

Mystical 161

Chapter 161: Prodigy 3

In the car, Garen closed his eyes for a little.

"Clark..." He was not sure what Clark is like as an enemy.

"I heard he's the strongest Grandmaster of Combat in Red Sand Sword's history," Jack sitting in the navigator seat said. "Boss, I checked the info, before he defected to Behemoth Gate, this Clark had suppressed the Celestial Circle Gate by himself. When he defected, he took one of the core Martial Arts of the Red Sand Sword Gate. As of now, his power should be close to Duskdune Shura's."

"Close to Duskdune Shura's, which means he's still weaker than him?" Garen stated calmly.

"Uh, yeah, sure." Jack nodded, "Duskdune Shura used to comment about this. He said among the younger generation, Clark was the only one who can elicit a sense of threat to him."

"Very high evaluation, however, he still put himself at a higher pedestal with that comment. Which would mean, it was only a sense of threat." Garen shook his head. "Very well, at least I can gauge how strong I've become."

"Boss is of course the strongest." Jack whistled.

About a kilometer from Red Sand Sword's main branch, the car stopped in an obscure street.

Garen looked upon the upper regions of Red Sand Sword Gate. One of the Eighth Hoop's men were there, waiting for Clark and Rosetta's appearance.

The bright sky, ever so slowly, dimmed to a shady gloom. Rain drizzled down the street in the afternoon, casting the already vacant street into a chilly disuse.

The driver from Golden Hoop glanced at Garen through the rearview mirror.

"Sir, do you want anything to eat?

"I'll go get some snacks." "I brought some beef jerky, spicy beef flavor, it's nice." Both Cynthia and Jack had their plans.

Garen asked the driver for four hard boiled eggs as dinner.

Lake Shore West City was three times bigger than Huaishan City, but the population was only half of it, pretty sparse. It took the driver a while to find a place that sells hard boiled eggs, so he bought eight at once.

Having their dinner casually, the sky finally darkened completely.

Tick!

Above Red Sand Sword's main branch, a white light clicked into existence like a glowing mushroom.

Garen's eyes focused on the white light.

"They're coming."

He exited the car, followed by Cynthia and Jack after they prepared their firearms.

"Hide yourself." Garen unhurriedly gave them an order, and hastened toward Red Sand Sword.

Clink clank!

Two clashes of swords, Clark straighten up his body slowly, his fine sword retracting with the same pace.

At his side, two elder men stepped back respectively, their swords splitting into two. The two men were stunned.

"Double Sword Strike! You mastered the Double Sword Strike!"

One of them stuttered, his voice quivering as he spoke.

Red Sand Sword Gate Master stood in the middle of the courtyard of the main branch, accompanied by the elites in the Gate.

Clark smirked and glanced at the anxiety-ridden Red Sand Sword Gate members.

"Give me the thing, it's not yours to keep."

His sight fell on the two police behind the Red Sand Sword Gate Master.

The two were as pale as ghosts, eyes drooping. After being on the run for such a long time, they damaged their bodies beyond what would be called "normal".

The situation in the courtyard was awkward, to say the least.

Clark and Rosetta were both surrounded, at least a dozen of Red Sand Sword Gate members were beaten to the ground, no one else dared to advance to attack, holding their ground.

Outside the Red Sand Sword courtyard, there was another circle of people in black uniform. These people were all dressed in black, but they weren't from the same faction, differentiated by the crests they're wearing. The white arcs, they were from the Behemoth Gate. The others were wearing black crosses, those people were from the Black Mark Association.

The people from the Black Mark Association were lead by two people, a middle-aged lady and a towering man. They stood side by side, observing the situation in the courtyard.

Red Sand Sword Gate Master scanned at the outer circle.

"Clark, you brought people from both Behemoth Gate and Black Mark Association, were you trying to threaten my sect?

The situation was truly unusual at this stage. Black Mark Association weren't wholeheartedly trying to help Clark, they wanted the secret scroll too, coming as a separate entity on their own.

Aside from the Behemoth Gate, represented by Clark and Rosetta, the Celestial Circle Gate had also had people dispatched after Red Sand Sword Gate informed them about their situation.

As long as anyone can thwart Clark's advance, the secret scroll can be saved.

Red Sand Sword Gate Master was still wearing his confident smile on his face. Whether he is actually confident is another matter, he has to show enough confidence to assure the disciples in his sect.

He glanced at the two Elders not far from him. Both of them were bleeding from between their thumbs and index fingers, having hurt themselves by the countershock when they tried to sneak attack from behind.

Clark didn't even turn behind, he only needed to brandish his sword to block the full strength attacks of them both combined.

"If we can't sneak up on him, we'll swarm him! I don't believe he has the power to walk out of here unscathed." Gate Master* blinked and sneakily caught a glimpse of the people from Black Mark Association.

He pressed his thumb and little finger together and flicked.

A sudden, yet uniformed set of steps sounded. The four people in the forefront of Red Sand Sword Gate, together with the two who were hurt, all charged at Clark.

Gate Master waved his arm, throwing a black scroll a dozen meters into the air. That was the scroll Behemoth Gate wanted to destroy.

People from Black Mark Association started rushing for the scroll, as well as those from Behemoth Gate.

In the darkness, there were sounds of fabric being rustled by the wind, two other elites blitzed at the scroll.

All eyes were concentrated on the scroll in the air.

"King of Fist Leo!" "Sky Warrior Corbella!"

Some people in the crowd yelled in surprise.

They recognized the two Grandmasters of Combat.

One of the three Kings of Fist in Black Mark Association, Leo, and Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate's Sky Warrior Corbella.

Bam!

Two massive Braveries clashed in mid-air, everyone felt as if a hammer hit them on their heads and started having vertigo.

They seem to be able to hear an eagle's scream and a tiger's roar.

With a heavy thud, both the fighters in the air fell backward.

King of Fist Leo fell into the Black Mark Association crowd, while Sky Warrior Corbella stumbled into the Red Sand Sword crowd.

"Attack!"

Red Sand Sword Gate Master roared. All the Red Sand Sword disciples and Elders, as well as elites from each branch lunged at the Behemoth Gate followers.

Some of them even brought out their guns and started shooting. However, untrained shooters cannot harm the extreme agile martial artists.

It really was quite a scene.

Some five people from Red Sand Sword Gate carried their submachine guns and shotguns, and opened fire at Clark wildly.

Intense clink-clanking sounded non-stop all over the battlefield.

Sparks enveloped Clark as his sword arm disappeared into thin air, forming a protective barrier with his sword to deflect every single bullet that had been shot his way.

The deflected bullets avoided followers of Behemoth Gate as if they're conscience, and sped through the air toward disciples of Red Sand Sword Gate. Just a moment after, flocks of Red Sand Sword disciples were hit.

Bubbled within a barrier of sparks, Clark's cheek glowed a sickly crimson.

"Fighters relying on firearms, Red Sand Sword Gate has really rotted to the core."

Seeing the ineffectiveness of firearms, Gate Master gritted his teeth and charged into the fight with the four Elders.

The five of them surrounded Clark, striking frantically with their swords, as though there were five fiery snakes circling him. The blades of the swords started heating up due to the friction between the metal and air. The swords, made with special materials, have extremely high heat conductivity. The swords soon became red from the heat, so much so that whenever they tapped on their opponent, they had the added effect of piercing and burn damages.

The swords strikes left behind red blurs like red sand pouring through the air. This is how Red Sand Sword got its name.

With five top fighters joined forces, even Clark was having troubles fighting them off. No one even dared to be near them within a dozen meters.

Six of them were in the same sect, they were so familiar with each other's fighting styles, they have practically no secrets from each other in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. In this fight, one side will eventually win out of sheer power and groundwork.

On the other side of the battlefield, King of Fist Leo from Black Mark Association and Sky Warrior Corbella from Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate started fighting each other again. Like Red Sand Sword and Clark, both of them knew each other's fighting styles so well, they were not able to tell if one is stronger than the other in such a short time.

The other less experienced fighters also battled against each other.

Rosetta fought against one of the four branch chairmen. They were both top fighters who are close to being Grandmasters of Combat. The branch chairman's sword had less intense red blur, but the speed is still not a normal fighter can keep up to. This is a first grade Secret Martial Art, it's what Red Sand Sword could become the leading sect once upon a time.

Even though Rosetta joined Behemoth Gate, her training for a stronger Secret Martial Art is still too little. If it wasn't for her opponent constant distraction at the Gate Master's direction, she had already lost.

"Tsk tsk... Rosetta, have you not already beaten your opponent?" A coquettish voice appeared behind Rosetta.

"Angela! Mind your own business!" Rosetta's face darkened, becoming impatient, her Fist Technique disturbed by the interruption.

Tssss!

Her left shoulder was scraped by her opponent's sword. A scalding sting pulsed from her shoulder.

Her opponent was already stronger than her, coupled with her natural disadvantage as a Fist Artist against a Swordsman who wields Red Sand Sword, a speed-focused Sword Art, even a slight distraction would cause a burnt mark on her skin.

"As expected, you were only paired up with Clark because of your junior brother, Sky Warrior Garen's fame. The higher ups had such high hopes for you, but you were disappointing. You think you are good enough to match Lord Clark with your junk skills?"

The woman behind Rosetta was dressed flirtatiously with on her shapely physique. Her hair was short and pale green. A short spike in her hand danced around, poking bloodied holes into her enemies. To her, strolling past the elites of Red Sand Sword Gate was like taking a walk in the woods.

Rosetta gritted her teeth, trying hard to focus. When Garen became famous, the higher ups raised her to an impossibly high position, going on missions with Clark. Obviously, from being a normal member, her promotion to such a high position made other elites in the Behemoth Gate less than happy. Everyone thought she was basking in the light of Sky Warrior Garen.

As Sky Warrior Garen's senior sister, her power could only be stronger than her junior brother. However, no matter how much effort she puts in, her strength only increased slowly. Sometimes, because of overtraining, her injuries even sets her back in strength.

Translator's Thoughts

J_Squared J_Squared

Gate Master refers to Red Sand Sword Gate Master, in case you're confused. Same below unless specified otherwise.

Chapter 162: Prodigy 4

"Unless I said something wrong?" The girl smiled, "look at your opponent who fights without strength, sloppy movement and shows no intention of killing at all. They don't even treat you like an opponent, they're just fooling with you."

"Shut up!" Rosetta growled, but was immediately cut across the chest on the shirt by Crimson Sand Sword's chief, leaving a black mark on her shirt.

"Look at your embarrassed face," the girl smiled, "I heard you've taught - before, and with this level you've actually produced a pro fighter, so how do you really teach it? Hmm... let me think, did you teach it in bed?"

"Angela, are you looking to die?!" Rosetta couldn't resist her anger anymore, she turned her back as if desperately wanting to leave the opponent.

In the blink of an eye, a red light shimmered in front of her eyes. Chi chi chi! Three times consecutively and the clothes on Rosetta's shoulders tore. If it wasn't for her Hardening Technique, that move would've caused her life because she made the mistake of triggering her emotions.

"I said it right? Are you angered by that embarrassment?" Angela showed an innocent face with her hand under her chin. "You weren't hurt badly? This is White Cloud Gate's Mammoth Secret Hardening Technique? However, why does it look so weak when compared to other secret techniques?"

"Poor bastard, the day Clark gets bored of fooling with you would be the day you die." Suddenly her expression changed, showing a sinister smile. "You looked so cocky, I thought you had such strong powers, but turns out you're just a disappointment. This is your White Cloud Gate's Mammoth Secret Hardening Technique?"

Rosetta boiled with anger, but the more she raged, the more she was suppressed by the opponent. Not only that, the injuries on her body also increased.

"Enough."

With a loud "chi", a red sword stabbed into the front side of Angela's toe and for a moment, it left the floor burning in white smoke.

A red light flashed by, Angela's opponent retreated with a soft hmm, hugging both hands while wrestling her way out.

Clark slowly walked in from the side.

"The higher authorities did not pair me up with Rosetta because of her abilities," he explained faintly.

Angela was slightly startled but finally understood everything.

At the moment, the situation was unfogging before her.

Clark already injured a bunch of pros from the Crimson Sand Sword. The remaining party was left surrounded, defending themselves with guns.

The Black Mark Association's King of Fist Leo stared at Behemoth Gate, as members of Black Mark Association and the Behemoth Gate did battle with each other. Besides this was the Sky Warrior Corbella, who were standing with the Crimson Sand Sword.

That black scroll fell in the middle of the arena. However, it was left untouched; nobody had dared to reach for it for fear of being killed by the surrounding fighters. The King of Fist Leo gave it a shot, but was immediately attacked, leaving him with no choice but to retreat.

Clark was the only one walking slowly towards the scroll, flicked it upwards with his toes and caught it in his hands as it fell.

As he held the scroll...

Boom!

Suddenly, a great number of guns were focused at him, and with it, ten times the amount of extremely strong hidden weapons spun around at breakneck speed towards Clark. In it included a lot of grenades.

Everything erupted in a split second. The weapons rang in the same moment, leaving behind a single, unified, deafening boom.

At the same time, Clark's surrounding lit up with piece of red sword shadow, an impossible armada of red lights burst at once.

As all the hidden weapons fired, a blanket of shadows was cast upon Clark'.

The arena was suddenly half empty, as if like bodies were rising and falling.

As everyone stared at the black figured shadow in the middle of the arena, they felt the same chill in their heart.

The Crimson Sand Sword sect's five strongest Grandmasters of Combat all attacked at once, were all injured, and did not dare attack anymore. Now it did not matter how many fire weapons were aimed at them, he still did not feel half threatened.

No matter if it was Sky Warrior Corbella or King of Fist Leo, everyone stared at Clark with an unusually dignified look. They looked at each other, scarcely believing that he had come out unscathed after that exchange, still looking calm as ever.

"Any takers?" Clark asked softly while tossing the scroll.

The arena was silent. A hand trembled somewhere in the crowd.

Everyone around who opened fire including the hidden weapons experts were injured with the ricocheted bullets and weapons. They were all either injured or dead.

"The Crimson Sand Sword is now are all but rotten to the core..." Clarked sighed, "but it's good. Let tonight be Crimson Sand Sword's last memory. Such a rotten sword based sect has finally died by my hand."

He held his sword, walking slowly towards the present group members of Crimson Sand Sword.

"Clark!" Crimson Sand Sword's chief shouted suddenly. "You don't really think that is the secret scroll, do you? Still remember the King's Cave?"

Clark squinted and held his steps, his eyes were locked on the body of two policemen who stood behind the Gate Master.

"What do you mean?"

The Gate Master of Crimson Sand Sword held his hand to his back and using his fingers, he drew a word on the hand of the small policeman: stall.

The male policeman Jia Ning finally understood. He knew now that the important moment has come. If they can't force Clark to retreat, they all would have to die!

He summoned his courage and yelled. "The secret scrolled we retrieved in the King's Cave was actually fake."

When he and his junior sister investigated that murder case, they were constantly chased after they got the secret scroll. It wasn't easy as they stumbled back to the city, in fact they were almost killed by a hidden weapon in the police station.

"It's a fake? So where's the real one?" laughed Clark. The long sword in his hands gradually turned cold, returning to its original black colour. "Since you brought it up, then you should know it too, don't you?"

"We're not lying. Actually... Actually it is tied to a treasure map!" Jia Ning started panicking.

"Treasure map?" Clark frowned. He knew about this secret scroll. He was particularly interested in this scroll that was leaked within the sect, as to why so much attention was given to a Secret Scroll of Secret Technique that wasn't considered strong. What secrets did it hide that would constitute the mobilization of a first class fighter like him?"

You need to know that to convince this level of Grandmaster of Combat to make a move, the resources that cost them was definitely not a small number.

"Why don't you explain the origin of this treasure map?"

The small policeman Jia Ning tried his very best to calm down and maintain a confident front.

He just heard someone behind whispered to him that Clark's Behemoth Gate's members have an enemy that would rush over tonight, so all he needed to do was stall for a bit. Who knows, the situation might take a good turn.

This was the Gate Master's meaning and arrangement.

Although he was panicking, but he still tried his best to slow down his heart beat.

"This treasure map is actually related to one of Behemoth Gate's big secret!"

"Big secret?! You're saying Behemoth Gate's big secret?" A ridiculing smile appeared on Clark's face.

"Chi"!

The fine sword on his left hand blurred for a moment. Suddenly, Crimson Sand Sword's fist master groped his neck and fell sideways to the floor, showing a small piece of rock wedged in his neck where red blood was oozing out. The boxer struggled a few times and eventually, stopped moving.

"Tell me. If I find out that what you say is untrue, and that you were lying to me..." Clark easily drew a few sword shadows.

Everyone in the arena, including the Black Mark Association's fist master and Holy Fist Gate's Divine Marshal, did not seem to care. The him now is already headed towards becoming a pro fist master who's at the pinnacle of the art. The average level of a Grandmaster of Combat does not even exist in his eyes anymore.

In here, he's the strongest of all!

"Treasure... The Treasure Map is real!" Jia Ning shouted as beads of sweat formed on his forehead, "it is hidden in the secret scroll! Unless you assume that Behemoth Group would really waste all those resources on a Secret Scroll of Secret Technique that is not considered the best?"

Clark's expression changed but that statement confirmed his initial doubt.

Seeing that Clark started to hesitate, Jia Ning quickly added.

"Hidden inside the treasure map is what was once the rare treasure that was buried by the Behemoth Gate! It can bring your martial arts to the next level! This was the secret I chanced upon in the King's Cave!"

Clark frowned, though it wasn't only him. Even the Black Mark Association and the Sky Warrior Corbella seem to be convinced.

Originally Behemoth Gate's actions were a little suspicious, but with the small policeman's stall, everybody started doubting.

"Where did you hear this from?" Clark asked.

Small policeman Jia Ning was scared by his aggressiveness that his head was full of sweat. Under intense pressure, he involuntarily wanted to speak the truth.

"I... I..."

Clark laughed, "Tell me, are you lying to me." He lifted his long sword, and slowly walked towards the direction of the Crimson Sand Sword group.

Boom!

At this time, a majestic transparent wave quickly flew in from the courtyard outside.

Moo! A huge elephant cry came from the courtyard.

Everyone in the courtyard felt their bodies sinking, as deep and huge as the sea being over the courtyard.

With a click, the courtyard was hit.

A strong, muscular shadow of a figure stood in front of the door.

The air surrounding his body seem to twist and move, as if a huge transparent mask was on him. A huge pressure, like waves was heavily pressed upon everybody in the courtyard.

At the same time, a faint sound of soldiers running came from the outside. Shortly, the Crimson Sand Sword sect was surrounded by rows of armed soldiers.

"We finally found you, Rosetta..." Garen slowly walked in through the main door, dressed in black leather shoes, expression cold as ever. His eyes quickly fell onto the girl behind Clark.

"Southern Twelve Gates' most powerful ones, Garen Lombard... is finally here!" the Gate Master of Crimson Sand Sword let out a sigh of relief.

Clark turned his head to look at Garen. The relaxed smile he carried before vanished quickly.

"White Cloud Gate's is here to cleanup, Behemoth Gate's members stay, everyone else may leave," Garen's voice echoed softly in the courtyard.

Rosetta looked like a miserable mess, she looked at her junior across the courtyard while panting heavily. That teen who was once a weakling, had now grown into an undefeatable fighter.

The two of them exchanged glares for a short while, and memories of the past seemed to flash between them.

"Where's second senior brother? Where's the boss?" Garen's face returned to a peaceful expression.

"I knew you would come," Rosetta started catching her breath and stood up straight. She was about to say something else, but was stopped by Clark.

Clark's face was filled with excitement, he slowly lifted up his long sword.

Hummmm!!

He violently brandished his sword in intimidation.

"As soon as I kill you, I will be able to advance to the next level!"

His eyes started to glow a mad red.

Garen looked at him

Rumble!!

A great amount of energy gathered around Clark, and crushed him.

Ka Cha!

Clark's face turned into fear, the ground beneath him cracked, as he took a few steps back from the attack.

The whole courtyard fell to silence.

Chapter 163: The Star Lit Sky of the Night 1

"You!!" Lord Clark's face went from a pale white to a furious green, then from green it went to a purplish red. His chest was rising and falling with his breathes, his face filled with disbelief as he stared at Garen.

The arena was silent, most of the members of the Crimson Sand Sword were sighing breaths of relief, so many had died on the arena, and all of them were their own. They all came from simple families, with ranks in the army, all loyal members to the sect. Now that the enemy of the Behemoth Gate had appeared, they were no longer the main attraction of the opponent.

Members of the Black Mark Association however, had their eyes on the King of Fist, Leo, whose eyebrows were locked together tightly. When Garen started relaxed for a bit, Leo turned his attention to the Sky Warrior Corbella.

Who knew whether if Corbella would be on Garen's side, even the usually fearless Lord Clark was retreating in fear upon sensing Garen's aura, even he was intimidated by the last Sky Warrior of the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate.

Leo had originally thought that the Black Mark Association and the Behemoth Gate were sure to win, but who had expected this sudden change and interruption.

No, Lord Clark must've anticipated this right?

Leo turned his attention to Lord Clark and the two women behind him. The members of the Behemoth Gate that stood behind the trio didn't seem too surprised by Garen's sudden appearance, but were more shocked by Garen's true power.

The other Sky Warrior Corbella looked at Garen from afar, he squinted, and crossed his arms as if he was thinking of something in the corner.

"Garen Lombard," Lord Clark stood still as ever, his face finally returning to normal, "shouldn't you be in Galantia? What business do you have coming here?" He seemed to have forgotten the shameful exchange earlier.

Garen usually operated out of Galantia, where he was the most powerful figure, a position that was recognized by everyone within the region. The Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate had noticed that Garen had no plans to expand beyond Galantia, and had since recognized the entire state as the property of the White Cloud Gate.

Almost everyone in the martial arts world knew that Galantia was White Cloud Gate's Garen's territory.

Garen took a sweeping look at the entire arena.

"Looks like nobody is listening to me huh? Is nobody going to pull out?"

"Wait wait!" The leader of the Crimson Sand Sword yelled, "we the members of the Crimson Sand Sword are willing to grant this territory to White Cloud Gate's Garen as the venue for him to settle his vendetta, we pull out!"

Reaching a situation like this, the Gate Master no longer cared about the reputation of his sect. Despite being usually proud, in the face of a life threatening situation, everything else was secondary.

Once upon a time when Lord Clark betrayed his original sect and got the Celestial Circle Gate knocking on his door demanding an explanation, he had given way then, hence there was no hesitation for this time as well.

"Gate Master!!"

Four of the elders alongside a few of the leading members of the sect yelled, their faces turned a gloomy grey, as they clenched their fists in anger. The rest of the members and followers however just stayed silent, only a few felt ashamed and angry.

On top of letting someone else invade their homeland, they now had to cede their land for the invader to settle his vendetta?! In the world of martial arts, this was a shame beyond description.

"Say no more!," The groundsman of the Crimson Sand Sword sect suppressed the anger of the followers, "retreat!"

Garen watched as all the members of the Crimson Sand Sword retreated hastily, even attempts to pick up corpses were halted by their founder.

Behemoth Gate's Lord Clark and its members, alongside followers of the Black Mark Association didn't stop their retreat, they merely stared at Garen.

As all this was happening, members of the Black Mark Association and Behemoth's Gate silently surrounded Garen.

"I thought I could have a fair fight with you, but looks like that's impossible now." Lord Clark's face was sinisterly peaceful, "Garen Lombard, you grew too quick! You really thought nobody would ever discover your secret huh?"

"Hmm?" Garen's expression turned into a confused gaze, "secret?"

"Hand over the secret technique to brewing the Blood of Secrets," Lord Clark's sword suddenly started vibrating violently, turning from black to a bright red, like a high temperature piece of metal.

Garen was stunned, these idiots actually thought his rapid growth was because he had used the Blood of Secrets. For a moment he thought that Lord Clark had discovered his bizarre secret when Clark made that statement.

"Looks like you will never be satisfied unless I destroy you," Garen's said with an expressionless face, Lord Clark smiled coldly and clapped his hands.

Two men of dressed in black cloth suddenly walked out from a corner of the courtyard, holding some sort of a weird blue machine gun in hand.

Upon seeing these two individuals, the other Sky Warrior's expression changed, he tapped his foot on the ground rapidly, and instantly leaped to the side of Garen.

"I am Sky Warrior Corbella, be careful of the gun in the hands of those two men, that's a specially made Ming Wen Gun, it uses the most powerful purple gunpowder!" he explained softly.

Garen looked at him.

"Purple gunpowder?"

"This is the Killer Hunters Squad! Lord Clark is a member of the Killer Hunters Squad!" Sky Warrior Corbella seemed to have suddenly remembered something important.

He wasn't exactly quiet about it either, everyone in the courtyard heard him, even the Gate Master who was about to leave stopped in his steps.

"Killer Hunters Squad? What's that?" Small Policeman Jia Ning stood by a side wiping his sweat.

The expressions of the Gate Master and the elders around him looked horrible.

"Killer Hunters Squad....is a collaborative effort between the Behemoth Gate and the Weisman Empire. It is responsible for the hunting and elimination of highly skilled fighters within the Confederation. While most martial art practitioners are vulnerable against firearms, skilled fighters are not threatened nor afraid of firearms at all. Hence the Weisman Empire created the Killer Hunters Squad with the sole purpose of reducing the potential threats within the populace of the Confederation!"

"Clark's group was never here for the scroll, instead they just wanted to bait Garen. As soon as Garen left Galantia, they were awaiting him with a plethora of traps!" The Gate Master of the Crimson Sand Sword suddenly felt defeated, just like the days when he watched as Lord Clark slowly gained influence and strength, while he watched on powerlessly.

The once proud and self thought to be powerful Crimson Sand Sword Gate was now reduced to just bait and venue providers in the face of these true masters.

"What a grand setting...", he turned his head to look at the courtyard, the sky there was being occasionally lit up by brighter and brighter balls of light, "Behemoth Gate, Black Mark Association, they have both sent their best fighters here today. I reckon that most of the best fighters of the southside are gathered here today, whatever that transpires today will define the southside for years to come."

"Gate Master...what should we do then?" among the crowd, one of the elders inquired.

"We continue to retreat."

Members of the Crimson Sand Sword continued to retreat in an organised manner, everyone was filled with a good amount of angst inside their hearts.

"Killer Hunters Squad..."

Small Policeman Jia Ning seemed to only roughly understand the situation. He lifted his female colleague in one hand, comforting her, while he looked onto the courtyard.

"Mister Gate Master, so you would say that this Killer Hunters Squad is incredibly powerful?"

"They are VERY powerful. They might not be too strong alone, but if they were to group up, the threat they pose overpowers any top fighter." the Gate Master nodded.

"In that case, the man named Garen earlier must be in danger then?" Jia Ning asked softly.

"This is a trap set just for him, an entire nation's resources pitted against him. Without a doubt, he will die here today." the Gate Master nodded again.

Jia Ning laughed, "I don't know much about fighters or martial artists, that is your world," he rubbed his nose, "I only know that if it wasn't for Garen earlier, we would all probably be dead already."

"What do you want to do?" his female colleague asked him, "Jia Ning you better not be having some stupid brainy idea again!"

"I'm not having a brainy moment!" Jia Ning laughed, "In the east we have a saying: 'A man's got to do what he's got to do.' Just now Garen saved me, now it's my turn to save him."

He pushed his female colleague aside, and took big strides towards the courtyard.

Members of the Crimson Sand Sword looked at him stunned, at a loss for words at sight of his act.

"You will not save anyone by doing this! You're just walking into certain death!" the Gate Master bellowed, his face confused.

Jia Ning stopped for a bit, "Didn't you say earlier that they are weak alone? Who know if I could disrupt their formation somehow?"

He sped up and ran towards the courtyard, disappearing into the shadows.

"Gate Master!"

One of the leaders couldn't help but yell.

The Gate Master lowered his head,

"What I'm doing.....is for the sake of our entire sect!"

Everyone was silent now, as they recalled how they were all ambushed by Lord Clark's people earlier.

Garen squinted his eyes, staring at the two individuals who had just walked out. He wasn't certain how powerful that gun really was, but since the enemy was poised in such a formation, it was obvious they had studied his methods before this.

"A trap set just for me?"

"The Weisman Empire's Killer Hunters Squad, paired with Behemoth Gate's best fighters, we're in some hot soup this time," Sky Warrior Corbella felt the situation not in their favour. Although he too was a top classed fighter, and had been a practitioner for many years, but against a setup like this, even he was in a bad spot.

Within the courtyard, Black Mark Association's King of Fist Leo and the Killer Hunters Squad stood by a side.

On the other side, was Behemoth Gate along with Lord Clark, Angela and Rosetta. The courtyard was split into three distinct groups.

The two sects surrounded Garen, in a tight formation, as they fought the soldiers Garen brought with him outside the formation.

But anyone could tell that those normal soldiers stood no chance against these two major sects. The situation was not in Garen's favor at all.

"Weisman Empire's Killer Hunters Squad?" this was Garen's first time hearing about them, "are they very powerful?"

Sky Warrior Corbella nodded, "Insanely so! They are as good as the best marksmen in the Confederation, selected as a few out of the five million strong army of the empire. The best of the best!"

"Garen, just hand it over. That technique is wasted in the hands of you alone. As long as you hand it over to us Behemoth Gate, we guarantee that you will receive an even greater amount of resources to build yourself. We can finally cut off The Immortal Palace Alliance's monopoly! We will be able to those terrorists that dare to drive the government. The Empire will also take you in as a citizen, with at least a Baron or above as a title to start." Lord Clark's lip turned into a sinister smile, "in fact, weren't you almost killed by the Immortal Palace Alliance's Sylphalan? Don't you want revenge?"

"You know that too?!" Garen was shocked. He was having fun leading these people on their own mistake, or else it would be really hard to explain his rapid growth.

Chapter 164: The Star Lit Sky of the Night 2

"Sylphalan is a madman, if you can survive a fight with him, you can definitely provide us with valuable information about him. This would be beneficial to both of us," Lord Clark smiled, "if it were possible, I wouldn't want to destroy such a powerful fighter like you. Not many are as merciful and open minded as I."

Garen was silent.

"Still can't make up your mind?" Lord Clark's sword tip touched the ground, releasing a small streak of white smoke where it touched the ground, "in fact, I even accidentally acquired some information." he stopped for a bit, lowered his voice.

"You seemed to have joined some underground society, you seem to be searching for something..." he said with a light touch of suspicion.

Garen's face dropped.

"You know too much..."

Rumble!!!

He suddenly disappeared from where he stood, the entire courtyard rumbled as ground exploded, forming a massive crater and sending small pieces of rock flying everywhere.

Boom!!

Lord Clark's expression changed rapidly, a massive amount of crimson sand like speckles of light appeared in front of him, they were streaks of light made by the brandishing over an infinite amount of sword tips.

The red dot collided with a black shadow, releasing a loud and terrifying rumble.

Lord Clark blocked the attack with his whole body, but he felt his limbs go numb, they had been vibrated to the point of total numbness.

Another rumble and a loud sound came again from the front.

"Open fire now!!!" Lord Clark ordered at the top of his voice.

"He is too fast!" two of the Killer Hunters Squad's marksmen panicked, "didn't you say that he was really slow? How can he be so fast! Fuck!"

They could only see a blackish grey shadow continuously collide with Lord Clark's body, blow after blow it let out terrifying bangs that scared onlookers till they were numb in their limbs. Even the floor seemed to be vibrating.

Lord Clark's body was surrounded by the red speckles as he tried to defend, but he wasn't able to catch up to any of the actions. Ever since the first hit, it seemed as if he was alone in the courtyard.

A streak of black shadow kept attacking him all over his body, the Crimson Sand Sword Gate's secret defense technique: Crimson Sword Veil, was about to fall apart.

"Quickly open fire! Open fire!!" Clark was losing his sanity, he swung his sword around desperately, each swing weaker than the one before.

Clark was a fighter that had honed his speed and strength to the pinnacle, even Garen was not as fast as him, but yet Garen was facing the tip of Clark's sword with his bare fists. Each time Garen's fists met Clark's sword, Garen would continue unscathed, while Clark's whole body would tingle, his strength slowly fading away.

Should Clark just miss Garen's attacks once, it would mean certain death!

As if some sort of inexplicable fear was brewing within him, Clark released all his might like never before, his strong observation abilities were now able to see Garen's movements as Garen swung his fist, took a step forward, swung his fist, took another step forward.

It was just two simple movements, Garen was expressionless, he was like a dead man, like the world around him had no effect on him whatsoever.

The ground would erupt in small explosions, leaving small craters in the wake of each step Garen took, like small bombs were exploding, they sent gravel and dirt flying all over the place.

Rosetta and Angela could only step away, keeping a distance so they would not be injured by the stray gravel.

At this moment, a huge empty space was made in the middle of the courtyard.

In the centre of it all, Clark was swinging his sword furiously alone like a red ball of light, a black streak kept flying around him, it was the mirage of Garen's ridiculous speed.

Boom!!

Finally, Clark was hit on the waist by one of Garen's palms, and was sent flying across the courtyard.

With a big splash, he landed in the fake mountain in the pond of the courtyard. The entire fake mountain was blasted apart, turning into dust instantly.

Clark lied in the pile of rocks with his sword, coughing loudly, his eyes, nose and ears were bleeding.

Pow! Pow!

Two sounds of gunshots went off at the same time.

Clang clang!

Garen's chest was hit, producing two bright sparks, and forming two holes on his suit.

He casually tore his suit off, revealing two bleeding holes on his chest, the long purple and black bullets actually managed to penetrate about half of their lengths into his skin.

"Oh I'm hurt..." he flexed and swung his chest muscles, squeezing the two bullets out of his body, as they fell with soft dings.

"You folks actually managed to injure me, well done." Garen's face produced a coy smile.

He stomped the ground.

With a loud bang, a massive piece of rock blew out from the ground, he whipped his feet and produced more.

A large amount of rocks flew out like cannon balls in every direction, taking down members of the Behemoth's Gate around him in quick blow.

Two of the Killer Hunters Squad members evaded the rocks and lifted their guns ready to shoot.

Roar!!

Garen suddenly made a loud sound like the roar of an elephant, sending a minor earthquake about the entire courtyard.

The loud and terrifying roar shockwave headed straight for the two Killer Hunters, the both of them suddenly felt their whole bodies go numb, as their hands trembled and pointed their guns upwards, Bang bang!

Two bullets flew straight up and landed nowhere.

The two Killer Hunters' faces were now filled with fear.

"Retreat!!"

With a swift movement, the two Killer Hunters rolled on the floor, evaded more oncoming rocks and took two blind shots.

They hit Garen's wrist, shaking it slightly.

"Everyone attack!!"

Clark bellowed.

The two Killer Hunters quickly split up and aimed at Garen from two different angles.

At the same time, Clark and King of Fist Leo propelled themselves onto Garen. Angela clenched her teeth, suppressing her shaky hands, she produced two throwing stars and threw them at Garen's back.

Rumble....

Two rockets appeared out of nowhere suddenly, and were headed towards Garen with a pillar of white smoke behind them.

In that split second, attacks were coming from every direction.

For inexplicable reasons, while being surrounded by all these threats, Garen suddenly thought of his conversation with Duskdune Shura by the cliffside...

"The you now, is just like the him of then," Duskdune Shura recalled, "before Palosa became the Saint of Fist Techniques, he was just like you. Young and undefeatable, even against Grandmasters from an older generation. However, sadly..."

"Sadly what?" Garen stared at him.

"You lack the aura of magnificence."

"Aura of magnificence?" Garen looked up into the sky as if he had just thought of something.

The night sky was littered with infinite stars, a great majestic sense of awe overwhelmed him.

"Without Defeat, Without Competition....." he muttered to himself.

Rumble!!

The rockets exploded, a large amount of bullets were shot in Garen's direction, a thick fog mixed with dust and dirt formed after the explosions, for a moment nobody could tell what had happened.

Clark and King of Fist Leo still stood on the same spot, they were standing by for Garen's evasion attempts, but surprisingly, Garen made no attempt to hide nor evade.

The dust finally settled.

Rosetta stood far behind Angela, suddenly cupped her mouth, she couldn't believe what she was seeing.

Clark and Leo stood side by side, about ten plus meters away from the epicentre of the explosion, their pupils suddenly shrank.

As the smoke finally cleared where Garen stood, a several meters wide crater was revealed, and in the middle of it, was an unscathed Garen.

He had somehow evaded the primary area of effect of the explosions, and everything else didn't have any effect on him.

"After this fight, I will challenge Palosa," Garen's last word fell, and suddenly disappeared.

At the same time, a shadow appeared in front of Clark. With a loud "Ka Cha!", the sword in Clark's hand was sliced into pieces, turning into many pieces of red speckles.

With a loud bang, a massive green and black hand penetrated through the broken pieces and pressed its palm on Clark's forehead.

"No!!! I do not want to die!!! I DO NOT WANT TO DIE!!!" Clark's face turned into a stroke of madness, the scars on his body suddenly started glowing. What was originally a thin shade of beige skin was suddenly filled with blood, and his veins glowed like he had been tattooed with blood.

In the split second before Clark's skull was about to be smashed into pieces, he suddenly mustered a terrifying amount of counter strength and released himself from the grasp of Garen, his forehead now sliced open slightly by the nails of Garen's palm.

Resisting a flurry of pain from his head, Clark flipped over skillfully, ready to escape.

Bang!!

He was hit by a palm technique, and spat out blood, the force sent him flying over the walls, his thoughts filled with fear of Garen. He didn't even think twice and started running away as soon as he landed, disappearing into the night.

He was dead for sure.

Garen slowly pulled his right palm back, he was still being shot at by two machine guns and held back by the attacks of the Killer Hunters and Leo.

The seemingly endless rain of bullets on Garen's body kept lighting up spark after spark, everyone felt chills as they watched Garen casually ignore the gunshots and begin to turn his attention to Leo and the Killer Hunters.

Upon seeing Clark's cowardly retreat, Leo and the Killer Hunters wanted to run too, but they were so pulled in by Garen's aura of courage that they simply couldn't stop attacking. They knew that if they stopped, they would be killed within a split second.

They weren't Grandmasters of Combat like Clark, and did not have terrifying amounts of explosive energy or durability.

All the attackers were starting to panic, members of the Behemoth Gate held back their fears as they remembered their strict training; members of the Black Mark Association however, were mostly convicts, they couldn't stand the pressure that came with the fear, some of them started abandoning the mission.

Two of the heavy machine guns were operated by a total of four people. The ones responsible for feeding the chains, their hands were shivering out of fear. The ones responsible for aiming couldn't even hold the gun still, most of the bullets started straying and hit the wall behind Garen instead.

King of Fist Leo and the Killer Hunters watched as Garen came closer, their foreheads, arms, their entire bodies started cold sweating. Some of the stray bullets flew past Garen's face, leaving small cuts on his face as he walked.

The guns suddenly stopped, the two Killer Hunters saw Garen about to get close to them, suddenly exploded into a ball of fire.

They simply lit the gunpowder they were carrying on them, killing themselves.

At this moment, Garen was still a few metres away from the epicentre of the explosion.

"They....couldn't take the pressure, and chose to kill themselves...."

Sky Warrior Corbella said, with sorrow and disappointment.

The surrounding houses around the courtyard were now on fire, the light of that fire glowed on Garen's face, giving him a demonic look with a reddish shadow.

He stood before the fire, and turned to look at King of Fist Leo.

The gunshots had also stopped by now.

Leo stared powerlessly at Garen's silhouette, he was shaking all over in fear, with a loud thump, he suddenly knelt on the floor.

The fire continued to burn around them, making occasional crackles as the wood burned.

"It is finished..."

Corbella looked at that silhouette before the fire, his heart was suddenly filled with motivation, his body pumped up with adrenaline.

"After this battle, you are without competition!" He suddenly remembered the days of Palosa.

He suddenly felt like he had just witnessed history.

"He will become the next Saint of Fist Techniques," Corbella said, as he watched King of Fist Leo kneel before Garen.

Garen lifted up his head and looked at the night sky, as if he had just understood something.

Behind the fire, small policeman Jia Ning stood stunned, an unprecedented thirst rose from his heart.

Chapter 165: Follow Up 1

A few days later...

Stars filled the infinite sky, Garen had never felt more at awe looking up.

"Ever since that battle, you've seem to have gained an interest in looking at the stars, what's so special?"

The Eighth Hoop donned a black cloak as he emerged from a corner of the courtyard. His face was the usual pale and aged, but the way he looked at Garen was complex.

"Specialty?" Garen smiled, "it just makes me feel minute that's all."

The two of them were standing in a rural courtyard, it had beautiful plants and flowers growing all over it, the mixed colours making it extremely eye catching.

"Minute... Since the fight the other day, you've been recognised as the number one fighter of the Southern Secret Martial Arts world. You're only second to Palosha now, and yet you still think you're minute? What should other people think of themselves then?," The Eighth Hoop sighed.

"Any plans after this?"

"How're the few leftover men?" Garen asked back.

"Still alright, just a little shocked, I got a few psychiatrists to check on them, the psychiatrists all agree that they went through too much stress and are shell shocked. Oh also, they would like to meet you."

"Meet me?" Garen smiled, ever since the day that he unlocked a new dimension of observation, he's been able to clearly see and feel the flow and control of energy along his body, it's as if he was now fully in control, and able to maximise his agility to a unprecedented level of accuracy and efficiency.

Just like right now, he can even sense the heartbeat of The Eighth Hoop who was standing a few meters away from him, he could hear every beat of his heart.

If a mere mortal were to focus all of his energy, he would conjure what would then be known as 'focus', but he would only be able to focus on one point at one time. In fact a mortal would feel tired very quickly after focusing for a while. Only after recouping his blood flow, would he be able to resume.

As for Garen now, his conscience, Qi, and spirit were all one now, energy flowed endlessly from his body, and his breaths were steady and strong. His ability to observe and focus on his surroundings was as if a mortal was focusing all of its attention on one thing, except that for him it was for many things.

Everything within a five metre radius of him was in total clarity.

"Why do they want to see me?"

Thinking back on that day, these were the people who surrendered and let Garen take them away without any resistance.

Rosetta, Behemoth Gate's Angela, and the Black Mark Association's King of Fist Leo, then there were some leftover members of both sects, totalling 54 individuals.

Over half of them had undergone too much shock, mostly by Garen's aura, had seem to develop hallucinations and PTSD, and were being sent to a nearby mental hospital. The remainders quietly stayed in jail, their mental defenses completely crumbled since that day.

"I don't know, they seem to have been both physically and mentally destroyed by you. No matter what it is, once they hear that you're involved, they'll play along and abide by it. In other words, you have completely defeated them," the Eighth Hoop said, "looks like it was right when I recommended you to join the Golden Hoop."

"Black Mark Association and the Behemoth Gate should still be active right?" Garen asked softly.

"Of course, but on the grand scale of national security, they aren't much of a threat. Black Mark and Behemoth Gate's strength lies in individual operatives, their macro influence on the Confederation is nowhere close to us at the Golden Hoop. What the Golden Hoop lacks are independent operatives. Now that we have you, we are complete!" The Eighth Loop laughed, "we don't need to give a damn about them anymore."

Garen understood this as the Eighth Loop expressing his alliance with him, they too were interested in the total annihilation of the Black Mark Association and Behemoth's Gate.

These two sects were not a force to be easily reckoned with, it was obvious that the Golden Hoop was placing a lot of faith in Garen.

"Oh right, what about Clark?" Garen suddenly remembered the palm technique he had landed on that Grandmaster from the Crimson Sand Sword sect.

"We just found his corpse, we came over to inform you about that. Would you like to go take a look?"

"Of course."

Garen followed the Eighth Hoop into the house, and onwards into a study room on the side. In the floor of the study room was a basement entrance.

The both of them walked inside in a single file, the walls were filled with bright electric lights.

Every short distance there would be two black uniformed soldiers on guard.

Each time the both of them passed a pair of guards, they would be greeted with formal salutes.

Garen quietly followed the Eighth Loop further downwards. The corridor seemed to be endless.

Very soon the both turned into a white room.

There were already two coroners inside the room who greeted them with salutes as soon as they entered.

"How's it going?"

One of the female coroners took off her blue gloves, pulled back a strand of hair and said,

"Before the individual died, his metabolism entered into an overstimulation of sorts. Not sure how or why, but sir you should see for yourself."

The Eighth Hoop walked closer to the cadaver.

Clark lied flat face up on a white high table. His lower body was covered by a white cloth, only his upper body was exposed. From his chest down to his lower abdomen there was a Y shaped cut.

The Eighth Hoop put on gloves, lifted the white cloth and took a quick sweeping look, then lifted his head to gesture Garen to come over.

"Come see for yourself."

Garen took the gloves from the coroner and walked over.

Clark's body laid silently on the table, his whole body wasn't a pale white like a typical corpse, but somehow was glowing red like it had been cooked well done.

Garen touched Clark's forehead softly, his eyebrows scrunched up.

"He was hit by my Red Jade Palm's Hot Poison, his entire body overheated, this condition of death is normal, except..."

"Except what?"

"Someone tried to save him, in fact that someone was a skilled fighter."

"Oh?"

The Eighth Hoop was suddenly intrigued, "what level of a fighter?"

"Quite strong, but it doesn't matter, the moment Clark left that courtyard his fate was sealed," Garen's face was an unusual peaceful.

"Red Jade Palm, pfft, you've practically boiled his blood and cooked him," the Eighth Hoop was incredibly impressed.

The two coroners stood in disbelief like they had just heard some crazy mystic talk.

"Sir you believe that there are methods to control someone's internal hormones and body temperature? This is absolutely illogical!" The female coroner looked at the both of them shocked, like she was staring at aliens.

"This person was obviously cooked by some high temperature weapon. My suggestion is that we collect samples from his body and cells to understand further. We must break this down from a scientific point of view!"

The Eighth Hoop and Garen did not know how to explain to someone who wasn't a member of the martial arts community.

Secret Martial Arts like this, is practically godspeak to laymen.

"This bastard's belongings had all been stolen somehow. If we were able to get to that we might've been able to find some useful intelligence," the Eighth Hoop said disappointingly.

"Let's go, to where Third Brother is," Garen turned around and headed outwards. Joshua had come with him earlier, except that before the action happened he refused to let him participate, in fact he deliberately kept him out of intelligence briefings so he wouldn't be informed until everything was over.

Of course Joshua was pissed off about it, but he understood that Garen did so for his own good. As soon as he caught up, he had been here looking after Rosetta and gang.

Leaving the morgue, the both of them washed their hands and headed further down the corridor.

Not long after, they came by the prison cells.

On both sides of were several prison cells, some empty and some with mortals locked inside.

The walls were filled with burn marks, and the ground was quite dirty, one could even find small traces of blood stains here and there. The prison guards each holstered a pistol while holding a baton in their hands as they patrolled the perimeter.

The corridor along the prison was very long, the both of them went straight for the end, as the warden quickly tried to catch up to them while explaining the situation here.

"Most of the inmates here came in the last few days. The ones that you specially ordered to give attention to, we've pierced their scapulae and put on the strongest chains we have on them. They won't be a problem!"

He said as he ran, his hands fumbling a huge chain of keys, standing by to open any door for the two leaders. As a small leader in the Golden Hoop, he had an eye for small details. Especially since this time the leader Eighth Hoop had brought this young man who didn't wear any golden loops to signify his position, and yet every time he passed a prison cell filled with mobsters and loud troublemakers, they would all shut up in his presence. For sure this young man was a big shot!

"We arrange the inmates by their abilities and how much of a threat they pose to society. The deeper they're placed, the more dangerous they are," the warden explained carefully.

"We want to go to the deepest part of your supermax," the Eighth Hoop said plainly.

"Yes yes yes!"

The warden quickly bent over a door near them and took out his keys to point and instruct the prison guards to open the multiple metal gates before them.

Garen followed the group and entered the end of the prison.

The stench of blood was now stronger than ever, as more metal gates opened, the space in the prison widened, as well as the thickness of the metal bars.

Within the cells in this area, some inmates hid in a corner. One of them had bloodshot eyes and looked ridiculously skinny, but emitted an aura of death and violence about him.

Now and then a whistle would echo through the cells.

"Little Jack? Did you bring us fresh meat to sell butt again? Man it isn't easy at all~~," a man with long messy hair in a cell on the left laughed sinisterly.

"Wow you brought us some really fresh meat this time. This little one looks like he just turned twenty," a big bearded inmate stood up and took off his pants facing the visitors, ready to pee right there.

Boom!!

Garen's shot an angry glare, he turned and grabbed one of the thicker-than-an-arm metal bars with his python like left hand.

Ka cha!

The metal bar broke and flew into the cell, hitting the inmate on the chest, stabbing him through the chest and sending him pinned to the wall behind.

The inmate couldn't even make another sound, and died instantly.

Everyone shut up at sight of that. Like terrified animals they all retreated into the shadow of their cells. Even some of the commotion from cells further down also silenced immediately.

Garen pulled his left hand back, just now that cell's metal bar had been vibrated till it broke by him earlier, causing the entire metal door for this isolation cell to come loose too.

"Continue."

"Yes...yes yes," the warden unknowingly distanced himself from Garen, and walked closer to the Eighth Hoop instead. After seeing what had happened, he could feel goosebumps and cold sweat all over.

"That's too insane, too insane!" He chanted to himself as he continued leading the way. Occasionally he would steal a look at Garen to study his expressions, in case he did anything to cross him.

Chapter 166: Follow Up 2

The Eighth Loop intentionally lagged in the back, he took a quick look at the broken metal bars. While his face was expressionless, but his eyes expressed a bit of wary and fear.

He had heard of how Garen fought and won against a massive group once, but he has never seen it in person before so he never really felt the impact, but now, he could really feel goosebumps.

Now, he was personally there, and really close to the moment Garen killed someone.

The way Garen killed someone was like squashing an ant, an air of death and murder surrounded Garen.

This speed! This strength! The Eighth Loop now knew why the Behemoth's Gate and Black Mark Association fell under his hand.

Against someone like Garen, one could only feel threatened and unsafe around him, if Garen were to expense his full arsenal, one could not even imagine what would ensue after.

Garen continued walking silently behind the warden. He could feel that despite the fact that his strength had not made significant advances, his speed had increased significantly, in turn this increased his explosive abilities, and the high speed also brought terrifying impacts. He had not implemented any secret abilities, just the mere increase of speed and strength, the metal bar gave and killed the prisoner.

"Unknowingly, I have improved to this level," He felt the cold, solid ground under him and smelled the scent of blood in the air. Very soon, Rosetta's silhouette appeared on the right up front.

A group of people stood in attention by Rosetta's cell. Joshua was guarding the cell, and he sat on a chair by the entrance. Once he saw Garen arrive, he slowly got up.

"Garen, you came," Joshua looked incredibly tired, like he had lost a whole lot of weight, his eye-bags were a dark black. Obviously he had not been resting for the past few days.

"Go rest, third brother," Garen said, "you're just torturing yourself like this."

Joshua looked at Rosetta in the cell, and nodded.

"Go ahead and interrogate her then, she won't say anything."

"Leave her to me," Garen nodded.

Garen turned around and said something to the Eighth Loop, then the latter left.

The Eighth Loop knew Garen wanted a private interrogation, and so he knowingly distanced himself and went to inspect the other parts of the prison.

The warden too, moved all of his minions away, himself included, he did not want to spend another minute close to Garen anymore, what happened earlier was enough to reinforce his fear for good.

Very quickly, the corridor was emptied, except for the inmates in their respective cells, there was only Rosetta and Garen left.

Rosetta still wore her black cloak, and was sitting cross-legged on the floor. Her brown long ponytail sat beneath her head, her face was peaceful, her eyes expressionless.

"Where's second brother?" Garen looked at her and said, "tell me you have news about Farak."

"Farak?" Rosetta slowly lifted her head, blankly said, "if I tell you, will you promise to not kill me?" Her voice had an angry undertone.

Garen looked at her, and didn't say a thing.

Rosetta smiled bitterly,

"I never thought I would see the day where I regretted the things I did. Farak.....he's dead."

Garen stared at her, although he saw this coming, but hearing the news from the horse's mouth, he still felt a little sad.

Farak was one of the most important guides and influences when Garen was still training his basics, he constantly pointed out and corrected Garen's errors during training. Farak was one of those people who looked dangerous, but was actually warm and easygoing.

"How did he die?"

Rosetta smiled, "When I left White Cloud Gate, Farak caught up to me, and we fought for over thirty rounds, until I slashed his throat with my claw."

"What about the elder?"

"Dead too, I wanted to look for something in the archives. That old bastard actually had the gall to stop me! He was asking for death with his "wise-old-man" stunts, so I killed him with one palm technique," Rosetta explained casually.

Suddenly she lifted up her head, and made a sad smile.

"When it all ends, the victor becomes the king, and the losers vilified. I always knew someone was going to come after me, I just never thought it would be you."

"Is there anything else you would like to say?" Garen said plainly.

"So this is how fear feels like..." Rosetta lowered her head and continued laughing in sadness and desperation. Her body shivered as she said, "What do you plan to do to me?"

"According to the rules of our sect," Garen turned to leave with those words.

As he was walking, he could hear Rosetta humming.

"The boat shakes, and shakes....the water's green, and green....you are here by my side....standing by the lotus leaves..."

That voice, that song, it was nostalgic, it made Garen think of Farak.

"You really liked Farak didn't you?"

The singing stopped, Rosetta sat upright silently, and suddenly her whole body fell to the ground. In the darkness, sounds of her choking echoed through the cells.

Garen closed his eyes, his heart rippling with emotion.

He didn't want to dwell on his thoughts anymore, and took big steps towards the exit.

Perhaps Rosetta regretted. Perhaps she regretted joining Behemoth's Gate in pursuit of more powerful forms of martial art, regretted killing Farak and the elder, and regretted betraying her own sect family. Between her and Farak existed many stories that nobody will ever know, along with their deaths, these stories will flow away with time.

Garen didn't inquire about it, and would not inquire about it.

His master passed away due to an extended coma that caused his body to be unable to take in anymore nutrients. His last wish, was for Garen to kill Rosetta.

He didn't cite any reason, and Garen didn't want to ask too much. Whatever it is, this situation has concluded. Perhaps someday in the future he might follow the seas eastward and find the roots of White Cloud Gate. But for now, everything was over.

"There are a lot of contradictions in life, that child did the wrong this, so she paid the price for it."

On the left side, in a solitary cell, a white haired old man spoke,

"Take it easy kid," the old man's eyes seemed to reflect some sort of helplessness, perhaps Rosetta's singing stirred up memories in him too.

"Who are you?" Garen stopped and turned to look at this man.

"I'm just an old man waiting to die. This is the Golden Hoop's prison, and also the prison of the Confederation's most wanted criminals." the old man responded.

"I'll remember you," Garen could feel that this old man was not simple. Although he looked friendly at first glance, he was surrounded by an aura of death and murder. Garen took note of the cell's number: 12.

Leaving the area, he continued walking forward. There were absolutely no guards in this part, even the bravest guards were afraid of this section. Two days ago the Eighth Loop had introduced this place to Garen, it had some terrifying inmates, some could even kill with a simple spit. Many of them have been locked up in here for god knows how long by the Confederation that they've become old men themselves. All of them had been convicted of some heinous crime so terrible that even if they were to die a dozen times over it still wouldn't be enough. For that reason, they've stayed here all the time, as the guards and wardens changed generations after generations, these old prisoners continued to stubbornly stay alive.

Garen found Black Mark Association's Leo at the Number 10 cell. Behemoth Gate's Angela was locked up in a nearby cell as well. They were locked up here not because of their abilities, but because of how important they were.

The both of them were cuffed with massive black cuffs, as they saw Garen arrive, they both looked up from their seated positions at him.

"Garen Lombard! If it is possible, I wish to serve you!" King of Fist Leo seemed to be passionate towards Garen as a person, "In search of the pinnacle of Fist Skills, I killed my first man when I was only 15, by the time I turned 20 I had already killed a thousand! For the sake of finding more powerful secret martial arts, I joined the Black Mark Association! For the sake of more resources, I became the bond between Black Mark Association and Behemoth's Gate! Yet despite all of that, I have gained nothing! Until today!"

He suddenly stood up, his metal cuffs making loud clangs.

"I am unsatisfied with just demonstrations of martial arts! I want to prove that martial arts too can fight firearms!! Now, this is possible, I have seen the light in you!!"

"What do you really want to say?" Garen frowned.

"I want to follow you!" Leo said passionately, his cuffed hands moving about, "you are destined to become a historical figure in the world of martial arts!! The direction you're headed to has been my lifelong dream!"

"You madman!" Behemoth's Gate's Angela cursed, "why don't you think about how Black Mark Association and Behemoth's Gate is going to come after you instead?!"

Garen never would've thought that Fist King Leo was actually someone like this, this guy was obviously one of those people driven by the singular passion of finding purer and stronger forms of martial arts. These people have always existed in the martial arts world, although they're just a small group, they're very traditional and would give anything to achieve the pinnacle of martial arts mastery. Looks like Leo was one of these people.

But Garen still wanted to observe for a while, to see if Leo was truly sincere in his words of surrender and following. Should someone as powerful as Leo truly serve him and White Cloud Gate, it'll be no small help. Afterall, a man such as him was at the peak of physical conditioning.

Settled on his thought, he turned to look at Angela.

"Why....why...why are you looking at me? I don't know much about Behemoth's Gate, we're not members of the higher echelon, and only members of the higher ups are given access to information about other members. The organization is arranged in independent cells, each cell has no idea what the other cell is doing."

Angela seemed to shrink, and took a few steps backwards, obviously there was still fear from what she saw Garen do the other day.

"Then what use are you to me?" Garen frowned.

"I....I....I too can serve you! Serve the White Cloud Gate!" Angela phrased it in such a way that she would serve Garen first as an individual, then only White Cloud Gate.

Influence was just a means of getting resources and intelligence to Garen, he was more interested in improving himself, elevating his abilities, and becoming better at martial arts. Everything else, was secondary to him.

"What else?"

"There's still more?!" Angela was a smart girl, she quickly analyzed Garen's personality and intentions, so she thought a while and suddenly said, "I have news about the Blood of Eternal Life!!"

"Blood of Eternal Life?"

"Word is that after the Blood of Eternal Life flowed from the hands from Duskdune Shura, some parts of it was taken by the Poker Organization, the other part was taken by our people," Angela studied Garen's expression carefully upon saying this, afraid she might lose her only lifeline.

"Taken by your people?" Garen was visibly shocked.

"Yes, some of the lower level people sent it to our middle level operatives, that's why the leaders from the upper level wanted to get the brewing technique from you."

"Where is that part then?" Garen was lazy to talk bullshit with her.

"In somewhere secret," Angela hesitated.

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"Yes, it's just part of it." Angela nodded.

"It's unfortunate that I have no use for it." Garen regretted. "Do you have any information regarding the function of the Blood of Eternal Life?"

"Now that one's much easier; it's widely known," Angela paused to align the relevant information before continuing, "Each Blood of Eternal Life has different functions. In fact, all of them come from non-humans."

"Non-humans?" This was the first time Garen had heard of the term.

"That's right. Most of the non-humans have life spans that far surpass humans, and the special ones are called the Everlasting Beings. The most extreme fighters among us have interested in these non-human race's long lifespans, as they've come to realize that they don't have enough time to achieve the extreme edges of martial arts.

Angela exhaled and continued calmly, owing to Garen's increasing interest in the topic.

"Hence, some of our top talents from the human race started investigating ways of attaining a lifespan equal to these Everlasting Beings. The two main methods were hybridization and food consumption, both of which are also the most effective methods. Hybridization is by far the best, as one could obtain a stronger blood lineage and offspring through copulation. This slowly begins to form some of the ethnic groups we see in certain countries. On the other hand, strong individuals like to increase their lifespan through edible consumption. After the Great Draught a millennia ago, which was the worst drought we've had, a lot of the Everlasting Beings left the land and went into the ocean. They took a boat and wandered the seas for decades. Humans are completely incapable of sailing the seas in the same way.

Naturally, their conflict with the humans gradually dissipated. "

"So the Blood of Eternal Life was something they left behind?" Garen asked.

"Yes. Due to the sparsity of these Everlasting Beings, you can only find a small amount of Blood of Eternal Life from some of the remains. But then again, these have already been contaminated by the ancient humans who consumed them into their bloodstream. Although the blood has been contaminated, its ability to lengthen one's lifespan still remains." Angela explained.

"Since the Everlasting Beings left just a thousand years ago, there should still be human descendants who possessed the Blood of Eternal Life besides the corpses right? If they really have such a long lifespan, it should be just a few generations to them for the past millennia." Vampires and werewolves

were the first thing Garen thought of when he heard the word Everlasting Beings. These mysterious creatures were known everywhere and became legends on Earth. The legendary vampire was said to be forever young and immortal. This gave earthlings a very strong impression.

"It is true that there are descendants from the Everlasting Beings. However, they hide themselves within the human world and it would be difficult to trace them unless they transformed, or use a specially made soul detector."

"There are detectors for them?"

"Li Gaode, the academician of the Champagne Empire's Science Academy invented a detector called the boiling blood. It's very expensive to manufacture and we, the Behemoth Gate could only buy two sets. It's very impractical as well due to its high electricity consumption."

The Champagne Empire was one of the three large empires in the Azure Continent, currently in a minor conflict with the Republic of the Tulip. The Champagne Empire was once a well developed country with a deep background. They were not afraid to go up against three dominating empires.

Garen understood well since he had learnt the world's geography.

"Furthermore, there are a lot of types of Blood of Eternal Life." Angela added on as she glanced at Garen.

"Types?"

"Other than increasing one's lifespan, they can give humans different talents." Angela observed Garen's expression closely as she explained. She found out that Garen was genuinely surprised as if it was his first time hearing such a common knowledge. This shook her assumption of Garen being a mixed between an Everlasting Being and human.

"What species are you guys mixed with?"

"We are mixed with the white dog's bloodline. Once you have absorbed the bloodline, you can live for a maximum of 300 years and about two hundred years on average, which is about 145 years of increased lifespan. You can live for more than two hundred years if you incorporate a series of Essence Locking Techniques."

"White Dog Man..." Garen was said aimlessly, as he had lost interest after hearing such a bloodline. With the talent he possessed, there was no need for him to obtain such a thing. He had reached the utmost limits of a human being before the age of 20. There was no rush for him to pursue such a thing as he still had at least seventy to eighty years to explore his options.

"What about the origins of the telekinesis from the Immortal Palace?" He asked a question that he had been very curious about.

"The Immortal Palace represents the bloodline of the Everlasting Beings. They are the last remaining organization which consists mainly of tainted half-breeds, so it is common for them to have special abilities. Furthermore, the majority of those humans, including those tainted half-breeds, would do whatever it took to kill the Everlasting Beings and obtain the Blood of Eternal Life. Once the tainted half-breeds were revealed, they would be in an unimaginable state, like becoming an experiment subject or a blood slave. Flamingo and Sylphalan, the powerhouses of the Immortal Palace, are prime examples. Both of them are tainted half-breeds, and their family members were mercilessly murdered. They have an insatiable hatred towards human kind."

She stopped for a while and continued.

"The Immortal Palace consists of five people in total. Now that Duskdune Shura has left due to his severe injury, there are only four left. All of them have their own secret organizations under them. Flamingo and Sylphalan have revealed their identities to the public, and we also know that Ghetto, the general of Weisman, is one of them as well. Unfortunately, the last member is still in the dark."

Garen stroked his chin as he processed the information he had obtained in his mind. He recalled Celine stating that the Immortal Palace initially had five members and there are currently four as one of them had left the group. This matched the information Angela had given.

"Alright, what is the Behemoth Gate's motive? You used Rosetta to lure me here so that Clark and the Killer Hunters Squad may attempt to murder me. What do you want?" Garen finally brought the issue up.

"I think you know why. We are after the Blood of Eternal Life that you are hiding." Angela confessed.

"Unfortunately, I am not a carrier of the Blood of Eternal Life." Garen shrugged. "There are a lot of humans with strong talents too. It's not just the tainted half-breeds."

"No one will believe that." Angela helplessly smiled.

"This can be proven by using the detecting device, right?" Garen needlessly explained.

Angela's eyes were wide open as she couldn't believe what she heard.

"Why are you staring at me? I am born from a normal family. I don't have any Blood of Eternal Life. All of this information can be obtained with some research." Garen explained.

Garen didn't stay long since he had obtained enough information. He went back to the study room through another prison tunnel.

The eighth Golden Hoop was already sitting inside the room serving himself drinks from the pot of hot coffee on the table in front of him.

When he saw Garen, he silently took out a roll of dark red paper from his arms, and used a white porcelain cup to hold it down, placing it on the table..

Garen sat in front of the eighth Golden Hoop, taking the cup and open the roll of paper.

'Nominating NO.9 as Province Galantia's regional director. Granting authority to mobilize all stationed military within the province.' With a stamping at the back, 'Golden Hoop Headquarters'

Garen understood intention of the piece of paper in his grasp.

"Is this prepared specially for me?"

"Yes." The eight Golden Hoop replied. "The upper management needs to evaluate your performance. If you can finish a small, specific task, you will have the authority to secretly mobilize the military of this province. Galantia's chief commander and most of the commanders are our people."

Garen understood that the Golden Hoop wanted him to continue staying in the organization as his value had increased. It is also probably that they wanted him to depend on the organization's power. Judging from the looks of it, it was so powerful that influencing the country leaders was no problem.

No. It might be the opposite, where the country leaders were planning to use him through the Golden Hoop. It was definitely a possibility.

"What do you want me to do with such authority?" Garen asked as he put down the paper.

"Just to clean up some trouble for the government." the eighth Golden Hoop smiled. "Although this is equivalent to hiring a mercenary, we won't mobilize you most of the time. It would be considered remarkable to receive a task once in a few years."

"I need something solid. I do not want these vague answers." Garen knew that with his strength, he could not live a good life even without the Federation's support. Hence he didn't oppose such headhunting.

"How about a mission once every three years?" The eighth Golden Hoop had obviously reached an agreement with the upper management. "The success rate of the mission must be at least fifty percent and the government will supply you the necessary monetary resources."

"Fine." Garen wasn't stingy at all. It was preferential treatment to him as the best among the grandmasters of combat, to have a mission only once every three years.

Firearms, which were once a threat to him were no longer so, due to his rapid growth.

It showed that the government was experienced in these affairs, based on their arrangements. They were able to protect the country when needed, by gathering enough power from the citizens even with regulations this loose. It was similar to an arrangement of hiring bounty hunters.

Garen, who was seated well, poured himself a cup of coffee and surmised his recent lifestyle.

From studying sincerely in Huaishan City to finding the Antique of Tragedy. He initially thought that he could study in a university and find a job after graduation while slowly climbing up to the top of the martial arts world with his talent. It was unfortunate that things had changed so quickly.

He had unknowingly made a name for himself by helping Su Lin with his troubles since he had owed Su Lin two favors. He was also made known in the time the Immortal Palace invaded, and the changes to his master's dojo.

He had reached the highest level in the martial art world in a very short amount of time.

Now that he had taken over the White Cloud Gate, he had become an important person in the eyes of the government, as he was also in a powerful organization in the martial arts world.

Garen felt surreal recalling these events. Practically speaking, he hasn't even reached 19 yet, he was barely 18.

Chapter 168: Follow Up 4

"Oh by the way, what happened to that small policeman who was catching up from behind?" Garen recalled the incidents one at a time from his memories, and thought of the small policeman, Jia Ning who came rushing back. According to the Sky Warrior Corbella, this small policeman was a righteous young man who was trying to help him escape the ambush. However, it hadn't occurred to him that Garen was able to deal with the Behemoth Gate and Black Mark association single-handedly.

"No idea. I think he's still at the Crimson Sand Sword."

Garen nodded. He admired such a grateful person.

As he collected his thoughts, the eighth Golden Hoop had already arranged an airplane to Harmony City.

Not far away from Harmony City was Wei Maen City, which was also where the headquarters of the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate was located. The fastest way to Wei Maen City was to go from the Skylark Mountain Range, nearby the city.

It was also the secret hideout of White Bird Holy Fist Palosa.

The two of them were engaged in further discourse; the eighth Golden Hoop was asking advice on techniques in practicing secret martial arts. Garen truthfully answered as much as he knew.

Most of his experience and techniques were taught by his master and acquired from his physical exercise. Although he had not plan his training to be as as detailed as some other fighters, he was knowledgeable in some training that could injure muscles in the body.

These were the riches of every fighter that would never be enough.

The next morning, the gate master of the Crimson Sand Sword brought along two of his disciples and the small policeman Jia Ning to a visit.

Just as they sat down, Corbella of the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate came with two of his disciples as well.

The courtyard was densely surrounded by the Men in Black. They were all special forces mobilized by the Golden Hoop. The two of them were hints to Garen's background.

Inside the white spacious living room.

The Crimson sand Sword Gate sat on a white sofa on the left, whereas the people from the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate sat on the sofa on the right. In the middle were Garen and the eighth Golden Hoop.

The morning rays seeped in from the entrance and formed golden enigmas shaped onto the ground, brightly reflected by the white floor tiles and lighting up the whole living room.

As everyone sat down, Garen glanced and observed both parties.

On the left, the gate master of the Crimson Sand Sword Gate and two of his disciples carried a weary look. They obviously had not recovered from the incident a few days ago. The small policeman Jia Ning was looking at him helplessly as if he was lost in thought.

On the right, the Sky Warrior Corbella noticed Garen's eyes upon him and politely smiled back.

He had brought two of his very similar looking disciples along, one male and the other female, who looked like they were in their thirties. Not only did they look like twins, they also seemed to possess good demeanor. On hindsight, these two were skeptical of Garen as they greeted him. They obviously could not believe that Garen, who was supposedly about the same age as their son could have achieved the top of the martial arts world.

"And what might be the reason for this visitation?" Garen questioned them directly.

"Gate Master Garen, we the Crimson Sand Sword are here today because of your help a few days ago. The Crimson Sand Sword Gate could have been destroyed if you had not reached out." He glanced at his beautiful disciples.

Although this disciple looked like she was below 15 years old, she already had an developed figure. With a full cheongsam-like uniform and a short skirt on her body with a brown ponytail hairstyle, she walked towards Garen and passed him a white bank cheque with both of her hands.

"Please accept this as our thanks Gate Master Garen." The girl smiled sweetly with her big eyes. Her skin was flawless like a porcelain doll even when viewed from such a close distance.

She obeyed his father's arrangement and passed Garen the cheque on her own accord. This allowed her to showcase her pure and charming seduction. Garen looked vigorous and imposing as he sat firmly in the middle of the living room. He was like an aggressive beast in the living room, pressuring others with power and influence. Anyone who entered his presence would feel a strange feeling of oppression.

This was not the cause of spirit but the effect of his reputation. Like a commoner meeting someone with authority, psychological pressure is not uncommon. .

"If I could seduce him, perhaps we can put this man onto the Crimson Sand Sword's Chariot, and the success rate of father's plan would increase tremendously." The idea kept churning inside the girl's mind.

Although she knew that Beo had a crush on her, it was an incomparable difference between the man currently in front of her. She was a girl with extreme greed. After being appointed as a navigator by her father, she started recruiting potential fighters into the Gate. This visit was most probably suggested by her as well.

The girl smiled sweetly again as dimples appeared on her cheeks.

The cheque had ten million dollars in Federation currency presented by a pure, beautiful and seductive young woman.

Any hot blooded young fighter would not be able to resist.

Since fighters were all hot blooded, this meant that their body would produce more endocrine. Naturally, their natural desire would amplify tremendously as well.

Unfortunately, Garen didn't give her a second look after glancing at her.

"I don't need the cheque. To me, money is as of no significance. If you really want to thank me, please allow me to enter your secret martial arts treasury and read on some non-core based secret martial arts."

"Studying secret martial arts?" The Crimson Sand Sword Gate Master was stunned. Then he smiled. "I see. You'd need these since the White Cloud Gate Master had already reached such a level. We will naturally comply but please understand that we will not show you any high class secret martial arts related to the Crimson Sand Sword. However, the others are fine." As he was afraid of any misunderstanding from Garen, he continued after pausing a while. "Don't worry, There are at least fifty types of middle range secret martial arts."

"Thank you,. Mr..." Garen thought for a while and realized that he did not know his name yet.

"Call me Luther."

"Thank you, Gate Master." Luther

Both of them smiled in satisfaction as they looked at each other.

"It's our turn to talk since both of you have finished chatting." The Sky Warrior Corbella voiced out as he sat at the sofa that could only fit one person.

"Please do, Sky Warrior Corbella." Garen focused his attention onto him after he waved his hand to dismiss the girl.

Corbella introduced both of his disciples.

"These two are from our headquarters. Under the Gate Master's instruction, we would like to invite Gate Master Garen to our headquarters to meet the Gate Master."

Both of the youngsters were wearing a white suit. The man with mustache stood up and bowed slightly towards Garen.

"Dear respected Gate Master Garen, we have come to greet you with the utmost respect in place of the Gate Master. The Gate Master is very happy that there is a new grandmaster of combat in the martial art world. Unfortunately, due to the immense workload he is currently facing, he is unable to visit you in the flesh. If Gate Master Garen could pay him a visit personally..."

Paying a visit to each other's place was a common social practice to indicate that the respective Gates were of the same level. The Gate Master of the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate had obviously positioned Garen of the White Cloud Gate as the same social standing as him.

Once Garen visits him, the opposite party must welcome him in an extravagant manner.

"I appreciate the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate Master's attention. I will definitely pay a visit very soon. Please do not worry." Garen had already planned to visit the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate so it was natural for him to do so, since the opposite party had shown more than enough respect.

Both of them bowed once more before they sat back down.

Sky Warrior Corbella had finished his most important task.

"Please voice out freely if Gate Master Garen had any more request. Corbella has some connections in the southern area."

"I shall thank you in advance, Sky Warrior Corbella."

"Then I will await your visit soon." Corbella nodded. He already knew that Garen planned to challenge White Bird Holy Fist. He planned to find a few good spots in the Skylark Mountain Range for this high level duel. He had also invited a few good friends to spectate the duel as well as it was a battle that no fighter would wish to miss.

He couldn't help but to look at Garen once more as he thought about it.

He recalled that inhumane battle that night. Clark, who was many times stronger than him was beaten like he was a rubbish bag. He had clearly been broken by Garen as he hadn't even dared to turn around and insult Garen as he escaped.

How much difference in battle power could cause such a result?

Was the martial art world going to rise to its prime again?

Garen and Andrela, who were both geniuses appeared in the same generation.

Corbella's mind churned.

Garen didn't know what Corbella was thinking, and started with both parties on the topic of the status of the martial art world. He then had a general knowing of the martial artists around the world.

In the martial art world, those who were below the grandmasters of combat were extremely weak against firearms. Any slightly trained gunner could pose a great threat towards the fighters, much less go against them head on.

Only the people who were the grandmasters of combat could go square ahead with firearms. Since they were different from the lower ranks, the government of each country has different attitudes towards the grandmasters of combat.

The Federation's view towards them wasn't too serious, but they did not take them lightly either. A grandmaster of combat was just one man after all. They could kill him instantly with specially made ammunition, from a few kilometers away with a special firearm.

On the other hand, Weisman respected the grandmasters of combat. However, they did not have many information regarding them as they had the least number of them. Most of the grandmasters of combat were from the east, as all of them were mostly influenced by ancient martial arts. Most of the ships from the east made landfall at the Yalu Confederation, as the Weisman Kingdom was too far away. Geographical location was a major factor.

As for Galantia, the majority of their martial arts were bred locally. There, martial arts based on ancient weapons were advocated, with a variety of styles and types due to the sizeable amount of grandmasters of combat they inhabited. However, it was not similar to the east.

"The position of being a grandmaster of combat is gaining momentum internationally. It may be because technology is getting more advanced and there are less foundations as time goes on. As a result, people who practice martial arts become few and far between. Most people view martial arts as a form of sports that helps them train their bodies." Corbella sighed. "Although our positions are getting more and more important, the quantity of the new generation of the grandmaster of combat is much lower when compared to previous ones. For the past decade, there have been less than five grandmaster of combat that are from the new generation. Same goes for the North."

"There's less than ten in total?" Garen frowned. The martial art world was in a worse state than he had previously thought. "This means that there are only two more people who became a grandmaster of combat in the southern region, excluding myself; Andrela and Beo?"

Chapter 169: Consultation 1

"That seems to be the case. Although the Celestial Circle Gate and the Crimson Sand Sword have been training a few potential candidates that could become Grandmasters of Combat, there are too little of them that might actually manage to become one." Corbella nodded with confidence.

"If this keeps up, both the public and the secret martial arts worlds would become dimmer and dimmer." Gate Master Luther of the Crimson Sand Sword nodded as he frowned.

"Don't the governments that value them not raise ones themselves?" Garen asked curiously.

"They don't have what it takes to raise one." Gate Master of the Crimson Sand Sword smile wryly. "A Grandmaster of Combat requires huge amount of herbal resources to provide nutrients and enhance the body. It takes a long time to train them as well. Excluding talented ones like you, a Grandmaster of Combat normally requires to train the secret martial arts since young for at least a decade before they qualify to become a Grandmaster of Combat."

"The problem lies in the qualification itself. The success rate is too low. It would be considered impressive if one out of a hundred candidates qualify as a Grandmaster of Combat." Corbella continued. "A low success rate combined with the long duration required to nurture them to reach the utmost limits of a human being. Only the crazy ones are daring enough to try and train their bodies for that. Furthermore, they would need to maintain the training for long periods of time as well to prevent the body from regressing. In short, producing one is extremely difficult.

"That's true. A country can nurture a few sharpshooters within the time and resources required to nurture one Grandmaster of Combat. Furthermore, sharpshooters pose more threat on the battlefield. All three of us here would be helpless if we go up against a canon, right?" The Gate Master of the Crimson Sand Sword sighed.

The atmosphere in the living room had started to stale up.

"The technology of missiles and the power of firearms are getting stronger and stronger. This means that an individual's effectiveness diminishes as the day goes by. Each country's military armor and air force are exceedingly powerful. The current role of a Grandmaster of Combat is mainly protection and assassination. This is one of the main reasons why The federation does not value the Grandmasters of Combat as much." Luther explained.

Garen nodded in agreement.

It's true that even if he had already mastered the body hardening technique, he would still be injured if he go against a person with firearms. If it were to be other Grandmaster of Combat, they would be torn in half in no time.

However, he felt that this was because the countries were not aware of the value the importance of special operations yet. Once special operations similar to that of Earth's were in motion, the importance of having a Grandmaster of Combat would be obvious.

"Let's not talk about this. The military has already arranged an airplane and I will leave two days later. " Garen looked at the Gate Master of the Crimson Sand Sword.

The Gate Master was skeptical. "Looks like you're here purely to gather information?"

"Yes. There's no problem, I assume?"

"Of course."

On the other side, Corbella stood up and said: "Then we shall pardon ourselves."

"See you."

Garen sat as he looked at Corbella and his two disciples leave. After that, he chatted with the Gate Master of the Crimson Sand Sword for a while and went to their headquarters.

They embarked with a convoy of well guarded red carriages as they left the courtyard of the headquarters that he visited a few days ago.

The house located in the middle of the courtyard was charred black, and most of the place was in a mess. The houses which were on the left looked fine, however.

"This way." The Gate Master of the Crimson Sand Sword lead Garen into the the left side area of the courtyard and passed through a few houses, reaching another small courtyard again.

This courtyard had a small garden, a false mountain pool and a huge locust tree. The courtyard was densely packed with trees and shades.

Garen followed behind the Gate Master and saw the same row of houses and a small courtyard across from the pool. He saw servants walking to and fro carrying water and a used bandages.

The Gate Master smiled and explained as he saw Garen's gaze, "Beo lives in that courtyard. He is still resting as he was heavily injured from the mission given by the Federation's government."

"Is that so?" Garen replied.

Both of them kept walking passing through the small courtyard and reached a small remote house.

There were two old women sitting in front of the red-brown door, facing each other. Each of them were holding a book on their hand as they muttered gloomily.

Both of them stood up as they saw the Gate Master approaching them.

"Is he here?"

"He's here. Please open the door." The Gate Master of the Crimson Sand Sword nodded his head.

They proceeded to swing open the wooden door.

After giving some simple precautionary instructions, Gate Master Luther left the place alone.

The door was then closed, leaving Garen alone inside the house.

The room had the same rectangular reddish brown, wooden floor.

A row of bookshelves was placed by the wall opposite the door. There was a spiral staircase on the right side of the bookshelf that lead to the second floor of the house.

There was a table and chair in front of the bookshelf, with a stone carving of a big black man on it.

The statue was a man with curled hair, wearing a black coat. He wore a stern facial expression and seemed to be in a walking position with a book in his hand.

Garen walked passed the statue and stood in front of the bookshelf.

There were a total of four bookshelves and the books were categorized properly.

They were categorized into experience, practice, methods and low grade secret martial arts.

The bookshelf was sparse; most of them were strewn this way and that. At most, there were about ten to twenty books per bookshelf.

Garen went directly towards the low grade secret martial arts category and ignored the first three.

The secret martial arts bookshelf was once again sub-categorized into physical movement, palm method, kicking method, finger method and weaponries.

Among them, books related to the weaponries were the most abundant, amounting to about seven to eight books. Garen picked them up and glanced through them.

Kris Dagger Technique, The Sword of Glory, Twin Sword Art, Trio Sword Art, Double Handed Sword, Single Handed Sword, Heavy Sword.

He glanced through all of them. As they were all low grade secret martial arts, they did not require high physical attribution. Now that he had maxed out his physical attribution and reached the utmost limit of a human being, he effortlessly memorized everything on the book by giving them a cursory glance.

While he did not need it now, that didn't mean he won't be needing it in the future. These secret martial arts were at the most, third rated, which was on par with the Iron Body and the Boulder martial arts.

After scanning through the weaponry secret martial arts, he set his gaze upon the physical movement category.

He gently brushed over the physical movement column with his finger.

Seasnake Walk, Greenwood Impact, Raid, Stella Assassination Step.

There were only these few books. Garen picked them up and flipped them open. Although most of the training methods made use of special techniques that require a sudden release in muscle and qi, they did not mention the methods in making up what it lacked. They were just very strong techniques with great power and Garen found most of them overbearing.

"These styles were all very different. Is this the secret techniques of the Galantia that I hear about?" He memorized all of them.

He took only a few minutes to memorize one whole book.

The important ones were the Palm Method and Finger Method.

However they were not a lot of them.

Finger Method: Wicked Claw, Double Finger Method.

Palm Method: Hundred Compound Palm, Javier Punch.

These were not so helpful towards Garen. However he could learn from the different training methods and perhaps he could gain some useful effects.

He walked up to the second floor as there was nothing interesting on the first floor.

There was only one bookshelf on the second floor. Similarly, there were only ten plus books scattered about.

However, Garen's eye was burned with excitement as he laid his eyes upon them.

Most of the secret martial arts books on this bookshelf were much more suited for him.

He simply picked out a book called the Lion King Fist. It was a secret martial art that hardens the user's fist, which suits his fighting style. It was rumored that it could enhance one's self-confidence through exercise. It would be very helpful in changing a person's personality. It was considered as one of the Magic Fist Art.

He memorized the Lion King Fist down in detail and continued looking for more.

Boulder martial arts, Iron Body and Firestream Fist could be seen on the bookshelf too.

Garen took out all the secret martial artss that he had yet to know and placed them on the second floor's table.

Speed Shifting Palm, Bronze Statue Technique, Steel Statue Technique, Gold Statue Technique, Hodman's Gun Jabbing Fist, Ember Claw.

There were a total of six secret technique books that Garen had never seen before, and they were all complete sets. They were all second rated or third rated secret techniques, which were the same grade as the Mammoth Secret Technique and beyond.

The Crimson Sand Sword seemed to not keep anything other than techniques with complete sets.

Garen then reread the secret techniques such as the Firestream Fist that he already knew to see if there was anything different from what he knew. After that, he memorized the remaining six new secret techniques.

Bronze Statue Technique, Steel Statue Technique and Gold Statue Technique was obtained by the Crimson Sand Sword by eliminating body hardening factions. It was obvious that they had prepared this for Garen since they hadn't taken them away.

Although these three techniques were strong, their differences in power were not that far apart. However, there was one crucial factor.

Although the three levels, namely Bronze, Silver and Gold were not much of a difference to an outsider, there was a difference between the users. The Steel Statue users could restrain the Bronze Statue users and the Gold Statue users could restrain the Steel Statue users easily.

This was an obvious way to form a hierarchy within the Gate.

The Speed Shifting Palm Technique could be use to increase the agility of the palm techniques, which could be considered as a small secret technique regime.

On the other hand, the Hodman's Gun Jabbing Fist was a secret technique with a powerful force. It was a palm technique derived by a fighting form mimicking the gun. It could produce at least three times the power of a commoner.

However, Hodman, who had invented this technique died before reaching forty due to this technique. Whoever practiced this technique had either died of young or possessed huge prowess. There were no exceptions.

The age of the users when they passed away was recorded in the book. None of them died from disease.

"This could be used to train sacrificial pawn." Garen memorized this secret technique as well.

The last one was Ember Claw.

It was a simple secret technique that trained both hands. Although it was able to increase the temperature of both hands to very high temperatures, its power was average. It was invented by a mediocre Grandmaster of Combat who wanted to improve himself in his late forties. However, he died from the fire he created..

As Garen was reading the secret technique, he was tempted. He closed his eyes and looked at his attribute pane after memorizing the whole thing.

Strength 2.66. Agility 2.72. Vitality 2.65. Intelligence 2.53. Potential 626%.

Secret Technique ----

Mammoth Variation: Explosive (Max Level), Epidermal Hardening Grade 1 (Iron Body), Blood Qi Stabilization Grade 1 (Boulder martial arts).

Red Jade Palm: rudimentary level (Grade 1), Burning Strengthen Level 1 (Dark Crimson Technique), Vitality Enhancement Level 1 (Dark Crimson Technique)'

"Another point from Potential." Garen smiled in satisfaction. "The Golden Sword Throne is indeed a good item. It was worth my time to take the risk and obtain it. It's good to be able to obtain one potential point per week."

Chapter 170: Consultation 2

He had six potential points. In terms of secret techniques, the lower grade, middle grade and upper grade required 1 point, 2 points and 5 points respectively. The difference could increase the level of the secret techniques. Naturally, this was under the assumption that the user had the prerequisite needed to learn it.

After some consideration, Garen decided to learn the Ember Claw in hope that it would merge with the Red Jade Palm.

He finally understood that the merging of secret techniques was connected to his technique's level.

This was the case for his Mammoth Secret Technique, as it acted as a foundation which most of his techniques were merged with and became an enhancement, as it had the highest level.

This meant that whichever technique had the higher level would become the foundation for the other techniques. Perhaps the grade of the techniques would affect it but it was not important.

He could learn two secret techniques up to the middle level with six points.

At the second floor of the house, Garen raised both of his hands and followed the instruction to learn the Ember Claw. With minimum movement, he kept changing his posture with his palm's joints. Combined with the flow of his qi, he placed both of his hands on the lit kerosene lamp and moved back and forth above the fire.

The scorching fire burnt Garen's skin.

Both of his hand's skin was completely covered in burns after ten minutes or so. Garen's hands started to go numb, and at the same time, a clear feeling flowed into his palms from his brain and it felt like his hands were completely different.

"I've learnt it!"

He quickly looked at the skill pane.

'Red Jade Palm: Preliminary Level (Grade 1), Burning Strengthen Level 1 (Dark Crimson Technique), Vitality Enhancement Level 1 (Dark Crimson Technique), Enhanced Ember Claw Level 1'

He focused his view onto the Ember Claw and the related information popped up out of thin air.

"Ember Claw has increases the fire resistance of the arms and the strength resistance under normal enhancement. Able to produce high temperature injuries."

Garen softly explained to himself

He looked at the 6 attribute points and thought:

"I don't think I can increase the grade of the Red Jade Palm. Celine is a cunning fellow, she would have definitely noticed my irregularity. I should increase the rest of my techniques first."

He hesitated for a while, but his vision ultimately fell onto Ember Claw.

As he focused his vision on the skill, the attribute points immediately decreased by three.

Hence, the Ember Claw was no longer an enhancement effect and became an independent secret technique. On the other hand, the Red Jade Palm and the remaining secret techniques merged into Ember Claw.

'Ember Claw: Grade 2 (Total of 4). Red Jade Palm Enhancement Level 1. Dark Crimson Technique Enhancement Level 1 (Vitality Enhancement, Burning Strengthen)'

There was a indent on the back of the skill.

"Quantity of similar Secret Techniques have exceeded by three; conflicts among the training regimes. Do you want Ember Claw to cover the Firestream Fist and a part of the Red Jade Palm?"

A conflict among the training regimes?

Garen was stunned. Naturally, it was possible that there would be conflicts in training regimes among the secret techniques.

"Cover."

As he just made his decision, the Dark Crimson Technique immediately disappeared in the skill pane and what was left was the higher tier second rated secret technique Ember Claw.

All of the sudden, the bunch of enhancement effect was simplified in the skill pane.

'Ember Claw: Grade 2 (Total of 4). Burning Strengthen Level 1 (Total of 3, from the Dark Crimson Technique and Red Jade Palm's training regime

"Since my body has reached its limit, I can only use the attribution points to increase my skills. Ember Claw would be the best choice, since it is the most all rounded and its tier is greater than the Mammoth Secret Technique." Garen directly focused his attention onto the Ember Claw.

Next up was the Golden Statue Technique.

This body hardening technique was easy to learn as it only required Garen to apply the golden oil on his body, which was a specially made butter. However, he didn't meet the condition.

Garen had no choice but to note it down in his head and bring it up another time.

He then memorized all the information in the treasury once more to make sure of the information.

It was already afternoon when he came out of the secret techniques treasury.

There were two disciples waiting for him outside the door.

"Have you finished reading, Gate Master Garen?"

"Almost done. Thank you." Garen nodded. "Please thank Gate Master Luther for me."

He didn't speak much to the people from Crimson Sand Sword afterwards and walked directly out of the place. A black car from the Golden Hoop had been waiting for him.

He had cleared up the relationship between the Crimson Sand Sword and him. He even paid a visit to Beo, who was bedridden and covered in bandages, before finally boarding the plane.

Huaishan City Public Cemetery, at the suburbs

It was cloudy with a slight drizzle as the dark clouds covered the sky.

There were a group of people standing in front of a white tomb, deep in the cemetery.

Garen and Joshua stood in front of the tombstone. Behind him were Cynthia, Jack and the fat Bouvini. All of them were in black; the men were in suits and the girls in skirts.

The area was surrounded by the men in black.

A woman in a black dress, who was escorted by two soldiers, stood behind the crowd.

"What do you plan to do?" Cynthia looked at Garen.

"According to the rules of the sects, traitors or murderers of the disciples shall be subject to capital punishment." Garen replied calmly.

Garen felt troubled as he turned around and looked at Rosetta, who was being escorted.

The capital punishment for every sects was brutal and cruel. Although it wasn't used often, Garen felt that it was the appropriate time to use it...

"You should know the capital punishment of the White Cloud Gate." Garen showed no expression.

"Let ants bite the person after peeling off one's skin and douse the body with honey water." Cynthia barely nodded her head. "But Rosetta is..."

"I know." Garen closed his eyes. "I know she is already dead."

Rosetta was motionless at the back as she was being held by two subordinates of the Golden Hoop.

She had already committed suicide after Garen left prison. What was brought here was merely a corpse.

"Do it. I was generous enough to let her commit suicide." Garen didn't waver at all.

The subordinates sent by the Golden Hoop were experts in capital punishment; both females.

They swiftly took off Rosetta's shirt and cut open a small wound using a scalpel, slowly peeling off her skin.

Soon, the white, naked female had her skin stripped and what was left was red, stiff muscle. They immediately threw her onto the tomb after the pouring water all over her body.

Another person poured a bag of black ant's nest onto her.

The black ants swiftly covered the whole corpse's surface.

Everyone on the scene felt like they were on a cold war as they saw their senior disciple's red flesh being covered up by the black ants.

A cold drizzle poured incessantly on the crowd. Garen stood still in front of the tomb, taking out a black woodring and stroking it gently. The emblem of the Golden Hoop had been shifted to his left ear lobe.

He felt a soothing feeling of peace that he had never felt before, as he looked at the ants devouring Rosetta.

A few black crows were attracted by the corpse. They landed onto the corpse and started to biting out big chunks of flesh, ignoring the onlooking crowd beside them.

Garen and the others ignored the crows as well.

Now that the incident with his senior disciple had been dealt with, Garen and Cynthia were the only disciples left from the older generation, as the elder and second senior disciple had passed away. The rest of the members were rookies. If he wanted to challenge the white Bird Holy Fist, now was the time...

After coming back from the cemetery, Garen sat alone in the hall of the White Cloud Gate's main dojo. The surrounding was covered in darkness, as the faint moonlight filtered in from the window and landed on the slightly broken floor.

He didn't know when it had started, but he started to enjoy sitting alone and letting his thoughts run wild after that night's battle. He realized that he could easily linking a lot of things together after maxing out his intelligence. He had also gained a tremendous amount of knowledge in martial arts.

"Master, are you there?" Simon's voice came from the entrance of the staircase but there seemed to be someone else as well, judging from the sound of the footsteps.

"Please come up if you have anything to say." Garen replied as he opened his eyes.

Soon, footsteps of multiple people came from the staircase. Simon brought along a gentle and calm handsome man, where Corinne brought along a cool and beautiful woman to see him.

Corinne and Simon were the disciples of Garen's ex-subordinate, and they were not related at all. However, they chose to stay and not give up during the White Cloud Gate's darkest times. Hence, Garen decided to make them his disciples and teach them martial arts with all his knowledge.

At this stage, both of them were very strong in terms of martial arts. They were at the same level as Cynthia after training for a long time; the level of the Tenstar Ni from the Celestial Circle Gate and the Crimson Sand Sword.

They played a major role in reviving the White Cloud Gate. With the addition of Garen becoming a Grandmaster of Combat, they had a clearer understanding of the body's qi and all of the results of this effect.

In addition, both of them were continuously consuming the body quenching pill that Garen once had when he was mastering his secret techniques. This meant that their physical quality was above average, which was the main cause of their big improvement.

"Yes?" Garen looked at his audience. Simon and Corinne were both wearing their black tight practice uniforms, whereas their partners behind them wore white silk practice uniforms. They had an exceptionally respectful demeanor towards Garen.

"Master, we have brought our disciples to greet you." Simon replied carefully because Garen who was sitting in front of him was like a beast in the dark. He was giving off a sense of oppression just by sitting there.

Unlike last time, it was still easy to talk to him due to his casual personality. However, Garen changed into another person ever since he had beat up the Behemoth Gate.

"These two are your disciples?" Garen was stunned. He had heard it from both of them last time, but hadn't asked about it in detail. They had finally met each other.

"Hello Grand Master." Both of the youngsters greeted Garen at the same time. they looked elegant, even though they were about fourteen or fifteen years old.

"Karina is Bouvini's niece." Corinne explained as the girl quickly lowered her head and paid her due respect respect to Garen.

"Yuan Reese is the second successor of the Di Youwen Household." Simon quickly introduced him to Garen as well.