on a brown leather chest plate, which covered half of their chest.

“Here comes Ying Er from Class 6 Grade 1, Ilya from Class 7 Grade 1, and David Jones from Class 8 Grade 1. Ying Er from Class 6 is an outstanding player in the Department of Archery. Yi Li Ya has won a medal in a competition in the city. David Jones has just begun competing, so it must be quite a challenge for him this time...”

While holding a speaker, a teacher was loudly commentating.

“Elizabeth from Class 7 Grade 3 has shot five tens. A peak record like that is nearly impossible for others to break. Now, let’s see whether Ying Er or the next up Su Man can break the record.”

Standing from afar, Garen looked at his sister, and Ying Er also looked back at him. He hurriedly smiled and waved his hand.

Ying Er felt calm. As the preparation sounded, she slowly raised and drew her bow.