

Mystical 251

Chapter 251: Tactics 1

Garen hurriedly looked for some white bread in the kitchen and cleaned up the dust on him. Returning to the master bedroom, he changed into a lime-colored robe he took from the wardrobe, throwing the soot-covered shirt to wash before resting comfortably for the first time in a long while.

The next day, Garen was up before the sun was even up. In the living room, the little girl had already started work. Obviously she had the keys to this house.

He sat on the couch, watching as the little girl served him a plate of slice apples and some bread along with some warm goat milk.

"Enjoy your meal." The little girl Nicol performed a rough imitation of a greeting and turned back to the kitchen with haste.

Garen sipped the goat milk slightly. It's thick and tasted fishy. Garen suspected something's been added to it.

He raised the glass and scrutinized the milk. It's got bits of yellowish substance floating around which he suspected was raw egg yolk.

Footsteps clopped on the stairs as Emin descended from the first floor. He wore an off-white robe and looked joyous.

Taking a seat in front of Garen, Emin took a slice of Garen's bread and bit into it.

"Did you have a good rest?"

"It was great, Teacher." Garen nodded.

"Very well." Emin nodded back, "Today onward, we'll converse using the Lush Forest dialect. This town was pretty cut off from the rest of the country. Aside from the common language of the empire, they only use their own dialect. They wouldn't be able to understand any other dialects or languages. Furthermore, your Lush Forest dialect is somewhat different from the common language, this should be good enough for secrecy."

"I have no comment on that." Garen answered.

"Good, then we can start." Emin's second half of the sentence was spoken entirely in the Lush Forest dialect. It sounded accurate too, something Garen wasn't expecting.

"Teacher, how do I start learning tactics?" Garen asked formally.

"Tactics..." Emin muttered, as if to organize his thoughts.

The little girl Nicol appeared with Emin's breakfast and set it down in front of him carefully. After silently curtsying at Emin, she turned and left.

She cleaned her hands on her black apron and exited the building, gently closing the door as she did.

When the little girl was out of earshot, Emin took his own glass of goat milk and said as he sipped on it.

"Tactics are the basics of any Luminarists and the foundation of all Luminarists' abilities. This you need to remember."

He dipped his finger into his glass without manners and started drawing on the table.

A circular-shape appeared on the table with several sections.

"You should know that the Science Pictorial have found out a long time ago, that organisms were made up of microscopic cells." Emin retracted his index finger, "Cells make up tissues, which make up organs, which make up systems, and those make up a whole organism. You should know this, right?"

"Of course. This is the basics of Biology, we have learned about it." Garen nodded.

"Our tactics is basically the same as that. It's just like a cell of an organism. They form the tissues, the organs, the systems, and become our own totem at the end. This is what you'll go through in the future." Emin answered simply. "Tactics are also units. Professionally, we call them unit tactics. They are what we base our totem creatures on. Every Luminarist would create their own totem this way, no exceptions."

"Teacher, there are countless cells in an organism, if we have to create the same structures in a totem, don't we have to build an insane amount of tactics?" Garen frowned.

"This is the core of what we learn. First, you will learn about the structure of a single tactic, an active unit. It is what forms everything else." Emin said seriously. "You will use active units in the future to build your own tissues, organs, systems, and finally a real living totem. This is what you have to do."

"That's... a huge project..." Even if he reached the top of Martial Arts in his past life, this was still shocking to him. There are trillions of cells in an organism's body, if he construct it one by one, it's impossible to construct a totem even until the end of his life.

"What's wrong? Disheartened?" Emin smiled. "Aren't you a genius? You aren't beaten with this little setback, are you?"

"So many Luminarists have successfully constructed their own totem, that means there'll be some sort of pattern to it!" Garen answered with confidence.

"Not bad." Emin nodded with approval. "Let's finish up our breakfast. I only told you what direction to take, you'll need to learn to use the tools of the trade."

"Okay."

Both of them sped through their breakfast and went up the stairs to a white room that is reminiscent of a laboratory.

There was a huge rectangular table that took up half the room. A piece of black cloth was used to cover up something on the table.

Emin closed the door and locked it.

He walked in front of the black cloth and yanked at it.

Flutter!

The black cloth landed on the ground, unveiling the object.

Garen took it in with a breath, his face in disbelief.

The whole table had one very delicate-looking apparatus made with a transparent metal with silver sheen. Within the area of a palm, there were hundreds of faint silver components turning with gears.

The details on the instrument was so precise, it exuded a sense of purity and cold steel.

The whole apparatus was like a detailed toy, it kept dropping a small aqueous silver ball, from left to right, top to bottom, until it dropped into a silvery container.

On the apparatus that's at least five meters long, there were thousands of components as big as a fingernail functioning as they're meant to.

Emin walked in front of the apparatus, sporting a businesslike expression.

"I will be teaching you about one of the two most important tools of a Luminarist, unit factory."

"Unit factory?" Garen repeated the noun, his gaze still fixed on the instrument.

"Yes, just like what it's called, it's a factory that produces units." Emin nodded and answered. "This particular one is mine, it produces my totem White Bear." He paused.

"As I have said before, totem creatures were created from unit tactics. Your father is also a Luminarist, you would have seen totems before, so I won't talk about that. Active units were the bedrock of everything. When a Luminarist studied and learned a creature's active unit, he will be able to use unit factories to clone them, slowly building it up to a higher level of structure and ultimately, become a totem. Basically, it's a tool to duplicate unit tactics to be formed into tissues, organs, systems and totems."

He covered the instrument with the black cloth.

"You'll get one in the future as you'll need one. Next, we'll look at the second tool."

He walked to the other corner of the room, in front of a small table.

"This is a whole series of tools. Before unit factories can reproduce active units, where do they come from? That's where the Luminarists have to search for themselves."

"Search?" Garen was confused. "Isn't it a standard blueprint that everyone can use? Like your White Bear, won't I be able to build it if I want to?"

"There's also that. Learning a standard model and produce based on that, that's the easiest way." Emin nodded, "Pretty observant, not bad. This is also why different Luminarists have different paths. The stronger and richer their inheritance, the stronger their totem will be. Hence, all Luminarists will be extra cautious about their own knowledge, because it literally represents their power."

Emin paused again, "Since you are my student, you'll have to walk the same path as I did, but I'm not only proficient with White Bear, I know about other totems too. But let's put that aside for now."

He pointed at a white instrument that looks mildly similar to a microscope on Earth.

"This is a microscope, it can show you enlarged images of objects. It can enlarge images up to 800 times their original size. It's one of the medium-range ones on the market. Beside that are petri dish, forceps, magnifying glass, microdissection needle, tripod, asbestos net, bunsen burner, tube holder, blade tweezers, slides, coverslips..." Emin introduced the whole set to Garen.

Garen looked at the familiar equipments.

"These are definitely the same as the ones on Earth..." He thought.

At the end of his introduction, Emin sighed,

"Alas, I only have so much money. The RAL just came out with a new tool, but I don't have the money to buy it."

He stood beside his table.

"These are the two things Luminarists must have, one to research, another to reproduce."

"I get it, active units are what forms everything, but how do active units come from?" Garen asked.

"This question is very crucial." Emin nodded with approval. "Their origins can be from anywhere. There are countless types of creatures in the world, Luminarists seek to research strong creatures and use silver to mimic their powers. The active units we talk about, are actually from the creatures in the nature."

"Creatures in the nature... If that's the case, theoretically, any beings can be used as a totem?" Garen asked curiously.

"Of course. As long as you dig deep enough to understand the cells of a creature, you can use them as your totem," Emin nodded, smiling. "Of course, there's a limit to everyone's vigor, if you want to study everything but lack specificity, then nothing would come to fruition. Your totem may not even win against the most average Luminarist."

Chapter 252: Tactics 2

"I understand now. Many Luminarists specialize in one type of totem generation after generation, and expand that type to a really high level, so it grows stronger and stronger. So unless you're an ultimate genius researcher, there's no Luminarist who could catch up to the results of their cumulative studies over generations while being distracted." Garen nodded in understanding.

"As long as you understand. So what you need to do now is first learn how to use these two sets of items. Especially the unit factory, you must make your own unit factory from now on as well. Otherwise, you won't even have to think about constructing your own totem," Emin advised him solemnly.

"Yes." In that instant it was as though Garen returned to his time on Earth, carefully listening to the teacher speaking.

Emin began to teach Garen how to use the two sets of tools. And the latter listened with unusual raptness as well, concentrating hard.

But after they began practical practise, Emin noticed with some regret that although Garen was terrifyingly talented at making blueprints, he was still slightly slow in understanding how to use the two types of tools.

For that reason he sighed a lot in succession, venting the unhappiness within.

However, he didn't get to sigh for long.

When it came to using these two tools, the microscope used for research was fine, but the unit factory on the other hand did indeed use up a lot of concentration and energy. Garen crouched clumsily in front of the intricate factory, following the construction process step-by-step. This thing took at least one hour for every cycle. If you followed the mercury ball while even slightly distracted, it would be extremely hard to observe the whole process of creating the factory carefully. At the same time, you needed to understand the actual timings and methods of using it.

"Teacher, I didn't see this part properly, let's go again."

"Okay."

An hour later...

"Teacher, please repeat this part again."

"Fine."

Two hours passed."

"Teacher, I used a little too much force there. Please start again."

"No problem."

Three hours passed...

"Teacher, I was slightly nervous just now, so my hand moved too quickly. Once more please!"

"..."

Six hours later...

"Teacher, I was too agitated, I didn't pay attention at the fourth part. Again please!"

Emin looked at Garen's excited, energetic face.

The student and teacher stared at each other wordlessly.

Coo-coo... coo-coo...

There was the sound of an owl from outside.

"Teacher, what's the matter?" Garen blinked, and asked in a low voice.

Coo...

Emin's stomach made a dull sound.

"Is it this late already...?" Only then did Garen notice that the sky outside was already pitch black.

"Are you... always this energetic?" Emin's feelings were complicated, as he looked at Garen's expression of excitement.

"It's okay, I'm young, and I have stamina."

Garen smiled.

"Forget it, I'll bring you something to eat, you go ahead on your own. You should have clearly seen how I use it. Is that okay?"

"No problem." Garen nodded. "Sorry, Teacher, I made you stay hungry with me."

"It's okay, this is your first time in contact with all this. It's very normal for you to be so curious about it." Emin waved his head, but deep inside he knew. When it came to learning how to use the unit factory, most normal people would start feeling dizzy after two hours of consecutive use, ending up mentally exhausted. This was because the Luminescence caused the human body a certain amount of damage. If one came into close contact with it for too long, their body wouldn't be able to withstand it.

But Garen had been working on it for more than ten hours, and still didn't feel any discomfort. This meant that the time Garen could spend on this was several times that of other Luminarists!

When Emin walked out of the lab, he once more harbored deep suspicions towards everything he thought he knew about this world before.

"Looks like I knew too few Luminarists before this." He shook his head and sighed as he went down the stairs, looking as though he aged a lot suddenly.

After having dinner, Emin finally gave in and returned to his room to rest. He left Garen alone in the lab, learning enthusiastically, using the unit factory over and over again. He seemed to have returned to those biology or chemistry classes back on Earth when he listened intently.

Of the three strongest specialties of the terrifying Divine Statue Technique, two of them were recovery power and endurance. This was when they shone the most.

Before Emin went to sleep, he saw the light in the lab shining.

In the middle of the night when he got up to use the toilet, he raised his head to look at the lab, and the light was still on.

Early the next morning, he yawned as he walked out of the bedroom, and the light in the lab was still shining.

"It's the first time, so no wonder..." He sighed feelingly, listening to the sounds of Garen moving about in the lab, and went downstairs to eat breakfast himself.

Noon.

Emin sat in the courtyard, lazily tanning in the sun.

"The weather sure is great..."

He narrowed his eyes, looking at the cornflower sky. The golden sunlight shone on his body, warming his entire body up.

The little girl Nicol was hanging out the freshly-washed sheets and clothes next to him.

"Is Garen still upstairs?"

"Yes, mister," Nicol replied hastily.

"It sure is good to be young..." Emin sighed deeply. He had always taken good care of himself. If he hadn't been grievously injured in that intense battle before, there was no way he would end up as old as he was now.

The sky gradually darkened.

After dinner, Emin looked at Nicol, who was washing up the dishes.

"Is Garen still upstairs?"

"Yes, mister," Nicol replied hastily.

Emin touched his beard, and said nothing.

At night.

Emin put down the novel in his hand, and glanced at the second floor.

"Garen still hasn't come down?"

"It seems so... mister." Nicol was crouching by the fireplace and adding more firewood, and replied hesitantly.

The third day...

The fourth day...

Ker-chak.

The door to the second floor lab finally opened.

Nicol picked up the empty tray on the floor outside the door and was about to leave when she suddenly heard the door open. She quickly turned around.

"Mr Garen?"

"Teacher! Teacher!" A black shadow dashed past her, and raced down the stairs.

Emin walked out of his room, yawning.

"It's so early in the morning, what are you yelling about."

The black shadow instantly trampled upstairs, ran in front of Emin and stood still.

It was Garen, who had lived in the lab for four days.

He frowned deeply, and held up something in his hand.

"Teacher, the lamp oil ran out."

Emin released a long breath.

"If there's no more oil, go rest. After messing around for so long, what results do you have? Don't tell me you fell asleep in there?"

"I got it!" Garen grinned, revealing his pearly whites.

"Okay... Four days, that's still considered normal." Emin nodded.

Garen also released a deep breath.

He already knew that his talent when it came to instruments of high delicacy like the unit factory was only so-so. This thing needed a high degree of concentration and an accurate hand of corresponding calculations at the same time, and he was really not used to it. His body had already regained his reflexes from the peak-level Body Hardening Technique, so if he lost his focus for even a moment, he would emit some miniscule vibrations.

This was the result of his body and spirit not merging fully yet. Although he could already use the Four Major Secret Techniques, he still needed some time to feel it out.

It was just that this didn't affect how much he could actually use his martial arts. After all, his martial arts didn't have any delicate moves, they were opened spectacularly and closed large.

For those four days, he basically didn't sleep or rest, only occasionally eating something. That was how he managed to learn how to control the unit factory in one go.

After eating breakfast, he took a little break.

It was only after Emin confirmed that Garen was still feeling quite good, and didn't show any signs of insufficient rest, that the teacher agreed to demonstrate the manipulation process.

In front of the lab door, there was a light silver horizontal line, glowing with a faint silver light.

Emin and Garen stepped across the line, and walked into the lab.

"This line at the door is a little device to prevent normal people from seeing the objects inside this room. It's another application of tactics, one of the practical ones to use in daily life. I'll teach it to you next time." Emin walked up to the unit factory.

"Now, let me see what method of control you've picked up."

Garen nodded.

He stood the furthest-left end of the unit factory, and picked up a small silver ball using the pliers in his right hand. He then lightly placed it on a slanted slope on the factory machine.

Brr...

The small ball rolled down the slope slowly, and dropped into a silver cylindrical container. Soon enough, in the midst of clacking sounds, the three silver pipes connected to the container began to flow with a translucent liquid.

The three paths of liquid split up and flowed towards three directions. When they passed through a small round archways, Garen instantly reached out his hand to press the archways, as though adjusting something.

The three liquid paths instantly became a lot clearer. Passing through the archway, they gathered into one silver pipe, and flowed into a metal device like a merry-go-round. Once the liquid stopped flowing completely, the merry-go-round began to turn slowly, making a melodic sound like wind chimes.

Garen quickly reached out to adjust some small switches and buttons around the merry-go-round, turning the many dials to the optimum numerical degree.

After the wooden horses took two rounds, he counted silently to himself, and reached out again to adjust these dials, his accuracy and speed absolutely on point.

Pak!

The spinning stopped.

A drop of viscous silver-colored water dripped down from the exact center, falling precisely into the neck of a purple curve-necked flask.

Pff!

A flash of purple smoke instantly rose from the curve-necked flask, following the curved neck as it flowed down, darting into a large silver ball the size of a human head.

Garen quickly walked up to the round ball, his fingers pressing rapidly on a panel there, as though he was keying in some data.

In a mere ten seconds, he keyed in twenty numbers, forming several combinations of different lengths. And this was just the beginning.

After a whole half an hour, drops of silver liquid dripped out of the round ball with a smacking sound, falling into the last large beaker.

These silver liquids looked like silver grains of sand, flowing slowly. At the same time, they looked like some microorganism, squirming ever so slightly.

"You did it." Emin looked at the silver-colored liquid in the beaker closely, and with satisfaction. "Not bad, there was not a single mistake there."

Garen heaved a sigh of relief, and pulled his hand back from the panel.

"Teacher, I learned how to use the tools. Now what?"

"You learned how to use the microscope as well?"

"That's a lot simpler." Garen walked up to the microscope with an air of familiarity, and easily set it up. He sucked up a drop of silver liquid, did the preparations, and began to observe.

Emin nodded, satisfied.

"Not bad, not bad. You've done all the preparatory work, so let's begin with the first step."

"The first step?"

"Go out into the wild on your own, and find the totem creature you want. Bugs, beasts, birds, anything works. Go ahead, we'll start constructing from the basic levels. But you should still choose carefully, this is the direction your potential totem will take, the totem you will rely on for everything. So it's best to be more careful when choosing the rough direction." Emin smiled. "Although I'm not specialized enough because I study everything and ended up still being a very average, normal Luminarist, the benefit is that my student will have more directions to expand. First, you choose something, anything, and as a demonstration, I'll show you how to construct a totem, as well as what steps are required in between. In general, which tactics are needed to create organizations, organs, systems. I'll show you each of them, one by one. Of course, other than the White Bear, which is inherited, I haven't gotten too deeply into the others. It's just enough to finish constructing a simple totem. If you want to upgrade it, you'll have to do the deeper research yourself."

"I understand." Garen nodded.

"There are two types of totems, one is core and the other basic. Now go, find a creature you want to make into a totem in the wild around here. This will be the first basic totem I'll give you. Basic totems have very weak abilities, but they'll have a certain benefit for your daily life. Such as reconnaissance, such as cleaning up, such as collecting items, or using it as a tool etc."

Chapter 253: Totem 1

"So I have to find a target by myself?" Garen nodded thoughtfully. "Are there any basic conditions or requirements?"

"It's good as long as it's not too complicated. Since you just began, you just have to learn the basic frame, the rest you can explore at your own pace in the future," Emin advised him. "Alright, go. You still have all morning, find me the totem you want to make. Remember, it has to be something you need, and something you can use. Every creature has their own unique power, don't choose carelessly."

"Yes."

Garen nodded respectfully.

"Then I'll go wash up now. Once you return after catching what you want, we'll officially begin the construction demonstration." Emin yawned, turned around, and walked out of the room.

Garen found a large glass bottle and a pair of boarskin gloves. Then he went downstairs and immediately left the house.

There were a lot more young men in town in the morning. They were mostly carrying bows and arrows, hunting knives, and wore clothes made of fur and leather, as they came and left in small groups. Some were even carrying their freshly acquired prey on their backs.

Garen followed the main road until he left the town. The long grey robes he wore slightly piqued the curiosity of the townsfolk. Several children who were chasing each other about instantly hid behind a wall when they saw him approaching, and watched him guardedly.

Upon exiting the town, he saw a large, wide field of hills and grass spread out in front of him. Small clumps of forests dotted the landscape, mostly shorter shrubs that didn't grow too well. The lush green forests and dark green grassy plains practically merged into one. Some small white butterflies danced circles around the little flowers on the grass, and groups of unnamed birds occasionally flew across the sky, making soft shrill cries.

Not far away from the town, there was a little stream about three or four meters wide. This was the source of the famous Red River, and was exceptionally clean because it consisted of melted snow water from the snowy peaks of the mountains towering into the clouds in the distance.

Garen walked up to the side of the Red River, crouched down, and began scouring through the grasses and moist mud.

"What kind of a totem do I need?"

That was how he asked himself.

"What kind of a totem would be of use to me?"

He uprooted the grass, and saw a troop of black ants slowly crawling across the black soil. He looked at them but didn't move. Then he turned his gaze away, to another clump of dark green grass.

There was a big fat green caterpillar resting quietly on the thin and narrow grass leaves. It was covered in spikes, its four lazy eyes looking completely listless.

On a little yellow flower next to it, there was a wild bee with a thin black thorax. It was crawling back and forth on the fingernail-sized flower stamen, its legs covered with yellow pollen. It was obviously out collecting pollen.

"Ants, caterpillar, wild bee..."

Garen shook his head slightly.

"They're too weak. Although they have simple make-ups, it wouldn't be much help to me even if I succeeded."

He stood up, and continued walking towards the hills and plains in the distance.

"If it has to be useful to me, then it better have some strength so it can support me in daily life. If it can fly, it can be used to obtain information, for reconnaissance, and as a lookout. If it has a certain offensive ability, it can also be used to defend. In that case... the best option is a type of bird."

He glanced at a few patches of forest not far away. There was the light trilling of birds there.

After crossing a few hills, he quickly chose the largest patch of forest and walked right in.

The forest was lush and green, with clean air. A few children were wandering about inside, gathering something. These children were dressed in rags, looked sickly and pale, and their bodies were also pitifully thin. They each carried a large basket on their backs. Some were filled with plants and wild fruits, while others barely had anything.

These children only took one look at Garen when he came in, but they soon started ignoring him, looking back at the ground instead as they dug.

There were many types of birds resting here, raising a continuous chatter.

Garen looked up and identified them carefully. There were many types of birds on those trees, almost five or six in all. They came in different sizes, and most were black. Only a few were blue or green.

"It has to be slightly bigger, with offensive power, and decent flying speed..." Garen realized he didn't recognize any of the birds. Looking around, his gaze fell on a dirty boy in the distance.

Like the others, this boy wore grey sackcloth clothes and carried a large basket on his back. His hair was matted and messy, but there was a green parrot perched on his shoulder, which let him stand out from the rest.

Garen walked over to him, and stood beside the boy. "Are these birds yours?" He tried to soften his tone as much as possible.

"Yes, sir. Do you require anything?" The boy straightened his bent back, looking at Garen in confusion. This strange lord came into the forest and starting looking left and right, but no one knew what he was doing.

"I want to ask about what species of birds you have here, do you know?" Garen pulled out a small copper piece and flicked it towards the boy.

The little boy quickly caught it in a flurry. A copper piece may not be able to buy much elsewhere, but it could still buy some snacks here. He instantly broke into a grin.

"Birds? I know about them."

"Know your bird! Know your bird!"¹ The green parrot on his shoulder started squawking.

"Shut up, Hans!" The boy grew flustered and angry. "If you go on like this I won't give you dinner!"

"Just explain it to me properly, if you do it well I'll give you another." Garen looked at the green parrot smilingly.

"No problem. My little sister loved keeping birds. After she left, I started liking it too, so I'm really good at this!" The boy thumped his chest.

"Know your sis! Know your sis!"²

"Shut up!!" The boy's face flushed bright red, and he flicked the green parrot's head angrily.

Garen couldn't help but laugh as he watched the boy and bird combo. They seemed to get along very well.

"I want to find a type of bird that can fly fast, has some strength, and some attack power. Do you know any types?" he listed out his conditions.

"Then you've found the right man, sir!" The little boy wiped the snot that was about to leak out of his nose. "According to your requirements, the most suitable candidate is definitely a hawk."³

"A hawk, is it? What's the fastest hawk here?" Garen nodded and asked.

"All our hawks here are pretty fast... and most of them are the cunning blue hawks. It's not too big, and it's really fast. It can scratch open someone's skin in the blink of an eye! Its claws are the sharpest, and it really likes to steal everyone's chicks," the little boy replied in details.

"Are there any other types of birds? Or maybe it doesn't have to be a bird," Garen asked, frowning. Although the blue hawk fit his requirements, he still doesn't like this sort of eagle that only knows how to steal chickens.

"If it doesn't have to be a bird..." The little boy scratched his hair. "Oh! There is a type, but it's not a bird, it's a bug."

"Oh? What is it?" Garen looked interested.

"Neon butterflies!"⁴ The boy looked uncomfortable. "The bigger ones are as big as a washbasin. They're strong, very beautiful, and really strange too. Most butterflies aren't fast, but these are super fast, even faster than normal birds. Only eagles can compare to them. And even more annoyingly, they're extremely poisonous. If a person accidentally breathes in their powder, their whole body will get poisoned and grow numb. If it's just a little more serious, it could kill you! It's terrifying!"

"Oh? There are butterflies like that? Where, show me?" Garen was instantly sold.

"I'm not going. You just have to walk in that direction, just walk all the way straight, and you'll see those annoying butterflies in no time. Their whole body is poisonous, and they took over the whole patch of forest. If you see any huge butterflies, without any speck of impurity in their blue, that's them." The boy pointed in a direction as he explained.

"Thanks." Garen flicked his second copper piece, and took large strides in the direction the boy pointed.

Leaving the little forest, Garen followed the direction the boy led him to. His steps were quick, and more condensed little forests soon appeared around him. Signs of human activity gradually decreased, while the tire tracks and footsteps on the ground rapidly vanished as well.

In the distance, he could begin to see the white snowy peaks reaching into the clouds.

Very soon, he saw the neon butterflies the boy was talking about.

Under some dark shady trees, a group of blue butterflies glowed with fluorescence, dancing in the shadows. It was as though they had fluorescent powder scattered all over them.

These butterflies danced about soundlessly. The smallest were palm-sized, the largest had nearly a meter in wingspan. The long furry bodies were fully exposed, and crept out anyone who looked at them.

Garen picked up a stone from the ground, narrowed his eyes, and tossed it at them.

Psst!

Like a sharp arrow, the stone tore through the air and accurately hit the largest neon butterfly.

In that instant, it was like poking a beehive. A large swarm of neon butterflies rushed out of the forest, flooding the air as they came for Garen, as though the blue lights had instantly merged into an ocean.

Garen kicked the ground, and a big piece of black soil scattered through the air, carrying specks of grass with it. They rained down everywhere, beating on the large swathe of neon butterflies around him.

In the midst of many dull plopping sounds, the blue lights began to fall and dim, while the piercing smell of poisonous powder spread through the air.

Garen held his breath. With a flash of his steps, he appeared in front of the largest neon butterfly. Picking it up with a gloved hand, he stuffed it into the glass bottle and turned heel immediately.

He hadn't gone far when suddenly a huge swarm of neon butterflies surged out behind. They were extremely fast, and could almost catch up to a running Garen even without flying in a straight line.

Garen took one look back, and applied more force under his feet. This gave him a boost of speed, and he left the neon butterflies in the dust.

He gave his body a jolt, instantly and quietly throwing off countless fine particles of blue powder from his body. They were blown away by the wind, and he only started breathing again after all the poison powder had vanished.

Holding up the bottle to see, he noticed that the neon butterfly wasn't completely dead yet, moving ever so slightly in the bottle.

He was considered satisfied with this sort of butterfly. It wasn't slow, it was highly poisonous, and rather strong as well. Compared to normal bugs that died with a stomp, there was a layer of thick keratin on the surface of these butterflies, so it seemed to be as strong as a mouse. That would mean it had no problem delivering messages.

"The only weakness is that it's not very good at camouflage, but even so, it will do." Garen thought back to the blue-scaled snake encountered before. Compared to those totem creatures, the neon butterfly was a flying animal, and it wasn't part of the hawk's menu. Even if it was rather flashy, the other advantages were enough to mask those little flaws.

In the experiment lab

Emin carefully wiped his mouth with a white napkin, holding up the neon butterfly's bottle to observe it.

"It's my first time making this type of neon butterfly, but I have researched butterflies before. Even though I didn't go into detail, I do know some." He put down the bottle. "So you're sure you want the neon butterfly?"

"Of course." Garen was standing beside him, and nodded when he was asked.

"Alright then. A Luminarist will have a core totem and a normal totem for support purposes. As your teacher, I can make you your first totem for free. Consider it my present to you. But if you want to change to another a totem next time, you'll have to study and create it yourself. Do you understand?"

"I understand." Garen nodded.

"Alright then, let us begin."

Chapter 254: Totem 2

Emin nodded, and put the butterfly bottle on the microscope.

"Creating a totem is basically using silver to imitate a living creature. How to imitate? First, you need to know the creature's biological make-up, only then can you successfully imitate it."

He pointed out his index finger, and slowly started sketching mid air.

His fingertip drew lines of silver-white light in the air, forming silver-white threads.

As the threads slowly faded and disappeared, but before the vanished completely, all the silver-white threads Emin drew each formed a tiny figure 6. All the 6's quickly and randomly matched up, forming many inconsistent figures that looked like badges. Just like a oval insect's egg being wrapped up in many large circles.

"This figure represents analysis. It's used especially for analyzing any creature's internal make-up. It can trigger the analyzing ability in your brain, in order to quickly analyze any creature. We call it the analysis tactic. It's one of the three basic Luminarist tactics. I'll teach it to you later."

Emin pointed at the the floating figures, and a wave of ripples spread from that spot. With a whoosh, the figures dart into the bottle, landing on the neon butterfly.

Soon, silver tattoo lines appeared on the neon butterfly's body.

Emin explained, "Normally, analyzing a creature requires sufficient knowledge, experience, and accumulation. If you haven't accumulated enough, your analysis tactic wouldn't get many results. After

all, this is just a quick analysis. It's only suitable for Luminarists who are familiar with this type of creature."

Beside him, Garen nodded, looking at the butterfly in the bottle with his undivided attention.

"Now, I'm analyzing this neon butterfly's body systems. Its life would always be dependent on some certain systems. This neon butterfly... mm... the survival system, that's the most basic instinct. A flying system, and defense system. There are three parts. It's made of three parts in total, that won't be too hard."

Emin flicked his finger, and the silver tattoos on the neon butterfly instantly began to dim.

"After that, I'll imitate the basic units of the three part systems in order. At these times, I need to have completely researched and understood creature cells. I can only proceed after knowing the root principles. I researched butterflies before, so I'll skip this part."

Emin walked up to the long table with the unit factory, bent down and pulled out a large black box. He opened the cover, revealing blocks after blocks of pure silver bricks. All square and proper, they looked unexpectedly clean and brand new.

Emin picked up a silver brick, and drew in the air again with his other hand. Soon enough, he had carved out another figure.

This time, it was an extremely complex figure, lined up like rows of mathematical formulae, or like a passage of unknown words.

As Emin wrote his figures, the silver block in his other hand also began to slowly melt, turning to liquid like mercury and floating over his palm. It merged into a silver ball.

"This is the second basic tactic: forging. Right now, I'm forging different units for the three systems at the same time, so it's a little more complicated. Actually, all these figures are used to move the silver, and use them to replicate the principles and scenes in my head. That's why we also call this tactic: replicate. Anyway, it's up to you what you want to call it."

Garen stared at his teacher's movements closely and nodded without speaking, terrified that he would miss even the slightest movement.

The round silver ball in Emin's hand dissolved quickly, revealing three small balls inside.

The three small balls formed a triangle and spun rapidly, as though forming a whole.

Emin pointed at the three silver balls and said, "These three things are the basic units for the three systems that I forged. Don't be fooled by appearances, the structure inside is actually very complicated, and completely different. What I'm going to do now is put these units into the unit factory, and then perform large scale replicating. Then I'll assemble them to make a model of the three large systems. The assembly also requires a third basic tactic: assimilation."

Garen nodded slowly.

"Three steps in total: analyse, forge, and assimilate. You use these three tactics to control and lead, is that right? Teacher."

"That is true, it looks simple on the surface. What you need to do is replicate a creature using silver. These three tactics are the most basic of the basic, and all totems come from them. No matter how complicated the totem, it must go through these three steps." Emin put down the silver balls in his hand. "Of course, after all that is done, there's still the final step."

"There's still a final step?"

"Of course." Emin smiled. "After completing the three steps, the silver totem formed is just a model made out of silver. But creatures themselves require food as an energy source to support their movements. What about totems? If they want to move, they naturally require energy. And this is the last step that needs our help."

"What is it?" Garen asked.

Emin threw a unit into the unit factory, and began to adjust and replicate it as he replied,

"The last step is to provide the energy. We also call it activation."

"Activation?"

"That's right, this is the basis for all Luminarists. In the past, it was also called lighting. Lighting the lamps to illuminate, that is how the term Luminarists first originated," Emin explained.

"How do you light it, then?" Garen pressed on.

"That is our most pivotal talent." Emin pointed at his head. "Here. Anyone who can be a Luminarist, has a special appraisal quality. Our power is shapeless and immaterial, and it can't influence anything other than silver. But it has the mystical effect of giving silver life."

"No wonder Luminarists use silver as their materials..." Garen instantly understood.

"It's actually very easy to activate something, but according to the difference in our appraisal, the strength of the totems activated will also differ."

"And how is my appraisal power?" Garen asked with slight anticipation.

"Unfortunately, your appraisal is very normal... Back then, at your home, I checked for you on the sly." Emin shrugged and said bluntly. "In other words, the totems you light will not be given any special extra effect."

Garen thought as much. Vanderman's appraisal was very average too, so it would be hard for his son to be Prodigy-level.

"Those Prodigy-level Luminarists, are there totems really strong?"

"I saw one peak Prodigy-level Luminarist's totem, it was an owl used for support. This prodigy's appraisal ability was to give totems three times the power the original had." Emin reminisced slightly, "That owl

was half a person tall, and it had terrifying power. It could actually fight on even ground with a lion totem, and eventually defeated the lion totem. It tore the lion into shreds."

"An owl defeating a lion, huh...?" Garen could also imagine this strange scene, and felt a little melancholy inside.

"Alright, enough about that. You are far from Prodigy-level now. But your advantage is with precision blueprints. A strong precision blueprint ability is enough to give the totems you forge impressive stability. Master-level precision blueprints would also have a great impact on high-level precision blueprints and fixing totems. With your skill, if you expand it well, you can accept jobs from some Prodigy-level Luminarists, and help them to make unactivated totems and reap some rewards. Of course, the precondition is that you must be able to completely analyze the principles." Emin continued to console him.

"I can still do that?" Garen's eyes lit up, and he nodded solemnly.

"First, I'll explain the principles of analyzing tactics..." Emin didn't waste a moment, and immediately started to explain the details to Garen.

The teacher and student gathered in the lab, and a whole day passed in a moment. Other than eating, drinking and answering Nature's call, they basically did not leave the lab.

With Emin's careful teaching, Garen also began to slowly understand some basic Luminarist knowledge and secrets.

Luminarists usually did not write any books. They tended to teach their own knowledge verbally just like this, in order to prevent their knowledge and inheritance from leaking out to others. Every Luminarist could be called a biochemist. Their appraisal talent was their research tool.

In four days, as the neon butterfly totem slowly took shape, Garen witnessed the whole process of forming a totem step by step. From analysis to assimilation, each step was further divided into many smaller steps, exceptionally intricate and detailed. The final assimilation was especially hard. With his teacher's tutelage, he used a Master-level precision blueprint and, step by step, put the units into groups, and then put the groups into units, systems. In the end, they had utterly formed a complete butterfly totem.

At last, it was time for the final activation.

Garen stood quietly in front of a small table, looking at the silver neon butterfly totem on it.

The totem was silent and dull, without a trace of life. It looked just like an intricate silver model, gorgeous and graceful.

Garen looked at Emin on his right, and the latter nodded slightly at him.

"I'll start now."

Garen pointed his index finger, and pressed the surface of the neon butterfly lightly.

"Kandas vieira (Ten Thousand Mammoths Traction)... Silversa (May the Silver be ever-luminescent, the end is rebirth) ..."

As he chanted lightly, a pale silver halo of light rose slowly behind him.

"Hildaves (where I am)... Runsa (there is life)."

As soon as Garen's voice stopped, the room descended into silence.

The two of them look at the silver totem quietly, and disappointment flashed in both their eyes.

Did they fail?

The same thought appeared in both their minds.

Garen also understood that if the first activation didn't work, that meant his appraisal quality may not even be average-level. It could only be the lowest level.

"It's okay, if you don't succeed this time there's always next time." Emin consoled him from the side.
"With just the Master-level precision blueprint ability, your abilities from now on will be guaranteed."

"That's all I can do." Garen nodded, feeling slightly helpless. The silver halo behind him slowly scattered.

"Let's go in to eat."

One followed after the other, as the two men left the lab.

At the very end, Garen looked at the butterfly totem on the table once more, and sighed imperceptibly. He began closing the door behind him.

Smack!

Suddenly there was a small noise from behind him.

Garen's whole body jolted.

In an instant, silver light erupted from behind him. Countless rays of blinding silver light shot out of the room, making his back shine like a sea of silver.

Just behind him, the silver butterfly on the table began to flap its wings slowly. It struggled a bit, and then leapt off the table, slowly taking flight.

Garen tilted his face to look at the butterfly, a hint of excitement and a hint of joy in his heart. He stretched out his index finger, and the butterfly landed on it.

"It worked..."

"Congratulations." Emin looked over from where he was standing by the stairs, with a similar expression of joy and relief.

Chapter 255: Achievement 1

After dinner, the teacher and student duo left their little block and went out of the town, into a dark and deserted forest.

There wasn't any sign of human habitation in these isolated woods. All they could hear were the strange noises of animals rustling past grass.

Emin wore all pitch black, holding a short staff in his hand. He tapped the ground once, lightly.

A silver ripple instantly spread from the tip of his staff, quickly rushing past underneath Garen's feet as it spread far and wide in all direction. It soon vanished into the distant forest.

It was only when the ripple scattered that Emin raised up the staff in his hand and gave it a twirl. Silver engravings rose to the surface of the staff, looking especially evident in the dark night.

"We can start testing now," Emin said softly. "I cast an isolation tactic around us. Normal people can't see us. Your neon butterfly is just a support totem, and you can change it any time you want later. But it's still your first totem, so it has some special meaning. It can demonstrate some totem-specific qualities for you. Are you ready?"

Garen was standing right opposite him, dressed all in grey, and nodded solemnly. He was holding a large bottle, and coiled up inside was his very first totem, the neon butterfly.

"I can feel it, the totem is like I got a new organ, an arm. It's very lifelike and convenient. I can choose to control it, or give it a simple order for it to complete on its own. What a miraculous feeling," he said soft, as he opened the cap to the bottle.

Psst!

With a flash of blow, the neon butterfly immediately darted out of the bottle, and slowly landed on Garen's shoulder. It was like a huge blue shawl, glowing with a pale blue fluorescent light in the night.

Emin's palm paused, and a large white bobcat walked out slowly from behind him.

It was a meter and a half long, like a slightly smaller leopard. It walked soundlessly, its shoulders rising on both sides as it walked, and it licked its tongue greedily at times. In the night, its eyes glowed with an eerie green light.

Emin reached out his hand to pat the bobcat's head.

"This is my support totem, Bobcat." He smiled, "As long as you can support them, you can create as many support totems as you want. After all, it's your own talent keeping them afloat. Most Luminarists can only support one or two. The stronger ones can do four or five. Because support totems have simple structures, it's easy to make them, so they're usually treated as disposable items."

He glanced at the blue butterfly on Garen's shoulder.

"If it's like yours, you should be able to do more."

Garen nodded, and said bluntly,

"I can sense that my spirit can support a few more, probably about two."

"In other words, you can have two more support totems. If you add that to your core totem, that would be four totems. That is the extent of your talent." Emin nodded. "Alright, begin then. Let's see, how does your neon butterfly fare in real battle?"

"Alright."

The two of them stopped talking, and retreated a few steps back at the same time, leaving the stage to the two totems.

Meoww!!

The white bobcat arched its back, and made a noise between that of a cat and a leopard. Its emerald eyes were fixed intently on the neon butterfly flying in front of it.

The white bobcat began to slowly walk circles around the neon butterfly.

The neon butterfly flapped its wings, rising higher and higher, as though trying to avoid direct conflict with the bobcat.

Suddenly, the neon butterfly pulled itself upwards. With a single meow, a white figure pounced into the sky, directly at where the butterfly was, and missed.

The neon butterfly immediately flew up in a curve, swaying uncertainly from left to right.

Pshh!

It dodged another pounce from the white shadow, and landed gracefully on a tree branch.

Having missed twice, the white bobcat seemed to get instinctively frustrated. It paced, making circles around the tree where the neon butterfly had stopped, and occasionally made deep howling sounds.

Suddenly its gaze turned sharp, and it dug its limbs onto the tree trunk, borrowing the momentum to leap up the tree.

The green tree trunk was ripped to shreds. Four white scars appeared on the whole and smooth tree trunk underneath its claws. The bobcat pounced at the neon butterfly with lightning speed.

Ka-chak!

The tree branch broke, and the butterfly took flight again. It flew higher up, but a white shadow quickly followed it, pressing it down with its claw as it landed nimbly on the ground.

But the bobcat had barely taken a few steps with the butterfly in its mouth when it started swaying, and eventually fell sideways onto the ground with a thud.

"It's over." Emin clapped his hands as he walked over. "It counts as a draw. The bobcat just needed to bite down to break the neon butterfly. But at the same time, it was struck by the poison powder during those few failed pounces. Its internal systems were damaged, so it can't move anymore.

"So you're saying I chose well?" Garen also walked over as he asked.

"To be more precise, you controlled it well. A real neon butterfly wouldn't be able to avoid a bobcat's pounces so easily. I would have won with the first pounce." Emin shook his head with a smile. "But the neon butterfly's main ability is its poison powder, that's used to protect itself. It can fly rather fast, and it can fly in the rain as well. When faced with complicated geography, it can also be a good scout. Only problem is it can't hide very well."

"That's true." Garen nodded in agreement. "It glows blue in the night, it indeed can't really camouflage."

"This is just your first totem, you can choose to change it later. There's no rush." Emin waved his hand, "Regarding totems, there's still one more crucial item."

He raised his staff, and dipped it lightly in front of Garen.

With a smacking sound the tip of the staff was pressing on Garen's calf.

"Eh?" On the other hand, Garen looked curious. "This is..."

He noticed that the tip of the staff hadn't actually touched the skin on his calf, as though it was being repelled by something.

He looked closely at where the tip of the staff was. There was a thin, transparent, pale blue membrane between the staff and his trousers.

"That is Totem Light." Emin pulled back his staff. "After a totem forms, this is the protective force field it reflects on its master. It covers the master's whole body, and has no weak spot."

"So this is Totem Light?" Garen reached out his hand, looking at that extremely thin pale blue membrane expand as he stretched his hand. It was like a malleable layer of water, and extremely fascinating. "How is its protective power?"

"It's usually twice as strong as that of the totem itself, or more." Emin smiled. "Do you know where it came from?"

Garen shook his head, waiting for his teacher to reply with careful concentration.

"A Luminarist has many totems, and each totem would bestow a protective force field on its master. The forces stack up, and are definitely stronger than the power of an individual totem. Besides, the defensive power of Totem Light usually stronger than the totem itself." Emin paused, "This is why, battles between Luminarists are usually fought by the totems, and you usually don't attack the master first."

Garen understood.

"True, in that case, Luminarists would actually have a lot more defensive power than the totems themselves. It's most important to deal with the totems first."

"That's exactly it." Emin waved his hand, and the white bobcat on the floor instantly became a flash of white light that retreated behind him.

The neon butterfly also took to the air again, landing inside the large bottle in Garen's hand. He stuffed it in mercilessly and stoppered the bottle.

Emin watched him keep it, and then raised his head to look at the night sky.

"It's still early. Let's walk back, and chat as we go."

"Yes, teacher." Garen nodded.

The two of them walked slowly down the path they had came, heading back towards the small town.

Emin held his staff, watching Garen as the latter walked ahead of his teacher carefully, testing the road for puddles and potholes to prevent Emin from stepping in one. The teacher smiled, comforted.

"Garen, the power of the totem itself will not harm its master. You must remember that. Aside from that, almost the large majority of Luminarists have support totems that aren't that different from real living creatures. There is no increase in their power, they're just like the creatures you see outside."

"Bobcats are bobcats, and neon butterflies are neon butterflies? They're just like the original creature, so support totems are rarely strengthened, is that it?" Garen said in understanding.

"That's it. But core totems are different." Emin sighed. "Take my core totem, White Bear, for example. Other than the superior strength that white bears are supposed to have, it also has thicker fur than regular white bears, so it can prevent damage from stronger lethal weapons."

Teacher, your White Bear didn't come from a regular bear, did it?" Garen asked softly.

"Naturally." Emin nodded. "My line focuses on three animals, the Great White Bear, Black Panther, and Sabertooth Tiger. The Great White Bear is indeed no ordinary bear, it is a large white bear from northern tundra, and is the apex predator there."

Garen nodded in understanding.

Emin continued, "This extremely durable fur and skin was the result of many generations of strengthening. It's a lot sturdier in defense than usual great white bears. When faced with regular bears, there won't be any unforeseen accidents, the other side will lose utterly. That's why if you want to choose a core totem in the future, you had also better choose a core totem that has some accumulation. Stand on the shoulders of giants, and you will go further, without having to start from scratch."

He sighed, "You must understand that, in the world of Luminarists, you can barely even protect yourself without real power."

Garen nodded silently. He suddenly remembered the large number of Luminarists who would die in the future war.

There would be the two consecutive crises. The first would be the war between the Royal Alliance of Luminarists and the Obscuro Society, in which Luminarists die by the hundreds.

The second would be the war between the Obscuro Society and the Terraflor Society, in which Luminarists die by the thousands.

At the end, the remaining Luminarists would not number up to a third of a thousand. A vast amount of knowledge will disappear because it was never recorded down. The age of the Luminarists, aside from partial knowledge from the very peak, will be reduced to a few schools of knowledge.

And Emin, would also die in the crossfires of the first war.

"Alright, let's forget that for now. When we get back, you can start learning the three major basic tactics from me." Emin smiled. "These three basic tactics are actually very easy. The difficulty lies in here." He pointed at his head.

"In the accumulation of knowledge."

"That's right. Luminarists without enough knowledge wouldn't be able to analyze even the smallest, weakest insect. And Luminarists with enough knowledge, will be able to analyze practically anything." Emin smiled as he replied, "I'll hand the three major basic tactics over to you. And then you can enter

my underground book cellar and study for yourself. In the meantime, if you're willing, I can also give you the knowledge that I have in hand, that of the Great White Bear, for you to learn."

Emin looked at Garen. At first he just wanted to bring this kid into his school. But after seeing Garen's Master-level precision blueprints, the scales in his heart instantly fell heavily down on Garen's side.

Chapter 256: Achievement 2

Ever since his teacher left the school, the large Tasura Academy school of thought also began to crumble and fall apart, splitting into the three main divisions. The Great White Bear, the Black Panther, and The Sabertooth Tiger.

Emin actually still had a senior brother and a junior brother, both of whom lived further away. Unlike him, the two of them had long since started spreading their teachings, and now had students as well as grand-students, holding quite an influence over the local community.

They had also invited him over many times, but he rejected them each time.

As his thoughts wandered over there, Emin couldn't help but sigh, and looked at Garen beside him.

"Your control is great, that's the little convenience brought by Master-level precision blueprints. If you're willing, join my school of thought, and I can help you create a White Bear core totem. Of course, once you decide on a core totem, it'll be very troublesome later if you want to change. And this way, you'll have to take responsibility for our school."

Garen did remember hearing about the situation of Emin's school.

Hearing his teacher's words, he remained silent, and did not reply immediately.

"When we get back, I'll start teaching you the three major basic tactics. It'll probably take a few months' time, you can consider it carefully in that period of time." Emin knew that this was a troublesome problem as well, and didn't force it.

Upon returning to Emin's house, Garen first achieved a basic understanding of the information and principles regarding the first tactic, analysis.

After washing up hastily, he returned to his room on the first floor to rest.

The kerosene lamp by the head of his bed burned slowly, emitting a bright yellow light.

Garen sat by his bedside, rather casually flipping through the large book in his hand. The cover of the book said: Illustrated Encyclopedia of Creatures.

"Once you've settled on a core totem, you need to wait for more than five years if you want to change it. At the same time, you need a special ritual and ingredients to disassemble it. It's very troublesome... but, with a decent core totem, you can have an automatically-reacting Totem Light that can follow you everywhere in life."

He understood the benefits of that. Totem Light that activated of its own accord was enough to match any dangers a Luminarist might face.

Without having to release their totem, they could automatically activate Totem Light to protect themselves at any time and place. This was also the reason Lumimarists could stand high above the rest, and disregard even the strongest normal person.

Because no matter how strong a regular person could get, they wouldn't be able to break that Totem Light that looked so thin. That's because attacks without silver would not be able to break the core Totem Light. This was a difference in quality, one that couldn't be overcome by quantity.

"Only Luminarists with core totems can truly manifest this unbeatable nature of Luminarists, and stand at the peak of mortals." Garen murmured, hesitation in his heart.

Logically speaking, choosing the White Bear would make a good shortcut, but deep inside he also knew too well that compared to those unbelievably strong Luminarists in the future, the White Bear was pathetically weak.

"Whatever, now I'll have to learn the three major tactics, and then accumulate the relevant knowledge. I'm not like other Luminarists, after regaining my power, I'm already standing at the peak of mortals. It's the same as being a Master-level fighter in this world. I don't have to rush in to decide a core totem to protect myself." Garen decided, and rolled into his bed, pulling his covers over himself to rest peacefully.

In the time that followed. Garen learned the principles and structures of basic tactics from Emin every day, as well as how to activate his own appraisal ability.

Just as Emin said, the three major tactics weren't hard, much less with Garen's special physical qualities. Even regular Luminarists taking it step by step could learn them.

In that period of time, Garen's attributes also returned to an average of 2.0 and above. Even his intelligence, his weakest point, rose to 2.0, evidently as a result of constantly using his brain.

With Garen's undivided concentration and effort, he completely learned the three major tactics -- which were expected to take a few months to learn -- in half a month's time, and he could use them with unnatural familiarity too. This was a great surprise to Emin, who also realized that as time went on, Garen's ability to learn seemed to be increasing and speeding up.

Soon, he suggested letting Garen go into the underground book cellar on his own to accumulate knowledge. Those were all non-core books he had collected, mostly about basic totem construction that had become public knowledge.

The way he saw it, the thing Garen lacked now was the accumulation of knowledge, as well as a unit factory that was suitable for him and completely his own. He could create a totem for Garen, but a unit factory was different. If Garen wasn't willing to inherit his school, then as a teacher in the future, Garen would need to create a unit factory all of his own. That involved a nearly astronomical cost...

"Now, you've gotten the three major tactics down. So all that's left is to gather your own theoretical knowledge. Only with enough theories can your analysis tactic have enough information to be based on. Now, let's go into the underground book cellar."

Emin brought Garen to the dark corner behind the stairs.

On the wall behind the stairs, there was a heavy metal door, fastened with a huge lock.

Emi handed the keys over to Garen, and then turned to walk away. He left, as though to discuss something with the little girl Nicole.

Garen held the large palm-sized key, and inserted it lightly into the keyhole. A turn.

With a clack, the large lock bounced open.

Garen pushed the metal door with all his strength. It was pitch black inside.

He walked in, and used a match to light the oil lamp on the wall.

Hiss!

It was strange. In an instant, a row of oil lamps lit up all along the walls of the underground room, forming a bright yellow row of lights.

The first oil lamp seemed to be a trigger, lighting all the oil lamps in the underground cellar at once.

The whole cellar lit up at once.

Garen closed the door behind him, observing the whole cellar quietly.

It was about as big as a futsal court, lined with bookshelves made of black stone. There were a few books scattered here and there.

There was a reading desk and chair next to the shelves, and there were sheafs of loose white paper meant for writing on the desk.

Garen followed the slope downwards, and felt a draft flowing in the book cellar. He walked to the first bookshelf on the furthest left, and glanced at the corner of the shelf. There was a black label stuck there, white words on a black base: 'Tactic research'.

He looked at the shelf. There were only two thin handbooks. They didn't even have covers, and were all white.

Shaking his head, Garen walked to the second shelf.

The label said: 'Creature composition encyclopedias'.

There were quite a few books on this shelf, of various sizes and thicknesses, filling up most half of the shelf. The largest book had pages half a meter wide, and was wrapped in very thick leather. It was like a black shield, leaning by the bottom of the bookshelf.

Garen glanced at the cover of this book: Tasura's Creatures Illustrated.

He continued on to the third shelf.

The label said: Basic school theories.

There was only one book on this shelf. It was extremely thick, and had a leather-bound cover. It said on top: History of Totem Development.

And then, the fourth and fifth shelves had the same name: 'Theories and Practical'.

The books there were also all about the Lumminarists' journeys, experiences, journals and so on.

Garen casually pulled down a book and flipped through it. Each of these books were actually written in unique symbols and words. They were all encoded, and each of them differently. There were thirty-two books in total and in twenty-eight separate coded languages. Unless you knew the key to these, there was no way to read it at all. Only a few journals from recent years weren't encoded, and these seemed to be talking about other Luminarists.

Garen had no choice but to replace all the books he couldn't read to their shelves.

Most of the remaining shelves were about the same, including that black leather book that looked like a shield, Tasura's Creatures Illustrated. This was encoded too, so he could only more or less see the pictures inside, and didn't understand any of the rest.

He could only read one bookshelf.

It was the second one: 'Creature composition encyclopedias'.

In this period of time, Emin had taught him his unique keyword, which was just enough to decode most of the books on this shelf.

Garen pulled a book off the shelf. 'Entomology', by Emin Kreso... and followed by a long line of names.

He flipped open this book, his brain translating its contents through rapid decoding.

This manner of decoding and translating took a long time, equivalent to the time taken to read two books. And it wasn't easy either.

Garen slowly translated the words one by one, and then read them together.

The time ticked by. A few hours had passed, but he had only gone through half of the book.

Garen closed his eyes. They were feeling rather sore, so he rested them a bit. And then he continued reading.

His attributes had all reached extremely high levels. Faced with an intelligence of more than 2.0, almost anything he saw could be instantly understood and stored in his brain.

In the meanwhile, Emin did come down to check on him. Upon finding Garen wholly focused on his reading and studies, he went out again, feeling comforted.

That first day, Garen didn't even finish reading that book on Entology. The book started out simple, but got more complicated as it went, and the more creatures it introduced the more complicated and intricate their systems got. There were also more things for him to remember.

On the second day, Garen continued to read and learn in the cellar. And then the third day, during which he finally finished reading the whole Entomology.

Sitting on the chair, Garen watched the light red skills attribute on his attribute pane shift a little. Light red symbols appeared, and he immediately understood what the symbols meant.

"Requirement to fully comprehend Entomology: Intelligence 1.4 (fulfilled)."

As soon as the symbols appeared, Garen felt the parts where he had been a bit blur about when reading instantly become extremely clear. Any secret parts he hadn't understood fully before, he also comprehended in an instant.

"The first book..." He let out a long breath, glancing at the few remaining books on the shelf. This included zoology, ornithology, marine biology, microbiology and many other types. There were even more specialized books with details among them, such as 'Composition of Butterfly-type Insects'.

Garen began to go through the books one by one, day after day, staying in the cellar.

Slowly, the books on the shelf about creature compositions began to lessen, and he piled all the books he had read on the desk.

Chapter 257: Turmoil 1

Emin had originally thought of letting him gain some knowledge on the different types, categorization and its structural differences of biology. He never expected that Garen would remember all that he had seen, instantly understanding them. With the combination of high intelligence and abilities, he could vividly remember each book he read.

However, there was no complete skill formed in his Skills Pane.

After staying in the underground chamber for more than a month, Garen walked out, face wrought with fatigue. Having continuously researched all the boring academic books for more than a month, even Garen, who had strong mental capacity, felt fatigued and sleepy.

"How was it?"

Emin stood waiting at the doorstep, quietly looking at him.

"I've gained a lot." Garen answered with a serious nod. "It's just that, so many books were encrypted, I couldn't read them."

"Naturally; neither could I, most of the books were snatched by my Teacher. There was no way of decrypting them, hence they are only fit for collection." Emin's face had a slight hint of helplessness. "Now that you have essentially mastered the three main tactics and have already read all the books within my collection, you can be a master too. I will ask you one last time; do you want to join my school? If you do join my school, I will craft a White Bear core totem for you, otherwise, you would have to choose other core totems. Once you are ready, come to me and I will craft a core totem for you once. But I trust you would know what the result would be."

Garen nodded.

It was time to make a choice.

"For now, I will still choose not to join." He calmly professed his decision.

Emin's mouth opened, as though he had wanted to say something; but no sound was projected.

Both parties went silent.

Garen solemnly bowed at Emin with respect.

"Regardless if I join or not, you will always be my Teacher."

Emin wave his hand with much regret.

"The Great White Bear is not as weak as you think, actually, each core totem has different evolutionary modes."

"I understand. only by inheritance from the schools can it show its strong evolutionary mode, making the core totem stronger, having headroom for evolution." Garen answered clearly.

"But... ""

He did not continue speaking.

Instead, Emin nodded clearly. "I know, you would want to inherit your father's core totem.

That's alright, when do you plan to go back?"

"I'll rest for a bit, so tomorrow. Tomorrow, I will leave." Garen replied surely.

Emin did not say too much, instead retrieving a thick, folded piece of paper from the pocket of his long robe, which he gave to Garen.

"This is the Luminarists' Night Market, some of the popular night markets are marked on it. With your Master level detailed blueprint, you could go there to do a few jobs and earn yourself some resources. In the future, you best build your own unit factory, otherwise your unit secrets may be leaked out if you borrow it from others. Of course, you could use your father's one, but.... You'll know in time."

"Thank you, Teacher." Garen thanked him sincerely. In this period of time, no matter what cause or intention, Emin had been very serious and responsible in his tutelage towards him, and really brought him into the world of Luminarists.

This was had been a huge favor.

Garen understood clearly the information that he had read in the book collection chamber; a majority of them were written by Emin himself, as the encryptions that was used was his specific encryption password. All this information had contained his experience and knowledge.

From the initial deal, to the attention he gave later, up till now where he taught Garen without reserve, Emin's change in attitude was observable to Garen

"Work hard." Emin patted Garen's shoulder with force.

"I will." Garen nodded sincerely.

"Since you have some time on hand, let me tell you some rules while interacting with fellow Luminarists. Don't offend or touch onto others' taboos and create trouble." Emin solemnly said.

Ding..... Ding.....

The silver wind chimes hanging by the side of the carriage rung incessantly.

The wide, yellowish-green plain held a winding river stream. The evening sun was oddly cold, and a cold breeze blew in waves.

The pale green carriage moved forwards along the stream, slowly, just like a little green bug on a yellowish-green carpet.

The wheeler had a gray leather shirt on him, with a wine bag on his hands, which he sipped from from time to time. His mind was concentrated on the tracks on the ground in front of him.

The grass still showed telltale signs from the carriages and hoof prints from the users of the track before him.

"How long more to Natta Town?" A male voice came from inside the carriage.

"About half a day's journey before we reach." The wheeler answered with some estimation. "We will definitely reach before dusk, be rest assured. Otherwise I would feel guilty taking those rums of yours." The wheeler snickered, and raised the whip and caused a loud thump with it.

In the carriage.

A handsome-looking young man with blonde hair was sitting inside, calmly sporting a long gray robe with a thick black leather book rested on his knees, with just the first page flipped.

This man was the one who had left the small town, Garen, who left Master Emin.

Before he left, Emin gave him yet another two items.

One, the book that was resting on Garen's knees. The second one was a short, silver-white cane, which is a storage device used to keep Garen's butterfly totem.

Garen, while listening to the horse's clip-clop along with the wind chimes, set his gaze on the black leather book on his knees.

The pages of the book were of the width and length of a forearm, the first page showed a line of familiar handwriting. That was Master Emin's encryption symbols, the ink still seemed fresh.

"Master, looks like I owe you another favor..." He muttered, shaking his head lightly as he started to decrypt the line of words.

--- "I have replicated a part of my academy's illustrations, some of these non-core items would probably be of use to you. When you are in a pinch, try browsing this book...." ---

Garen sighed, and flipped a page over.

--- "Any normal creature can evolve into strong, legendary creatures. It all depends on how you nurture its evolution."

That's all that was written in the second and third pages.

Garen continued flipping the pages.

In the fourth page, a menacing looking black wolf appeared on the top. To its right was a colored picture, on the left was some textual explanation.

‘Black Wolf, foundation level, one of the most commonly found forest wolves in East Continent, are very large in number, vicious in nature, cunning and cruel.’

‘Special ability: sense of smell. Its strong sense of smell is much stronger than regular canines, they are quite effective in tracking and pursuit.’

‘Area of activity: Forests, hills.’

‘Totem crafting difficulty: Simple’

Garen frowned, and flipped over to the next two pages.

On the fifth and sixth pages, to the right was a black wolf with its paws stepping on crimson flames, on the left were more textual explanations.

Garen observed closely; this black wolf's form is almost identical with the one in front, just slightly bigger in size and the bottom of its four paws are burning with a crimson colored flame.

‘Fire Wolf, Evolution Level, second form. A vicious evolution from the black wolf totem. Possess stronger and sharper fangs and claws, able to attack by supplementing biting high temperature attacks.

‘Special Ability: Sense of smell, damage fortification, high temperature fortification, self-destruct. The final special ability is the main reason why Luminarists chose the black wolf as pets, fire wolves will detonate a horrifying explosion upon death, completely melting everything within a certain radius.’

‘Totem upgrade difficulty: ten thousand grams of A-grade ruby, ten thousand grams of A-grade garnet. Success chance depends on (base material) and (totem strength before evolution). Normal success rate: 11.5%. Will self-destruct upon failure, carries a certain risk.’

Tch.....

Garen inhaled a breeze of cold air.

"Ten kilograms of grade A rubies and garnets... such high success chance!" He understood the self-destruct part, after all, the power of the Luminarists was not easily obtainable, and you can be in danger at any time.

While reading through the information, the top part advised multiple times to do all the necessary preparation before evolution, otherwise your life will be in danger easily.

"This kind of financial expenditure... if you are not noblemen, evolution should not be something you can afford at all." Garen internally simulated the situation below, finally having a clear position towards a Luminarist as a profession.

"This is as good as burning money! But on retrospect, there should be a large production of gemstones in this world...."

Garen continued flipping through the pages.

‘Giant Magma Wolf, evolution level, third form. The Fire wolf totem evolves into a terrifying giant wolf. Its power is stronger, speed is faster, its body is filled with a fluid similar to lava, just by approaching it, one can feel the hundred degree heat. It is the strongest evolution form from a black wolf, is one of the three ultimate forms of my Tasura Academy.’

‘Special ability: inherits all of fire wolf’s abilities, and gets strengthened. Exploding Fireball: able to shoot powerful exploding fireballs, destroying enemies from afar, highly destructive.’

‘Totem evolution difficulty: One piece of red dragon fruit, magma tactics. Success rate depends on (base material) and (totem strength before evolution). Typical success rate is 2.6%. Will self-destruct if failed, carries high risk.’

Garen let out a long sigh, looking at the giant magma wolf on the page.

"This is no longer a normal creature, but a true strong legendary creature. No wonder totems are so powerful, no wonder Luminarists are so powerful..."

By continuing to flip the pages, two more creatures appeared: the white bear and leopard, as well as their evolution forms.

The entire book only had three creatures, the final totem of the Tasura Academy, the sabretooth, was not shown in this book.

According to the research done by the Tasura Academy, all their creatures had three evolutionary forms. The White Bear, Great White Bear and Ice Bear. The leopard, on the other hand consisted of the Leopard, Black Wind Leopard and Night Shadow Leopard.

The final forms were like creatures of legend; each extremely tough.

However, the evolution requirements and success rates were terrifyingly low. This lets Garen witness clearly the gap among Luminarists.

"To be able to gather such detail, this meant that the final forms were not only theorized, but had actually appeared before. If we took the black wolf for example, appearance wise it was not any different compared to a regular black wolf, At most it would have white luminescence, and be a little stronger than a living black wolf. However, if it evolves into a Fire wolf, it would essentially be a killing machine. The final form, the Giant Magma wolf is simply a legendary creature! This gap between the elite and normalcy is utterly huge!"

Garen originally was unclear about what form the Luminarists could achieve, after all, the scenarios that he saw as he transmigrated were blurry, due to the strong interferences when the scenario involved high level combats.

But now, through the illustrations, he can see that Tasura Academy's hundreds of years of ultimate totems, have already reached such heights.

Chapter 258: Turmoil 2

He slowly closed the book, gazing out of the window into the now distancing plain.

From afar were a group of dairy cows and sheep sporadically walking around on the plain. Strong winds kept flattening on the grass, which rippled like sea waves.

"It is scary being a Luminarist..." He let out a long, emotional sigh, "If I were to face the giant magma wolf..." He no longer spoke, but just imagined it. No matter how he simulated it in his mind, it would always end with utter defeat; he would not even be able to get close, and was easily eliminated.

"Looks like I have to choose my core totem soon, and be a Luminarist as soon as possible, Only then will I officially step into this world. There are only one and a half years left."

Garen kept his illustrations into his bag. Holding the forearm-lengthed silver cane, he closed his eyes and started paying attention to the skill and attribute pane at the bottom of his field of vision.

Under the skill pane, there was a faint, red, translucent symbol, just like a growing fetus, and a faint red light shining with rhythm, like a heartbeat.

This is something that Garen had noticed last night, as he looked closer, he realized that in this fetus, there seemed to be a 3D image of a luminescent butterfly.

This made him happy, he always hoped that his abilities were able provide him some help on his journey of the Luminarist. Otherwise, it would be preposterous to think that he could catch up to the elite Luminarists in the span of over a year.

And now it finally seemed like there was a glimmer of hope.

Abilities seem to slowly merge into the luminescent butterfly totem.

"The image today is clearer." Garen retracted his vision, "I guess when I go back to the manor, I would be able to showcase its real function. But I can't just count on this, I still need to prepare on multiple different aspects."

Now what he lacks is a core totem.

The scenarios that happened while he transmigrated were always blurry during combat scenes, it was always too complicated, always with strong vibrations. He could only see clumps of colors shaking around, and could only roughly make out the strength from just how shaky it was. Even the actual totem form was not very clearly visible.

Garen refused to use a totem by the Tasura Academy, mainly because he wanted to find a strong enough totem by himself, one that gives him some confidence in what lies ahead.

But this kind of totem would require detailed inherited knowledge; how to nurture and maintain the totem, the conditions needed, even the requirements in terms of time and environment.

At least, he had some sort of plan in mind already.

The carriage arrived in a small town. Garen kept changing carriages, or joining caravans, and soon he arrived at the border of the Lush Forest District.

The Lush Forest District was a garden district. Being covered by large sections of forests, tourists came and went endlessly.

Garen arrived at a small city between the Hanna District and Lush Green district called the Ferlondo. From here, he took a tourist bus and headed for the central part of the Lush Forest District: Trejon's Territory

In the jade-green forest, two white bus-sized carriages moved within the sea of trees slowly.

The tour guide was the hunter's daughter; she held a megaphone-shaped paper cone, loudly introducing the culture and habits of the Lush Green District to the tourists.

The carriage was full of tourists who came for a tour, mostly husbands and wives, couples, and a family of three. They were comprised of the working class, merchants, minor nobles and military officers. Males, females and the old and young made up about twenty-odd people in the bus.

Carting the carriage were black cows with strong physiques. There were 4 of them, each about one meter-odd in height, and were about the strengthened version of a typical black cow. Occasionally, they let out a deep roar.

The wheels would run through a pebble or a small pothole from time to time, making the carriage ride a shaky one.

Garen sat on the left side of the final row of the ride, near the window.

Still wearing his usual grey robe, with a black leather box next to his legs, he looked very tidy. Much like a young lecturer of a university, carrying an aura of gentleness.

He sat facing two people, one middle-aged male pastor with black shirt and white sides, and next to a quiet young lady.

The two of them seemed to be together, but they did not talk to each other in the carriage, the atmosphere seemed awkward.

The two of them have not spoken a word since they went onboard about half an hour ago. In contrast, the four people that were sitting diagonally on the right have been speaking merrily. They are two pairs of newlyweds, the gents are talking big, about the glorious old days, about something weird that happened. The two wives were showing off new items purchased for the house; what was it, where was it imported from, and on top of that what kind of cuisines that they have tasted from which chef.

The two pairs of materialistic mercantile couples that were grouped together influenced those around them; everyone around them had started using different methods to imply that they were not to be offended, that they were able to ask favors from whoever.

The poor tour guide could only boringly talk about Lush Forest district's culture and customs alone, although it seemed like nobody was paying any attention to her.

Of course, there were those who are not interested in engaging such conversation, like Garen, and the pastor and lady opposite him. Also the ones in front of them: a white-haired old couple and a young male military officer.

Garen studied again the comprehension of basic tactics, but upon feeling that his brain was tired, he stopped for a moment to rest.

He looked outside the window. Just when the carriage passed a metal road sign, there were some sort of words written on top, but he wasn't able to see clearly.

"May I know where are we now?" Garen politely asked the black-shirted pastor.

"Yishenhaire, that's what the road sign wrote." The pastor replied with a warm smile.

The lady next to him burst into laughter.

"We turned left, so we are heading to White Garcia. Don't just blurt something out if you don't know!"

" Perhaps I was mistaken, apologies."The pastor told Garen, with composure. "If it is the White Garcia, we would reach in about an hour." He looked at the time on his pocket watch.

"That's fast, after White Garcia would be Trejon's Territory, right?" Garen asked again.

"yes, the Trejons family are the local noblemen. They have maintained the territory's original look very well. Now, it is a great tourist spot." The pastor nodded."

"We'll get to see a lot of black swans!" The lady interrupted . "God, the black swans there are as abundant as ducks, it's a very popular place for scenery!"

"But the bandits there are rampant too. We won't get robbed, right?" one of the men among the 4 newlyweds on the left interrupted the conversation worrisomely.

"We won't. I've heard that some time ago, the bandit lairs were mostly cleared." The pastor replied warmly. "I have been there once, to officiate a newly built small church . I have met the territory's city planners, I have a good idea of the situation on the ground."

"The city planner should be Sinke right? Sinke Minrose, an empire officer from Hanna?"The man asked.

"You know him too?" The pastor asked, slightly surprised.

"We met a few times, He is a well mannered big-shot, we met him once at the musical."the man replied in a slightly delighted tone.

"Planner Sinke was said to have transferred here from places where the turmolous Hanna District." The pastor frowned.

"Turmolous? You mean those damned Noir Rebels? I heard the southwestern areas are quite heavily impacted..... quite a few officers have fled their cities..." The man slowed down his speech.

"Do not speak lightly about the major issues of the Empire!" The wife next to the man tugged at him.

The man and pastor stopped talking, but their expressions were visibly tensed. They noticed that the military officer sitting at the front row glancing at their direction, his look seeming slightly hostile.

Garen however, got more curious.

"You said that there is unrest at the southwest?" He gazed attentively at the pastor and the man.

"Say no more, these kinds of national issues are best not discussed in this environment." The Pastor reminded in a slow voice.

"Can you tell me which cities are in trouble?" Garen lowered his volume too, but he had an expression that looked very curious.

The man on the side could not help but to answer. "I heard that it's Cloudray City and White Rose city."

"White Rose!" Garen was slightly taken aback. his memory showed a squared flag with black and white on each side. The left, black side was a pure matte black, and the right, a white side which symbolized the pure, elegant petals of white Rose.

"So it's began..." Garen's heart felt heavy.

The wheels of history have begun spinning again.

Garen tidied the history scroll, everything started with the war between the Obscuro Society and RAL.

This unrest in White Rose marked the intervention of the Obscuro Society, as well as the beginning of the end of the Reign of RAL that lasted several thousands of years.

As the fires of the war of the Obscuro Society burns, the corrupt, puss-filled body of the RAL, will completely collapse within a year.

"RAL shouldn't collapse that easily.." Garen internally calculated carefully. "According to written history, RAL is still much stronger than the Obscuro Society, just that the inner ring held back most of their combat prowess, worrying about the troubles outside. Plus, the alliances started fighting among themselves, trying to swallow other whole by not sending help for each other. This was what caused the second wave of unrest and the third Great War."

"All these stupid royals, they think the unrest would be the same as before, that the rebels would be exterminated before long, and they would use this to empty the nation's resources amidst the war. Unfortunately... this time will different." Garen sat alone in his seat, his heart feeling uneasy.

The battle of White Rose was Obscuro Society's one action to gauge the RAL's integrity. They would assume that RAL's power was strong and far-reaching, hence they would not launch a large-scale conflict. Unexpectedly, the results were far beyond their expectations.

A simple small-scale conflict could actually exterminate the small empire by itself. The ripples from this would affect the power balance of all the neighboring countries.

Garen's heartbeat quickened.

"The assault this time was unstoppable, soon, within two months, an war will erupt. The Obscuro Society will launch a full frontal attack, and this war will reach and affect every corner of the world. There will be no place to hide. Luminarists would also completely expose themselves to the public. Enlisting into the army and fight for their lives. I must decide on my own core totem within these two months. Otherwise, when the war erupts, and father is enlisted for war, my safety will be the biggest issue.

This is the first world war for this realm. The Obscuro Society will wage war against 23 countries, launching their strongest retaliation against the traditional ruling coalition; RAL. And they will not do it righteously, but instead use the Luminarists' style to ignite the fire of war throughout the world.

Garen remembers that in the first world war, the Obscuro Society used totems as a base, and created an army of countless inhuman creatures, destroying everything in its path like a natural disaster. RAL will face countless losses and large areas of their territory will be taken over.

Within a year, the empires from around the world will fall, the world will descend into chaos.

However, even in such apocalyptic and dystopic outlook of the world, there will be three extremely strong and young heroes emerging. Grand Duke Goth, Crown Prince Alyson and Queen Jean Earnest.

The city that the three of them are in, would become the forefront of the resistance against the Obscuro Society, at the same time saving the Three Formations that were about to collapse, becoming the flag and standard of the resistance.

What Garen wants to do now, is to find a strong enough totem for himself within this unrest.

Chapter 259: Ambush 1

Money, knowledge, a sufficiently strong totem. These three requirements must all be fulfilled, otherwise he would face immense danger in the upcoming chaos.

As Garen sat in the tour bus, his thoughts churned and churned, but still no plans came out.

Logically speaking, The Three Great Heroes are extremely strong, so long as he can get any one to inherit their knowledge, his level would reach a very high level. However, there was doubt in Garen's

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Logically speaking, The Three Great Heroes are extremely strong, so long as he can get any one to inherit their knowledge, his level would reach a very high level. However, there was doubt in Garen's heart.

"Even if the Heroes were that strong, it would still be an imitation, it would never exceed the levels of the generals. The abilities I own, might it be able to compete against their talent?" His heart still has a sliver of hope for his own abilities.

Observing the ever-nearing silhouette of the butterfly in the vision, Garen still couldn't calm his heart. He decided to wait for his ability to mature, and then plan things out.

Regarding the terrifying effects of the ability, he once experienced it with the secret weapon. It was definitely not what you'd say to be within the ordinary realm of strong.

When he calmed down, Garen took out a small note book, flipped over the top and jotted down some questions and thoughts on it. This would be his preparation for his core totem in the future, so he tried his best to model a totem type that he would be suited for, as well as the requirements needed to achieve such a totem.

He would sometimes shoot the breeze with the two in front of him, or casually chat with the 2 pairs of couples.

The carriage slowly moved along, considerably stable. Miss tour guide seemed to be tired from all the talking, so she sat down with a bottle to moisten her throat.

"Look! It's a black deer!" A child shouted while pointing outside the carriage excitedly.

"There actually still are black deer!" "So Pretty!" "Is that a fawn?"

The tourists started getting rowdy.

Garen tilted his face to the right to have a look. On the grassland next to the carriage was a fawn, about half a man's height. No antlers, its body is slim and slender, it lowered its head to feed on the grass below, occasionally lifting its head to observe the tourist bus out of curiosity, Its ears twitching a little. Very cute.

Phew...

A zephyr blew past, rustling the leaves, carrying the sound through the forest.

The black fawn then suddenly dashed into the forest, quickly disappearing from sight.

"So cute." The girl opposite Garen praised, "If only we get to rear them..."She muttered slowly, her face etched with nostalgia.

She then pulled out a small bottle from her bag, drank some water and no longer spoke a word.

However, Garen squinted, as though he had realized something. He concentrated, suddenly turning his head to the far side canopy of the forest.

"Something's wrong... "

In the forest.

Two girls wearing jade-green dresses squatted on a tree branch, quietly looking at the carriage path in the forest, observing the two tour busses moving along slowly.

The girl on the left was about 20 years old with a slender body frame, well-defined features, her skin almost translucent. There were two black shoulder pad on her shoulders. Two quivers decorated with white feathers hung by her waist, like a beautiful kingfisher resting upon a giant tree branch.

"Vera, are you sure that the person is in one of the carriages?" she looked at the other girl, who seemed ordinary.

The other lady is slightly smaller and looked average. She had a blood red slash scar on the bridge of her nose, making her her look ferocious.

"I've followed them for about half an hour now, there should be no error. Our target is the man sitting at the last row of the first tour bus." Vera spoke softly, "This time elder sister ordered that we complete the mission because this affects our valuation on Green Shade, mistakes will not be tolerated.

"I know" the first lady nodded. "I was supposed to be on holiday, but I got called back earlier. Alright, let's move out."

"Okay."

The both of them squatted on the branch, simultaneously picked out an arrow from their quivers. They flipped their left forearms, and the forearm guards on them let out a few crisp snapping sounds. The guard had turned into a short bow.

"Jii.... Jii..."

The two sounds made were from the bow's string. Two white feathered arrows from two different angles aimed straight at the end of the first tour bus.

The thin long arrow had a yellow wood color, with a distinct carving on it - Kingfisher

"Be careful, next to Cena should be a few General-level experts guarding her." Vera spoke softly "By then it will all depend on you, Tracy."

"Leave it to me." The first lady nodded, "We will go for a one-shot kill. This arrow has been imbued with something great, and it is invaluable..."

Only then did Vera notice that the tip of the arrow resting on her bow had a silver colored metal ball which had some sort of pattern inscribed on it. It looked very delicate.

"You actually used..."

"Shh....." Tracy's face looked slightly reluctant, "Even if she is a Master-level, she'd definitely die."

Garen sat on the seat, having chills on his back but not knowing why.

He glanced his surroundings, not noticing anything out of the ordinary.

Between his tiny movements in the eyes, his right arm reached out to the box near his leg, slowly fishing for the cane rested diagonally on his box.

Just as he gripped onto his cane, the corner of his eye scanned a white silhouette that flew towards his direction, just like a white bird.

"Such a pretty white bird..."the girl opposite him also noticed the white silhouette, suddenly she looked slightly shocked, her sentence got cut off.

"Look out!"Garen's iris shrunk, and he ducked quickly.

Ching!!

A white arrow instantly passed through the top of his head and lodged itself on a wooden plank in the carriage. The arrowhead which was lodged inside the wood let off a sound like something was being corroded, and within two seconds, the white piece of wood oozed a large patch of dark green, which had a sourish smell and green smoke.

The entire carriage first went into shock, then it erupted into chaos.

Ahh!!!

The entire carriage screamed in panic.

The girl sitting opposite Garen ducked down into a bundle quickly, her back facing the carriage wall.

The pastor also covered his head, fearing his head would be in the line of fire.

Garen avoided the arrow, and he stood up again, looking at the direction from where the arrow fired. Far within the forest, two human-shaped silhouettes in green retreated swiftly.

Ching!!

Suddenly, he felt an extraordinarily strong sense of danger diagonally from his rear.

Garen only felt creeps behind his back, and his entire body had goosebumps.

Without stopping to think, Garen rushed out. With a crack and the carriage shaking slightly, Garen knocked down the wooden plank on the side and he jumped out through the window, rolling on the ground a few times before stopping

Bang!!

The back of the carriage exploded.

Garen did not turn back. With his back facing the carriage, he saw the grass around him reflecting a sliver of red light, the burning sensation of fire surging towards him.

Ching Ching Ching!!

Yet another three piercing sounds came.

Garen pushed hard against the ground beneath him. Two small craters were left in the grass, and he evaded the three white feathered arrows in a flash.

Bang!

The final arrow suddenly exploded where he had been a moment ago and formed a crimson red fireball. The ground and grass instantly charred, and at the same time there was some sort of weird red smoke.

Tssss...

Garen's back felt painful. Touching it, his hand was full of burnt fabric. He felt a stinging burning sensation on his back, which made it obvious that he's injured.

He then rolled away from where he was and into the dense forest.

"What kind of arrow is this?! Such terrifying power!" He was surprised yet angry, "Even my Divine Statue Technique with such a strong defense could not defend against it."

He moved swiftly within the forest, at the same time staying alert to his surroundings, trying to capture any trace of the two people's. The Divine Statue Technique was fully activated, a large aura of Qi spread from within, forming a white gold aura that was not normally observable to regular people which spread across different directions.

Very soon, the aura covered the radius of more than 200 meters of the forest.

Garen closed his eyes slightly, his body unnoticeably expanded, observing the surrounding like a leopard.

Suddenly, his body turned aside, a white arrow shot past him.

"Thinking of running?" The green silhouette within his sight retreated. He sprinted with a burst of energy, leaving more impressions as he sprinted towards the direction of which the arrow was shot from.

In the forest, far away, the two green silhouettes were moving within the forest with high speed. Like monkeys who leveraged the branches around to move.

"Tracy, he's catching up!" Vera said loudly turning back and frowning.

"Such speed... interesting." Tracy laughed coldly, the silhouette was running at high speed, but his breathing was so calm, as if that person was standing on a platform. "I hadn't expect that so many arrows would not kill him. Looks like this person is the expert who is protecting Acacia by impersonating him. He must be thinking of baiting the enemies and finishing them at one go. Their plan was great, but too bad they met me."

"I used two Red Smoke Arrows, but it could not hurt him at all, I estimate that he is a Master-Level, so I guess we should "treat" him appropriately."

"Tracy laughed cunningly. Her right left a slight afterimage as pulled out four arrows from the quiver and placed them all on the short bow and pulled.

Jii.... The string was tugged instantly, almost a full moon.

Ching ching ching ching!

4 minute piercing sounds rang, all four arrows pinned onto four different tree trunks. Forming a large arc.

Ching ching ching ching!

Another four Red Smoke Arrows were shot into 4 other trees, forming another large arc, the two arcs came together to form a circle, which was oddly symmetrical.

"The Ambush of Red Smoke, since you want to close the distance, I'll let you." Tracy stood her ground and would rather not run anymore. "Vera, you go ahead, waiting for the results at the outer ring will do."

"Okay." Vera jumped into the forest.

Bam!

Vera suddenly fell back, as if she was pushed back by a force field, both her legs drew tracks in the ground,, and with a "bam" she smashed into the tree.

Garen walked slowly into this part of the forest, standing far away, with his sight fixed on Tracy, and took a look at their attire.

"Who are you guys?" His tone was very deep. Looking at Vera by the side of the tree, who withstood one of his Red Jade Palms. She merely puked some blood, and did not look like she suffered major injuries. She would be able to continue combat.

"As a mortal, You could withstand two red smoke arrows, impressive." Tracy's expression became calm again, glanced over at Garen, and busted a laugh.

She suddenly took out a black iron plate, and waved it in front of Garen.

"Now talk, where is Acacia now? Bring him to me obediently, and then cripple your own two arms as a honest sign of apology, otherwise I wouldn't mind killing you here." She thought for a moment, "Right, which school are you from? I am very interested in your martial arts, write me a copy of all your martial arts while you're at it."

"?" Garen looked at her, confused, as if he was looking at an idiot. This woman had no idea what she's talking about, with just one iron plate and she wants him to surrender, cripple his own hands and give his martial arts to her for free? Did she read too many novels?

Chapter 260: Ambush 2

"Why? Can't do it?" Tracy laughed coldly, "Haha, it's true that adventurers are the kind of idiots who do not know how to give up until the end. A bunch of idiots with muscles."

"You... You are from the Mercenary Guild!" Garen suddenly identified the plaque and its significance. When Cia was younger, Cousin Sofea mentioned it once.

The Mercenary Guild is the strongest among mortals, a terrifying dark organization. They committed countless misdeeds, and have wide connections in the dark world like spider webs. Its inner circle was very mysterious, even many kings of different empires had been successfully assassinated by them before. They were the sole rulers of the dark world.

"As an adventurer, you should know the rules. Perhaps you thought that a normal Luminarist would suffice to protect you?" Tracy continued laughing coldly.

Garen frowned, he didn't know anything about adventurers, but the strength of the Mercenary Guild was well known. Obviously the opponent thought he was meddling with the dark world, like they were.

"Whatever, talking to idiots like you gives me headache." Tracy waved her hand away.

"Are you retarded? Or do you think everyone is as retarded as you?" Garen got lazy of thinking, so he spoke directly, and sarcastically. "Just a simple plaque and you expect me to stop resisting and surrender immediately?"

Tracy's expression turned cold.

"There's actually someone who doesn't know my title of Kingfisher...."

Shikkk!

She flung her left forearm, and a green short bow formed, her right arm pulled the bowstring back and a "chikk" sound was heard.

"Forget it, personally killing you wouldn't take much time anyway." Tracy smirked weirdly.

"Boastful!" Garen hmphed. With a big step forward, his body form turned into an afterimage that rushed forward.

At the same time, the bowstring loosened, Tracy did not move at all, while Garen rushed forward. A weird sonic boom spread across all directions.

The pair's movements were set in stone from this moment.

Bam bam bam!

A barrage of crimson red fire exploded in all directions. A cloud of red smoke engulfed the forest like cirrus, leaving no space untouched.

"Heart of Awakening, Ares' river!" Tracy raised her arms, suddenly her right arm was pulling the bow string with insane speed.

Ching ching ching ching!

Continuous rings from the bowstring formed a unique sound vibration.

The vibration and the red smoke got closer to Garen, forming a complete seal-in roundup, surrounding him from many directions.

Garen stood in the middle, and closed both eyes. He suddenly inhaled large amounts of air in one go, his chest bulged like a balloon, and it looked terrifying.

Suddenly, his eyes opened, and his irises held traces of white and gold.

"North Capturing Hand!"

Fuu!!

The wind blew.

The wind caused the forest to rustle.

The sphere formed from the red smoke erupted with a large hole. Large amounts of red smoke started spinning and congregated on itself, forming beneath Garen's left hand, forming a fast rotating, pressurized red air ball.

Garen rushed forward surrounding himself with the vortices, the air around him sounding like the terrifying roar of an elephant

The right palm swung forward! Pressurized air and aura violently rushed onto Tracy's chest. The strong air flow carried with it the surrounding leaves and rustling, as though a tornado just blew past. It was horribly powerful.

The shockwaves activated by the bowstrings were completely collapsed. The red ball was violently pressed upon Tracy's chest. A red hot light bathed her face in red.

"Heavenly Arc!!!!"

Tracy shouted, she did not retreat, but instead rushed forward split into two silhouettes; one rushing forward, and another is disappearing slowly, it was an illusion!

The green bow's bowstring was tensed to point of breaking. The string had actually glowed briefly.

Zzang!

After releasing the bowstring, it became a silver arc, cutting towards Garen's right palm.

In that instance, both persons attacked simultaneously, The North Capturing Hand and Heavenly Arc merged and formed a terrifying effect.. The red smoke ball and the silver arc collide.

Vera, who was nearby, shielded both her eyes.

Honggg!

A powerful gust of wind almost swept Vera off her feet, and she fumbled backwards a few steps. Both her ears were ringing incessantly, and she could barely hear anything.

After things had settled down, she took in her surroundings once more..

On the battleground was a grey silhouette colliding furiously with a green silhouette, each time they collided, the green silhouette would release a dim luminescence.

"Tracy actually used the Totem Light!" Vera took two steps back, her heart aghast. For Tracy to be using the Totem Light should be unrivalled by anyone that's not a Luminarists! That is the trump card given by the organization.

But now she could only barely keep up with the opponent as equals?!

Agh A female voice let out a cry of pain.

In the intense combat, the green silhouette was knocked backwards and some fresh blood was spilled.

The silver silhouette caught on, both palms appeared to have a red jade texture, the sound of elephant roaring in the air have also became clearer.

Bam!

Both people engaged in combat once again. The ripples of the air blades struck the trees nearby, causing axe-like gashes on the trees, chipping off countless white tree barks shreds.

Garen showed himself, and with a hammer-like fist swinging downwards, clouds white and red smoke congealed his palm.

"Deity's Possession!" He roared ferociously. A platinum silhouette appeared behind him vaguely, then shrunk rapidly and rushed into his body.

His entire body started swelling to the height of about 2.5 meters, his body also had well defined muscles, much like a titan in the legends.

"How can a martial art reach this level??" Tracy spat out fresh blood, she took a few steps back staggering, her eyes not believing what she saw.

"It's over!" Garen's eyes recalled a brand new martial arts skill tree, and he had a sudden epiphany.

He grabbed her with one hand.

"Kandas Vieira, Gods' combined martial art!!"

His right hand suddenly became slow, the back of his hand glowed a line of light.

Instantly, countless blue lights illuminated from Garen, each ray became thinner, and smaller, covering the entire forest within the 100 meter- radius.

Tracy could only feel a large, terrifying formless pressure engulfing her.

"No!! No!! I will not die here... No!!" She struggled to pull the bowstring of her bow.

Lifting her arm, trying to take aim at Garen.

Jii.....

The bowstring was pulled halfway.

Blood oozed from Tracy's eyes, nose and ears. Her body started trembling as she looked at the expressionless Garen.

"You...!!" it is as though she wanted to say something.

Her head exploded, it turned into a puddle of red-white goo-like mixture which was strewn all over.

Badum.

A headless corpse collapsed on the ground.

The forest became peaceful and quiet once again.

Garen stood back up with a handstand, but he stood in front of Tracy's corpse, and he turned around to look at Vera.

The latter had knelt down on the ground, tightly wrapping her hands around her throat, her face pale and without breath.

Garen lifted his right index finger. A blue butterfly appeared from behind him, resting upon his fingertips.

"This is all thanks to you, otherwise I'm afraid the other one would have ran away." Garen muttered.

With a light flick, the glowing butterfly turned into a blue light, and shot into the cane hanging on his waist.

Garen rushed to search Vera and Tracy's bodies. He did not wait around for long, instead he left the place quickly.

He reminisced his final palm strike, the pinnacle form of the Deity's Possession.

If say, in this world, his battle with Cayduran had approached the pinnacle of human limits, then the battle just now, he felt that he had found out how to use the power of a Luminarist, matching it with the secret techniques to show a perfect combat style.

Ever since he came to this world, Garen had been dissatisfied that the secret techniques were unable to advance. However, he had found a sliver of hope.

Running through the forest, he hastily rushed back to the area nearby the tour carriage.

Tourists of the carriage had mostly died, save for a couple of tourists supporting each other, and resting on a tree nearby, their face full of blood and boils that were caused by the fire.

From the attire and clothes, Gare could recognize that these are the pastor and the young military officer.

That were very lucky, to be able to withstand the burn from the Red Smoke and live to tell the tale.

Garen felt a twinge of guilt. After all, the pair were targeting him, but in the end it brought in two carriages full of people. Even if he had in fact killed countless people, but these were innocent lives caught in the crossfire, which made him very guilty.

"The damned Obscuro Society!" His face seemed forlorn.

The clip-clopping of horses came from afar. A platoon of black-clothed chivalry units were headed this way.

Garen quietly walked out of the forest, the black robe on his body having been torn and damaged during the intense fight with Tracy. There were a lot of blood stain on his clothes too.

At the same time, he silently activated the Turtle's Breath to conceal his aura, and now his face looked terribly pale, without a trace of vitality and looked extremely weak.

As he approaches the pastor and military officer, the officer lifted his head to give him a glance.

"You have very good luck."

Garen opened his mouth to say something, but instead he coughed uncontrollably.

"Don't talk, Look at you, I guess you fell out from the carriage right?" the pastor's boil-filled face cracked open with a smile that somehow looked worse than crying. His eyes look swollen, perhaps he had just cried.

Garen nodded, and he sat next to the two of them, breathing loudly, coughing strongly from time to time.. He looked half-dead.

The speeding horses were approaching. The black knights quickly stopped next to the trio, each getting off their horses and frowned at the scene littered with corpses in the carriage.

"This is terrible..." One young female knight's face turned pale, and she covered her mouth. She had just witnessed a three-year-old boy's brain and body severed by an enraged black cow. The boy's face still had traces of him crying.

The knight leading the platoon was a middle-aged man who got off the horse. With a heavy face he walked to the side of the carriages, and he pulled out an arrow that was lodged in the carriage.

"The Mercenary's Guild again! Those damned bastards!" He couldn't help but to shout, his chest bulged and released, and he looks very irritated. "Louis! Immediately inform the Secret Services! Keith, investigate the deceased's identities! Give me a list of their immediate family contacts! If the Secret Services does not care, report it to the National Council! If they don't respond this will be under my jurisdiction!"

He slapped the carriage once again out of anger. The back of his hand had traces of light glowing.

Garen, who was sitting on the side was feeling downcast. At the corner of his eye he saw the sliver of luminescence and his heart skipped a beat.

"This person is a Luminarist as well?! The National Council?! One of three departments! This person must have ties to people that work inside!" Garen had multiple thoughts crossing through his mind.