

Mystical 201

Chapter 201: Preparation during the Eve 1

Garen slammed the car door behind him and walked into his uncle's house.

The car was slammed again and Cynthia stood still behind Garen, with a black full body tight leather shirt.

"I don't like causing such a scene. It's too troublesome." Cynthia whispered.

"This situation is a must since the Federation's government had failed their operations a few times already. I don't want to forget that they are still supporting and assisting me." Garen calmly replied.
"These are all small matters. The federation is so huge that it would take at least a few decades before it falls. With such a big treat ahead of us, we need to be careful to not bite off more than we can chew."

"A hero appearing in our most desperate times?"

"Sort of." Garen turned his head and looked at one of the cars.

A middle aged man with a beautiful, curled beard appeared from the car. He was in a white suit and held a white cane in his hand.

"Sir Garen, please go ahead."

"That's very kind of you Minister Difana." Garen nodded.

This minister was in charge of the whole of Galantia Province's economy and investment. He was 'coincidentally' passing by Huaishan City so he had met up with Garen. He was also a member of the Golden Hoop inner circle, the uncle of the Seventh Hoop.

He heard that Garen was going to visit his uncle Tyr Anjer. Since he had seen Anjer once in a party before, he decided to visit him as well.

In his eyes, Garen of the White Cloud Gate had obviously become a strong force that he could not afford to ignore. No matter if it was in terms of personal strength, or in the military, he had an irreplaceable influence.

Since the Federation's Government was at a disadvantage, there were rumors of separatist regimes blooming up all over the province. The powerful White Cloud Gate was the most concerning of all to the Governor. This was especially true since the White Cloud Gate had been expanding at an incredible rate recently and had been involved with almost the half of the districts in the whole province. Their members were increasing on a daily basis and they were also representing the martial art in the civilised community and the underground world. In addition, Gate Master Garen was also one of the high ranked leaders of the Golden Hoop, who had a lot of power and support.

If the governor really wanted to become a king, he must first face the two major forces, military and the White Cloud Gate. He could only truly control the whole of Galantia when he obtained the support of these two major powerhouses.

This was one of the main reasons he had sent the finance minister Difana to investigate Garen's attitude.

Both of them walked into the building with lunging steps.

Bodyguards flanked and followed them as they walked up to the fifth floor together.

Uncle Tyr had already been waiting for their arrival at the front door.

"Long time no see, my beloved uncle." Garen walked up and gave his uncle a gentle hug.

"Long time no see indeed Garen. This is...?" Tyr looked at Difana who was standing behind Garen. "Is this Minister Difana?"

"It's a pleasure to meet you again Sir Tyr." Difana placed his cane onto another hand and greeted Tyr with a handshake.

"That is rude of me. Please come in." He took off Difana's jacket and the three of them walked into the living room.

"I have a gathering going on currently. I hadn't expected that Minister Difana and Garen would come over, I'm sorry if my hospitality isn't up to my best." Tyr smiled as he introduced.

"Lombarth and Phelia, come over now!" He shouted.

Both of the kids had been waiting at the side as they had already heard the fuss.

Tyr Garen and Minister Difana was at the center of everyone's attention the moment they entered the house.

Lombarth swiftly went into the room to call his sister out. When she heard the call, she quickly went out and greeted obediently with her head bowed.

"Nice to meet you brother Garen and Minister." Lombarth bowed with respect as he greeted them.

Phelia held her knee height shirt and greeted them as well. "Nice to meet you brother Garen and Minister Difana. Long time no see brother Garen."

"Long time no see indeed." Garen reached out his hand and pinched Phelia's small cheek as he smile gently.

Difana who witnessed this at the side took note of it in his mind.

"These two are the kids from my wife's side of the family." Tyr gestured Delai Ando and Vaeneris to come over with his hand. These two are the most outstanding teenagers on my wife's side of the family. They had no choice but to lower down their head when they met the finance minister of the whole

province. This person was on another level compared to their family background so they had to be careful.

"Good to see you minister." Delai Ando's face was stiff when he walked over to greet him. As he finished greeting Difana, he looked at Garen and his face turned red as he didn't know what to tell him. He had had a conflict with Garen in the past. The current Garen was far above him and was looking at him from above. The feeling of knowing someone looking down on him made him embarrassed and wanted to find a hole to jump into.

"Brother Garen... about the past, it's our fault. Hope you can forgive us." Vanaeris smiled awkwardly as he apologised to Garen.

"I don't hold any grudges on it. You should be more careful when doing your tasks next time and don't assume what you do will definitely go well. Don't rely on others too much because you're not as bad as they are most of the time." Garen smiled and he said. He didn't have any hostile intent towards these two who viewed him as an enemy. These two more or less was at a loss under him and since he was on the winning side, he naturally didn't have any hostile intent towards them.

"Alright. We will talk about the past later. Minister Difani and Garen, this way, please. We will go to the meeting room." Uncle suggested as he led the way to the study room.

Garen and Difana followed closely behind, with multiple strong body guards and Cynthia guarding the door ensuring no one comes near the occupied room.

As the black door was shut tight, Lombarth, Vaeneris and Delai Ando looked at the meeting room with complicated feelings.

"Looks like us taking him for an enemy was useless after all. He is no longer at the same level as us." Vaeneris whispered helplessly.

Delai Ando was completely silent as he held his fist tight and exhaled intensely, as if he had just released a load from his body.

Lombarth felt awkward within. He was very cynical towards Garen back in the day, and Garen hadn't given it a second thought at all. However, he was slightly relieved as well, Garen was currently much stronger than his father and the relationship between his sister and Garen had always been good. Not to mention his father had treated him even better than his sister. Based on this, Garen's power would be a strong force towards his family as well.

Just like the three of them, Phelia was staring at the meeting room quietly, her mind seemingly churning incessantly.

Inside the meeting room

Garen, uncle Tyr and the finance minister Difani were sitting opposite each other, forming a triangle from the round table.

The big study room was quiet as there were the only the three of them. None of the bodyguards had entered the room at all.

"I think Sir Garen should know the purpose of my visit today. I come here on behalf of the Governor Wahana."

"I clearly understand Governor's Wahana current point of view, however the extent of your power and influence is still unknown to me. The White Cloud Gate is just a small sect, and we have been through a lot lately, and we can't have any more on our plate at the moment." Garen said calmly as he crossed his fingers.

"You're too modest. The Governor had hoped that you would come and support our work. This would be a huge contribution towards the stability and safety of the whole Province." Difani smiled. He paused for a moment, and it dawned on him that it would be better to talk about the issue directly to a martial artist like Garen, as martial artist didn't seem to like to beat around bushes. "As long as you show your commitment and improve the stability of the province, the government would definitely help the local development. In this era, it is very difficult to become a leading country. Hence we need to focus on local development to prevent the foreign economy from invading our country."

Difani added on as he looked at Garen.

"Not too far from now, the government plans to release a series of supportive measures that would help in economical development. However the overall structure is still under observation and they need the comments of the district to maximise our efforts."

Garen had finally understood his intentions.

This meant that as long as he agreed to support the Governor, as long as it was within the scope, any recommendations were welcome. Furthermore, if there were any good things from the government, he was sure to get his share as well.

He started thinking about it. He personally didn't mind about it but there were a lot of people who worked under him. Hence he needed to improve the whole organisation's development and profit.

Uncle Tyr was sitting at one side in shock as he looked at the other two negotiating between each other.

In the past, he knew the power and influence of Garen and the White Cloud Gate. However, they were still a small sect at the time and had little influence. At the most, they could only influence the local city. Who would have thought that the influence of the White Cloud Gate had grown so fast that Governor Wahana had to take note of his existence and lower his position to request for a cooperation. Compared to his nephew that he knew so well, his influence hadn't even reached that kind of level yet.

It was at this moment that he realized that he had underestimated the influence of the White Cloud Gate, or the speed at which the White Cloud Gate was developing once Garen had become the successor.

After the discussion between Garen and Difani, they finally came up with a exaggerating mutual agreement.

Garen would tacitly approve of the Governor's actions and in return the Governor would go against the White Cloud Gate's current industry policy: The workers of the White Cloud Gate shall not be imposed of any taxes and at the same time they would have the rights to the internal criminal department.

The rights to the internal criminal department! This meant that if anyone related to the White Cloud Gates had committed a crime, it would be internally sorted and the police department had no say in it.

They allowed such a ridiculous policy towards the White Cloud Gate.

Speechless, Tyr looked at the two of them signing the agreement and each of them kept a copy. It was obvious that the power the Governor gave to Difani had not reached its limit and Garen could have requested for more. However Garen had stayed his hand for more.

After the agreement, Difani started to consult Tyr on the local economy and recommended an overall rectification. It was obvious that he was giving face to Garen and at the same time keeping an influencer like him in check and offered a series of offer conditions.

Ultimately, the three of them reached an agreement and everyone obtained what they wanted.

Difani left the house after they left the meeting room.

After Garen and his uncle sent the minister off, both of them went into a single room to reminisce about the past.

They also called Lombarth and Cynthtia to enter as well.

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The door closed slowly.

Lombarth and Phelia stood in front of Garen and his uncle.

"Garen, seeing you succeed, I'm happy for my sister and brother-in-law. With us Jody's, I'm still considered to be pretty well off. And now there's you." Garen's uncle Tyr said earnestly. "I'm old now. Some things are harder to manage, more tiring. You're different, you're young, you can still go for a long while."

"Uncle, you don't have to beat around the bush with me, you can tell me anything straight." Laughing in spite of himself, Garen leaned forward, suggesting he's genuinely interested.

"That's good to hear," Tyr nodded in appreciation. "I asked Lombarth here, so you, as his elder cousin brother, can help advising him in the future if he messes up anything. Of course, only if you have the time. The Anjer household can still afford to keep him fed and housed without much difficulties."

"Of course." Garen nodded, "Lombarth was a little immature then, but people do change. You needn't be so worried, uncle, maybe he'll even do something huge in the future, no? Quite a number of people only made it later in life."

"And Phelia too," Tyr held his daughter's hand. "Your younger cousin sister has always been obsessed with the war chess, to the point of neglecting everything else. Even now, she's preparing to take part in this King of War Chess Competition in the Bolsha province. It had really taken over her life!"

"Don't worry, uncle. Phelia is still young, she'll learn to prioritize after she matured a little more, it won't affect the important things in the future, I can assure that." Garen had heard about the popular war chess, it was said to be unusually complicated in that everyone who participated will win or lose something, even sacrificing their lives.

"War chess is not a game for children." Phelia protested, pouting. "This is an Open Sea Championship with a reward of one billion dollars*! And I am one of the three representatives for the Galatia province! Don't underestimate me!"

"One billion!" Tyr and Garen both flinched.

"A championship with such a large amount of reward? That's crazy!" Garen's uncle frowned.

Garen shook his head, "I've heard of this war chess game. It's said to be peculiar in the sense that winners will get stronger while losers get weaker. People who always win would achieve immense success in whatever they do, while the more people lose, the more they suffer from bad luck. The war chess has rumors of it being dangerous and mysterious."

"Fine, just be careful." Tyr shook his head, "I'll let Kerrigan escort you there."

"Thanks dad!" Phelia grinned happily.

Garen shook his head, speechless. He resumed his conversation with his Uncle Tyr about the issues with the development and arrangement of the province. He accepted his uncle's suggestion about employee's benefits, transforming White Cloud Gate into a for-profit organization with each aspects of the welfare of their employees. That way, he'll be able to utilize everyone's capabilities and influence the best possible way.

This inspired Garen a lot.

He decided to use this same concept on other newer influences like the teams from the former Black Mark Association, Cynthia, Jack and the other mercenaries, as well as some other new elites in the Martial Arts community.

If they were bound together with their subordinates, even if the forces under White Cloud Gate were to leave due to issues, they would not have huge issues running on their own.

Garen finally left his uncle's place after dinner. The opinions and advices Uncle Tyr had given him were valuable experiences. Even though he's a member of the Information Era from Earth, many things will not work with just pen-and-paper theorizing. In that aspect, Uncle Tyr provided Garen much needed help.

Back at White Cloud Gate, Corinne finally got back along with representatives of Circling Dance Gate and Seven Moon Gate to greet Garen.

After arranging White Cloud Gate's new system of operation, Garen took a flight to Hubo City

His sister Ying Er had left to Shengying University, he wanted to meet her there.

Soon, he'd be leaving to a closed off Smoke Island, where he planned to destroy the ship to force Sylphalan out to fight with him. Before that, he needed to make sure he had prepared for every situation.

Shengying University

On the yellow field in front of the library building.

Garen was wearing black T-shirt and jeans, blending in with all the other university students. Garen sat on a white marble bench underneath a tall Japanese pagoda tree. The winter sun sprinkled its light onto Garen, bringing him only a slight warmth.

The library of Shengying University was a maroon building with a roof resembling two cones. On the steps in front of the entrance, students were walking in and out of the entrance.

Two long-haired girls exited the library. One of them had black hair and red eyes, the other one had blonde hair and purple eyes, both were equally pretty.

On seeing them, Garen slowly stood up.

"Big brother!" The red eyed girl squealed when she saw him, and started jogging toward Garen before giving him a big hug.

"How are you here all of a sudden?" After a while, Ying Er looked up and asked.

"I'll be going away soon, so I can't visit for a while. I just had to drop by before that." Garen smiled, "How's it going with the school?"

"It's okay..." Ying Er curled her lips indicating her indifference, "Lots of assignments lately, a little tired. Thank goodness Nina's helped." She pulled her friend up, "Big brother, this is my roommate Nina, Nina, my big brother. He came here to visit from home, he's studying at Harmony City."

"Nice meeting you." Nina greeted Garen with grace.

"Nice meeting you too," Garen smiled politely, "Thanks for helping Ying Er with her things."

"It's nothing. Ying Er helped me a lot too." Nina replied with a slight shyness.

They both gave Garen a tour around the cafeteria, the sports field, as well as other places like the indoor swimming pool. If it wasn't for the restriction of boys in the girls' dorm, Ying Er would probably want to bring him to her room.

Ying Er was pretty popular at school, very soon, the parade was joined by two other girls.

The girls were all very interested in the mysterious big brother Ying Er kept mentioning, including how she used to bully him when they were kids.

Everyone had always imagined Garen to be a scrawny, androgynous boy. Upon meeting him, they were surprised by his good looks and lean, muscular physique.

It was almost lunchtime when they finished touring the campus.

The five young people went straight to the cafeteria to order dishes.

The lunch was simple, only some raisins, white bread, potato soup and some turkey meat*. Simple as it may be, it was pretty nutritionally balanced.

After lunch, the girls brought Garen to the hawker street behind the campus, where all sorts of street food can be found due to the food variety, or lack thereof, available in the cafeteria.

It wasn't until they were stuffed that they returned onto the grassy park.

The sunlight at noon was much warmer than the morning. Garen and Ying Er strolled behind the three girls who conversed among themselves, drawing glances and gazes all around.

"Just a while ago, the dorm keepers caught Ivy keeping a squirrel she caught in the woods over there. You should have seen the squirrel, it's so cute I wanna kiss it!" Ying Er recounted funny stories she'd experienced spiritedly.

"Remember grandma's house at the farm? There were lots of squirrels in the woods behind, you can go catch a squirrel or two to keep." Garen smiled.

"I know, but I can't even take care of myself properly..." Ying Er kicked at the turf.

"Big brother Garen, can you play badminton? Do you want to come play with us at the badminton court over there?" A girl in front, Ivy turned around and asked.

"Badminton..." Garen was about to nod when a tall man scuttled to him and whispered in his ears.

Surprise flashed on Garen's face before he returned to normal.

"Excuse me ladies, I have some urgent business to attend to. Maybe next time?"

He pinched Ying Er's face lightly.

"Study hard, I'll visit again when I can. Try to visit home during the holidays."

"I knooooow, I'm not a child." Ying Er swatted at Garen's hand.

"Let's go, Garen shook his head and turned around, leaving in a hurry with the tall man following without a word.

It was only then that the girls realized some five or six pedestrians trailed behind Garen as he leaves. Obviously, the men were Garen's hidden bodyguards.

"Such an illustrious send-off!" Nina's jaw dropped. A few white limousines with silver patterns stopped in front of Garen at the entrance before him and his bodyguards got on and left quickly.

"Who is your brother? How do we not notice the bodyguards before? That's so extravagant!" Utterly confused, Nina turned around and bombarded Ying Er with questions.

"That's so over-the-top, not even the trust fund babies can compare to it. That's a send-off fit for a government official! Ying Er, be honest, what is your brother!"

"Spill it! This goldmine cannot be let out before we could take a bite off it! Let us, your roommates, have him!" The last girl teased before bursting out in giggles.

Ying Er turned bright pink, unable to answer anything at all.

Chapter 203: Preparation during the Eve 3

Garen sat in the car with his eyes closed and his brows slightly furrowed. The tall man who relayed the message sat in front, driving.

"How are they doing?"

"The doctor said it's not a huge problem, but they need some time to recuperate." The driver answered.

"Su Lin and Celine were not that weak, how is it possible that they were driven to this point? Cynthia, did you hear anything from your end?"

Cynthia who sat beside Garen only shook her head.

"I only knew they were pulled into the riot at the border, it was impossible to investigate otherwise. You'll have to ask them yourself."

"What did Leo say?"

"They were already unconscious when Team Leader Leo found them. We don't know who attacked them." Cynthia's answers were short and sweet. "Gate Master, do we..."

"We need not be too hasty. Su Lin's father is an official of the Confederate, he will not let this go easily. Tell Leo to cooperate with their investigation. If he suspects anyone, he can take action against them, no hesitation needed."

"Isn't this too..." Cynthia felt some discomfort with the order.

"It's fine. Right now is not a peacetime. If we don't act aggressively, no one will be scared of making a move on us." Garen snorted.

As one of the White Peacocks, the three secretly collaborated for exchange of information as well as fighting power when needed, and even the means to do things if required.

Right now, White Cloud Gate have been able to get intelligence and military support from the Sirens' influence overseas. Celestial Circle Gate was also able to provide enough help from the army as well as the political circles.

In return, White Cloud Gate provided support to Celestial Circle Gate's underground operations, they also helped the Sirens with intelligence exchange as well as operations.

Technically, the three had already been bound together by the mutual benefits they get from each other.

Arriving at the airport, Celestial Circle Gate had already arranged for a military plane to transport them. The military power here was still mostly affiliated with the Celestial Circle Gate.

After arriving at Harmony City by flight, they proceeded to switch to a car to drive to Su Lin's manor. It was already 9 o'clock by then.

In a clean white bedroom.

Su Lin leaned against the headboard of the blue bed, his lower body was covered with a cornflower blue blanket. He was in white pajamas and looked pale, and even his fiery hair seemed dry and depressed.

Aris wore a thick black windbreaker and a pair of black gloves, and was feeding Su Lin herbal soup.

The room was filled with the pungent scent of the herbs that was slightly similar to traditional Chinese medicine.

Garen took a whiff of it when he arrived before frowning while he sat by the bed.

"How do you feel? Better?"

Su Lin looked at Garen wryly.

"Lost too much blood, almost couldn't make it."

"I told you to not go around so much! Look at you now, now you can't even move aside from staying in your bed and rest." Aris grumbled resentfully. This outburst was a first for the lady who was usually graceful.

Still grumbling, she stuffed the spoonful of herbal soup into Su Lin's mouth.

"Yes, yes, I'm wrong. I should've heeded your advice. Hey, do you think you can leave Garen and I to ourselves for a bit? We need to talk." Su Lin asked in his helplessness.

"Fine. Talk all you want." Aris stood up and handed him the bowl with the remaining herbal soup.

Understanding her point, Su Lin took the bowl and downed the content into his throat, after which he handed her back the bowl.

"Are we good?"

"Hmph!" Aris responded with annoyance on her face and left the room, closing the door with a backhand.

Only Garen and Su Lin were in the room now.

"So what happened?" Garen glowered at Su Lin. "With both your strengths, you shouldn't be hurt this badly."

"You don't need to worry about this. I can deal with it on my own." Su Lin didn't elaborate, "It's not the Poker, it's some other people. I'll deal with them." Mirroring Garen, he frowned. "I got careless. They are weaker than me, so I can't ask you for help."

Garen stared at him straight in his eyes. Seeing the conviction in his eyes, Garen nodded.

"If you insist. What about Celine? How is she doing?"

"Much worse. She was buried alive in the avalanche and almost froze to death." Su Lin answered.

Coldness filled Garen's eyes. "You are both my friends. If something happened, I wish to be there for you as your friends."

"Thanks," Su Lin nodded earnestly. "But like I said, we need to do this ourselves. I can't bear the humiliation of having to ask people to avenge me..."

Even though he said that, he was still very grateful.

Among his friends, there were only two people who wouldn't think twice to avenge him, and one of them was Garen.

Like this time, most of the dangers he and Celine was met with near the border was averted once they mentioned Garen being his friend. A huge number of forces treated them like they were important guests.

Even the riotous gangs dared not attack them due to Garen's reputation of being Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate's Sky Warrior.

"I'm really glad you visited." Su Lin patted Garen on his shoulder. "You're in a different position now, the Sky Warrior of Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate, wait no, the Second Divine Warrior of Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate, the White Cloud Gate Master, the strongest Grandmaster of Combat of the Twelve Southern Sects, the Underground King of Galantia, Holy Mammoth Holy Fist... Your fame is all over the place! Tsk tsk... You're a famous person now, even Black Mark Association had been absorbed by White Cloud Gate. You have three Grandmasters of Combat under you who are on par with Sky Warriors. You are dominating the whole of the South, you're just like a cancer... I mean anti-hero!"

Speechless, Garen played along with his antics.

"You do look like you're much better, you're even well enough to tease me."

"It wasn't that serious in the first place." Su Lin countered, "It's just..." "Is Su Lin awake?" A young man knocked on the door, his voice giving away his calm, steadfast demeanor.

Su Lin immediately hid under his blanket.

"My elder brother is here!" He whispered and then used a louder voice. "I just got up."

With a click, the door was opened by a tall man in a black windbreaker.

He has short red hair, like Su Lin, but he also had red brows. His eyes were as sharp as an eagle's, with only a glance, he could intimidate people.

He wore black leather gloves, accentuating the golden patterns on his cuffs.

Garen knew him as Harris, Su Lin's biological brother. He was recently promoted to a senior official.

As for his impression of Harris, Garen could only remember Duskdune Shura had tried to assassinate him.

Duskdune Shura had tasked a former Royal General with the assassination. Obviously they've failed, indicating the complexity of his background.

"Your friend came to see you?" Harris nodded at Garen who stood up, giving out a subtle aura of authority. "Nice meeting you." He held out his hand.

Garen shook his hand.

"Nice meeting you too. I'm Garen."

"Garen?" Harris blanked for a little. He thought the name sounded familiar. But since he is a friend of his younger brother, he only nodded.

"I'll be taking my leave then," Garen nodded politely. "Su Lin, get well soon." He turned around toward the door.

Laying on the bed, Su Lin thought his words sound loaded.

"Garen!" He called out. "Don't butt in, I'm serious."

Garen kept his silence and smiled weakly.

"Fine. I'll let it go this time. I'll go visit Celine."

"Mm."

Harris listened to the conversation with a weird look on his face. This Garen seemed really influential, he didn't know his brother had friends who had power over the situation at the border, this surprised him.

"Harris, Garen is my friend, I owed him my life. He's not in the same circle as you." Su Lin noticed Harris' expression and immediately understood his brother's occupational habit of analyzing other people's backgrounds, the links between different influences, and all those complicated mumbo jumbo.

His brother Harris was a pretty decent guy, but he's always going off on conspiracy theories, as if the whole world was built on conspiracies alone. Because of that, he had not found someone to marry after all this time. The girls were scared as soon as they saw him with his strict face.

"Su Lin, you don't understand, our family has a lot of connections with very influential backgrounds. If you don't think in a deeper level, you may not even realize it after people have already cheated you. There are many people who wanted to use our family's fame." Harris stated matter-o-factly.

"He's not even in the same system you're thinking about! To be honest, what he's pursuing is totally different than what we are doing. The political situation in the Confederate at its current state, if Garen wanted to, he could've become a leader himself. He was so different from us it's like comparing apples and oranges!" Su Lin rolled his eyes, "He's one of those people you politicians fear the most. If you offended him, don't count on a night of good sleep if you don't have hundreds of special forces with artillery capabilities."

Harris smiled, not believing Su Lin. However, this really isn't his business to butt in on. With their father and his vast political experience to protect Su Lin, this shouldn't be an issue.

After leaving Su Lin's room, Garen turned into another room not far from Su Lin's.

The door was open, a nurse in white came out with a slew of medication in the basin.

"Excuse me, is this Miss Celine's room?"

"Yes sir. Mr. Garen, is it? Miss Aris told me it's okay for you to go in."

"Thank you."

Garen entered through the open door. A bright white light illuminated the room.

Oil lamps filled every empty corners of the room. The outside of the glass of the oil lamps were painted white, so light from the fire was turned white and spilled into the room.

Celine leaned on the bed in the middle of the room. Like Su Lin, she leaned at the headboard, her face pale, eyes blank.

"You're pretty quick." Celine forced a smile. "Thanks to you. If they didn't know I'm your friend, I could've died out there."

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"They knew of me, and they still hurt you guys so badly?" Garen squinted in spite of himself.

"It's not their fault. They didn't know initially. Let's not talk about this. Su Lin and I will get back up where we fell. Let the two of us handle it. If you meddle with this, it's just gonna add to our embarrassment." Celine shook her head in defeat. "I heard Andrela from the Celestial Circle Gate and you were working together?"

"You knew?"

"Oh please. Both of you were celebrities of the south. Behemoth Gate had it bad this time. With you and him together, the Red Sand Sword Gate will definitely follow your tracks. And with your connection with the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate, the whole of the Southern Martial Arts Community is basically your oyster farm." Celine sighed. "If anyone annoyed me in the future I'll just call out your name and watch them quiver."

"Give it up." Garen sat on the bed, shaking his head.

"Oh yes, do you still want the rest of the Red Jade Palm?"

"Of course I do, the more the merrier. You're finally willing to give it all to me?" Garen teased her.

"I already gave Su Lin the whole of his parts. Yours shouldn't be delayed too. Besides, I'm not even sure if you still want the Red Jade Palm." Celine made a face as if she's annoyed.

"Of course I do." Garen smiled. "Even if I don't train in it, I can still collect it. White Cloud Gate needs to be stronger, but it lacks in that department when compared to the other sects. Also, talents between different disciples vary, if I can get more Secret Martial Arts, I may be able to fully develop a disciple's talents."

"I'll give it to you in a bit." Celine sighed as she scrutinized Garen, her gaze deep and full of admiration.

"Your Aura is so strong, it's unbelievable. Have you had a breakthrough last trip?"

"That's right. Where's your mini-me? I don't think I saw him in the manor."

"He ran away with our beloved Eight-Arm Dragon King. That twerp realized his immeasurable talent in the Gun Arts and followed Yoda to the military base to train his firing skills. It's been about two months." Celine said helplessly. "He left me, his first teacher, for firearm, this is ridiculous."

Garen laughed softly.

"Right, if you're ready we can start with the last part of Red Jade Palm. I have time now, but I need to leave in a few days."

"Fine."

The two of them sat together, one explaining, the other memorizing.

Celine only needed to say things once before Garen was able to memorize word by word. Celine who tried so hard to memorize everything when she learned it was so jealous for that.

The following two days, Garen stayed in the manor to help the two patients with blood circulation massages. After making sure they're both alright, he told them about his long trip for them to be mentally prepared before leaving.

After that, he went to Red Sand Sword Gate to discuss things with the Gate Master and to visit Beo who had finally recovered from the coma. He also visited Seven Moon Gate and Circling Dance Gate.

Time flew like an arrow, it was soon the third month of the year.

Garen's final destination was set to be the headquarter of Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate at Wei Maen City. It was close to the Skylark Mountain Range and Skylark Mountain Waterfall.

White Bird Holy Fist Palosa hermitted there.

He decided to wait for Palosa to come out of his recluse before telling him about the Promise of March. If his departure to Smoke island was joined by Palosa, it would be a much safer option. With only the three of them, it would be hard to overpower IPA.

'Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate'

An onyx tablet was erected with a tilt in front of a series of white buildings. The words were inscribed into the tablet with a strong calligraphy style.

Garen stood in front of the tablet with elites from the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate who came out to greet him around. He lightly touched the tablet, surprised by the skill.

"Who made the inscription?"

"The previous Gate Master." Sky Warrior Corbella explained with pride. "Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate was not a simple sect, it's got a rich history on its own."

"I've heard about that." Garen nodded in understanding and glanced at the elites around him.

Behind him were two Elders who are pretty strong before breaking through to being a Grandmaster of Combat. If they went out on their own to found their own sect, they might even be stronger than Fei Baiyun.

Waiting in front were three middle-aged fighters who were infinitely close to being Grandmasters of Combat, even though they probably will not make it given their age, they're still strong enough to keep up the appearance of a strong sect.

Slightly further, in front of the entrance, were two Grandmasters of Combat in different clothes. Judging from their Spirit, they're probably only slightly weaker than Sky Warriors like Corbella.

Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate had three Sky Warriors, Garen had already been given the title Divine Warrior like Palosa, and was only second to Palosa. Hence he was called the Second Divine Warrior.

The extra slot for Sky Warrior was open for the Grandmasters of Combat in the sect to compete for.

As a sect with enough manpower to fight Black Mark Association, Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate naturally had more than just three Grandmasters of Combat, but the ones who managed to achieve the level of a King of Fist or Sky Warrior were still too rare. In that context, aside from Garen and Palosa, there were not more than five who qualified.

They weren't around for as long as Red Sand Sword Gate and Celestial Circle Gate, but it's already good enough that they managed to gather five Grandmasters of Combat.

Coincidentally, Garen was dropping by when they were holding the intrasectional championship for a new Sky Warrior.

Gate Master Bondi had decided to call anyone who's a Grandmaster of Combat a Sky Warrior now that Black Mark Association has technically disbanded. Without an enemy, Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate gradually became lax, the title of a Sky Warrior became sort of a bragging right for the few Grandmasters of Combat to fight about.

Since everyone wanted it, it was decided that everyone will get it. Five Grandmasters of Combat, five Sky Warriors. Among these Sky Warriors, there exists conflicts of interest. To solve that issue, the intrasectional championship was born. Not only they can solve the issues they have with one another, it was also a way to showcase their power.

Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate was originally formed by multiple smaller sects, the outcome of this intrasectional championship would determine the advantage each group gets, heating up the competition even more.

Garen arrived at this point.

"Sir Garen, this way please." A middle-aged man greeted him and let Garen walk in the first.

"No need for such formalities." Garen smiled and marched in.

The bunch of people marched behind him, as if he's a celebrity being followed by his fans.

On the other side of the entrance was a large field dissected into tiny rectangular fields like a chessboard. Within every rectangle, several disciples stood.

Some of them were only in their teenage, and some of them were at least 50 years old.

Cheering came from all sides of the field with energy and gusto.

With Corbella's lead, Garen walked in from the side of the field with people following him, drawing gazes all around.

Soon, they arrived at a large conference hall. It was painted white, and the style was very reminiscent of the buildings for court trials of the past.

Outside the conference hall, Gate Master Bondi and other High Elders waited for Garen on top of the staircase.

"Welcome, Second Divine Warrior, Sir Garen."

"Anything but Holy Mammoth." Garen answered with a smile.

The bunch of people entered the hall and was greeted with the sight of two disciples in white in the middle of the hall, indicating the championship had already begun.

Garen's seat was positioned higher than the Gate Master's beside an empty one, which is Palosa's.

After everyone was seated, the announcer proclaimed, "February 28th, Year 2088, Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate Intrasectional Championship, fifth match, begin!"

Ding!

The bell rang from one side of the room.

Hundreds of people sat in the hall, everyone of them were elites of the sect, some were competing disciples, some were their masters or family, most of them, however, were the core disciples of each branch, here to widen their horizon.

As the bell rang, the two disciples in the middle started getting anxious, they circled around each other, trying to look for each other's weakness.

After a while, both of them were drenched in sweat due to the stress. Their masters, the Gate Master, and even the legendary Divine Warrior were all here. They were so worried about making basic mistakes, they were extra cautious with their movements.

A dozen minutes later, both of them finally charged at each other and started sparring.

In their over-cautiousness, they have lost their usual power and looked like they kept hesitating. People were getting bored with the match that was underwhelming.

After some time spent in a tie, the taller disciple finally ran out of stamina and was hit on his shoulders and sent out of the field. The judge who had ran out of patience hurried forward to announce the winner.

Gate Master who sat in front of Garen shook his head out of embarrassment.

"They're too cautious and didn't let go. Too much hesitation and without commitment to their movements. Maybe your presence stressed them out too much, Sir Garen. They were terrified of embarrassing themselves."

"Their foundation were still pretty good." Garen lightened the situation with a smile.

The same happened with the next match. After the match was over, Gate Master furiously left his seat to lecture contestants and their masters alike.

The following match was slightly better, two graceful female disciples fought against each other with ferocity and agility, letting people raise their hopes a little more.

The ninth match onward, the skill levels gradually raised within the fighters. Each of the disciples who went on had mastered the ability to use the Vibrating Fist technique. Below the level of Grandmasters of

Combat, it was considered basic to have mastered the ability to Vibrate. Otherwise, they couldn't even be considered a Martial Artist.

Anyone who was called Martial Artist must have complete control over the technique of Vibration. With that, they would be able to start teaching students in smaller places.

Chapter 205: Mediation 1

Sitting on the high seat, Garen looked like he was paying his utmost attention on the matches, but he was really casual about it.

Glancing at the matches below, he softly asked the Gate Master about situations at the Skylark Mountain waterfall.

"First Divine Warrior should be ending his solitary period in a few days. The herbal supplements he asked us to send had been increasing. Without his summons, no one was even allowed near the waterfall."

"Looks like he's at his critical period." Garen nodded, "I will wait for him here for three days. When you're sending people over, please relay the message."

"No problem." Gate Master Bondi nodded. This man is a descendant of Holy Fist Palosa who took care of him when he was a kid. His talent was pretty good, but it's still ways to go before achieving the Holy Fist Realm, being a Grandmaster of Combat.

Bondi glanced at Garen before inquiring, "Do you have any opinions on the current situation in the Confederation, Divine Warrior?"

"Why do you ask?" Garen smiled.

"I heard you have a close relationship with the higher powers of the Confederation, and also that you have an important role." Bondi answered cautiously.

"Oh? This news had been travelling fast." Garen didn't deny.

The winner's announcement rang once more. "Aisha Freya of the east wins!"

Garen took a quick glance below and answered nonchalantly, "I do have a role in the Confederation, but I've only touched a tiny part of it. I don't know most of how they run things."

"I only need some advice," Bondi asked seriously. "Now that Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate lost our enemy, we've become a little lax and disjointed. Without the stress of a common enemy, some of the original sects were thinking of separating from us." He scanned Garen's facial expression before continuing. "Right now, the situation in the Confederation wasn't stable, I don't think you've managed to get wind about the current event?"

"What current event?" Garen paid a little more attention.

"Yesterday, Weisman struck Moshi City, the military port of the Confederation's Special Forces. Three countries landed there and launched a massacre, killing more than two hundred thousand people. Only about a hundred people were spared to clean up the corpses." Bondi's face fell as he described the situation. "The Confederation commenced a lockdown on the news. I only found out because my disciple's family was there. The news should spread here soon."

"Two hundred thousand!" Garen's face stiffened. "Three countries? Which three?"

"The empires Weisman, Crimson Crescent and Talitaan, Weisman lead the genocide." Bondi sounded somber.

"Are you sure? Two hundred thousand! Not a hundred or two, not a thousand or two, but two hundred thousand!" Garen was in disbelief. "In this age when several thousand deaths could cause an outrage, two hundred thousand deaths without even a sound?"

"Completely sure!" Bondi nodded,

Garen squinted as his heart suddenly sank. No matter what happened, disturbances in the Confederation is a threat to the safety of his family and White Cloud Gate. He could ask the Sirens for help in avoiding the war, but it's not as calming as his own country.

"Let's not be too hasty... We'll see how the Confederation reacts, they are not so brittle to be easily defeated."

"I hope so..." Bondi went silent.

Garen's put his arms on the armrest, thinking about something, the atmosphere becoming heavier by the second.

The next day, Cynthia got news from her contact confirming the authenticity of the news. It can be assumed to make its way through the whole Confederation, after all, it's not a small amount of people who were killed.

The third day after the news, the championship had arrived at its final segment.

Garen didn't go to audit the matches. Instead, with the arrangement of the Gate Master, he arrived at a secluded hall alone.

It looked like it used to be a small chapel. A bronze statue about eight meters tall was erected in the middle of it. The scent of incense permeated the air.

Garen entered. The disciple who lead him there closed the door and left, leaving him alone in the empty hall.

The statue looked down at him, his humanoid silhouette covered with a gray hood, spikes extended from his back, casting a shade of rustiness and savagery.

Standing in front of the statue, Garen waited without speaking.

Soon, a tall thin silhouette appeared from behind the statue. He had white hair and white beard, his face was calm and kind, and he wore a gray robe like the statue. It was Palosa.

"Been a long while, Garen."

"You've finally retired from your hermitary. Have you made up your mind? Join us." Garen asked calmly.

"I heard you got a Mirror of Secret Texts from the Immortal Palace in Picardi?" Palosa avoided the topic, bringing up another.

"If you join us, we'll definitely share it with you. And not only that, we have other news." Regarding Smoke Island, there's something that even the Immortal Palace was interested in, it must not be a normal treasure. It's also why the King of Nightmare and Andrela decided to go together. If Palosa refused to join them, this news will not be shared with Palosa.

"Isn't crossing the boundary the only dream we have at our level? Nothing to hesitate about." Palosa agreed without much thought. As one of the strongest fighters, he didn't have to play tricks on them. Once he gave his word, there's no need for them to doubt him.

After all, they are only teaming up for the benefits. They would naturally disband once they gotten the benefits.

Garen told Palosa about the Promise, in case he's still hung up on the injury he suffered last time.

"Have you fully recovered?" Garen asked, "We've managed to get hold of the Argent Mirror last time, this time it's possible there are more people from the Immortal Palace, be prepared."

"Don't worry, if even I haven't recover, Sylphalan could only be worse." Palosa answered confidently. "If there are other things to shout about, I won't drag you down."

"Shall we go together?"

"No need, I still have things to arrange."

"That's fine. See you at Hilda."

"See you there."

Garen turned around and left the hall, the door closing behind him.

Palosa stared at his leaving figure until his footsteps were no longer heard before a look of seriousness crossed his face.

"This boy... He's even stronger now... Sylphalan, I've prepared something big for you!"

Having left the chapel-hall, Garen could tell Palosa had recovered to his previous state, but he's also more confident than usual. Obviously he's prepared a trump card, which is good, the stronger your allies are in this period of chaos, the better.

After reporting his current status, Garen tabulated the loose ends he want to wrap up.

"Two to go."

He left the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate at night in an prearranged car toward the capital of the Confederation Yangliu City.

Fenistine is there right now. According to Golden Hoop's information, the leader of Behemoth Gate, General Black Orchid, had agreed to Garen's private meeting request. The both of them will be meeting officially for the first time in this capital city.

Under Garen's leadership, White Cloud Gate, Celestial Circle Gate, and Red Sand Sword Gate, as well as the whole of southern Martial Arts community have attacked Behemoth Gate countless times.

After killing Behemoth's elite, Clark, Garen got his hands on the Blood of Eternal Life.

Furthermore, Celestial Circle Gate also utilized their sources to flush out one of the hiding places of Behemoth Gate. It is now safe to say Behemoth Gate no longer has any standing in the South.

Initially, Behemoth Gate wanted to have a formal meeting with Garen, to which Garen refused.

After that, the saga with the Argent Mirror happened in Picardi. As soon as this spread, the Behemoth Gate immediately contacted White Cloud Gate's Intelligence department, hoping to meet with Garen.

After a few times, they even asked a high level Confederation official to be the mediator before Garen agreed to the meeting. Garen's conditions were that it could only be a private meeting in Yangliu City and that Golden Hoop will arrange for heavy duty bodyguards surrounding the place.

Aside from the meeting with Behemoth Gate, he could also deal with Fenistine's troubles at once.

After his return, Garen confirmed that Fenistine do need help with her situation. As a friend, he didn't mind lending a hand, plus, it's not that big of a deal to him.

In the plane.

Under the starry night sky, blue starlights were reflected on the smooth fuselage, throwing a luster of gentle sheen like a mirror.

The four-winged military transport aircraft floated on top of a sea of cottony cloud like a black bird gliding slowly through the air. Strings of cloud zoomed past the windows occasionally, flying toward the full moon in the distance.

Garen sat in the cabin, quietly observing the blue-black sea of clouds. In the aircraft, it felt as if he's in a world of endless cotton.

The aircraft slowly made its way through the cottony cloud. Above the aircraft was a canvas of black decorated with numerous amount of sapphires.

"Sir, your coffee." A pretty female soldier slowly handed Garen's hot coffee to him.

"Thank you." Garen took the white ceramic cup and sniffed it. It wasn't the best kind of coffee, but it's already pretty lucky to be able to drink coffee in the air. "How far are we from the destination?"

"Another hour, sir!" The female soldier gave him a salute before answering.

"Can you please pass me today's papers?"

"Please hold on."

She acquired a stack of newspaper and hung them on a hook beside Garen's seat.

Garen casually flipped through the pages, and stopped all of a sudden as he picked out a page and started reading.

'Military Port Massacre! Who's Responsible?'

'Surprise Attack at Navy Port! 200,000 Dead!'

'Weisman Empire's Declaration of War, "This is A War on The Systems, This is A Revolution!"

Chapter 206: Mediation 2

Headlines were flooded with the massacre.

Garen scanned through the other papers. Weisman defended their action, saying the number of deaths were grossly exaggerated, and that this was a response to the Confederation Army's provocation. 99% of the deaths were soldiers, so they didn't violate the international laws on human rights.

Garen picked some of the more trustworthy papers and perused them in greater details.

It was already a few days since the genocide. Protests were staged in various places to demand a strong military response, and at the same time to protest against the violence against helpless citizens displayed by the Weisman Empire.

After reading through the papers, Garen silently contemplated in his seat.

The aircraft was getting ready to land as it swiftly descended.

With some minor trembling, the aircraft landed safely.

Garen alighted the plane and took the pre-arranged car out of the airport and into the city center.

Half an hour later, within minutes of entering the city, noises came flooding in from the streets as if there were lots of people yelling. They don't sound very practiced, bordering on disorderly, even.

Garen sat inside the black car, feeling the slowing of its speed. Pulling back the curtain, he took a peek outside. There was no one on the street, the noise seemed to be coming from afar.

"What's happening?"

The driver was a female soldier arranged by the army. She answered awkwardly.

"Sir, there may be protesters in front, maybe we should reroute?"

"Protesters?" Garen asked.

As the car crawled forward, the voices became clearer.

"No more imperialism!"

"No more imperialism!"

"Avenge Moshi Port!" "Avenge..."

Sounds of the protesters echoed from the front. Someone must have led the chants before people joined in.

"Sir, we can't move anymore. They must have closed the road off." The soldier reminded Garen loudly.

"Let's take a different route." Garen locked his brows together, "Does Yangliu have these frequently?"

"Yes, about once a week, at least ten thousand people each time." The soldier answered, "I heard many places have marches like that."

Garen exhaled and pulled the curtain back up.

"Wasn't the army mobilized to keep them down?"

"Not yet, they've only mobilized the police to keep them orderly and jailed a few people who wanted to benefit from the chaos. Now that the protest snowballed, the higher ups didn't dare to arrest anyone as well." The soldier answered helplessly.

Garen nodded with understanding.

The car turned into another street, slowly advancing behind other cars. Police were helping to direct the traffic on their motorbikes.

A dozen minutes later, the car slowed to a stop in front of a black-painted clubhouse.

Garen stepped out of the car and marched toward the entrance, accompanied by his bodyguards.

An obese, fair man in a lieutenant outfit stood in front of the entrance, smiling at him with his hands placed behind him and looking kind.

"Mr. Garen, I'm really glad to be the mediator for this meeting. It's been a long trip, please, come in and have a little rest." His voice sounded shrill, a little like a duck's voice quality, it's a little funny to Garen. He didn't feel like an official.

"Lieutenant Lycian, is she here?" Garen asked while following him.

"She arrived about ten minutes ago." Lieutenant Lycian was a friend of Su Lin's father. When Behemoth Gate looked for him to mediate, Garen had to give face* to Su Lin's father.

Of course, looking at the current situation, he might have wanted to mediate himself.

The hall was lit, the floor was lined with thick red woolen carpet. There were golden decorations all around, the wallpaper is of a faint yellow. There were special forces soldiers standing at a set distance from each other.

Garen could smell the faint scent of blood from these soldiers, it was apparent they had just finished a mission, and was directly ordered to cover this space.

After all, both the Behemoth Gate General and White Cloud Gate Master were ruthless. If they couldn't reach a consensus and started fighting without the safety precautions, this mediator role may be dangerous to take on.

Noticing how Garen looked at the soldiers, Lycian smiled, "There's a tent outside with artillery aiming here, keeping here as peaceful as possible so the meeting could go on. I think Mr Garen would appreciate that."

"Of course." Garen nodded, "The Confederation couldn't sustain any more internal damage. This is why I'm willing to meet with him."

Lieutenant Lycian nodded in relief.

The two entered a quiet tea room.

The tea room wall was lined with black wood. A very detailed Eastern ancient drawing hanged on the wall facing the door. It's rectangular, and was set on the wall in a horizontal fashion. It's about 5 meters wide, accentuating its exquisiteness.

Tens of birds were drawn on the canvas. Some were soaring, some landing, some charging ahead, and some waiting to be fed.

There were red birds, blue birds, white birds, black birds and birds with all sort of colors and sizes, highlighting its magnificence.

"Such a good picture!" Garen doesn't know how to paint, even then, he could tell the painting must have a really high value.

On the right of the painting sat a tiny lady in black clothing. The lady was slowly pouring a cup of tea. The jade-colored tea flowed smoothly into the white jade teacup, stunning Garen a little bit before calming him.

The lady had a pretty face and looked as if she's only in her twenties. She moved with grace and a smoothness highlighted by her fair porcelain skin.

Garen approached her with the lieutenant, and noticed she wasn't wearing any simple black clothing, but a black silk dress with a long, floor-sweeping skirt that shone with mystery and silky smoothness.

Black hair, porcelain skin, pretty face, and a pair of soul-catching slanted eyes.

For a moment, Garen felt as if he was back in China, and the lady sitting in front of him was a classic oriental beauty, gently pouring him his tea.

The two sat down slowly with Garen facing the lady as he watched the lady handing him his tea in appreciation.

"I'm a crude guy, I don't know the simplest things about culture, so I will be frank. You're General Black Orchid from Behemoth Gate?" He didn't explain much, instead admitted himself straightforwardly.

"I heard Gate Master Garen was barely twenty years old, but it seems like you're more mature than that. Unbelievable." The lady smiled. "Yes, I am Black Orchid. General is just a title, it couldn't compare to yours."

"My time is running out and I have other matters to attend to, so let's not beat around the bush. The situation in the country no longer have room for infighting. About your sect, you must know, I was not the one who started the feud. You were the one who incited my senior sister's betrayal." Garen stated expressionlessly.

"This was our fault, but White Cloud Gate was not one of our concern at that point. It was only after your ascension that this happened. Strength equals dominion, it was the law of nature. Now that you're strong enough, we no longer have reasons to fight against each other." The lady paused, "This was also one the reason I requested Lieutenant Lycian to mediate. Only the Strong Ones may earn respect."

"And by that you mean..."

"We'll give up on the South and will retreat completely." Black Orchid sipped her tea, "We will also abdicate from avenging Clark, that way we'll be even."

"Even if you struggle, you won't be able to do anything else in the South." Garen smirked. "This outcome was already in my grasp, your offer lacks sincerity."

"Kid, don't be too arrogant..." Cold fury flashed through her face. "You are strong, but don't you assume what you saw was the entirety of our power."

"Me? Arrogant? You were the one who initiated the mediation, but you didn't even want to show any sincerity, and you dare to call me arrogant?" Garen responded with the same fury. "Don't assume I don't

know that your headquarters is in the North. I wouldn't mind a war between your sect and I, at least then I can find out whether your sect is stronger or the Immortal Palace Alliance!"

"Let's not jump to conclusion so soon. Since both of you willingly participate in this mediation, it's obvious both sides were sincere about this. Let's back up a little for my sake." Lycian interjected, reminding them of his presence with his kind face.

"Let's agree to this, for my sake, Behemoth Gate will retreat from the South and will discuss with White Cloud Gate when their future operations involving the South. Likewise, White Cloud Gate will discuss with Behemoth Gate in the future whenever they need to move to the North. What do you think?"

"What if the discussion didn't happen?" General Black Orchid sneered.

"Then it's not my fault if I kill them." Garen recomposed himself. "For Lieutenant Lycian's honor's sake, I agree."

"Likewise!" Clenching her jaw, Black Orchid echoed Garen.

To be honest, if it weren't for Garen and his companions' victory against Immortal Palace Alliance in Picardi, the Behemoth Gate wouldn't request for a truce so readily.

Garen and Andrela were still somewhat easier to handle, at least they were more straightforward.

The difficulty lies with King of Nightmares. This person can shapeshift into any identity they choose, be it male or female, young or old. More horrifyingly, they are proficient in hypnosis and have the title of King of Hypnosis. With an enemy like this, it wasn't their true power that was hard to manage, but their tracking and anti-tracking abilities.

With a character like this, no organizations would be able to conceal themselves completely. If a war breaks out, with King of Nightmares' help, Garen will have the entire Behemoth Gate thrown into disarray in no time...

Black Orchid didn't even dare to imagine when that happens.

Because of Behemoth Gate's deviant initiation method, they have made enemies out of everyone. If they were exposed...

This was also why they requested General Black Orchid to call for a truce.

Chapter 207: Meeting 1

A verbal agreement was one thing, but concrete action was another altogether.

Black Orchid observed Garen through narrowed eyes for a moment, and then lightly took a sip from her cup of tea.

"I heard that Gate Master Garen managed to stop the people from Immortal Palace at Picardi. It's making quite the uproar through the world of martial arts." Black Orchid put down her teacup, and patted her hands lightly. "When they heard that Gate Master Garen had agreed to meet here, the elite warriors of our Behemoth Gate fought each other for the chance to experience your ultimate Body Hardening Technique."

Garen's expression didn't change. The elite fighters of the Behemoth Gate wouldn't stop at anything less than a personal experience of his powers. They were obviously here to scout out his abilities.

"I have also long heard that the Behemoth Gate likes to recruit potential geniuses from all walks of life and disciplines. In that case, the fighters you have raised must be extraordinary. Allow me to widen my horizons."

"Since you have agreed, Gate Master, then I shall ask the General to arrange an arena." Black Orchid smiled slightly, and slowly stood. "Other than the leader of the Behemoth Gate, there are two of our strongest fighters. I believe they won't disappoint you, Gate Master."

"I hope so." Garen stood, and fell silent.

Lieutenant General Lycian had guessed this would happen, so he stood at the same time and led the two of them out through a small door on the left.

Passing through a narrow wooden corridor, the three of them quickly arrived at a spacious concrete area behind the meeting place.

The arena was oval-shaped and surrounded on all sides by almost a thousand soldiers, all armed to the teeth. And on the right end of the arena, there were already two people waiting.

One of the two had been standing while the other crouched, but upon seeing the other three enter, both of them instantly stood at attention.

Garen observed the duo, one man and one woman, closely. The man had his hair falling over his shoulders and stubble all over his face, wearing a long white robe that looked like a bathrobe. Only his eyes were a strange blue-green, just like those of a cat or wolf.

The woman had a slender but healthy figure, and was wearing skintight leather like Cynthia, except hers was all red. Her waist and limbs swayed gently, her arms twisting flexibly like snakes. In contrast, her skin was shockingly white, like someone who just recovered from a horrible illness.

A pair of red eyes fixed tightly onto Garen, with a vague flash of cruelty in them.

"Red, White. Gate Master Garen wants to see the true essence of our Behemoth Gate martial arts. Which of you would like to demonstrate first?"

"Me first." The long-haired man was probably the one Black Orchid called White. He took one step forward, standing in the middle of the arena. With a wave of his right palm, there were suddenly five transparent crystal blades in between his fingers, each as thin as a cicada's wing.

"Top level fighters who can stand their own against the Immortal Palace only come once every few decades. I would like to experience Gate Master Garen's mystical powers for myself." The man chuckled coldly. "Please."

Be it Black Orchid, Red, or White, none of them actually mentioned the issue of key importance.

It was the fact that the two fighters here who had been brought out of the Behemoth Gate, together with Black Orchid herself, were in fact the three strongest members of the Behemoth Gate. Most importantly, the three of them had faced the Imperial Palace head-on before, and likewise managed to get out of the encounter intact.

If Sylphalan wasn't so ridiculously over-powered, the Imperial Palace might not have been able to suppress the Behemoth Gate.

The Behemoth Gate had had their way for several decades. Butterfly Blade Barcrand, from the same generation as Sylphalan, was a top-tier fighter who had escaped over the sea from the Azure Continent. The Blue-eyed Butterfly Assassination Group that was founded in and terrorized the Azure Continent had later been destroyed by the Imperial Palace over a dispute in profits.

Garen gripped his fists lightly, and slowly stepped forward.

"Blue-eyed Butterfly, Barcrand? To think you were still alive, and you even joined the Behemoth Gate."

"You know me?" Barcrand was rather taken aback, but he immediately laughed nonchalantly, "Compared to how you, the White Cloud Gate Master, had your reputation spread across the entire Confederation within a few short years, I am still far from your match."

"You, sir, are a legendary senior." Garen smiled, "Since you've already retired into the shadows, why do you still come out to look for a beating? Old guys should stay in their wheelchairs and live the rest of their few remaining days quietly."

"You got an impressive mouth on you! I wonder if your hands are as impressive," Barcrand's expression didn't change as he said calmly.

"Won't you know as soon as you start the attack?" Garen stood with his hands behind his back, his eyes slowly narrowing.

Neither of them won an advantage in the war of words, so they decided to abandon speaking altogether, and just observed each other closely.

Phiuw...

A cold breeze blew past them.

Barcrand instantly vanished, quietly, without a trace, as though he had completely disappeared.

Garen was slightly taken aback, and carefully felt for the movements around him. But he couldn't find any trace of this person whatsoever.

Swish!

He cocked his head, and sparks flew instantly on his left cheek. Something transparent and sharp had sliced across his face.

"Interesting. Assassination Knife Techniques, is it?" It was Garen's first time facing this strange field of martial arts. Even though Palosa's moves from back then were called the Assassination Fist Technique, the truth was he used his fists so openly and honorably that they could no longer be considered an Assassination Fist Technique.

Psst!

Another row of sparks appeared on Garen's right arm. That piercing sound of friction, sharp enough to make one's teeth ache, continued to linger in the air.

As for those watching from the sidelines, Black Orchid's and the Red woman's eyelids kept twitching. They knew very well how much damage White could inflict with his slices. Even Duskdune Shura wouldn't dare stand still like this when facing White. But when faced with Garen...

Lieutenant General Lycian's scalp had gone numb.

"Unbelievable... To think the human body could reach such a high level of hardness!!" He murmured under his breath non-stop, looking at Garen as though the latter was a monster.

Psst!!

More sparks exploded from Garen's chest. Garen suddenly laughed, just once, and threw his left arm backwards. The air was smacked loudly, producing a piercing sound.

In that moment, a shadow staggered before disappearing into the air. It was obvious he had been scraped by that split-second attack.

"Never let it be said that I don't know how to respect my elders." Garen pulled back his left hand, looking at the faint traces of blood on his fingertips.

Slowly, he started walking forth. Rows after rows of sparks kept erupting on his body, but after every bout of sparks, he would casually brush past Barcrand's shadow without fail.

Psst!

Another shadow aimed a strike at his left ear hole without mercy. This was also the only place on Garen's body where the defense was slightly weaker.

Barcrand held his breath, all the power in his body focussed on the sharp blade in his hand. His body twirled in mid-air, his arm similarly spinning at high speed, like the tip of an electric drill.

"It's over." Suddenly, Garen's voice spoke into his ear.

A powerful force struck his waist fiercely from the side.

Barcrand's expression shifted slightly, the tip of the knife in his hand slipping downwards instantly to act as a shield in front of his waist. At the same time, his body curved upwards like a butterfly amongst flowers, and he actually managed to evade the brunt of the attack.

Barroom!!

His whole body was struck away by Garen's whip kick, and he flew into a nearby wall with all the impact of a bullet.

Eerily, the wall split into an infinite number of small pieces without a sound. Barcrand's figure stood on the collapsed wall, looking ever so slightly worse for the wear, as he stared at Garen with a serious expression. His right hand hung loosely at his side, evidently dislocated.

"What fast reflexes," White sighed sincerely.

At the last moment, Garen did hold back a little. Although they fought fiercely with their words, neither side was willing to bring the conflict one step higher, both opting to leave some space to maneuver. According to legends, Butterfly Blade could control five Butterfly Blades at once, but he had used just one earlier. It was obviously just a test.

With the familiarity of an old hand, Barcrand lightly pressed his dislocated arm together, and it fell back in place with a 'crack'.

"Next one." Garen looked at the woman in red by the side.

Red took a step forward, her whole body emitting a faint aroma. A slight breeze blew past, and the smell entered Garen's nostrils, relaxing his body and mind. The woman had eyes as sharp as a hawk's, her whole person radiating an aura that contained a hint of coldness and cruelty. Her long chestnut hair was tied into a ponytail that hung behind her. After seeing that short test between Garen and White, the tinge of easygoingness on her face had also gradually vanished. In its place was the careful wariness of a beast before the hunt.

With a swoosh, she pulled out two identical fiery-red guns from goodness knows where. The barrels were thick and large, with spiders engraved onto them.

"My martial arts is a new trend, a mix of guns and Secret Techniques, so watch out."

Without waiting for Garen's reply, she fired her first shot with a 'bang'.

Strangely, the bullet from that shot wasn't particularly fast, but it left a clear trail of white smoke in the air.

Garen tilted his body slightly, the bullet brushing past his shoulder.

Bang!!

There was the sound of a muffled explosion from behind him, the burning red flames coloring Garen's face crimson.

That bullet had hit the wall behind him, and immediately exploded like a grenade.

"A custom-made explosive bullet, is it?" Garen instantly took three more steps back.

Bang-bang-bang!!

Three more explosions, and three more clouds of red flames on the wall behind him.

Even he wouldn't want to test explosive shells like this with his own body. Who knows how strong the explosive power inside was. If it was powerful enough to overcome his defenses, and if it contained poisons at that, he would surely fall where he least expected it.

The only thing he was still vaguely wary of at this point, was high temperature weapons like these.

Just as he steadied his footing from his retreat, a red shadow flashed past his eyes.

Red actually began fighting at close distance. Two long reverse-hooks extended from the grips of her guns, piercing through the air at Garen like a pair of fangs.

The two were so close, their bodies were almost plastered together. Standing in the middle of the arena, they emitted a continuous barrage of metal clanging sounds.

Directly in front of Garen, Red had completely morphed into a flurry of flames, her movements strange and unpredictable like an eight-legged crimson spider. Her attacking patterns were completely unlike regular martial artists, as she used those sharp thorns to aim at the vital spots on the lower body. But at the same time, her speed was extraordinarily fast, her angles hard to catch.

Garen had never before encountered such a vulgar manner of attacking, and couldn't adjust in that moment. As such, he was forced into retreating repeatedly.

Psst!

His belt was hooked and cut, making Garen reach for his belt in a hurry to prevent his pants from falling off. As the Master of a Gate, as the strongest fighter in the South, his reputation and image were an important trademark for the entire power.

And as a man, if he were forced to run buck-naked by this woman here, even an eventual victory would count as a loss.

Red chuckled sweetly, easily did a backflip, and fired two shots in mid-air.

Bang, bang! Two clouds of red flames erupted on either side of Garen at the same time, the kickback making him retreat backwards the entire time.

Hearing Red's laughter, Garen started to grow rather angry. She was either aiming for his lower body, or his butt, all her attacks honed in on his fatal spots. Although his Body Hardening Technique was unrivalled, he couldn't hold up to such a vulgar fighting style.

As soon as he stood steady, he immediately saw Red pouncing at him again while upside down. The two reverse-hooks whistled sharply through the air, aiming straight between his legs.

Chapter 208: Meeting 2

"Hmph!" Garen finally stopped holding back, and stomped down his right foot.

Boom!!

Large swathes of concrete shards instantly flew into the air, shooting away in all directions like a bomb.

Smack!

A piece of concrete accurately hit Red's large, perky breasts.

"Ahh~~" This woman actually moaned seductively, somersaulting before landing slowly on the ground not too far away. Her right hand cupped her chest tightly as she stared at Garen resentfully.

Garen's heart skipped a beat, and he suddenly found his mouth thirsty and his tongue dry.

"Why don't we end the sparring here." Black Orchid's voice came from above, "We, the Behemoth Gate, have understood your strength, Gate Master. As expected of the White Cloud Gate Master, the man who could fight against Sylphalan..."

Before he realized it, Black Orchid had soundlessly walked up behind Garen, her soft arms like white jade as they lightly caressed Garen's chest. There was a hint of seduction on her face, her lips moist and glossy like peaches.

"What are you lot trying to pull?" Garen carefully worked his Blood Qi throughout his body, but didn't find anything amiss. Having successfully perfected the Divine Statue Technique, and add that to his maxed-out vitality, he should have been completely immune to all diseases. Most poisons also only had

a tiny effect on him. Right now, his Blood Qi was shockingly thick, about equal to the blood and flesh essence of a few elephants compressed.

Turning his eye to the side of the arena, Garen abruptly discovered that General Lycian had disappeared without him knowing, and the surrounding soldiers were also retreating non-stop.

Black Orchid's soft and slender arms held Garen's face lightly. For some reason, Garen had no intention of rejecting her whatsoever. The places where his skin was in contact with Black Orchid were radiating a bone-numbing sensation.

The fragrance of Black Orchid's body kept assaulting his nostrils, further agitating his already quickening Blood Qi.

Black Orchid's cherry lips hung by Garen's ear as she said softly, "There is only one medicine in this world... that can get past even peak-level Body Hardening Technique..." She grabbed Garen's hand lightly, and placed them on her own towering breasts.

Whoosh!

The black gown flew upwards, covering the two of them like a black veil.

"Let me bear you a child..." Black Orchid's voice said softly from underneath the black veil.

All the Blood Qi in Garen's body erupted in an instant, like black powder set alight. He no longer held back, and no longer wanted to hold back. Although he had no idea what the Behemoth Gate was planning, his natural-born special power was indicating that his current condition wasn't negative, but positive. Besides, this primal instinct gushing up from deep within his body made him unable to resist it.

Beside them, Red stood up from the floor, her gaze complicated as she looked at the man and woman tangled behind the black veil.

"The world's strongest woman and the world's most talented man... A combination like this..."

After an unknown period of time.

There was abruptly a loud moan from within the black veil.

Soon after, the black veil started to twirl and rise, enveloping a slim and perfect female body, as it floated directly to land on top of a wall.

At the end, Black Orchid turned back to glance at Garen.

"The world's most talented man, a child like this would definitely complete our dream!" She felt the intense, tearing pain from her lower body, her gaze complicated.

Red landed softly beside her, and was similarly wordless.

"Go!" Black Orchid lifted her black dress, obscuring both of them from view. Once the dress vanished, the two of them also disappeared without a trace.

Garen lay face-up, the clothes on his body once more tidy and presentable. There were still traces of Black Orchid's soft fragrance on his body. That water-like feeling and surrounding had him slightly dazed even now.

"The Behemoth Gate..." he chanted lowly, as he slowly stood and glanced towards the direction Black Orchid had left. He lowered his head to look at the bloodied scratches across his chest. It was the first time someone had managed to break his skin with their fingernails since he perfected the Divine Statue Technique.

"To think it would be under these circumstances..." Garen smiled wryly.

He did not know why Black Orchid, as the leader of the Behemoth Gate, would do something like that. But as his first woman in this world, Black Orchid's body was just like a water current, soft and supple,

clear as jade. That faint fragrance, those perfect, slender curves. Every image was imprinted deep into his brain.

Inhaling deeply, Garen tried to chase the lingering temptation and pleasure out of his mind.

He understood what the medicine Black Orchid used was. It was a medicine that could work against peak-level Body Hardening Technique, and it was even an irresistible aphrodisiac.

It was the Heaven Match Powder, from the East. This kind of nearly-extinct aphrodisiac should have been exhausted several centuries ago. To think the Behemoth Gate managed to find a portion.

"Now the relationship's gotten complicated." Looking at the virgin blood on the floor, Garen suddenly felt a headache coming on. At first, his relationship with the Behemoth Gate was crystal clear. Because of First Senior Sister, both sides had a considerable grudge against the other. Great, now their highest leader had even given him her body's first night. The previously simple relationship instantly became ambiguous and complicated.

It was obvious to see that Black Orchid had all this planned in advance. She used the intervention as a chance to get closer to him, and drugged him when they were testing him one-on-one. In the end, they achieved their motive.

Helplessly, he turned around and walked towards the exit to the arena. He had no idea since when Lieutenant General Lycian had been standing outside the door, but presently the man smiled at him suggestively.

"How was it? That was the strongest leader of the Behemoth Gate, y'know. Such a strong woman, beautiful, with good skin, strong enough abilities, and wielding considerable power as well. She even took the initiative to drug you and gave herself to you. And you're still sighing like it's the end of the world, you chump?"

"Looks like I hadn't taken the training to build an immunity towards drugs seriously... This time they got me with an aphrodisiac, but next time it could be a poison." Garen shook his head, "And besides, if it weren't for you, Lieutenant General Lycian, pulling some strings in the middle, their chances of success wouldn't be that high, would it? Don't you think you should bear some of the responsibility?"

Lycian chuckled, looking rather awkward. "You already got all the benefits, can't you leave a little for others? When that woman Black Orchid found me and mentioned about borrowing some seed, even I was shocked. But I still agreed in the end. You know how it is, in the South of the Confederation now, the main conflict is the problem between you and the Behemoth Gate. As long as the two of you have this sort of relationship, when faced with an outside threat, you won't have to worry about the other side deliberately holding you back."

"Besides, you can relax, the agreement you had with the Behemoth Gate before this still stands. That woman, Black Orchid, is deathly decisive, so once she has made a promise, she will definitely fulfill it." Lycian said with a straight face, "As for my compensation... If I gave you the military position of Upper Major General, would you take it?"

"Sure. Why not?" Garen knew that Lycian represented the higher-ups in the Confederation, and did not hesitate. He understood what the Confederation had in mind as well.

The higher-ups had already discovered the fact that Governor Grant wanted independence. Perhaps they thought that since they couldn't do anything about that right now, rather than letting a governor who wasn't close to the higher-ups gain independence, they might as well give the authority to a power who was closer to the government.

"I'll exert some influence on the governor's office, don't worry. Didn't you give me a military position so I can set camp against that guy?"

"You sure see through things clearly," Lycian said with a nod, somewhat surprised. "It's very hard to imagine that you are only slightly over twenty this year."

"Alright, now that things are settled on this said, I should get back now. There are still things I need to handle." Garen found this trip to meet and discuss with the Behemoth Gate utterly mystifying.

He carefully observed the attribute pane at the bottom of his field of vision.

To his great surprise, the vitality pane had increased a little again.

From 2.65 to 2.76.

It had obviously increased suddenly after he did that with Black Orchid.

After exiting the hall, Garen got onto a military vehicle and immediately checked into a luxurious hotel according to prior arrangement.

At the same time, Cynthia and Jack, who had been trailing behind, also arrived at the hotel.

Due to his complicated feelings towards Black Orchid, Garen asked the two of them to investigate Black Orchid's background, while at the same time calling a temporary halt on some of the actions he had been taking to raid the Behemoth Gate.

But in truth, up until now, the Behemoth Gate's bases in the South had already been pulled up by the roots under the joint attack of various powers such as the King of Nightmares' Sirens, the Celestial Circle Gate, the Crimson Sand Sword, and the Southern Sky Holy Fist Gate. They had lost almost a hundred members. This may well be the Behemoth Gate's worst loss in recent decades.

So even if Garen asked them to temporarily cease action for now, it was already meaningless.

Reining in his good mood from before, Garen stayed at the hotel for two days. Cynthia also obtained Fenistine's current home and company addresses.

Following these addresses, Garen searched.

In the Yang Liu city area, in front of a dilapidated office building.

Garen slowly walked up to the entrance of the office building and stood firm, frowning slightly as he looked at the building.

It was all crooked and twisted, like a grey plastic box about to fall into pieces. There were graffitied swear words all over the walls, and there was even a pile of steaming hot dog shit on the ground by the metal door.

The people who walked past him were mostly peasants wearing simple clothes. Some of them had green tattoos peeking out from their necks, acting like hooligans.

Meow~~~

A filthy stray cat walked slowly past Garen's feet. Most of its black fur had fallen off, the rest of it lay in patches just like a leper.

"Cynthia, are you sure Fenistine's company is in a place like this?" Garen turned around to ask Cynthia very suspiciously.

His pretty subordinate was currently wrapped up in thick cotton clothes, wearing a hat and gloves. Even so, she kept on attracting some nearby hooligans' filthy gazes.

"I'm sure it's here, yesterday Miss Fenistine just beat up a hooligan here."

Garen shook his head. He never thought Fenistine's situation would be so bad.

"Never mind, let's just go in and see."

"Yes."

The two of them walked into the office building, one after the other. As soon as they got in, they saw a fat man with a large beard swaying as he walked down.

The fat man was wearing a wool shirt and black-rimmed glasses. Seeing Garen and Cynthia, he immediately pushed up his glasses and carefully considered the two of them.

"May I ask who you're looking for?"

"Is this the Green Pine Auction House?" Cynthia stepped forward and asked.

"Yes, you two are here for General Manager Fenistine, aren't you? Please come in, the manager is upstairs." The fat man took out a dirty handkerchief to wipe his forehead. "Actually, no matter how you rush us, we can't give you any more money. As you can see, we have even sold the building that was the company's headquarters, and sold a large majority of the merchandise..." He turned around and led the two of them downstairs, all the while explaining the poor misfortune of Green Pine with an expression of pain.

The more Garen and Cynthia, the less they had to say. This fatty didn't even bother to ask why they were here, which obviously meant that too many people had been demanding debts here recently, to the point where he had gotten numb to it.

Chapter 209: Reason 1

"If memory serves me correctly, Green Pine should have been a larger auction company, right?" Garen asked, perplexed. "How did it end up like this?"

The fatty glanced at him and nodded in affirmation. "True, Green Pine was very famous before, with fixed customer bases both inside and outside the country. The only thing is recently, the company's source of liquid funds were all frozen, so we couldn't make ends meet for a while. Our previous competitors also piled on the pressure, and then there were multiple serious mistakes with the purchase of merchandise, so we lost a considerable sum there as well. In other words, it was like all our misfortune from before befell us all at once, and everything that could go wrong did go wrong. My god..." Speaking of what happened in the past, the fatty's face was presently still unhappy and depressed.

He led Garen and Cynthia into an office on the third floor and knocked the door. "Big Sis, there are more people here."

"Bring them in... One more won't make a difference." A tired voice came from within.

The door was pushed open, and the two of them walked in while the fatty stayed behind to close the door.

The room was empty, with only a large, long table in the middle. A young woman was sprawled on it, writing something on the table and looking deeply exhausted.

The woman was very young. Even her gold-rimmed glasses and black professional lady's outfit could not hide her air of childish youth. Her blonde hair was tied into a bundle, and her dark blue eyes showed a deep-seated weariness.

She raised her head and pushed up her glasses, looking at Garen and Cynthia carefully. Her expression was first of confusion, and then she frowned. She looked obviously hesitant.

"May I ask, you are...?"

Garen couldn't help but laugh. "You don't recognize even me anymore?" His voice hadn't changed at all from before.

As soon as he spoke, Fenistine's eyes widened, and she stood abruptly. "You!! You're Garen!! Why are you suddenly here, why didn't you tell me beforehand?!!"

Garen shook his head. "I just had something to see you for, but it seems that you've hit a wall yourself."

Fenistine smiled wryly. "It's just a small matter, didn't you go to university? Why do you have time to come here?"

Garen casually pulled a bench to the table and sat down. "Forget about me, what about you? What on earth are you doing now? How did you end up like this?"

Fenistine wiped her face, sitting down as she said helplessly, "I don't know either. Starting from three months ago, it's like I fell into a run of bad luck, and nothing good at all happened to me. Even good things ended up becoming bad. By the time I realized it, things have become like this."

Garen frowned as he said, "Explain it to me in detail."

He already had a hunch at this point. He could vaguely sense a thick air of Antique of Tragedy on Fenistine. It was highly likely that this thing was causing her run of bad luck.

As Fenistine slowly described the events leading up to this, he also gradually understood what had been happening. Navici

The root cause of it all was going to Navici, in the Jade Mountain Province near the border.

Fenistine waited but never got Garen to agree to go with her, so she decided to go alone and excavate clues about the mysterious incident from that secret underground vault they had found.

He still remembered the message on that paper slip.

"Navici Tsunami Mountain, number 174, the third tree, six feet under. I left the item there. --Charlie."

According to Fenistine's story, she had gone alone to find the object mentioned in that message. In the end, she brought it back and kept it in a secret vault.

"What is it? What made you so nervous?" Garen asked in confusion.

Fenistine glanced at Cynthia, who was standing behind Garen.

"Cynthia, leave for now." Garen waved at her.

Cynthia nodded, turned around and left the room, closing the door behind her. With that, only Garen and Fenistine were left in the room.

"Who knew? You're doing pretty well yourself, huh?" Fenistine looked rather surprised to see that. "I thought she was your girlfriend. To think, she's your lackey?"

"I'm not particularly well, it is what it is." Garen was still sorting out what he had just heard. "Do you still have the item you excavated?"

"No, I sold it long ago. At first I suspected it was due to an Antique of Tragedy as well, but I'm still the same after selling it." She bent her body down a little, lowering her voice, "I'm telling you... The thing I found was a tiny, really small wooden carving. According to my deductions, that thing is definitely a very formidable Antique of Tragedy!"

Garen watched Fenistine and her expression of mystery in exasperation. He really wanted to say that he had discovered that a long time ago, but seeing how Fenistine was trying so hard to build up the suspense, he couldn't bring himself to interrupt her.

There was a thick air of potential misfortune from the Antique of Tragedy surrounding Fenistine. It had evidently accumulated after she spent too much time with the Antique of Tragedy, and it would take at least a few months of bad luck for it to dissipate. Garen mused it over, but decided to immediately reach out his hand anyway.

With a 'smack', he accurately grabbed Fenistine's wrist.

"Don't panic, I'll check your condition. I know some Eastern medicine."

Fenistine's face reddened in an instant, and she opened her mouth to say something, but she never did say it. In the end, she just let Garen hold her wrist.

As soon as the two of them touched, that thick air of misfortune was quickly absorbed by Garen until there was not a trace left.

"Alright, it's fine now." Garen released Fenistine's hand, and smiled as though nothing happened. "Your condition now isn't that great, do you need my help?"

"Can you?" Fenistine recovered in an instant, looking at Garen half-believingly. "You have to know, I need a substantial amount of money right now."

"It's fine, just tell me."

Fenistine knew that Garen had inherited the White Cloud Gate, but the White Cloud Gate was merely a trifle. How much money could a local gate like that fork out?

"I need at least two hundred million in liquid assets, to have a proper turnover," she said in a low voice.

"Two hundred million, no problem." Garen had thought it would be a huge sum, and didn't expect it to be so little. All else aside, just the Black Mark Association that he recently merged with alone could squeeze out the money for Fenistine to use. That wasn't counting the White Cloud Gate's power and assets that, in total, had enough financial power to match a provincial government.

To him right now, two hundred million was merely the tip of the iceberg.

But Fenistine was slightly dazed. Her little mouth hung open, her eyes widened, and she looked at Garen dumbly.

"Hey hey hey, you're not kidding, are you? That's two hundred million! Not two hundred! I know you inherited the White Cloud Gate, but even if it's the White Cloud Gate... that's still too much, right? Why does your expression tell me that two hundred million is two hundred!"

"I'm not kidding." Garen shook his head. "I'll transfer it over to you in a moment, how about using a Confederal bank account?"

Fenistine stood up, and walked a circle around Garen.

"You little punk... Not bad!"

"Alright, stop fooling around." Garen was speechless. "It's just that you weren't aware of it. The truth is regular martial arts sects aren't all that meets the eye, you just didn't know about it."

"Fine, I didn't know anything. But are you sure you're not kidding?" Fenistine still couldn't quite believe it.

"No, no," Garen replied helplessly. "Oh, yeah, your family has local connections. Do you know about a woman called Black Orchid? She has a lot of power, and is a martial artist herself."

"Black Orchid, huh. If you didn't get the name wrong, there is a woman with a lot of power here and a name like that in Yang Liu City. Just the one. She's the mastermind behind the private rose-colored places here in Yang Liu City." Unsurprisingly, Fenistine did know.

According to the information Garen had gathered, Black Orchid had a decent influence and reputation among Yang Liu City locals, which was why she could convince the Lieutenant General into putting a word in for the Behemoth Gate. So it was very normal for him to get such an answer from Fenistine, who had some base work here.

"How well do you know her?" Garen was still rather unhappy about having a woman take his first night. And he had another layer of concerns behind that.

"That woman, Black Orchid, is very mysterious." Fenistine thought back with a gaze of concentration. "I first saw her at a banquet. She was very beautiful, with a great aura. Back then, she was standing next to the leader of a powerful clan, and they had a great presence. I heard Father say that this woman had methods, and a fierce determination to achieve whatever she set her sights on, together with a lot of hidden power and influences."

"How much do you know about her as a person?"

"Personally? Her?" Fenistine wasn't stupid, and she immediately sensed something amiss. "Did you offend her?!"

"Mind your own business, just tell me." Garen shook his head.

Fenistine glanced at Garen half-believingly.

"Black Orchid is a powerful woman, and has perfected her martial arts to an amazing degree. She once demonstrated catching a bullet with her bare hands, she's basically a humanoid monster! And she's cruel and cold, very decisive. It's just that previously she took a trip to the Fourth Military Hospital, and apparently fell ill.

"One of my older brothers mentioned that she was injured by someone, though. After escaping with a grievous injury, she nearly died on the road."

"Injured?" Garen frowned. "How do you know such a secret? For elite fighters like Black Orchid, she would definitely hide the fact that she was hurt."

"She got hurt and nearly died, but the captain of the special forces team that protected her was my older brother's best friend. It was a secret back then, but a lot of time has passed since then, so it's a secret no more. Any limitations had also been removed." Fenistine replied simply.

"Do you know who injured her?"

"Not sure."

Garen tried to make some inferences.

The largest possibility was that Black Orchid's injury had affected her abilities, so she wasn't strong enough to hold up the huge Behemoth Gate on her own anymore. That was why she used the conflict with the White Cloud Gate to retreat, hiding the fact that her own condition was far from great.

And his concerns were related to his own natural-born special powers.

He hadn't realized it yesterday, but after calming down, he noticed it immediately. Were those natural-born powers hereditary or were they unique to only him?

Judging by Black Orchid's personality, even if she did have his child, the child's education would have nothing to do with him. God forbid there one day be appear a monstrous enemy with the same powers as himself, now wouldn't that be fun.

After obtaining some relevant information from Fenistine's side, Garen asked Cynthia to send a telegram, informing the White Cloud Gate headquarters to transfer two million over to Fenistine's company accounts.

As for himself, he returned to the hotel they had decided on.

Chapter 210: Reason 2

While he was chatting with Fenistine, he thought about the source of his special powers and had a vague feeling, as though his powers were sending him a signal.

The attribute and skill panes at the bottom of his field of vision had both started shimmering slightly. It was like countless ripples on the water surface.

At night, he sat cross-legged in his hotel room. On the surface, there weren't any changes in his body, but his spirit kept trying to catch that little flash of inspiration in his heart.

It was just like a piece of paper flashing through his mind. He could see the words and pictures, but he just couldn't recall them.

Garen tried his best to catch those traces, or rather, those memories.

As he kept concentrating, the ripples in his attribute pane kept getting larger and larger. Until finally.

Boom!!!

There was an ear-splitting noise, and Garen's mind was a complete muddle as he descended into oblivion.

After some time, a series of mystifying images appeared in his heart.

In the middle of the endless starry sky.

A red shard sliced past the galaxies at high speed, eventually being pulled in by the Earth's gravity and crashing into a certain place on Earth.

As the shard burst past the atmosphere, most of it was oxidized, and at the same time it turned into countless tinier pieces, scattering like rain across Earth's sky.

The rain-like shards entered many living beings without a sound or trace, invisible to the eye. Most of these living beings self-combusted, and were burnt to ashes.

A few of them survived, but were greatly weakened. After contracting all sorts of diseases, they died an early death.

And then there were the ones amongst ten millions, those who were hit but continued with life as usual. The shards had no effect on these people.

Garen quickly noticed his past incarnation. He had also been one of those hit, and was one of the lucky few who were unscathed. At the time, he was a mere teenager.

In the blink of an eye, many years passed. He grew up, started working, all the way until he died of electrocution.

Just as he was electrocuted into a pile of charcoal, a translucent figure slowly rose from his body. It was about to be torn into shreds by the unseen rays radiating through the air, when suddenly the figure glowed with a faint red light from deep within. This light was the unique life of every individual, that little bit of sizable energy born from their bodies, memories, and souls.

It wrapped the figure's head, blinking continuously, until the head slowly merged with the red light. Finally, both vanished without a trace, while the remaining body that was left behind was directly torn to pieces by the rays.

Strangely, Garen also saw the other people who had lived after being struck by the red shard at the same time.

Those people either died of illnesses, or ended their lives peacefully. Some of them were also killed.

But of all those who died, only three managed to awaken that dot of red light that lay dormant within them. The rest were torn to smithereens.

He was one of these three with the blinking lights. Although the other two managed to awaken the red light, the places they merged with the red light were different. And in the final process of merging, the red light had gradually faded, meaning the merging had failed.

Therefore, of all the countless Earth humans who had been awoken by the red shards, he was the only one who successfully merged with it, and he had merged his head as well.

The red shard was like a stimulant to the DNA of the soul. Some of the creatures succeeded and lived, while others failed and died.

The ones who lived were one in hundreds of millions. And of those who lived, there was another tiny, miniscule chance that they could successfully awaken the red shard.

Of the ones who were activated, they still needed to merge with red light. And the parts that merged were all different.

After Garen absorbed the red light, the soul in his head that was wrapped up in the red light floated slowly through the universe. It sporadically blinked into different unknown universes, before finally being swept up in a space tornado and ended up swept onto this planet. It was then that it was incorporated into a young man named Garen.

As he wandered through the starry sky, Garen gradually began to understand what this sort of red shard was for.

It was a natural mutagen for soul, and only worked on souls. The activated souls would present all sorts of different effects, some useful and others useless. Some were very powerful, while others were extremely weak.

And the difference in the part that was merged also manifested in different results. He was very lucky to have merged his head, and even more fortunately, he was able to find a planet with sentient life and a proper body before his consciousness was ultimately destroyed after aimlessly wandering the starry sky.

The starry universe was limitless. If he wandered for too long under those circumstances, even the strongest would end up grounded into nothing.

If it weren't for this round of quiet reflection, and his natural-born power having merged with his head, he truly wouldn't have been able to see so many of these memories.

He didn't know how it was like for the other creatures awoken by the red shards, but it certainly wasn't like his situation. After all, every creature's experiences, lives, and memories were distinct. These differences decided that the red light they had nurtured would also be different, and the special powers developed as a result of the final merging would also be certainly different.

And his special powers, were this body's attribution abilities. Perhaps his ability to transmigrate was part of that as well.

Sitting cross-legged on his bed, Garen slowly opened his eyes. There was a thin sheen of sweat on his brow.

"So this was the truth of my beginnings..."

He had always wondered where his special powers came from, even though there wasn't any doubt deep within his memories. But he had never really seen the whole process.

He wasn't sure what that shard was, but after it activated the red light, it burned itself out completely. That must mean it was some sort of medicine.

He was lucky to have that light merged with his head, so he could retain all of his memories. He was lucky to have found a planet with humans and successfully merged before his consciousness disappeared completely.

"This was basically the lucky result of countless coincidences."

Garen completely understood the source for his natural-born powers.

To put it bluntly, his body on Earth had nurtured a mutated soul. After the body hosting it perished, this one-of-a-kind soul transmigrated through space and time, and was lucky enough to meet a new sentient planet before dying, finding a new merger, and took over someone else's body.

It was a miraculous process. Without the physical body on Earth, without these memories and experiences from before he was even born, without these countless coincidences, there wouldn't have been someone as naturally talented as Garen.

And this most basic idea lifted the heavy concerns from Garen's heart.

This was different from hereditary powers, his were natural powers born from the mutation of his soul. The source was the very quality of his soul, that had changed after being awoken back then.

A hereditary power came from the blood and genes. These were two fundamentally different things.

One was the body, the other was the soul.

The blood was gone once you change a body, but it wasn't the same for the soul. A power that followed the soul was purely nurture, not nature. So the hereditary powers could be inherited, but the powers of the soul could not...

"It's fine as long as they can't be copied. Or else, if there's someone else with the same powers as me..." Garen knew exactly how strong his powers were. With enough potential, no matter how untalented that person was, as long as they weren't too unlucky, they could still be pushed to the very top.

But these memories he had just excavated made him realize that souls did indeed exist on Earth. At the very least, he was an example of someone whose soul had mutated.

"In that case, as for the Behemoth Gate..." When Garen imagined the other side discovering the truth, he couldn't help but relish in their misery. Black Orchid would surely throw a tantrum of crazy proportions.

In a hidden underground base somewhere in the Confederation.

Black Orchid's face was pale as she looked at the white crystal rock in front of her. Her hands dug deeply into the surface of the stone, leaving deep scratch marks.

"How can it be!?!? How is it possible!! How can the essence of such a strong man produce a life reading of only white quality!!" Her eyes were about to spit fire.

"There's nothing impossible about that." A man with long black hair reaching his chest stood behind her, and replied mildly, "That person didn't make love to you willingly, but was forced to by drugs. And even normal people could have imperfect descendants, the same goes for strong fighters. The only difference is that the chances would be smaller."

He glanced at Black Orchid. "Alright, time to decide, are you going to have the child or not? Essence Stones aren't that easily wasted according to your whims."

"I...!" Black Orchid gritted her teeth, her heart suddenly a mess. She had no idea how to respond.

Within the underground chamber, both of them fell silent.

Finally, Black Orchid forced the words out of clenched teeth.

"I'll have it!! Even if it's just a normal person, it's still his son! That man, he won't be able to leave it alone!"

The long-haired man was about to reply when suddenly, the white crystal that was as tall as a man was dyed a faint wisp of red.

His expression changed, his gaze turned disbelieving.

"How could it be!!"

"What happened!!?" Black Orchid instinctively sensed something amiss, and asked hastily.

The long-haired man's expression was torn between laughing and crying. He turned his gaze away, his expression as he looked at Black Orchid holding just a hint of pity.

"In the testing process, that man's essence weakened and died because its life force was too weak... To put it professionally, its chances of living were too low. So you can't have it even if you wanted to."

Black Orchid froze.

"Then... Then I..." Her voice began to tremble.

"Congratulations, you were f*cked for no reason." The long-haired man looked at her with pity.

Black Orchid stood there, staring.

She wasn't even aware of when the long-haired man left the room. She just stood in front of the crystal blankly, watching as the stone gradually returned to its original colorless state. It reflected her pale, colorless face,

"Garen!!" She finally spat out those words through gritted teeth.

Just then, Garen was sitting on a plane headed towards the seaside city. He could imagine the ugly expression on Black Orchid's expression upon discovering the truth. But no matter what, he still had some special feelings for his first woman.

"If we are to come into conflict again, I'll make her death easier," he told himself. Without that mental burden on him, his relationship with the Behemoth Gate was simplified once more.

At the same time, he finally understood the source of his powers. He was no longer worried about hereditary powers, and so that lifted a heavy weight from his chest.