

Mystical 231

Chapter 231: Preparation 1

Garen sat quietly on the bed for a while, before getting up and changing into a white casual shirt with silver sleeves that he had obtained from the wardrobe.

He set his sights on the attribution pane just below his vision.

The attribution pane was no different than before.

He hesitated for a moment as he looked at the remaining ten or so potential points that he currently had, and decided against using them to speed up his recovery..

"Since I haven't found a new source of energy, I have no choice but to ration the potential points."

The potential points were obtained via absorbing the Antique of Tragedy, and he did not know if they existed in this world. Even if they did, ten potential points were considered a very large amount, and should not be spent haphazardly.

Garen tidied his shirt properly, since he was the kind of person who loved to be clean and well presented. He touched it up, and even used different kinds of cologne.

Garen frowned as he looked at the diary that wasn't finished from last night. All of the notes were praises and admiration towards Aquarius.

He picked up the book and flipped for a few pages to find out that there wasn't much content inside.

As he gently closed the notebook, he walked towards the mirror and picked up the comb that laid beside it and started combing his hair tidily, just like Acacia normally would. He then picked up the usual colognes and applied onto his body.

"Who uses cologne?!" He placed down the cologne bottle with dissatisfaction.

After checking everything in front of the mirror to ensure everything was flawless, he then turned away his gaze and walked out of the bedroom.

He walked along the faint yellow wooden corridor and walked down to the first floor through the spiral staircase.

The two female servants who were cleaning up the main hall placed down whatever was in their hands and kneeled at Garen as they saw him approaching. They then continued what they were doing after that.

Garen glanced at the two female servants. They were in their forties and weren't beautiful in the slightest. However, they were very agile and they would make a good helpers.

He passed through the main hall and walked out of the building.

The lawn outside was as green as emeralds, and they looked very pure under the sunlight. A few big, grey trees were scattered in the lawn, and the leaves sung as the breeze blew. Occasionally, a few green leaves with yellow leaves mixed among them would gently drop to the ground.

There were a few people of both genders in grey long sleeves and long pants on the lawn cutting bushes at the edges.

Garen looked at the sun that had just risen from the horizon. Since it was still early, considering that it was not 7 o'clock yet, he decided to circle the manor to familiarize himself with the surroundings.

As he walked along the lawn, he slowed down his pace as he walked passed the buildings. These buildings were of different sizes and had different purposes. They were used for living quarters, storage, collection, guestrooms, etc.

Garen spent twenty minutes slowly at first, but hastened his pace as he circled the whole manor.

The only impression he felt towards the whole manor was desertion.

There were too little people. A manor that could fit up to fifty to sixty people was only occupied by ten or so. This quantity had already accounted for the servants, gardeners, grooms, etc.

A lot of these places were not properly cared for. Weeds were growing wild in some areas, and a few buildings looked grey with paint starting to crack and peel. It looks like it had been a few years since a guest had come visiting.

The area of the manor that was actually fully utilised was only about one third of the whole manor. Many places were deserted and it gave off a sense of strange quietness.

Dang... Dang...

The melodious morning clock had rang.

Garen looked up at the clock tower and could barely see a person hitting the bell.

He turned around and walked towards the main building in the center of the manor.

His morning routine involved greeting his father, and most importantly, the female housekeeper would also be there with the latest newspaper from the outside.

Going through the newspaper was the fastest way for Acacia to understand the situation outside the manor.

Garen squinted his eyes as he needed to prove that the images he saw during his transmigration was real.

He walked along the patterned lawn as he headed towards the building in the central area. As he reached his destination, he saw a tall middle aged man standing at the balcony on the second floor.

The first impression he had from this man was majesty. He was a tall man with a face filled with black moustache. His moustache was trimmed neatly, and his hair was combed from one temple to the other.

He had two moustaches above his lips and a sharp beard right under his chin.

The moustache didn't give an impression of messiness. Instead, it gave an impression of cleanliness as it was perfectly trimmed.

The man was in a black coat as he looked down from the balcony.

"Is that Acacia."

"Yes, father." Garen answered with his head down as shown in his memories. He even mimicked the cringy expression.

"Come up here. Du Qian has returned and she brought you the Black Duran Cologne you wanted." This man was Acacia's father, Vanderman Trejons.

This man was already in his fifties. On the surface, he was an upper class aristocrat of the Kovitan Empire and the professor of the Royal Academy. In fact, he was a Luminarist of the Phantom Light and possessed incredible strength.

Garen walked into the building and there were two people, one girl and one boy, already sitting opposite of each other on the sofa in the living room.

These two were called Edney and Maxilan and they were Vanderman's most loyal right-hand-men. They were also the strongest among Vanderman's underlings. Although they were not Luminarists, the royal army could not be compared to them in terms of sword and gun arts.

Garen took a glance at the two. and he remembered clearly that they would die in the hands of Beckstone and his team in the near future. On the other hand, father Vanderman would die in the hands of an elite member of the Obscuro Society.

He, as Vanderman's son, would die from one of the Obscuro Society's lackies as he escaped from the manor, while his cousin was protecting him.

No matter how one looked at it, these two were definitely loyal to the Trejons Household. Their profit and pride were placed with the Trejons. Their loyalty was placed not just with Vanderman himself, but with all of Trejons.

"Sister Edney, brother Maxilan." Garen greeted them politely as he recalled from his memory.

"Sir Viscount is currently upstairs and he will come down soon." Maxilan was a gentle uncle.

Two of them were not that familiar with Acacia. Since Acacia would be the next successor of the household, they treated him politely as if he was the master of the household. Their actions were not affected by the news of Garen's gambling habit.

"Where is sister Du Qian?" Garen looked around as he didn't see her.

"She's upstairs reporting the situation to the Viscount." Maxilan replied. He was wearing red casual clothes with a sword hanging by his waist.

"Oh..."

Garen nodded and sat on an empty sofa at one side as the female servant poured him a glass of lemon tea.

Garen picked up the glass and drank the tea as he noticed a stack of newspapers at the corner of his eye. He reached out his hand to the newspaper and placed it on his knees as he started to read them casually.

Maxilan and Edney were whispering to each other about something off to one side. They seemed to be unhappy, in fact it was rather obvious.

Garen ignored them and focused his attention on the newspaper.

The first thing he saw was 'The dangers of self abortion'

Garen was speechless and went to the next page.

'Are you well prepared to take care of your breasts?'

He flipped to the main page of the newspaper with a poker face.

'Lush Green Sanitary News'

He raised his head up to find out that Maxilan and Edney were trying to hide their laughter with all their might. He could also heard a faint laughter off one side.

"Fine. I just wanted to see the latest news for this country. Is there anything wrong with that?" Garen shrugged.

"It's this one." Maxilan took out a folded grey newspaper and passed it to Garen.

Garen took the newspaper and the first big headline he saw was: 'Danpalas Five to interview Kovitan in the near future.'

Below the big headline: 'Both leaders are to negotiate regarding the turmoil in the valley.'

"Turmoil in the valley?" Garen whispered.

Daniela was one of the top two strongest countries in the east continent. In terms of power, Daniela was on par with a super country in the west continent when allied with Kovitan.

Garen continued reading the article.

It was the uprising in the valley that he saw in the images.

Garen felt a chill down his spine.

He continued reading the article but did not find out anything of significance.

He then changed to another newspaper.

This was last week's national newspaper. The second headline was the nation's protest regarding rental of a small farm.

It was at this moment Garen began to understand. To assure himself, he searched his memory to confirm the location and the date of this major event and compared it to the date and location reported on the newspaper.

It was exactly the same!!

Garen used the newspaper to block his face from everyone as he tried to hide his shock.

"Looks like the thing I saw will definitely happen in the future."

"If the events I saw in the images are real... Then, what I really saw was the history of the planet?"

He closed his eyes and recalled the scenario once again.

"Garen, when did you start to care about the nation's problems?" Vanderman's voice came from behind his back.

Garen put away the newspaper and noticed Maxilan and Edney had already stood up and had their sight set behind him.

He turned around and saw Vanderman in a black tuxedo and he had a black hat in one of his hands. His overall look could only be describe with the word elegant, and there was a beautiful woman with an hourglass body figure standing beside her.

Garen immediately lowered his head.

"Father, you have came down? I have made an arrangement with Garcia so I will be leaving now."

"Leaving already? Why not have a breakfast together?" Vanderman walked over and sat on the sofa. The lady beside him followed his movement tightly and sat down as well.

"No thanks." Garen had his head down the entire time as he looked at Vanderman's footsteps. His footsteps was slow and calm like a delicate clock and it sent a chill down in Garen's nerve.

It was fortunate that his rejection was similar to of Garen. The original Garen didn't really want to hang out with his father as well so both of them shared this side of the personality.

"Fine. You can leave now. Don't come back too late." Vanderman replied calmly.

Garen nodded his head, placed down the newspaper and smiled at Edney, Maxilan and the woman beside Vanderman before he rushed out of the building.

Chapter 232: Preparation 2

It was just a simple morning greeting, but with Garen's extensive experience in Martial Arts, he caught a whiff of the thick scent of blood from this viscount-slash-professor. Not only that, he also exuded a sense of extreme meticulousness.

Having left the small building, Garen walked on the lawn under the sun, warming his body up, to his delight.

He walked straight to the entrance of the manor and asked the carriage driver to prepare his double-seater white carriage with silver edges.

Mounting the carriage, he ordered the driver to drive along the only road to the outside. He himself sat inside the carriage and looked at the environment from the inside.

Under his request, the driver went around the manor so he could get used to the environment near it.

The Trejons Manor was surrounded by forest with a small lake on one side. The path went along the woods, extending to a small town called Mirrorlake Town belonging to the Trejons Family. Even so, it was about a dozen kilometers before they arrived at the town.

Garen let the carriage cruise the town twice. After memorizing some of the more important landmarks, he alighted the carriage and walked toward the woods. His driver didn't stop him. The whole area near here was his family's territory and was frequently patrolled.

Walking alongside the edge of the lake, Garen walked into an area with black-leaved trees.

The forest was dark even in bright daylight, appearing gloomy and damp.

Pigeons and doves from the manor played around on top of the lake, some black swans waddled casually in the lake, combing their feathers occasionally.

Garen slowly compared his view with the location he scanned during the ride, examining the area and making his way toward where he mentally dropped a location pin.

Eventually, he arrived at the edge of his family's patrol border. In the distance, he saw an outpost with sharp, gray-white roof. The flag on top of it shows a black swan on a white background with silver outline. That's the family flag of the Trejons family.

There were two sentries wearing the same gray-white color on the outpost. One of them was having a drink, the other was drying clothes by hanging them.

Garen evaded the outpost to avoid being seen and turned left and right by himself, finally arriving at a clearing with tombstone.

The clearing was roughly circular, as if cleaned out to make space for something. It also had wooden fence around it, even though a significant part of the wood had rotted and started to fall off.

Garen compared the scenery with the ones he saw in his memory. The two Luminarists were battling here.

He examined the ground for fighting marks, there was none.

"Not yet, obviously..." He went in front of the tombstone and looked at the name. 'Hill Clinton Phalange'.

This area was only recently included within the borders of the family patrols. Before that it was just listed as a wasteland. No one knew about the old headstone here.

Silently, he returned to the patrol area of his family after memorizing the location of the spot.

"In the memory, this tombstone is the direct cause of the conflict between the two Luminarists. But these has nothing to do with me. What's important is to get a sense of how strong a Luminarist is..."

Garen was in deep thoughts on his way back.

For three years, he studied Secret Martial Arts. Even though it was because of his special ability that he managed to attain the maximum stats, he had put in a lot of effort before he transformed into someone who had the courage to fight numerous elites with his life.

His constant self-encouragement, hard work, and persistence were also not to be ignored.

The limits of Secret Martial Arts was already apparent during the fight with Sylphalan at the Smoke Island. According to the images he'd received when he first transmigrated here, Luminarists' powers are obviously more fantastical.

They seemed to be able to control a number of powers to fight against one another, and their powers seemed to be stronger than Secret Martial Arts' too.

The one thing Garen wanted to know the most, was that between Martial Artist and Luminarists, who'd be stronger.

After preparing the things he needed, he returned directly to the manor and into his room to start training to breathe as per the Divine Statue Technique. That way, he could return to his normal strength with most efficiency. At the same time, he planned to wait until the battle that was going to happen.

After returning to the manor, he started living like Acacia, doing his daily routines, he'd read the books and the news, he'd take care of his beloved lilac rose garden, and he'd go out every afternoon to where the tombstone is located and spied from afar.

Other times, Garen would focus on training his body. The restoration of Divine Statue Technique can't be done within a day, but through stimulating his body over a long time. That said, the training combined with the healing effects of his special abilities, he could tell it was returning to him faster than he'd expected.

He waited patiently. The battle of the Luminarists will be within these few days.

Between the utensils clinking, Garen and Vanderman sat opposite each other, having their dinner.

The lazy afternoon sun sauntered in through the window on the left and cast itself on the floor left of the rectangular white dining table.

On the dining table were turkey meat, bacon, grilled duck, squirrel broth and onion stewed tomato soup.

Both of them ate without a word.

Vanderman looked at his son, his son who was never a stickler for rules, was suddenly obedient. Usually he'd have gone out to gamble or to court Aquarius whatshername, but the past few days he'd been quiet.

"When Sofea left yesterday, why didn't you see her off?" He asked, "You shan't be so rude, do you hear?"

"Yes, father." Garen nodded and muttered. He forgot. He'd been paying attention at the tombstone so much, he didn't know Sofea had left.

"About the Astronomical Edict, you were in the wrong. Don't think I won't know just because you don't tell me. But you've already given it away, there's no need to take it back, lest other families shame you. You owe your Big Sister Sofea an apology." Vanderman closed his eyes for a moment. "I will repay her on your behalf. Do not do it again."

"Yes, father." Garen nodded conscientiously.

The original Acacia did behave that way with Vanderman.

Whatever wrongdoings he had had, Viscount Vanderman was tepid at best, he never really showed any distinct expressions. He would gently take over and solve things as being Acacia's 'loving' father.

Somehow, Acacia was just afraid of his father without any specific reason.

Vanderman finished his soup and wiped his lips clean before standing up.

"Alright, enjoy the meal. I will be out for a forum in the afternoon and will return late. Do stay in the manor for this evening, it may be dangerous out there."

"I understand." Garen nodded with alert.

Danger in the evening? What danger?

He started to have a guess for the possible reasons. Vanderman never used to warn Acacia like this. As a Luminarist himself, if he would consider something a danger, he definitely knows something.

Could it be that something is happening within the Luminarist circle?

Guesses kept flashing through Garen's mind.

He had been following Acacia's behavioral pattern for the past few days. He also minimized interaction with people who were close to him, for example, his friends. They sent him an invitation to a ball the previous night, and he'd turned down the invitation.

The point for this seclusion was to slowly change the impression people have on his behavior, to adapt to this life.

After all, no matter how much he disguise himself, Garen and Acacia are two very different people.

Staying in his seat, he watched as Viscount Vanderman left the dining hall.

He sped up and finished up his food, and wiped his mouth as he stood up. A servant passed him his palate cleanser soup, which he swallowed after gargling with it.

He excused himself to go have a walk by the lake, and under two guards' protection, he strolled along the lake.

The guards here, as compared to the guards in the last world, were just two normal people who were slightly stronger. They wore leather armor and were equipped with daggers. Only a captain would qualified to carry a gun.

Even with Garen's weakened body, he'd be able to take out the guards by himself. It doesn't matter if they've been trained as a Royal Guard, the outcome would be the same.

He found an excuse to get away from the two guards. There were the patrols and the outpost nearby anyway, he needn't worry.

Alone, Garen walked until he could see the tombstone from afar.

Viscount Vanderman's warning had him thinking the battle may be happening that day itself.

The timeline for the battle in the memory aligned with the current period too.

He hid himself in the bush and concealed his presence using his Martial Arts breathing technique. His weakened presence quickly wicked out of existence. After all, he'd learned the Turtle Breathing Technique in his last world.

Inside the bush, Garen paid close attention to everything around him, especially for the sound and movements.

"According to the last world's classification, I was a Grade B at my highest achievement, that's the power level of a guided missile, my destruction level is equivalent to a mobile bomb able to cause mass destruction."

He calculated his rate of recovery.

"Within four days, I only recovered to the level of a normal adult."

When he was chosen as a core disciple for White Cloud Dojo, he was already close to attaining Grade E barring some combat experience. Grade D was Grandmaster of Combat level, Grade E was Fei Baiyun and First Senior Sister Rosetta's level. They were qualified to open up a dojo of their own and teach.

With a body of normal human being, there are a lot of skills in the Divine Statue Technique he can't use, with the exception of some basic battle and grappling skills. However, with his experience in combat and knowledge of the Secret Methods, Garen was confident he could beat anyone below a Grade E.

In other words, his body was weak, but his mind was one of the strongest fighters, of the King of the Century.

"It boils down to how Luminarists fight now..." Garen's presence sank deeper and deeper into concealment, even his breath became slow, trickling, and drawn out. He could already sense something wrong in the environment with his rich experience in combat.

Chapter 233: Power 1

A tiny breeze swept through the black-leaved woods, causing the leaves to swoosh loudly. Some dandelion seeds glided in the air, and bees buzzed around a bush littered with tiny red flowers.

On the side of the graveyard, in walked a middle-aged man in a black dress suit through the rundown fence.

He looked cleaned up and had a pair of white gloves, like a nobleman who'd just gotten out of a carriage.

Silently, he stared at the headstone with a solemn look on his face, seemingly reminiscing the past.

A faint footstep rattled behind him.

"Who's there!"

The man turned abruptly, vigilantly stared at the trees behind him.

Deep in the woods, a maroon-colored windbreaker appeared in his sight.

It was a young man walking through the woods with great strides. Stopping ten meters behind the man in suit, he glared at him with a dark look.

"Emin, how dare you show your face here?" The man with red windbreaker said coldly. "Twelve years! This is your first visit here in twelve years!"

"Aren't you the same?" Man with black suit replied with equal darkness on his face. "Clyde, this is my wife's tomb, you're not welcomed here!" He stressed on the word 'my'.

"You're the one who killed her! What right do you have to say that? Even her grave is crummy!" The younger man argued.

Both of them confronted each other with their outfits as contrasting as night and day.

Emin, the one wearing a suit, looked around as if searching for something when he realized.

"You were tailing me!"

"How else would I be able to find Hill's grave?" Clyde, red windbreaker, smirked. "Just give up, Emin, I shouldn't have let you take Hill back then. I thought she'd have a happy life with you, rather than suffering in the army with me. Had I known... Today, I'm going to settle the score with you!"

"I admit, I've failed her, but you're in no position to lecture me!" Emin stared at his former rival in love. "Clyde A. Jackson, you don't scare me! I just don't feel the need to compare with you."

"Why are you still babbling about?" Clyde raised his right arm, revealing a ruby ring on his middle finger. "Come on, show me what you got after all these years!"

All of a sudden, the ring glowed a brilliant red. From the surface of the ruby, a thin red beam shot out.

It landed on the ground and transformed into a huge red-furred wolf as tall as half a person's height.

Aroooo!

The wolf howled with a red glint in its eyes. Its physique was just like a real wolf if it wasn't for its glimmering red eyes.

Its fur fluttered in the wind, making a sort of windswept grass plain effect.

The huge red wolf was three meters long and one meter tall, its claws were sharp and deadly, with a little bloodstains on it.

Garen hid inside the bush, stunned at the sight.

Every single detail, from the red beam shooting out of the ruby ring, to the beam transforming into a wolf, had been seen by him.

What's even more surprising was Clyde, who released the red wolf, was shrouded in a faint red glow. That red light formed an egg shape around him, enfolding him completely without a gap.

"That's... intriguing..." Garen thought the Secret Methods from Secret Martial Arts were fantastical enough, and the Sword of the Sprite was equally wondrous, but those were top tier forces after all. Unlike those, the two here only represent a normal level for this world!

"A giant red wolf?" Emin kept his face straight, and took out a small silvery-white cane hanging on his waist.

Lightly waving it, the tip of the cane sent out a beam of white light that transformed into a white bear.

Grrrr!

The white bear is as tall as a man when it stood up on its hind legs. It growled at the giant red wolf.

The white bear didn't look too distinct from a normal polar bear, there was also no special light surrounding Emin.

"Clyde, I lost to you then, but I'll never lose to you in front of Hill. Never!" Emin took off his white glove, revealing his scarred hands.

"Nothing comes from just talk." Clyde smirked, gesturing with his ring hand. "Attack!"

Red wolf growled and zapped past the right side of the white bear. Its claws glowed red as it sank them into the white bear's skin, slashing it. The white bear's fur around the wound was scorched and was emitting a charred scent.

The wolf was so quick, the bear only realized what had happened after the wolf landed behind him.

The patch of grass the red wolf landed on burnt, emitting green smoke.

Roar!

The white bear roared loudly as it pounded at the wolf. It missed.

Crack!

A branch was hit instead. It cracked, sending splinters toward the ground.

The white bear chased after the red wolf, pounding it with its paws and tearing at its torso with its teeth.

The beasts rolled against each other, causing the ground to rumble.

Still hiding, Garen observed the beasts' attacks.

The wolf's claws and teeth seems to have the effect of burning things they touch, it was so potent they can blacken trees and grass.

The bear was strong, its skin and fur seems to be able to withstand heavy damage, it hasn't been hurt much in its few clashes with the wolf. Only when it was bitten that some tear wound appeared.

While the beasts were fighting, their masters didn't even move, they just stood there without actions of any kind.

Garen observed carefully and was shocked to find them both surrounded by egg-shaped lights of their beasts' color, and their feet are not touching the ground, but instead slightly hovering above.

"This is a Luminarists' totem?" Garen noticed the none of wounds on both of the beasts bled. The flesh that was torn off the body just disappeared in a swirl of red or white light.

The two beasts kept tearing at each other, their attacks affected nearby trees and rocks, making a mess. However, as if with tacit understanding, they didn't even go near the tombstone, so Garen on the other end of the clearing wasn't concerned about safety at all.

"If these two beasts were totems, their destruction level is about the same as a Grade D in the Martial Arts world..." Garen eyeballed from the wreckage they've caused.

The two Luminarists were very normal, their power levels are only mediocre.

In other words, anyone who's a Luminarist would have the power level of at least a Grade D Martial Artist.

Recalling the memory he received, there were other stronger Luminarists in the future. Garen winced.

"There are other stronger Luminarists, this world is stronger than the Martial Arts World!"

Crack!

The white bear snapped a tree with a half-meter diameter with its paw. Some parts of the tree fell off and hit Clyde, but was immediately blocked by the red glow surrounding him and bounced off.

"So that's why they don't fight themselves, they have that light-thing protecting them."

Garen noted.

He realized the Luminarists in the memory were all like that, they never ordered their totems to attack other Luminarists. Looks like this was the reason behind that.

White bear finally caved after defending against the red wolf's burning attacks. Its wounds cumulated, but it still kept fighting, roaring, as if saying it will take the red wolf down together with it even if it dies.

Not far away, Emin's eyes were bloodshot and he's clenching his jaw, flicking his cane in the air continuously, as if there were something there.

"Have you gone mad!" Clyde's face went frantic. "You'll destroy your totem if you keep this up!"

The words didn't even registered in Emin's brains, he just kept flicking his cane with frenzy.

Arooo...

The red wolf was finally pounded on its abdomen and was sent rolling. Red light spots detached from its body and dissipated in the air.

"Don't force me to do this!" Clyde's face showed a savagery that wasn't there. "Don't you think you're the only person daring enough to sacrifice your totem!"

"Do it then!" Emin replied, gritting his teeth.

A slight hesitation flickered in Clyde's eyes.

In that instant, white bear charged at the wolf, lifting it skyward.

Roar!

White bear seemed to have increased his strength dramatically, no matter how hard red wolf struggled, it just couldn't get away. The bear claws ripped into the wolf, tearing it apart.

"Sivak!" Clyde screamed.

Raising his right hand, the ruby ring erupted into a burst of radiant red.

The red wolf's torso tremored, flashing red, and started to bloat up, the bigger it got, the redder it flashed.

Boom!

The red wolf exploded like a balloon bursting, golden flames billowed out of its torso.

The ground shook, the booming sound of the explosion spread in all direction centering the beasts.

The trees and the soil shot outward along with the blaze, devouring the two Luminarists. Scorching red liquid spewed as far as twenty to thirty meters away, igniting the trees around.

Garen already felt something's wrong when Clyde screamed and bolted away. When he heard the explosion, he rolled on the ground and ran a dozen meters.

"It's almost as powerful as a high-explosive bomb... That's something." He commented as he stood up.

The flames stopped advancing not far before him. Within a twenty-meter radius, every rock and tree and flower had been burnt black. All the trees were felled by the force of the explosion, burning trunks and branches were everywhere on the ground.

"Such force..." Garen looked at the center of the explosion, trying to catch a glimpse of the two Luminarists.

Boom!

An explosion larger than the last one. Once again, blazing fire burst out from the explosion center and charged at him.

"F*ck!" Garen turned and took off. The impact carried him for several meters and set him down beside a tree. If it wasn't for his foundation in Martial Arts, he would've eaten dirt.

He glanced backward. Centered around the two Luminarists, everything within thirty meter radius in the black-leaved forest had been turned into a sea of fire. Trunks, bushes, grass patches, even rocks, everything was on fire.

The fiery red shone on his clothes, dyeing them bright red. His hair and parts of his clothes were slightly scorched, too.

Chapter 234: Power 2

"What is this flame..." Stunned, Garen watched as a boulder was melted quicker than he could count to ten. It crawled, joining the other dark-red liquid that almost flooded the uneven ground. It looked like a red marsh that releases heat.

The heat reminded Garen the lava at the volcano back at Smoke Island.

"The flame is definitely close to a thousand degrees*..." Garen dared not get close. He stared at the ground in the area of the explosion, feeling kind of creeped out.

"If any common Luminarists have this power of this level..." He cringed at the thought. The power, the destruction, it was too horrifying!

"This isn't a Grade D... This kamikaze attack is at least a Grade B!"

Garen immediately thought of the father of his current host body, Viscount Vanderman, and if he also had that explosive force.

In the beginning, the two was just fighting with mild strength, nothing too dramatic, but it's actually because they've been keeping their full strength in. In that explosion, every inch of their strength must have bursted out, melting even boulders within thirty meter radius area. This is comparable to an explosion of a tiny volcano!

By association, Viscount Vanderman's future enemy, Beckstone, as well as the elite members of the Obscuro Society, these are the elites of the elites within the Luminarist circle, overpowering the two significantly.

"If all common Luminarists were at this standard, then Luminarists as a group is terrifying..."

Garen felt as if his blood had been steadily rising in temperature, his exposed skin on his face and hands were hot from the heat.

Even though he had finished his inspection of the power of Luminarists, he did not feel any relief when he thought about the two major enemies he'll have to face.

He honestly felt even at his peak and mastery over Divine Statue Technique, he wouldn't be able to withstand the destructive power of the explosion and the heat he witnessed, and this was just the power of two ordinary Luminarists.

Now that Viscount Vanderman had killed Beckstone's first love, as well as was involved in some infighting at the Obscuro Society, if it wasn't because of his support for the royals, he would've been offed a while ago.

The seed of vengeance had already been sowed.

Flames devoured the trees nearby, lighting up the crowns of the woods. The fiery glow dominated the color palette in the immediate surrounding.

Crackles from wood burning kept coming from the site. The breeze carried the spark into the air and further away.

Black smoke rose to the sky, calling attention to this side of the woods. The smell of the charred woods repelled Garen from his spot, forcing him further from the explosion site.

He looked at the center of the explosion again. No movements. The two Luminarists were nowhere to be found.

If someone told him before that humans can survive that explosion, he might not have believed it, but now, he's not sure. After witnessing the strength of the Luminarists, he wouldn't be surprised by things that challenged his knowledge.

He heard the patrol coming from afar, chose a direction, and sneaked away from the burning ground.

On his way back to the manor, his heart felt heavy.

Luminarists' power exceeded his expectation. The fight in the beginning looked just like the ones in the memory, mild, not very exciting. If it wasn't for the final explosions, Garen wouldn't have felt the energy within the totem beasts.

Everything within thirty meters radius area became a sea of fire, even boulders turned into lava by these two normal Luminarists.

Hoof...

Garen let out a long sigh.

When he thought about facing Beckstone and Obscuro Society in the future, he felt slightly depressed.

"Looks like I need deeper information about Luminarists as soon as possible..." He thought of the dates he saw in the memory, "I have two years until Beckstone's arrival, I hope there's enough time..."

Whether he like it or not, since he transmigrated into Acacia's body, he would need to face this danger as him.

Luo Jing wasn't sure if he would transmigrate again once he died in this body. The Luminarists were no joke in this world, they're far stronger than the Martial Arts World. If someone could interfere with souls...

Witnessing the strength of Luminarists, Luo Jing started to doubt his own.

With his strength, even if the Divine Statue Technique has fully recovered, there's no way he could withstand a high heat of a thousand degrees, let alone the stronger enemies after this.

Boom!

Once again, an explosion came from behind.

Garen turned around to look. The flames were getting smaller, the smoke thinner.

From his side, a team of guards in white uniform hurried over to his side.

"Young master! Are you okay? Young master!"

The lead guard was a man with trimmed beard, he asked as he arrived in front of Garen. His face was pale.

"We were late to come here. Why did you loiter around here? It's so dangerous! It'd be bad if you got hurt in the explosion!" The lead guard pointed at two other guards behind him, "Luckily they reported back to us in time, or else this would've been a tragedy!"

"I don't... I'm fine..." Garen used the Turtle Breathing Technique to create a pale, scared-looking face. "Let's go back, I was just scared..."

"Of course, of course." Lead guard sighed in relief. "Let's go, we'll send you back to the manor!"

Garen returned to the manor with the escort of the guards. He took a nice warm bath and changed into fresh white clothes before noticing his housekeeper Du Qian's arrival.

The housekeeper was the one he saw beside his father. She's slightly plump. As she saw Garen, she inquired his health with concern. It was only after she's sure he's of good health that she got at ease and asked people to get him some nerve-soothing aromatic herbs. After that, she instructed people to put out the fire in the woods.

Garen closed his door, sat on his bed, turned off the light and pretended to sleep.

He started mapping out his future plans.

"Two years... from the information in the memory, only a Luminarist can fight another Luminarist. When I was in the Martial Art World, I only needed three years to get to the top, I refuse to believe I couldn't reach a level where I can protect myself in two years!"

"How do I become a Luminarist?"

Garen started thinking about the question.

His father Vanderman is a Luminarist. If he wanted to become one, he only needed to ask. However, if Vanderman was willing to teach Acacia Luminarist in the first place, he would already have, not keeping any knowledge of it from him.

Garen glanced at the attribute pane at the bottom, it was slightly different than before.

'Strength 0.8, Agility 0.8, Vitality, 0.8, Intelligence 0.4, Potential 1872%. Unknown Talent detected.'

Vitality had already increased by 0.1, obviously from the training for the past few days.

His gaze fell upon the Unknown Talent once more.

"What is this Unknown Talent? Is it the talent to become a Luminarist?"

After lying in the bed for a while, he heard sounds of Viscount Vanderman, it sounded like he was asking Du Qian about the fire. He insisted about his son's health, that which upon he's well, Vanderman relaxed audibly. Finding out that he's asleep, Vanderman didn't insist to see him.

The voices left as footsteps faded away.

Garen sat in his bed, and considered telling Vanderman frankly about wanting to become a Luminarist to gauge his success rate. At the same time, he was searching in the memory about becoming a Luminarist.

From the memory, Garen found a key point.

Luminarist is definitely a money burning job.

Becoming a Luminarist involves melting silver down to make very detailed work of a totem. He only knew the gist of how it works, but it wasn't hard to extrapolate that conclusion from the fact that they use silver to create totems.

Garen scanned through the memory he'd received and found that silver was far more expensive than even gold, not to mention other metals, that's different from how it was on Earth.

In this world, silver became the most expensive metal followed by gold.

Noble families in this world like using silver to indicate their honorable births. This includes Acacia's clothes, they're mostly laced with silver.

Garen did a little analysis and ruled out financial reasons. Acacia himself was a very prodigal person, but no matter how much money he'd lost to gambling, Viscount never minded, obviously their wealth is enough to support his lifestyle.

"If it wasn't because of wealth, then it'll be something else." Garen very carefully tried to recall Acacia's memory.

He could vaguely remember a scene.

It was when he's very young, he inadvertently saw Vanderman doing something mysterious, something fun-looking.

Vanderman was in a private chamber, lights flowed out of his hand, forming something silvery-white in the air, it was pretty.

The silvery lights arranged itself to become a something like a glyph, but the memory was too long ago, too blurry for Garen to make out what it exactly is.

As that was happening, Vanderman noticed little Cia, it seemed like he took a drop of blood from him, it wasn't painful, just numbing. Vanderman left Acacia's side and came back looking disappointed. Acacia lost his consciousness at that point.

This also made his memory fuzzy and thought it was just a dream. Now, it seems it might be real.

"Since it said I have some 'Unknown Talent', it may just be one for becoming a Luminarist. But Vanderman was disappointed, so if the memory is correct, that'd mean his talent didn't meet his expectation." Garen sat cross-legged on the bed, analyzing. This body's Intelligence is a little low, affecting his brain power and thinking speed.

"Intelligence is his weakness..." Garen sighed speechlessly. "Should I just spend some Potential on his Intelligence to make sure the calculations are correct?"

He thought his own Intelligence was low, but evidently, when compared to this body, he must be like a genius. This made him feel much better about himself.

Chapter 235: Willpower 1

Recalling Vanderman's expression, Garen suspected it was because of Acacia's low Intelligence that he wasn't taught to become a Luminarist...

It was getting quiet outside, human voice and footsteps slowly faded away. Only occasional howls in the woods remained.

The sky was getting darker.

Staring at the dark sky outside, Garen slowly calmed down.

His anxiety-ridden brain was slowly tranquilized, returning to his previous state.

"Two years... Last world I was able to become the top in the world, I refuse to believe I can only accept my fate in this one!" He sat with his legs crossing, his eyes shining brightly in the night.

He recalled everything in the last world, Sylphalan, Old Man Gregor, Andrela, King of Nightmares, Ying Er, his uncle... Familiar faces keep popping up.

Garen closed his eyes slowly, and breathed deeply.

Sssss...

A breeze of cold air entered his lungs, lifting his spirit.

"Luminarists..."

Wordlessly, he sat in his bed trying to comb out his thoughts, attempting to find a way to become a Luminarist.

"If it was really because of his Intelligence, it would be problematic to look for Vanderman. No one would believe someone else would become smarter, and even adopted so many extra behaviors overnight. Luminarists are not so stupid they couldn't tell the difference. So unfortunately, this is out for now."

He continued brainstorming.

"Then I'll need to find other Luminarists, learning by my own is definitely out of the window, too time consuming. If I don't understand how it goes outside, I'd be boxing myself in and other people might take me by surprise." He reviewed the memory meticulously to see if there are any more valuable scenes.

The memory is large, he could only scan through it one by one.

The clock ticked...

Martial Arts World

Garena and Sylphalan both perished amidst the nuclear bomb and volcano eruption. The Smoke Island rose and became a huge crater for the volcano. People called it the Black Smoke Pot Crater.

Only a portion of the elites who participated the Smoke Island battle managed to escape. Most of them suffered from some sort of side effects.

The world's Martial Art community was in a decline.

Half a month after the volcano erupted, King of Nightmares entered the White Cloud Gate. Together with Celestial Circle Gate, he managed to stabilize the Martial Arts community in the South. Then they planned to head toward the East in a systematic way.

Due to the volcano eruption, the air was mixed with volcano ash. Air quality was deteriorating around the three continents, the sky was dark, the ocean polluted. Floras and faunas were all affected, poisonous material were spread everywhere in the world.

One year later...

Celestial Circle Gate, White Cloud Gate, and The Sirens bought one giant ship each. Under Andrela's lead, they were all headed to the East.

At the same time, Garen's family, as well as his uncle's family were all hypnotized onboard.

"Can you tell me how big brother died?" Ying Er asked Andrela who stood at the bow. Her waist-length purplish-black hair swayed in the wind, adding to her innocence.

"You big brother..." Andrela paused to think, "He may have been the strongest man in the world..."

"The strongest man in the world?" Ying Er's eyes widened.

Andrela looked out to the horizon and slowly recounted Garen's stories. "In the pursuit of Martial Arts, he's already at the limit of what humans can achieve. His spirit and strength joined together seamlessly."

"In the three years he's been studying Martial Arts, he had battled countless enemies and won, he had arrived at the peak of physical achievement!" Andrela stated calmly. "As his sister, you should be proud."

"It is so." An enchanting woman spoke from behind them both. King of Nightmares.

She transformed into Ying Er and approached slowly. They look the same, but her attitude is completely different from Ying Er's, not having a single strand of purity.

"Garen used only three years to become a Saint of Fist Technique and killed the First Divine Warrior Palosa, taking over his title! His strength is out of this world!"

Ying Er was sad, but at the same time she felt a sense of pride. The praises the two top elites in the world sang of him made her feel a surge of exhilaration.

The three stood at the bow of the ship, silent, deep in their own reminiscence.

Three ships sped toward the Eastern ocean.

Boom!

A bomb dove into the water less than a hundred meters in front of the ships.

A white column of seawater burst into the air and rained on the deck.

"Warning! Black flags! Pirates!" A sailor on top of the mast yelled. Cannoneers hurried to their places.

Andrela waved his arm.

"Raise the white flag!"

White flag?

Ying Er did a double take, doesn't white flag mean they're surrendering?

She noticed, there were words on the white flag, so it's not a flag of surrender. The words were...

From afar, scores of ships of different sizes had their Jolly Rogers raised. Several pirates were watching their prey with a telescope, and reported, "It's White Cloud Gate! Let them pass!"

The pirate ships turned back without hesitation.

Ying Er stared at the leaving pirate ships, stunned. There was a shocking feeling of disbelief in her heart.

"This is the prestige of the strongest fighter in the world!" Andrela sighed. "We've met twenty-six different pirates, no exceptions, just raise the flag."

"Even Immortal Palace, Behemoth Gate, and other countries have recognized Garen as the strongest man in the world!" King of Nightmares continued. "The moment Weisman released the nuclear bomb, many elites saw Garen punching at the sky, his Divine Statue Aura was clearly seen above the Smoke Island."

Andrela nodded, "It's not that the pirates were scared of Garen, it's their way of showing respect. They respect his bravery to challenge firearms as a Martial Artist. The pirate king Macks is also an elite Martial Artists, he just couldn't arrive at the Smoke Island in time, but he also saw the platinum-colored Divine Statue Aura."

"Rather than saying that they respect his power, it should be said that they respect his attitude and spirit." King of Nightmares added, "Garen Lombard's spirit is now a popular culture among the Martial Arts community, even in the army of each country. Some soldiers even tattooed his face on their bodies. He symbolizes the spirit of Martial Arts! One that does not give up even though they are in a tough spot."

"That was your big brother."

"That is your big brother."

The two mused the same words one after another.

Ying Er stood against the sea breeze, her heart burning, eyes watering even though she was not sure if she's sad or proud.

Woo-woo!

In that instant, black ships sailed in an orderly fashion on the opposite direction from them toward the three continents.

Sirens kept blaring. Numerous cannons spotted on the deck of the ships. The black on the ships almost covered wholly the deep blue of the sea.

"That is the Pirate King, accepting the summon of the Immortal Palace Alliance to attack Weisman's army!" Andrela stared at the ships, and explained. "Sylphalan and Garen both died when the nuclear bomb exploded in the volcano. The Immortal Palace were so mad, as if Sylphalan's death had stopped their plans permanently. Two people from the Immortal Palace wreaked havoc within the borders of Weisman. Flamingo himself blew up two ammunition depots of their military base, as well as a biochemical research base in three days. His method Estelle as extreme as always!"

"Weisman didn't expect such a repercussion from bombing the Black Smoke Pot volcano. As of now, the armies of every country banded up into a coalition to take down Weisman." King of Nightmares laughed unapologetically. "When we left, the Confederation and the Tulip Republic coalition had already started attacking the bay of Man Marseille."

"There's the Immortal Palace wreaking havoc from inside, and there is the world's army on the outside. Weisman is finished." Andrela nodded.

Garen kept thinking while memories of Luminarists was dug out one by one.

It may be because he had not mastered the Divine Statue Technique, or maybe he realised his strength in this world is weak. Without unrivalled power, he's not confident in being invincible.

However, he's confident in getting stronger even though it's not the same world. The only problem is how much time he would need.

If you wanted to return to the last world, he'll need to make sure there is no more accidents. Transmigration through death had never struck a chord with him. He can't guarantee returning to the last world after his death, or going to a completely new world, or even perish.

If he wanted to avoid that, you'll need to solve the problem that is coming in two years.

After his battle with Sylphalan, the feeling of dropping to a level of normal human from the strongest man in the world had slowly healed. Right now, his thoughts are as calm as a cat.

A tiny scene flashed through his mind.

"No!" His brows furrowed, thinking hard to remember the scene that almost escaped him.

Soon, a man with a black fedora appeared behind a group of people. He was wearing a black suit with a pair of white gloves, and he was carrying a short cane.

"He's that Luminarist called Emin! He's not dead?" Stunned, Garen immediately recognized him.

He jumped from his bed, wore his shoes, and went to the window.

Near the dark lake, wisps of smoke was still visible above the woods.

"If he's not dead, it would mean that he had survived the battle! This is an opportunity!"

He examined the places around the explosion site, there were several people cleaning up, preparing to leave.

Standing beside his window, he waited for a dozen more minutes until they've all left. It was then that he dressed up, changed into his boots and sneaked out of his room.

After leaving the manor, Garen went straight toward the direction of the site. Very quickly, he'd arrived around the explosion site.

Chapter 236: Willpower 2

The ground was left a black glass-like shell, stones and metal and mud melded together. There were no trees, no grass patches, all of it vanished, melting together with the other materials.

The explosion site has turned into an oval black crater.

Garen made his way carefully along this area, while at the same time checking for places that might hide bodies.

There was only a slight spillage of moonlight that night. Garen could barely see the silhouette of the objects in the woods.

The air was cool, but the site was still a little warm from the explosion. The ground was hot to the touch, he could feel it through his boots.

Garen checked the place thoroughly around the oval crater. Nothing. He widened his search area.

It was getting late by the second. He checked everywhere, in the bushes, behind trees, between boulder cracks, under the branches etc. He has searched everywhere that could hide people, but there was not a single sign of anyone hiding.

He did, however, almost stepped on a nest full of black swan eggs.

Slowly, his search area widened to include the lakeside.

Garen believed the person he saw in the memory is the Luminarist called Emin.

This was an opportunity of a lifetime, it's also the most practical. If he could find the Luminarist called Emin and save him, then he could request him to be his teacher, that's the idea with the highest success rate.

Garen didn't show any impatience searching for Emin even if it's taking a long time. When he was training his Martial Arts, he had to constantly repeat the same movements, some were not only uncomfortable, but painful as well, but he persisted.

It can be said that even without the help of his special ability, he'd be able to become a decent Martial Artist within a certain timeframe. His special ability merely gave him a key to reach the peak.

Compared to those days, this was nothing.

He had decided to fully utilize the night to look for the Luminarist Emin. In an explosion like this one, he would've been badly hurt.

Walking along the lake, he started to examine the water. Soon, a dark silhouette entered his sight, it was floating on the water, unmoving, but it still looked like a human shape.

Garen hurried over, and threw a pebble at it.

Slap.

No movement, the pebble sounded like it hit flesh.

Garen had a slight suspicion. He closed their distance to better make out the silhouette's true shape.

It was a charred, curled up body. Floating beside it was a short cane covered in soot.

"This might be him." With a little hope, Garen approached him waddling through the water.

Flipping him over, he revealed a soot-covered pale face, it was the Luminarist Emin.

"It's him!" Garen sighed in relief. "Hey, are you alive? Wake up!"

He patted Emin's face and pressed his stomach, he wasn't bloated, he didn't drown. He gave Emin two slaps on the face. No reaction.

He used his fingernail to press hard against Emin's philtrum point*.

After a few tries, Emin finally groaned weakly.

"How are you doing? Do you need treatment? I'll send you to a hospice." Garen pretended as if he didn't know him. He felt weird saying that.

"No... No need..." Emid said weakly. "Child... I just need a some antibiotics*... Just a little would do..."

Garen touched Emin's forehead, it was cold.

"You're too weak. There was an explosion here just now, it's not safe. I'll bring you to where I live."

Not waiting for an answer, Garen dragged Emin back on land before piggybacking him home slowly.

Within moments, Emin was out cold again, not making any sound.

Garen managed to return to his house without waking anyone up. He removed the lake seaweed on Emin and set him down on the recliner. Then he started the fire in the fireplace and placed Emin near it to dry.

Adding firewood to the fireplace, Garen fiddled with the fire. He looked at Emin who was on the recliner.

"This is my first time looking after people. If you don't repay me when you wake up, I will not let it go." He murmured. He wasn't sure if Luminarists have any way to investigate the past, so he continued his act even when Emin was unconscious, including the way he murmurs.

Emin wasn't moving much on the recliner, but his face was slightly redder because of the fire.

Garen continued playing with the fire. He thought it weird how Emin had no burn marks from the explosion, only a slight bruise.

After making sure the fire would burn a while, he went to get the first aid kit, got out a few white pills and poured a glass of water from the water room.

When he returned, Emin was awake. He sat up straight in the recliner, watching the fire crackle. His expression didn't give away what he was thinking.

Hearing the footsteps, he turned to Garen.

"You saved me?"

"Who else did you think save you out there?" Garen threw the question back at him, "This are the pills you wanted, take it." He walked toward Emin and gave him the pills and the glass of water.

Receiving the pills, Emin swallowed them with a huge gulp of water.

"Thank you." He returned the glass to Garen.

"How were you floating on the lake? The lake water is bone-chilling at night, you should choose a better time to swim if you really want to. Afternoon's great, some of the my guards like swimming in the lake too." Garen set the glass down on the table, "Not Black Swan Lake though, if you're found out by my father, you'd be dead meat!" He shrugged, pretending to not knowing anything. "My father hates it when the water source was polluted. Oh, he's the viscount that owned this land. If you were found to have dirtied the lake, it's probably a light punishment to be sent to the gallows.

"I'm sorry... I don't actually like to swim at midnights, but this time I just had to." Emin shrugged the same way Garen does. After drinking the water and dried off by the fire, his speech was much smoother. His accent was melodic, obviously he wasn't local.

"I understand, it's okay." Garen nodded, "Unfortunately, I saw your fight with that guy. Losers deserved to be pitied."

"You have a sharp tongue..." Emin was speechless at that comment.

"You should be happy because you're alive, and he's probably dead."

"This is true." Emin nodded, his face expressing wonderment. "You said you saw our fight?"

"Of course, it's so intense, it's like bardic tales." Garen replied honestly.

Emin sized Garen up.

"If you can see our fight, it means you're also someone talented. You also saved me, is there anything I can do to repay you?"

"Of course," Garen answered. "I would like to learn that fighting ability from you."

"You know what that is?" Emin asked, surprised. He regained his composure soon after. "Right, you have the talent, you must know about it already. Your parents or someone in your family must be one of us. But why do you ask me, a stranger, instead of your parents?"

"My father won't teach me. My family is poor." Garen answered without hesitation. Being poor... If only Viscount Vanderman had heard about this... Even among the Luminarists, the Trejons Family is one of the wealthier ones, they've got a long way to become 'poor'.

Emin's face froze, and suddenly started reminisce.

"It's true... I used to be poor..." His gaze toward Garen turned soft, "Don't worry, since you saved me, I will pay for your future studies."

"You agreed?" Garen showed a surprised look. If he's still being deadpan at this point, it'll look very put on, it doesn't suit youngster like him.

"Call me teacher." Emin nodded, "I will teach you until you're also one of us, think of it as a thank you gift."

"It's that simple?" Garen was stunned.

"It's that simple."

"I thought it may be a little too casual..." Garen muttered under his breath.

"You've got the talent, you don't look stupid, and you've saved my life. I have the money, I have the knowledge and experience. Everything would be based on those, what else do you want?" Emin said, wryly.

"What if I don't have the talent?" Garen asked suddenly.

"Then it's not gonna work. Answer me this, did you save me because you want to become a Luminarist?"

"Of course, who else would have the mood to take a walk in the wood at midnight? Do you think I'm crazy?" Garen mocked.

"Fine..." Emin has no comeback to that. He suspected this young man to have ulterior motive when he saved him. Hearing him admitting it frankly, it made him feel as if he's the one at fault.

He paused.

"Well then, last question." He looked straight at Garen's eyes. "Tell me your name, young man." He raised the slightly charred cane as if he's going to point at something.

For a moment, Garen was dazed, but he gave a calm smile right after.

"Acacia, my name is Acacia Trejons, but I like people calling me Garen."

He genuflected as a sign of respect toward Emin.

The cane touched his right shoulder and momentarily flashed silver.

Emin stared at Garen, his face full of gentle reminiscence, as if seeing himself on his knee back when he was initiated.

"With this ancient ritual, I swear to never reveal any of teacher's knowledge and skills. May the Silver be ever-luminescent."

Two immature voices rang in his mind, overlapping, it was hard to tell Garen's from his own.

Chapter 237: Friend 1

A week later...

Emin left without a word. Although his injuries hadn't healed completely yet, he was now able to move on his own. After writing Garen a handbook of notes, he also gave an address before he left. His requirement was that Garen learned everything in the book and achieved the standard stated there, before searching Emin out again.

Garen didn't step out of the estate for an entire week. Every morning, after having breakfast with Vanderman, he would lock himself in his rooms and forbade anyone from entering. There, he focused all his attention to deciphering that handbook.

The handbook had a lot of messy and scattered bits and pieces of knowledge, with no sense of organization whatsoever. Therefore, Garen couldn't use his special power to read and absorb it as a whole.

And there was another key problem, which is that Acacia's, or this body's intelligence was simply too low. The quality of this body was simply not there, and could not satisfy the basic conditions to learn the special ability. That was why he could only study the traditional way.

The handbook had no name. In it was a great deal of the most basic information about Luminarists, just the very basics.

It was only after Garen read some of these things that he began to understand the true mysteries behind the existence of the Luminarists.

This was a very powerful group of people.

They relied on a basic, inherent talent in quality appraisals, to achieve the level where they could sense and control silver.

At one point, some of the geniuses among them suddenly discovered that they could use silver to create a resonance of mysterious power, and so the Luminarists were born.

They used silver to form many different totems, and then used unique structures and principles to eventually light those totems, activating them. These then became their helpers or subordinates.

But these totems themselves didn't have much intelligence, so they were only equal to a Luminarist's second body.

From the handbook, Garen found out that you had to fulfill three conditions to become a Luminarist.

One: Appraisal, a basic talent.

This was the basic or basics. Without this, it was impossible to enter this circle. You wouldn't even be able to see through a Shielding Light that someone cast casually.

Two: Intricate blueprints.

The creation of a totem required an extremely intricate silver blueprint, and it had to be three-dimensional rather than flat. The level of accuracy needed was extremely high. Someone without this talent couldn't become a Luminarist either. This was the basic method and road to transforming knowledge into power.

Three: Basic tactics.

The Luminarist was the base, designing the totem, creating the totem, and helping the totem to fight or work. These were all a series of tactic, and in actuality a totem can be broken down into countless basic tactics.

A totem was like a complex machine made out of countless tiny components, and the tactics were the most basic of intricate components. At the same time, they could be used individually, to increase a totem's ability in any one area.

These three points were the key to becoming a Luminarist.

And when it came to basic tactics, there was actually a lot of basic knowledge to learn. Each and every different Luminarist had their own accumulation of knowledge.

The further they went with their knowledge, the stronger the totems they created.

In truth, totems were like the physical embodiment of their knowledge. As everyone's understanding was different, the totems would turn out different even if they used the same basic tactics.

The handbook only contained the basic contents of intricate blueprints, for Garen to study.

This area of knowledge needed a steady hand and a calm mind. They had to focus intently, and their emotions must not be disturbed.

This was also why most Luminarists were quiet by nature, because this was the basic requirement for making intricate blueprints.

He practiced for a few days in the manor, but he didn't improve very much. It was obvious that this body's innate talent really wasn't all that. He wasn't steady at all, and despite his frustration, he couldn't do anything but wait for his body to regain some of its old quality, before he can improve it and then learn faster. Right now, all he could do was repeat the exercises mechanically.

This time he couldn't take any more shortcuts. Just like other normal Luminarists, he had to start training his steadiness from scratch.

Near the Trejons territory: the Palato family grounds.

The thick forest of trees was like a dark green carpet. Towards the left of a waterfall, there was a grey-black estate under renovation.

In one house on the estate, the balcony of the second floor.

Garen was lying lazily on a deckchair, looking at the blue sky through narrowed eyes. He heard gentle piano music wafting out from inside, feeling so comfortable he nearly fell asleep.

The balcony was a white semicircle. Garen lay on a chair near the edge, wearing white casual clothes with silver trimmings, long sleeves and long pants. His golden hair blew about in the wind.

The sunlight fell on him, reflecting a light that was so white it was nearly blinding.

"Cia." The glass door opened, and a young man with a black ponytail walked out. He looked at Acacia, stretched out on the chair, with mild surprise. "Aren't you going to play a few hands in there? Marin and the others had put out a table just for you, what's with you today?"

Garen tilted his head and looked at the young man.

"I don't want to play today... Recently I've been thinking about the meaning of life."

The young man's face went blank.

"Wha? The meaning of life?!" He stood there frozen, an expression of disbelief as he looked at Garen, "I say, Cia, we were best friends since we were kids. You can talk to me about anything, but don't go doing anything stupid!1"

"It's fine, I just understood some things recently." Garen waved his hand. "Alright, go on in, or those young masters and misses in there will have to call you again."

"Save me, Prynne! Andel wants to smear cake on me!" On cue, a girl screamed inside.

"What are they doing now?" The young man turned away exasperatedly, going in past the glass door. There was cacophony inside.

Garen continued narrowing his eyes disinterestedly, staring at the white clouds slowly floating through the sky. In his head, he kept repeating the basic points of knowledge from the handbook.

This was Acacia's life, going out and gathering with three bad friends every day. Today your place, tomorrow mine. Or after a few days, everyone would go book a large hotel room, and occasionally they would have a barbeque, go hunting, swim.

Gambling, racing horses, watching wrestling, and then they would drink beer together and tell tall tales when they rested. Whenever there was a special occasion or some big incident occurred nearby, the four of them would always be the first to rush over and watch.

Things like foreign circuses, wandering theaters, these were all their favorite activities.

The four of them were one of the two circles with the highest family backgrounds among the nobles around here. Acacia and Prynne Acivis were the representative members, eating, drinking and playing. Whatever was fun, they'd do it.

Prynne's mother was the lady of the largest territory in Lush Forest district, his family's power stronger than even Acacia's. Normally, people thought he was the main player, while Acacia was the sidekick. As for the other two, Andel and Marin, they were also girls from two noble families who played together with Prynne since they were young. Their families were slightly weaker, but not by much.

The four of them represented half of the noble families in the entire Lush Forest.

Through these memories flashing in his head, he remembered that when Acacia was young, the four of them had stood and compared how far they could pee... That really was a spectacularly embarrassing memory. Two boys competing with two girls to see who could pee further while standing...

Unlike regular families, noble families could get whatever they wanted. And there was a lot to learn about etiquette and culture when they were younger, so whenever they got to play, they threw caution and logic to the wind.

As they're continually spoiled by kowtowers, they had played almost all there was to enjoy. All that was left was emptiness.

And so they look for more extreme things to do.

For example, look at the four of them now. If it weren't that their families strictly forbade anything sexual to prevent bodily harm, they would probably have gotten tired of that by now too.

Garen lay quietly on his deckchair. After revising his basic knowledge, he rested a little more and took a short nap. Then he started to think back again. If there was anything he couldn't remember, he would take out a tiny note he had copied and check.

Time passed before he knew it.

The room started to grow quiet. A guest had come to visit, and was rejected by Prynn lazily. The two girls then chased away the pianist and randomly hit some keys on their own, creating a ruckus.

Amidst the chaos, the glass door to the balcony opened again, and a tall girl in a black-purple dress walked out. She had blonde-brown hair falling over her shoulders, and she walked up to Garen before crouching down.

"Hey, what's the matter with you recently? Why do I feel like you're growing more and more listless."

"Leave me alone. I suddenly feel like it's time to grow up," Garen said mildly, mimicking Acacia's tone from before.

"Is it because of Big Sister Hathaway?" The girl's rather plain face looked as though she understood. "It's just an Astronomical Edict, there's nothing to it. At the most, I'll steal my uncle's one to make up for yours." She clenched her teeth, as though it had taken her a lot of determination to make that decision.

"Leave me alone, Andel, I'm just not that happy inside." Garen stood up and took a deep breath. "Recently I've wanted to learn some things, and stop messing about like this. I mean, we're already twenty, what will happen if we just continue like this?"

"The families have everything arranged for us, don't they? We don't have to worry about anything, and just follow the script, right?" Andel smiled, but there was a hint of unhappiness in it. "Once we're old enough, we'll just get married, have kids, and continue messing around like this. What's wrong with that?"

"That's what you say, but deep inside you don't like it either, do you?" Garen glanced at the girl.

"Aren't we all like that?" Andel retorted.

"That's why I want to learn something, and stop wasting time like this anymore." Garen was starting make preparations for his future change.

"Forget it, you?" Andel pouted disbelievingly. For some reason, she was feeling slightly angry, so she went back inside and decided to ignore him.

She didn't know why, but when she saw Garen saying that he wanted to learn something so seriously, she just felt really suffocated inside, and panicky.

Watching Andel walk away, Garen didn't say anymore. He got up from the deckchair, and stood on the balcony, looking down into the distance.

The white waterfall roared as it left long white streams in its wake, falling down into an emerald pond. A few birds circled over it at times, and a few coaches were stopped next to it, the horses snorting away.

Everything seemed unusually quiet and peaceful.

Chapter 238: Friend 2

This was Prynne's most secluded estate, so they could avoid a lot of the adults who wanted to suck up to the four of them to build connections. These adults always found distant connections from all sorts of cracks and crevices, making them impossible to refuse when they say they just want to visit. And then they come one after the other, non-stop, so that they don't have any more time for themselves.

These few days, Garen had been enjoying the excessive lifestyle of a rich heir. As the only son of an upper noble family, there were powerful people visiting him every day as soon as he stepped out of the house. All of them wanted to establish a relationship with Vanderman through him.

He only had a bit of me-time when he was together with Prynn and the others, so that was when he could study the knowledge on the handbook. That was why he agreed to hang out with the three of them.

It seemed like an easy life, but he had to be constantly feigning, and at the same time he spent a lot of energy on studying the handbook. So in truth, these days were pretty tiring for him.

And these days, while he was studying, he was also thinking how he should increase his own power.

Two years from now, - would surely come to Lush Forest for revenge, and the Obscuro Society was already fairly unhappy with Vanderman. Their life looked quiet, but in truth they were already surrounded by dangers.

Garen decided that he would find a way to first understand the entire Luminarist community's overall situation.

During the time he spent with his teacher Emin, he more or less understood that the Luminarists were an extensive organization. Out of the several billion people in the Kovitan Empire, at least a hundred thousand of them were Luminarists.

Other than the Luminarists in the two main powers, Oscuro and Terraflor, most of them were regular Luminarists. Regular Luminarists made up ninety percent of the total.

In other words, Obscuro and Terraflor were at the highest level, completely out of reach for regular Luminarists. Their whereabouts and actions were mysterious and unpredictable, and normal people had no way to find out more about them.

Besides, most Luminarists liked to do research and lived quiet lives. Their social relationships weren't anything to shout about, so they communicated even less with the outside world, and the latest news about them was even harder to obtain.

These were all basic things about Luminarists that Garen found out from Emin.

Thinking back on the related information he had, Garen glanced at the attribute pane at the bottom of his field of vision.

'Strength 0.9, Agility 0.8, Vitality 0.9, Intelligence 0.5. Possesses Luminarists' appraisal ability.

Secret technique -- Divine Statue Technique, Ten Thousand Mammoth martial arts.

Time until full recovery: 367 days (one year).'

"My power and intelligence improved just a smidge, it's way too slow..."

"Cia! Are you going to the barbeque tonight?" A pretty girl with a maroon ponytail ran out and rushed at Garen, yelling, "Your goddess Aquarius is going too, y'know? Wanna come?"

Garen hesitated. He did want to see this woman that had the original Acacia wound around her little finger. "Alright. Who else is there, other than Aquarius?"

"There are two of her friends, both pretty girls," the girl with the maroon ponytail said mysteriously.

"Thank me, I was the one who pulled them all here. If you weren't looking so down recently, I'd be too lazy to take the initiative and invite them."

"Thanks a lot, adorable, pretty little Marin." Garen hastened to thank her.

"Saying it like that has no sincerity at all, gimme something with substance. I love your poetry, is there anything new?" Marin squeezed up to him, asking. A faint fragrance of roses wafted into Garen's nostrils.

"You like my poetry? ..." Garen's expression went blank for a moment. There were actually people who liked Acacia's poetry?! It was an unbelievable assault to his understanding of this world's beauty standards.

"That's right, just tell us if you got anything new so we can all appreciate it. You're our resident genius, y'know." Andel had come out as well, followed by Prynne.

Prynne's expression was approving as well.

"Don't hide it and keep it to yourself, just read it out for us," Prynne hurried him.

Garen looked at the three expectant faces in front of him, and began to wonder if it was his sense of beauty that had problems. That nauseating poetry actually had so many fans!

"Hurry up and read it out, what are you waiting for? Don't tell me you ran out of ideas?"

"No way, I just heard one of Cia's new poems recently!"

"Don't disappoint us! This is one of our regular activities!"

Seeing the three of them staring at him expectantly, Garen started to feel a bit constipated.

Poems... Sure, there were some, but for him to stand up and read it to the three of them with a straight face... No way, that would be a source of eternal shame..

"Um... my throat's been feeling off recently... why don't you guys read it yourself." Garen hurriedly took out the notebook Acacia always carried around with him, and stuffed it into Prynne's arms. Then he quickly darted into the large living room inside.

Prynne flipped open the notebook.

"Fine, we'll read it ourselves."

"Beautiful lily! Thou art so fragrant~~ My goddess Aquarius, thy face art like that flower vase... uh, there's an extra word here, it's like that flower, so beautiful and fair."

Prynne posed as though performing poetry, and began to recite it loudly,

"O Beautiful Aquarius, worry not that thou lose thy beauty, worry not if thou art ugly. Even if thou became a toad, I would not give up on thou, I would love thou unconditionally! Aquarius! Ah! Aquarius! Ah! Ah! Ah~~~~!!!"

Each of the 'Ah's increased in pitch.

Inside, Garen felt his whole body going numb. Every hair on his body stood on edge.

"What a good poem!! As expected of my best friend, Acacia!" He could hear Prynne's praises from the balcony. "I want to publish this poem to the love poetry magazine, and let everyone witness, the poetry of my brother Acacia! Look, these last three exclamations, they're practically heavenly muse!"

"My favorite line is 'Even if thou became a toad, I would not give up on thou'! Mm... so touching!" Marin kept agreeing beside him.

"Cia, how could you hide such a good poem after writing it? That's mean of you!" Prynne voiced his dissatisfaction loudly from the balcony.

On the sofa inside, Garen was thinking that his dignity in this life, no! The previous life, and the life before that! His dignity since the very beginning had all been utterly lost.

"Suit yourselves..." Garen replied weakly.

What kind of eye would see this sort of thing even remotely as good poetry...

Prynne and the others repeated the lines over and over again on the balcony, and even had heated discussions about it. They were so loud that even the servants downstairs could hear them clearly. Only then did they enter the room, still dissatisfied.

"Cia, what's the matter with you? Why does it seem like you're feeling kinda down?" Prynne looked at Garen, sprawled over the couch and unmoving, with disbelief. "As expected of someone deeply in love. Your poetry is even better than usual!"

"Don't mention poetry to me, it makes me nauseated..." Garen replied, more constipated than ever.

"As I thought, writing poetry takes too much out of you. True, classic lines like these would take up quite a bit. In that case, you'd better rest. We'll call you when it's time."

"Alright..."

"Then we'll go ahead and prepare. We'll decide on the choices, that okay?"

"Sure..."

Ker-chak.

With the sound of the closing door, the room suddenly became slightly empty.

There were only two young maids standing respectfully in the corner, quietly awaiting orders.

Garen lay on the couch. After a moment's pause, he slowly recovered from his speechlessness.

Grabbing the black notebook, he tossed it fiercely to a side.

"What on earth is this!"

He stood up and returned to the balcony, lying on the deckchair to rest. And then he pulled the small papers out of his pocket to memorize the information from before. At the same time, he had to recall a few important matters.

Regarding the Aquarius he was going to meet at night, he found some relevant information in Acacia's memories.

She was a very beautiful woman, with a small waist, long legs, a large bust and a breathtaking face. She had lively almond eyes, and when she looked at people, her expression always invoked love and pity. Especially when she looked directly at you with her eyes widened, her pure gaze would always make one lower their head in shame, unable to meet her eyes.

But Garen sensed something amiss about this woman.

This woman, who looked so weak and like a social butterfly, seemed to be perfectly at ease at a series of banquets and events. In fact, she seemed to take the initiative.

And even more strangely, many rich and powerful people also lowered their heads to her out of shame, and allowed her whatever she wanted. Her body was unusually soft, her skin as smooth as the highest quality white jade.

"Aquarius Senbenita..." Garen narrowed his eyes. "This woman was probably trained in martial arts... and probably some joint-related techniques used in assassination. She's not what she seems..."

"Vanderman allowed this woman to play his son around, and didn't do anything at all about it. Why?" Thinking back to what Vanderman said, he had absolutely no intention to trouble this woman. Instead, he had cleaned up after his son's mess.

Garen began to vaguely suspect Aquarius's identity.

"We'll see when the time comes. If she really was a spy who was trained in assassination techniques, this would also be a great chance to see what the fighting level in this world is like."

He moved his shoulders, and they made small cracking sounds.

Although his body was recovering very slowly, he was still a top level martial artist. His fighting level was still no lower than E.

In the previous world, level E was already part of the letter levels, and was only lower than a Grandmaster of Combat. Regular small machine guns would not pose a threat to them unless wielded by a top level shooter.

Even outside, they were perfectly capable of starting their own groups.

Garen chased the two little maids away and stood alone in the living room. Then, he began to relearn a few tips and tricks to combat joint techniques.

Soon, Prynne rushed over to call him. Everything was ready, he said, so Garen had to go over there and prepare to leave.

They planned to stay a couple of nights on the mountain, and return home a few days later. They could take this chance to hunt and hike, too.

Garen asked the driver to inform his family, and got onto the carriage together with Prynne and the others. They drove towards the depths of the forest, a few strong bodyguards following them closely to maintain their safety.

They were going to the nearby Blackflower Mountain more than ten miles away, and planned to start a campfire there. There were few people and many wild animals there, so it was their newest hunting spot.

Chapter 239: Encounter 1

Amidst the sea of dark green trees, there was a thin, pale green roadway. It crawled through the forest like a slow earthworm, wider in some places and narrower in others, twisting and turning unpredictably.

A carriage drove slowly along that road, followed by a team of horseriding bodyguards in black.

The sky was beginning to dim. The setting sun was obscured by layers of thick clouds, only the slightest bit of red light seeping through.

The carriage soon stopped at the end of the road. The old driver steadied it, and turned around to yell,

"This is as far as we can go, the carriage can't go any further."

"Got it, you can go back now, Old Peter. Come back here to fetch us in two days." The door opened and a young man in tight black clothes jumped out as he spoke loudly.

"Yes, Young Master."

A few more young people dressed luxuriously jumped out of the carriage, two male and two female in total. They were all wearing black clothes that seemed to be for hunting. Their pants legs were stuffed into long breeches, and there were sharp short knives tied to their belts.

"Prynne, where did you guys decide to meet?" the other boy asked casually. He had blonde hair and a handsome face, with a studious air. It was Garen, who had come along with his companions.

"Right over there, we need to walk another distance. Let's go over there first, I'll tell a guard to go pick up Aquarius and the others. Do you wanna go along, Cia?" Prynne glanced at Garen.

"It's fine, I'll stay with you guys." Garen shook his head. Right now, he was carefully observing his surroundings. "The plants here look pretty old, it does look like people don't usually come here."

"Indeed." Prynne looked slightly proud of himself. "I even purposely asked travelling merchants who go out a lot, and finally came up with a place they don't go. Of course there wouldn't be anyone here."

"It won't be dangerous, will it?" Marin was combing her her long maroon hair, and asked worriedly.

"Relax, even if there is something dangerous, we have so many guards here. There's nothing to be afraid of!" Prynne shrugged, pointing at the team of guards riding behind them. "The people I brought this time are my family's elite fighters, they're definitely capable, so you don't have to worry about safety!"

Prynne walked up to a tall and strong-looking man, with a broad back and thick waist, and patted the man's chest.

"This is Hanson, he once tore a forest grizzly up alive! He's the strongest of men! And he's also the defense captain in charge of our safety this time!"

Hanson was an entire head taller than Prynne, with limbs as thick as an elephant's. The muscles on his body were about to explode out of his skin-tight armor, keeping anyone who looked at him on edge.

"Leave it to me, Hanson! No problem!" Hanson patted his chest, and flexed his muscles like a bodybuilder. It instantly garnered some laughs from the girls.

Whoa!!

"Hanson!!" "Hanson!!" "Hanson!!"

The guards behind him drew their scimitars at the same time, raising them above their heads as they cheered for their captain.

"Our safety is in your hands, Big Brother Prynne." Andel giggles as she got closer to Prynne.

"Speak for yourself, I still think Cia's side is more reliable..." On the other hand, Marin walked up to Garen. "Big Brother Cia, you gotta protect me~~" she purposely said flirtily.

"Cia is head over heels trying to get Aquarius, he won't have time for you." Andel didn't hold back with her words.

Garen shrugged exasperatedly. "I'll protect you, relax." He turned around to glance at the middle-aged man standing behind him.

This man was wearing a long-sleeved dark green shirt and similar long pants. He said little to nothing, and wore a metallic black armguard on his forearm. He looked to be in his thirties.

His name was Ulun, the bodyguard his father Vanderman had sent to protect him.

Garen lowered his voice helplessly.

"You guys know it too, Prynne had always been in charge of our safety, and we were too lazy to bother with it ourselves. It's just that there was a huge explosion in my family's territory this time, so my father specifically sent someone to protect me.

"So you're saying this guy is really good?" Marin stuck out her tongue.

Garen nodded.

Ulun was indeed very strong. Even in the previous world of secret martial arts, he wouldn't be your regular Joe. Judging from the way he walked, his reactions, as well as the killing intent on him and his gaze, he was definitely an elite fighter with several dozen lives on his hands. Only people like these would have that vague sense of disregard and contempt whenever they looked at everyone else.

But Garen never saw Ulun in a fight himself, so he couldn't quite assess his total abilities. One thing was sure, Ulun might not look like much, but his abilities were definitely no lower than the guard captain Hanson.

Seeing that Garen and Marin were talking about him, Ulun put his right hand on his chest, and bent his head with a smile.

Having more or less introduced the servants, all four of them knew who was who. Hanson took the lead, and the team of guards protected the four of them on both flanks. Only then did the procession continue walking to the edge of the forest.

Axes continuously broke through the bramble, cutting open a path. Snakes, rabbits, and forest mice that darted out occasionally were also cause for the two girls to scream dramatically.

Marin always preferred to stick to Garen, whereas Andel stayed with Prynne.

As the group went further into the forest, the four of them quickly decided on a relatively flat piece of land. The guards started to chop up the bushes and trees nearby, setting up an activity spot.

Hanson and Ulun split up, patrolling the surroundings and chasing away poisonous snakes or bugs.

The four of them had barely stopped to catch their breath when soon they heard the rustle of activity behind them. Someone seemed to have caught up from behind.

Soon, a group of people dressed in dark green approached them quickly.

"It's Aquarius," Marin whispered beside Garen. Her gaze was slightly complicated, but she hid it well.

Garen looked around him. Prynne, Andel and Marin were all staring at him. He knew he had to do something. After all, the previous Acacia liked Aquarius more than anything else, and even fought with his older cousin who loved him the most over her.

He stood up helplessly, and took the initiative to meet the team.

"Is it Miss Aquarius?" he asked loudly.

"Cia! Is that you?" A response came immediately from the approaching group. The crowd parted, and a girl in white walked out, holding up the hem of her dress. She wore a long one-piece dress, had long

dark brown hair over her shoulders, and extremely thick makeup. Garen's first impression of her was one of those unconventional beauties from Earth.

She had an oval face, with smooth and fair skin. Her eyes were made larger by dark green shadow, forming perfect almond eyes. Her eyebrows seemed to be drawn too, a textbook example of eyebrows like willow leaves, thin, long, and dark green. A straight nose, pink lips. Add that to her thin waist and thick bust, her long legs. There were even dainty crystal pendants hanging from her ears lobes.

At first glance, anyone could see this was a beauty of luxury, and she really knew how to dress herself up. In truth, her real face was nowhere near this level.

But to innocent boys like Acacia, this kind of makeup was more than enough to have him head over heels with her, his eyes stuck to her like glue. Compared to Aquarius, Marin -- who was quite pretty among the four of them, but who didn't know how to use make-up -- was like the duckling next to the swan."

"It's been a while since we met. Since I heard you were coming this time, I thought, it's not like I have anything else to do. Coming to meet you lets me relax at the same time. I wonder, am I welcome here?" Aquarius' voice was full of calm confidence, giving the impression that she was very in control of herself. It wasn't too loud or too soft, and even the turns in her voice seemed to be fully calculated.

"You are, of course you are!" Garen imitated Acacia from before, acting completely head over heels for her, his eyes not turning away. He looked as if Aquarius had a hand on his soul. And then he followed Acacia's actions in his memories, grabbing Aquarius' hand and making to kiss it. But he was instantly pushed aside.

Impatience flashed past Aquarius' eyes. Every time Acacia took her hand, he would immediately chew on it for half a day and refuse to let go. So even though she was supposed to stretch out her hand first, she pretended to forget about that.

"Why don't we first figure out how to make a fire? I have two more friends coming over." Aquarius greeted Prynn, Marin and Andel respectively. There was no faulting her manners.

The five of them began directing the guards to stick the vines and branches that had been chopped off into the ground, forming a simple fence. And then they began to put up each of the tents they brought.

Aquarius' friends arrived quickly as well. They were two pretty girls, one called Maria and the other Cena. They only brought a couple of guards each, and quickly gathered around Aquarius, chatting merrily.

Garen expressed his love for Aquarius every now and then, acting particularly passionate, but the other party didn't say even a word to him.

The few tents were set up in no time at all, each of them covered with large nets that had leaves tied to them. This was to camouflage the tents from the eye, merging them into the forest.

The seven or eight guards in total also set up a few large tents a little further ahead for shelter.

While they were putting up camp, Garen took that chance to take a walk around the area to stake out the ground. Marin volunteered to stay with him, and they went on the excuse that they were gathering firewood.

Under Ulun's protection, the two of them began to gather wood.

"Cia, do you really like Aquarius that much?" Marin asked softly as she gathered the wood.

"Do you still need to ask?" Garen replied simply.

"Then what part of her do you like?"

"I like all of her. Most importantly, don't you think Aquarius is really beautiful?" Garen copied Acacia's words directly. The two of them picked up a few small sticks every few steps. They weren't gathering firewood at all, but chatting as they took a walk. Behind them, Ulun privately twisted his mouth.

"Then, we're very close, right?" Marin asked again.

"Of course," Garen replied.

"If... I say if, Aquarius and I fell into the water at the same time, who would you save first?" Marin suddenly asked very solemnly.

"Isn't it obvious? Aquarius, of course! Don't you know how to swim?" Garen could also see that Marin liked Acacia, but he was following Acacia's original memories and impressions to the T. Although this answer was very unlike him, it was the answer that suited Acacia best.

Helplessness flashed past Marin's eyes, and she became somewhat down.

Garen bent down to pick up a few dried out branches, when suddenly his palm brushed a black-green plant next to him. A small cut immediately opened up on the back of his hand.

He frowned slightly, not at all used to how weak his body was now. He was just about to straighten up when something in the corner of his eye made him freeze.

"This is...!!"

He carefully peeled apart this unknown plant with its sharp leaves, revealing a small purple-black flower underneath.

"This is... the amejade¹ grass!" Garen's heart began to race. "This world... This world has that legendary, supposedly extinct amejade grass!!"

Chapter 240: Encounter 2

As the ultimate fighter in the previous world, who scoured through a sea of secret technique manuals and handbooks, Garen could still remember that many of his predecessors had recorded several medicine recipes that could strengthen the body and mind in their fighting journals. Most of these had mysterious and impressive effects.

Unfortunately, these records came from the far distant past, and so many ingredients couldn't be found. Even those that were discovered proved to be from a different time, and simply weren't old enough. That was why they had to give up reluctantly.

But this amejade grass happened to be one of the core ingredients in one of those ancient recipes.

These recipes had been added onto the handbooks he had found. Back then, Garen had basically memorized everything in it for the heck of it. After all, with the help of his special power, he didn't have to worry about his memory in the slightest. To think that he would actually find a precious herb that was allegedly long extinct here like this.

"Good stuff..." Garen's expression didn't change as he scanned the ground around the area. Unbelievably, he found two stalks of amejade grass underneath another one of these plants with sharp leaves.

"If I can match this with the pills and solutions on those ancient recipes and then use it on myself, I'll definitely be able to drastically reduce the recovery time. There might be even be an even stronger effect!"

As for judging the age of this amejade grass, he compared it to the information recorded in the manuals and knew for sure it had at least a thousand years' of history! The medicinal effect of something like this would be extremely potent, without a doubt.

"I can't let anyone notice anything different." Garen acted nonchalant as he stood up, and continued chatting with Marin on the way back to the campground. He put the firewood he had gathered in a pile with the rest, but inside he had memorized the exact location where he discovered the amejade grass.

Right now he was impatient to check around this forest, and see what other undiscovered precious herbs this world had in store.

And even more than that, he wanted to see what medicines he could match up besides the amejade grass. If he could find everything on that recipe, then it wouldn't be much of a hassle at all to rapidly regain his secret technique strength in a short period of time.

"Ahh!! Snake!!"

Just as he sat down to rest and was planning to find an excuse later to dig up those herbs, he suddenly heard the surprised screams of Aquarius and the other two girls in the distance.

He thought it over quickly, and dashed towards Aquarius. At the same time, he observed carefully.

Aquarius and her girl friends were running over to his side in a panic. Unlike her two friends, however, Aquarius only seemed flustered, running as she held up her skirt. When he looked closely at the panic in his eyes, he realized it was ever so slightly fake.

Garen took another look at her steps. They were obviously very steady. They looked messy, but in truth, it would be very hard for her to trip.

"So she isn't a normal person..." He took a few steps forward, acting lustful, and reached his arms out to hug Aquarius' waist.

Oh dear!

Aquarius was suddenly tripped by something, and fell into the arms of Prynne, who had just made it here and stood right next to Garen.

"Sorry, I didn't hurt you, did I?" she said softly to Prynne, with tears in her eyes.

"I... I'm fine." Prynne blushed, and replied with a stammer.

Beside him, Garen snorted and rushed forward.

"Aquarius, are you okay? Are you hurt anywhere, did you get bitten anywhere? I'll suck it out for you with my mouth, don't be shy now, if you're bitten by a poisonous snake then it has to be sucked up by mouth! Otherwise, you might get infected, or poisoned! You'll fall into the crutches of illness!"

"It's... It's fine... Hehe." Aquarius rejected him with a slightly annoyed expression. She suddenly realized that Cia was being harder to deal with today than before. "Even if I was bitten, you're a man. Using your mouth to... is not right, is it?"

"At times like these I'm just your doctor, and you're merely my patient! There's nothing to feel bad about! Of everyone present here, I believe only I'm the best at sucking out snake poison, and this is for your safety as well! Otherwise if the poison gets into your body, you might get seriously hurt, grow really sick, or even end up handicapped!" Garen said with an air of truth and justice. He wanted Aquarius to push him away of her own accord, in order to avoid further complications.

"It's not so serious, is it..." Everyone around them fell speechless, including Prynne. But it was obvious that Acacia was deliberately exaggerating the effects, so no one stepped out to say anything.

"It's okay, I wasn't bitten..." Aquarius wondered if she'd attracted a big pain in the neck, as she stood up from Prynne's embrace.

"Is that so? That's too ba.... Good! Hehe... heheh..." Garen purposely said that extra half a word, causing Aquarius to shudder. "Oh, right, Miss Acacia, while you're injured now, do you want to hear the poem I wrote for you?" He quickly pulled a small black book from his pocket.

"T-there's no need..." Once he mentioned the poem, Aquarius instantly looked somewhat uneasy. "I'm very grateful for your praise, but I don't feel very well right now, could you let me rest a little?"

"Where are you feeling uncomfortable, milady?1" Garen took a step forward, and said with a straight face, "I just learned some massaging techniques, I'll definitely make your uncomfortable parts feels better! I can massage you right now!"

Aquarius said helplessly,

"I'm just a bit tired, and I want to take a short nap. Could you spare me that little bit of time? I know you, sir, are a gentleman who cares for the ladies, right?"

"Is that so?" Garen purposely looked disappointed. "In that case... Okay, I'll be right around here. If you need me for anything, you can ask me whenever! I'll be here in an instant!"

"Yes, I'll do that!" Aquarius reached out her hand to lightly push aside the hair on Garen's forehead, "Don't wear yourself out too much, you rest well too."

When the icy cold fingertip touched Garen's forehead, in that instant, their skin both jolted ever so slightly.

"Hm?" Aquarius' eyes flashed with surprise. Only expert fighters and killers would have the basic instinct to dodge when the vital point in the middle of the brow was touched. But why would this aristocratic boy with zero skills or talents have such a response?

Perhaps her fingers were too cold? She guessed inwardly.

Garen also noticed that he had blown his cover slightly, but maintained that lovesick expression on his face, at the same time reaching out his hand to grab Aquarius'. Unfortunately, he missed.

"Go rest." Aquarius smiled at him, then turned around and walked towards her own tent.

Garen remained on the spot, staring at Aquarius' back, stupid with love. His gaze very obviously and vulgarly fell to her swinging, round buttocks. And his uninhibited, heated gaze was also evidently picked up by Aquarius herself.

She felt as though even the skirt couldn't block those lustful eyes from her butt, goosebumps rising all over her body. Even her steps towards the tent became more hurried.

Garen only heaved a sigh of relief when Aquarius entered the tent.

When facing cunning women like this, the simplest and most direct method would be to be direct enough, and vulgar enough. As long as the other party still cared about their body, this tactic would surely have a decent result. He could force her into a panic, and make her unwilling to see him.

Garen was well aware of his socializing skills. If he were to turn circles with her, he would surely be sold before he knew it. Rather than using his weakness to fight the opponent's strength, it was better to solve this matter directly in a manner that suited him best.

This was also related to his martial spirit. Once he got hold of the slightest flaw, he would chase it relentlessly and hit it ferociously. He wouldn't give the enemy the slightest chance!

The group ate the rations they had brought for dinner on that first evening. At night, they lit a campfire, while Prynne recited Cia's love poem out loud. Evidently, other than the other three people in his gang cheering loudly, the rest of the audience looked constipated.² But they still had to clap and cheer against their conscience.

Aquarius and her two girl friends, on the other hand, ducked into the tent and hid out of 'embarrassment'. The others looked as though they were used to it. It seemed this wasn't the first time she used this trick.

Garen kept thinking about those few shrubs of amejade grass, and so seemed distracted as well. The others just assumed he was thinking about Aquarius, so it fit.

As for whether or not Aquarius was a Luminarist, he couldn't be sure. Luminarists weren't like the Martial Adepts, they didn't have absurdly strong Spirits, and usually they looked just like everyone else. Until the very last moment before the explosion, nobody knew who was a Luminarist.

But upon seeing her face-to-face, Garen was sure of one thing. Aquarius wasn't very proactive in chasing Acacia. She was just simply toying with him, rather than purposely pulling him closer. Even if she did have a motive like that, she wasn't taking it too seriously.

If that's the extent of it, then everything is still fine.

Inside Aquarius' tent.

Frowning deeply, Aquarius put her legs together as she sat inside the tent. Looking at her two girl companions in front of her.

"This Acacia, how did he suddenly become so disgusting? At first he was pretty gentlemanly, and here I was thinking he had patience, but to think he's as impatient as other men! No, he was even more direct!"

Maria had a head of long milk-white hair, giving off a spoiled and unreasonable aura. She curled her long hair nonchalantly, acting slightly detached.

"Aren't all men alike? Big Sister Aquarius, you're the one who wanted to play around too much. Wouldn't it be fine if you hadn't attracted him in the first place?"

"I had no choice, wasn't it a request from above? Otherwise why would I butt my head in here for no reason, I'm bored out of my socks!" Aquarius glared at her. "Unlike you, I have a good father and mother!"

"Hey hey hey, don't bring me into this!" Cena protested from the side. "But I kinda think this Acacia isn't too bad. Love should be direct and intense! What's the point of turning around in circles and hiding everything! If you like someone, you should say it out loudly, and show your heart to the other person without any hiding!"

She said nonchalantly.

Cena had dark brown shoulder-length hair. Her air was completely that of a pure and kind girl next door, and she was very beautiful too. She should be the youngest among the three, looking no older than nineteen years old.

Her skin was fair with a flush, but her figure was slightly less impressive than the other two. Her chest was just enough to touch, and so didn't match up to everyone's sense of beauty when it came to body figures.

"He's much better than the guy my dad arranged for me." Cena pouted and took out a small mirror, quickly combing through her hair and pushing her fringe into a right-side slope.

"If you like him, just take him." Aquarius was exasperated. "But I really can't... Cena... Give me your father, could you?"

"If you want me, take him yourself," Cena replied carelessly. She pursed her lips and reflected it on both sides in the mirror, as though not too happy with her image.

But neither of the girls noticed the flash in Aquarius' eyes when mentioning Acacia earlier.

She had suddenly remembered that scene from earlier, the reaction when her finger touched Acacia's forehead.