

# Mystical Journey

## Chapter 3: The beginning (3)

The class was about to end but Garen still hadn't decided on which attribute to enhance. At this point, he finally believed this supernatural ability was actually real.

"Riiiiinnngg"

After the crisp sound of school bells, the etiquette teacher collected his rosewood box and left the classroom. The class went from complete silence to chaos.

Garen remained seated in his desk, startled by the mess. He straightened his back and let out a relieved sigh. Suddenly, he felt his belly deflating and quickly covered it with his hands. A sense of hunger — never felt before — came from his stomach.

He bent down and looked around, checking to see that no one was looking at him. He reached into his pockets and took some blue papers out, each of which had either the numbers 1 or 5 printed on them. Counting the bills, Garen slightly knitted his brows.

"Only fifteen dollars to spend... this is far from enough for one week. Also, I remember eating breakfast just now, but when the potential reached 100% I started feeling hungry again. It seems like the potential wasn't just draining energy from the gem, but also from my body's digestive system."

At that moment, someone patted him on the shoulder. "Garen, same old spot for lunch?" A young male voice came from behind him.

Garen turned around and saw the white-skinned hand of a freckled boy laying on his shoulder.

"What old spot?"

"The one close to the windows." The boy's name was Kalidor, one of the students Garen was most acquainted with in his class.

"Last weekend the cafeteria had jasmine tea and dim sum. I wonder what's on the menu today?" Another teenager joined them and murmured, "If they still have that specialty dark purple fruit jam, I'm ordering it."

“All right, I’m going to get the goat milk for everyone, so give me your money. Five bucks each.” Kalidor extended his hands. All the students had the habit of drinking hot goat milk before lunch.

Right after Kalidor reached out, a dozen students gathered around him one after another, placing five dollar bills in his hands.

“I’ll have one!”

“I’ll have one too.”

“Same for me…”

These students were nowhere to be seen just now, but when they heard someone was willing to fetch the milk, they all showed up out of the blue.

Kalidor counted the money in a hurry. “There’s money here for twelve people… Garen, don’t you want milk? In case you want something else I can bring it for you instead of the milk.”

“It’s okay, you know I don’t like goat milk.” Garen quickly refused. He pretended to look indifferent, but the truth was that he had no money, so even if he liked it he had to say he didn’t. The small amount of money he had was to be spent on more essential things. After all, the old Garen had always used that pretense as an excuse for not buying milk, so the new one just followed his lead.

However, Kalidor had no idea of his true thoughts and always just believed that he didn’t like goat milk. “Come on! Try it once, it’s delicious! I can bring you one. What are you afraid of?”

“It’s okay, I really don’t like it.” Garen refused again.

“Try it man, it’s great!”

“No thanks, I’m good. You guys go ahead!”

“Fine then…” Kalidor shrugged his shoulders and jogged out of the classroom.

After a little while, the students chattering all had a carton of goat milk in their hands while Garen had to pretend he was focusing on his school work. He lowered his head and started taking notes. Over the last few days, he had started exercising more frequently. The amount of money he had on him was far from enough to satiate his new highly active metabolism. As he smelled the fragrance of the hot milk, his belly started growling again. Fortunately, the loud chattering noises covered it up and no one heard it. He shook his head helplessly, then suddenly noticed the girl on his right, Ai Fei.

Just like him, Ai Fei was pretending to be studying with her head lowered. She strained as she sucked her stomach inward in an obviously unnatural position, trying to prevent her belly from making a sound.

Ai Fei seemed to have noticed someone staring at her and looked over. When their eyes met, both Garen and Ai Fei blushed. They roughly understood that they were in the same situation and thus a sympathetic feeling rose between the two.

After drinking the goat milk, Garen and the other boys left toward the cafeteria, laughing and chatting.

The cafeteria stood in the center of the academy, surrounded by student dormitories. It had the shape of a black cube, with each side containing an entrance. Students were constantly coming in and out through the doors. One could smell the sweet scent of cakes and bread, and hear the noisy students long before walking inside. Garen ate the free lunch together with his acquaintances, finally satisfying the ravenous hunger in his belly.

Following the crowd out of the cafeteria, Garen raised his head and looked up at the clear sky. The bright sun shone on his face and he felt a burning sensation. "This place really lives up to its name as one of the top 100 schools in the nation. Shengying Nobles Academy probably has the best food among all the ones in Huaishan City... The class schedule is different in the afternoon, school would be out at three. I could go to that place and test the effectiveness of my abilities."

Looking again at the five symbols at the bottom of his vision, Garen's eyes glimmered with anticipation. He started recalling all the information he had about the local geography. "I have to check out the details of my surroundings..." Thinking of this, he looked around, picked a direction that looked vacant, and marched off in big strides, quickly disappearing among the buildings.

\*\*\*\*\*

The orange and oblique light of dawn shone above Huaishan City, dyeing the large complex of buildings red. Some high-rise buildings with pointed and domed roofs reflected the sunlight like mirrors. A breeze of warm air gusted through the city.

In the south district, next to the streets west of the well-known Shengying Nobles Academy, there stood a spacious courtyard built with redwood. In front of the yard, there were simple houses while the back had two huge training grounds.

On the corner of the yellow training ground to the left, some youngsters in yellow uniforms were hitting the training dummies under the shade. The sound of impact rang out ceaselessly. A young man in white uniform was walking between them with hands in his back, correcting the boys when they made mistakes. One of the young men stood on the outer rim of the grounds, under the shadow of the surrounding trees. He had

purple hair and wine-red eyes. It was Garen, who discreetly left Shengying Nobles Academy after lunch to come here.

This was an ordinary dojo near Shengying Nobles Academy, which specialized in teaching basic martial arts. Garen and two other classmates joined the dojo out of pure impulsiveness; they only wanted to practice martial arts because they noticed that the students practicing here all had a sturdy body and wanted to look as fit as they were.

Garen was sluggishly whacking the wooden dummy in front of him. The dummy was as tall as a person and had a dark yellow body covered with rubber. Even if he hit it with great force, his hands would not feel any pain.

After a while, he took a break. "According to Garen's memory, it wouldn't be wrong to say he didn't have much talent, but he did work very hard at this dojo. He had practiced the White Cloud Dojo's basic combat techniques countless times. However, his talent and his body were just terrible. In this world, without Qi or special abilities, anything would be meaningless if one's body was too weak."

Leaning against the stout wooden dummy, Garen panted lightly and organized his thoughts. "In the White Cloud Dojo, the dojo master was rarely seen. The ones teaching the techniques are usually the dojo master's disciples who have mastered the basics. The one teaching us..." Garen's eyes landed on the young man in white uniform, "...is Luo Ya, and there is another girl named Sharmilla."

"The basic combat techniques I learned should be good enough, but my body is too weak, making it impossible for me to stand out among the others."

Garen had something planned in his mind. As he was thinking about this plan, he started exercising his body again, following the routines he already knew by heart.

A few minutes later, from the far side of the training ground, a girl in a white uniform with a ponytail hastily walked over and talked with Luo Ya, who was standing among the students. Luo Ya decisively walked toward the exit, giving the impression that someone was waiting for him outside.

The ponytail girl in the white uniform was Sharmilla, who was now covering for Luo Ya. Most of the students were familiar with her, so no one questioned the substitution.

Garen glanced at Sharmilla. Her slender legs were her greatest pride. She was tall and had a slim waist, with white skin and a charming face. In the continuous demonstration of the correct positions and movements of the techniques, her chests bounced slightly, showing amazing tension and suppleness.

A lot of boys who were practicing peeked at her now and then. Some of them seemed to be hitting the training dummies much harder than before. One of the students made a

mistake on purpose and was spotted by Sharmilla. She scolded him with a smile and flicked his forehead.

“I love it when assistant Sharmilla is teaching us. This is the best!” The two boys next to Garen mumbled. Garen, of course, did not waste his time replying. “I didn’t save my money to look at pretty girls. I came here to practice combat skills.”

“All right, pick a partner and let’s start one-on-one training. We’ll rank everyone later. Same exercises as usual, the five who place the worst will clean up the field.” Sharmilla raised her voice and announced.

Garen’s movements gradually died out and he squeezed the dummy’s arm in anger. In the dojo, they had to do one-on-one ranked combat daily. Garen was consistently one of the people cleaning up the grounds since he rarely won a match, and thus could never relax after the training sessions. He was one of the worst among the twenty students in this class.

Hearing that ranked sparring was about to begin, his eyes landed on a girl with short silver hair. He had lost to this girl last time, once more joining the ranks of his fellow cleaners.

On the other hand, the girl did not notice his gaze. She was focused on chatting with a female friend of hers, occasionally laughing out loud.

Sharmilla inspected the students, nodding satisfied at the growing eagerness in their eyes. “The combat techniques of our White Cloud Dojo are simple but effective. Even an ordinary person can instantly use forces up to 1.5 times greater than his original strength if they master this technique, but only five among them have mastered it. We will observe them for a few more days, but if no one else improves we’ll have to pick two among these five and teach them better techniques, promoting them to elite students.”

It was clear to her. No matter how much one practiced the basic combat technique, the effectiveness of the strength amplification was at most 1.5 times, and the training results were also very limited. Moreover, it was hard for ordinary people to master the technique. Only those who were truly interested in martial arts and had great perseverance could go one step further while the rest simply did not have enough willpower to practice advanced martial arts. Most dojos used this method to pick out the talented students for training.

Garen started preparing for the upcoming battle by reviewing the basic combat techniques and warming up his body while focusing his vision on the five symbols. “I should be able to use the basic combat technique to train my body while speeding up my growth with the help of attribute enhancements. This way, I have faith that no one would be able to surpass me in training speed. I wonder just how much the attribute enhancements would change my body...”

He carefully went through the five symbols in his vision. Strength 0.31. Agility 0.22. Vitality 0.27. Intelligence 0.32. Potential 100%. Garen's focus switched back and forth on these five attributes, but no extra information from his memory showed up, so he stopped, disappointed.

"Okay, let's begin," Sharmilla's voice echoed over.