

# Mystical Journey

## # Chapter 36: Silversilk Castle (4)

“A dungeon? Sure, your call.”

The group continued wandering through the forest after Dale Quicksilver found the marking he made on a tree from before. After being led by a few more of these markings, they arrived at an area of open ground.

“This is it. Last time I was here, we even had a barbecue at this place.” Dale Quicksilver laughed as he strode on the grassland. His facial expression, however, suddenly changed after stomping on the ground a couple of times.

“Something’s different, someone has been here already! Si Lan!”

Si Lan hurried to him. She bent down and started fumbling around the ground. Soon enough, she pulled out a metal ring from the soil.

It was a dark red ring, corrupted by rust resulting from the long passage of time. The color of rust greatly contrasted with its true hue, which showed a glint of silver.

Dale Quicksilver, who had also been searching on the ground, rushed to Si Lan immediately after she found the ring.

There, a square wooden cellar door revealed itself as it was pulled up. Chunks of grass and dirt slid off the surface, revealing a dark hole underneath.

Garen didn’t ask how Dale Quicksilver knew that someone had been here, but seeing the expressions of the other two, he felt a bit nervous as well.

He walked up to the edge and looked down. The hole was deep and pitch black.

“I’ll go take a look.” Surprisingly, Si Lan was the first to volunteer, not Dale Quicksilver.

“Be safe.” The detective unexpectedly answered her. He nodded at her with a respectful expression.

“Let me go down instead, this is not a job for a lady...” Garen said, feeling hesitant.

“It’s fine, Si Lan isn’t your usual lady, just watch out for her.” Detective answered calmly.

Si Lan pulled out a white bandana out of nowhere and tied it around her face to cover her nose. She pulled out her black dagger, secured a rope to a nearby tree, and threw the other end of the rope down the hole.

“I’ll go down first; you guys watch out up here. The trace is fresh, so the person may not be far from here!” Si Lan warned them.

“We got it, take care of yourself.” The detective pulled Garen two steps back, his face even more serious.

Si Lan grabbed the rope and jumped down, quickly disappearing into the darkness. The rope instantly became taut.

Ten seconds later, it became loose again, signifying Si Lan’s successful landing.

“Sir, you better come down as well, there’s something wrong here!” Si Lan’s voice came from below.

Dale Quicksilver’s stony face turned even darker.

“If Si Lan is calling for help, it must be very serious. I have to go down myself. Mr. Kelly, the task of guarding this place is on you now. I’ll leave this rifle to you, please don’t go anywhere.”

Garen was slightly surprised. He didn’t know why Dale Quicksilver trusted him so much. However, he still agreed. He still needed something from the detective, so it would be unwise to have any funny ideas right now.

“Don’t you worry, I won’t move an inch.”

Dale Quicksilver nodded. He handed the rifle to Garen and fixed his belt, organizing the items he had on him. He then slid down the rope into the dungeon.

After about ten seconds, he was not visible from above ground anymore.

Garen stood alone next to the cellar door. Holding the double-barreled pipe rifle, he was on high alert.

Fortunately, there was no movement around him except for the tree leaves rustling as they blew in the wind.

After a short while, Si Lan climbed out of the hole with a dirty and tired face.

“There are two corpses down there. It seems they have been rotting for some time already.”

“Corpses?” Garen faked a surprised expression and gulped. “Ms. Si Lan, you’re not joking, are you?” In fact, he had already either directly or indirectly killed two people, and after comprehending his school’s teachings regarding the heart, his mind had become calm and fearless. Two corpses no longer frightened him.

“No joke, there are two men’s bodies down there.”

Si Lan sat on the grass and stabbed her dagger into the ground next to her. She took out a white handkerchief with a fading red handprint.

“What is this?”

“This handkerchief has the perpetrator’s bloody handprint; this is an important piece of the puzzle.” She carefully folded the handkerchief and kept it inside a small pocket.

“These were taken from inside the dungeon. As skilled as Mr. Dale might be, he couldn’t identify them either.” She pulled out a few pieces of black objects covered in mud. “He said that this might be an antique. He is still examining the area, so he asked me to bring this to you first.”

“Oh.” Garen carefully received the objects and peeled off the mud on them.

Soon, four small objects were laid on the grass. They were four small iron plates about the size of a knuckle, each of them rectangular-shaped.

These four objects were thick, and had some indistinct letters carved on them.

“Well?” Si Lan asked.

“This antique is useful, quite useful for me.” Garen’s face twitched for a second, but it quickly returned back to normal.

“He said that if you like them, you can keep them as a reward for this unpleasant journey.”

Garen touched one of the plates. He felt the same qi from the emblem, and he shook his head.

“I’m sure Dale knows how valuable these iron plates are. This reward is too much compared to my work, but I’ll have to accept it.”

He couldn’t put them down since he had them in his hand. Garen glanced at Si Lan, only to see her looking at him with a faint smile, which in turn caused Garen to blush.

He could not refuse. If he could absorb all of the potential inside these plates, he was certain of having an increment of 10 points in his attribute. He had a feeling that this could even be an antique that supplied continuous qi just like the emblem.

“This gift is a little too heavy...” He gripped the iron plate in his hand. The sensation was akin to one directly holding an ice cube. A biting chill permeated his hand as though it was beginning to freeze his skin, yet it hadn’t done so in reality.

“This speed of absorption is too slow, it will take months before I could absorb them all.”

Garen looked at Si Lan, his eyes squinting. “I have a check for one million dollars.” He took out a bank check from his chest pocket, neatly folded it and placed it next to the plates.

“If I identified it correctly, this plate is the Black Jade Disk Dale mentioned earlier. A while ago, this disk was auctioned for the price of six million dollars in the Weisman Empire. It’s still quite a bargain for me.”

He paused for a second, feeling hesitant about something.

“I’ll take it this time, but I owe Dale a big favor.”

He gave her his solemn word. Even in his former life, Garen was one who valued his own promises. Once he swore an oath, he would always honor it and keep his promise.

This plate was like a great treasure for him. What it brought was not only wealth, but also the enhancement of his attributes. As long as he kept it close to him, it was bound to bring great improvement to his overall strength. He could probably catch up to his senior brothers and senior sister, and even surpassing his master Fei Baiyun, achieving a great leap in strength in an extremely short period.

“Mr. Dale knew you would accept it, and luckily, you can do him a favor right now to repay him.” It was as though Si Lan had already expected Garen’s response.

“What does he want me to do? I’ll do everything in my power to help him.” Garen’s pupils shrank slightly, knowing that Dale Quicksilver might have seen through his cover.

“Stop the approaching Golden Hoop.” Si Lan’s eyes turned fierce, and she said in a low voice, “If you can delay him for half an hour, our help will be here! Of course, it would be better if you killed him!”

“Golden Hoop?” Garen turned around to look to his right.

A man wearing a camouflage suit along with face covered with black bandana, and had a golden ring hanging from his right ear was approaching in the grassland.

“You guys hunted me last time, but now, it’s time for me to hunt you instead.”

The man’s voice was hoarse, which sounded grating and harsh.

At this moment, Dale Quicksilver climbed out of the hole, panting as he glanced at Golden Hoop.

“It’s on you, Kelly!” He tapped Garen’s shoulder and made an eye gesture to Si Lan, the two turned around and escaped toward the castle without looking back.

“Sir, that Kelly... Can he really stop the Golden Hoop?”

“Gasp... gasp... as long as he can hold him for a little while. I never expected him to stop Golden Hoop to begin with.” Dale Quicksilver gasped as he ran, “The Black Jade Disk I left to him is for trading his life, and by Golden Hoop’s rules, he won’t take Kelly’s life.”

“So you had all of this planned out huh.” Si Lan was only slightly panting, her stamina seemingly unabated.

“Let’s keep running, Golden Hoop will catch up to us soon.” Gale Quicksilver said as he climbed through the hole in the fence.

\*\*\*\*\*

Inside the forest.

Garen collected the Black Jade Disk and slowly stood up. His bones made a series of loud cracking noises. “I owe Dale a big favor, and killing you will repay it. Don’t blame me, blame your own misfortune.”

His body swelled up like an air balloon with his height growing from 1.7 meters to over 2 meters. A strong and violent aura began to emanate from him. His muscles and skin turned from pale white to a leather-like black color.

Golden Hoop’s expression changed. Under the strong force of Garen’s aura, he was pushed back two steps.

“Who the hell are you?”

Garen didn’t answer. Instead, he flexed his arms and reached toward Golden Ring with a grasping motion. His fearsome and muscular arms coiled with purple veins clawed toward Golden Hoop’s head as he crossed a few meters in milliseconds.

## **Chapter 37: Leave (1)**

With a sudden and violent attack, Garen's arm caught the tip of Golden Hoop's head—and like the giant claws of a vicious beast—he clasped it tightly as if he were going to crush it.

This was the Acceleration Technique of the White Cloud Secret Method. Combined with any other action, it could achieve the effect of instantaneous acceleration to create a sudden attack.

This was the first time Garen had used White Cloud Combat Arts in a real battle. White Cloud Combat Arts required an imposing momentum to it: every single action had to exhibit a crushing force.

When his palm was about to catch Golden Hoop's forehead, Golden Hoop produced a dagger out of nowhere and stabbed upwards, aiming for Garen's wrist.

The move was swift and agile. The tip of the dagger seemed to instantly accelerate, as if some special force technique was used.

Whack!

Garen turned his palm sideways to avoid the blade, then he hit Golden Hoop's wrist with the side of his palm. With a swoosh, the dagger flew out of his hand and landed in the bushes.

Golden Hoop took the opportunity to back up a few steps, opening up some distance between them.

“”

“You think you can win by force? Fool!” Golden Hoop reached his right hand behind his waist, and suddenly, four small black throwing knives were flung towards Garen.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The four throwing knives flew out in a flash and accurately struck onto Garen's chest.

Garen didn't manage to respond in time. He wanted to cross his arms to protect his chest, but when he raised his arms, the throwing knives had already pierced his clothes.

The throwing knives merely ripped his clothes and were nailed to his skin, but they didn't cut through the skin.

He grabbed one of the knives and threw it at Golden Hoop. A violent whirling sound followed. The throwing knife turned into a round disk and flew straight at Golden Hoop, but he evaded it with ease.

Garen flung the three remaining knives in succession, but they were all casually avoided by Golden Hoop. This time, Garen took the opportunity to pick up the double-barreled rifle while Golden Hoop was distracted.

Bang!

White smoke came out of the barrels as the shot hit a tree trunk and left a black indent. Some leaves and bark fell off the tree like raindrops from the force of the blast.

Golden Hoop was extremely fast. He started dodging once Garen showed signs of his next actions, which made him impossible to aim at. After a few evasions, he seemed to realize that Garen's reactions were not as quick as his, and his eyes narrowed into a sneer. His astonishment at Garen's physical change earlier instantly faded.

“”

“I thought you wanted to kill me? Do you think you can?”

“”

“Go to hell!” Garen roared. He raised the double-barreled shotgun and flung it at Golden Hoop like an iron bar. Garen's force caused the gun to give a loud, piercing whistle in mid-air. This was to no avail either: Golden Hoop turned his body to the right and easily avoided it.

“What's the use of having a ton of strength? If you can't hit me, it's all in vain,” Golden Hoop jeered. With yet another dagger in hand, his body suddenly drew close. He did a slight flick with the dagger, then stabbed towards Garen's wrist.

Angled upwards, this stab was quick and precise. He had targeted the moment when Garen's large range of motion created some space.

“It's over.” A trace of malice flashed across Golden Hoop's eyes.

At this instant, Garen squinted as he swung his right arm backwards, avoiding the dagger in a flash.

The slow pace he had a while ago had seemingly transformed. His right arm flung out like a rubber hose at a lightning-pace and hit Golden Hoop's left arm.

The speed of this attack was different from before. Only a glimpse of a shadow could be seen from the swinging arm. His speed had almost doubled!

Golden Hoop stared wide-eyed. His dagger was only halfway through the stab when he felt a crack in his right arm, which was then followed by a burst of pain. Suddenly, his body turned light as it involuntarily leapt towards the right.

Wham!

Golden Hoop crashed into the bushes. After some ruffling, he created a trail in the shrubbery, trampling over a large amount of plant and leaves. He went on for a good seven to eight meters before colliding against a large white rock.

Garen stayed put and didn't give chase. As his body gradually restored to its original state, he shook his right arm a little as a relaxed smile broke across his face.

"You really thought I was slow? Even though I'm not as fast as you, I'm not that slow. I deliberately said I wanted to kill you first, then acted like a clumsy doofus. All of it was to lure you to stay and duel with me, and to make you think that you could get rid of me easily without wasting too much time, with the added benefit of relieving yourself of your hatred towards me. Too bad..."

He slowly walked over. He saw Golden Hoop try to hold his body up from the ground, but his every attempt was met with the same result: he kept falling flat every time. It wasn't just his right arm; when he was stumbling through the bushes, it was obvious that there was an unnatural distortion in his left arm—it was broken.

"I am not as fast as you. If you ignored me and directly pursued Dale Quicksilver and his companion, then I wouldn't have been able to stop you. Good thing you were agitated by me enough to stay put." It was the first time he had used the combat arts strategy taught by Fei Baiyun in an actual combat. The fact that it worked like a charm gave him an immense sense of relief.

Golden Hoop's face was livid. Fresh blood slowly dripped from the bottom half of his body. He must have cut himself somewhere when he was stumbling through the bushes.

"You got hit by four of my knives, but you weren't... cough, cough... weren't even injured. Even so, don't get too cocky. Someone will avenge me!"

Upon finishing the sentence, purple blood instantly spilled from the corner of his mouth. His head bent askew, his eyes clouded over, and he eventually stopped breathing.

Garen squinted and quickly crouched down to apply pressure on Golden Hoop's chest. His body was still warm, but his heartbeat had stopped.

"Dead? The infamous thief, Golden Hoop, can't possibly die so easily from my trickery, can he?" He felt that it was all too simple.



Golden Hoop and Dale Quicksilver had been battling wits for a few years. If he could so easily be dispatched, he should have disappeared ages ago—it wouldn't be up to Garen to do it.

Garen gave a puff as he stood up and surveyed his surroundings.

The forest was quiet: only the fluttering of tree leaves blown by the wind could be heard.

He crouched down again and started examining Golden Hoop's belongings and clothing.

The man had nothing on him except some money and throwing knives.

Looking at the cloth covering Golden Hoop's face, Garen frowned. When he removed it, he was instantly shocked at what he saw.

Under the mask was a half-burnt face with a black scar of the number "102" on his right cheek, as if he was branded.

"102? Looks like Golden Hoop is not a person, it's an organization." Garen suddenly felt that things had become more complicated. "That means there is probably someone else pursuing Dale Quicksilver and Si Lan. This guy was just a decoy."

He stood up, mindfully examined his surroundings, then quickly ran towards the direction of the castle.

"This Golden Hoop is just an ordinary person with some training in combat arts. Most people could easily impersonate him with a bit of practice. He just knew some Explosive Speed Force Technique. The real Golden Hoop wouldn't be so simple. "

Recalling the "102" on that man's face, Garen felt a heavy weight in his heart.

"If that number represents a rank or a serial code, that means Golden Hoop is an organization with more than a hundred members. So why would such a big organization dedicate itself to stealing antiques? Purely for profit? Or is there another purpose?"

From how Dale Quicksilver casually gifted him the Black Jade Disk, it showed that he didn't know what that meant to Garen. He probably thought that Garen had great skill and also liked antiques.

Valuable antiques of tragedy like the Black Jade Disk were absolutely irresistible for such a collector.

But that was Kelly the collector—a fake persona. The real Garen was, in fact, merely a high school student.

The thought of facing a murderous evil organization like Golden Hoop alone made Garen uneasy, even though he had been training in martial arts for so long. Although he had lived for decades in his past life and he wasn't actually a teenage high school student, that life was led in a lawful and socially stable environment.

He quickly ran back. Soon, he was in front of the hole in the castle fence.

Garen hurried through the hole before turning to a corner and heading towards the main gate of the castle. Suddenly, he glimpsed a flash of light to his right.

He stopped in his tracks. He focused his gaze towards the direction of the light, and he could vaguely make out a black telescope withdraw into the trees in a distance. The flash of light earlier was the reflection of sunlight off the lens of the telescope.

"I didn't think there would be someone surveilling. That means my every move has been monitored." Garen was stunned. "No wonder Mr. 102 said someone would avenge him. This is troublesome."

He thought he had killed that person in the forest without being seen, and his organization shouldn't have noticed him. Now, he realized this thought was too naïve.

"I'll just have to find Dale Quicksilver and Si Lan first, then figure it out from there. To be marked by the organization but still remain unclear about the situation, that's courting death."

He walked around the side of the castle to the front gates.

The castle gates were ajar. It was unusually quiet inside; he couldn't hear the voices of Dale Quicksilver and Miss Si Lan.

Garen quickly walked through the gates. In the castle hall, the previously set white-colored wooden coffee table had been overturned, and the tea from a glass pot had spilled all over. A clutter of footprints could be faintly seen all around the floor, as if a lot of people had rushed past this place.

Garen briefly scanned the footprints. Most of them were moist black footprints, with some green moss mixed into them.

"Someone was here, and they were not alone." He lightened his footsteps as he crept up to the first floor, then he started patrolling the corridors.

The castle walls and floor were covered in burnt ash, the type that was white with some black mixed inside, like black and white paint that wasn't fully blended.

Remnants of half-burnt oil paintings still hung on some parts of the walls along the corridor.

Walking towards Dale Quicksilver's bedroom, Garen tried to breathe as softly as possible, all the while listening for movement within the castle.

It seemed like he was alone in the entire castle; there was no sound. The air was filled with a dead silence and desolation.

Soon, he reached the entrance of Dale Quicksilver's bedroom. The iron door was ajar.

Garen gently pushed it open and went in through the gap without making too much noise.

There was a white bed in the room, a single sofa, and a large rectangular crate.

The thick curtains covered most of the windows, only allowing a ray of light to shine in through a small part. The whole bedroom was eclipsed in shadow, and it seemed dark inside.

The crate was placed at the end of the bed; an oil lamp was still alight on top of it. The dim light from the oil lamp illuminated the parts of the room eclipsed by the shadow of the curtains.

§§§382

Garen treaded lightly into the room. The stale and depressing air made him feel slightly uneasy.

[This room is too quiet...]

He could not hear any movement. The windows seemed to have particularly good soundproofing, insulating the room from the outside sounds of birds chirping and the wind blowing. The whole room was oppressively silent, as if there had been someone resting here moments ago who left in an instant.

Garen slowly walked to the large package at the end of the bed. He was suddenly curious about Dale Quicksilver's large crate.

[I thought he said he didn't bring much kerosene? Why is the lamp lit in the daytime?]

He reached out to pick up the kerosene lamp.

Creak...

The sound came from the door behind him. Startled, Garen turned around to see that the door had closed on its own and had been locked from the outside when he was not looking.

He strode over and tried to turn the doorknob, but it kept clicking without turning. He could hear the footsteps of someone outside running away hastily along the corridor.

Garen's face sank.

[This place is strange indeed...] Suddenly, he recalled the information that Dale Quicksilver had showed him. The detective had annotated his key analyses at the end of the material:

[There was one common factor on the bodies of the victims in the mysterious deaths of the three previous masters of Silversilk Castle: they were all wearing the Bronze Cross Emblem handed down to them by their ancestors.]

[According to legend, this Emblem was a second-tier military medal awarded during wartime for meritorious achievement. But in fact, according to my research, the masters of the castle had obtained this Emblem as early as two hundred years ago, so it couldn't have been something awarded during the war which occurred later.]

At this thought, Garen quickly pulled out the black thread around his neck. A magenta emblem hung on the thread with a letter "P" in the middle. It was the Bronze Cross Emblem that he always had on him.

The color of the Emblem seemed brighter now, like it had just been polished. There was no sign of it being timeworn.

"This is indeed the problem!" Garen's expression was somber as he glanced around the entire bedroom. He yanked the Emblem off his neck, put it into the crate, closed the lid, then rushed to the window in a few strides.

Crash!

He smashed the window with his fist.

All of a sudden, the whole bedroom seemed as if had escaped from a silent film. As though someone had turned off the mute button, everything livened up in an instant.

Garen had a spooky feeling in his heart, as if danger was rapidly approaching, and he subconsciously did not want to leave through the door.

He stood by the window and looked down. This was the second floor, more than ten meters away from the grass lawn.

[I need to get some bed sheets to make a rope. It's quite high from up here!]

As he was about to turn around, he suddenly felt someone push him hard from behind. The force was stronger than his could muster, even in his current state.

Uncontrollably, Garen fell straight out of the window.

“Who!!” he roared. His mind blanked and his whole body was extremely tense.

“Hehe...”

A faint laughter came from behind.

Bam!

Garen stretched his arms out to cushion his body against the grass. Fortunately, he had a very good physique and he was strong enough. His arms merely suffered from slight dislocation due to the trauma of the fall and his poor arm positioning.

He rolled over and got up quickly, then turned to look up at the bedroom on the second floor. The curtains were fluttering in the wind, but no one was there. He took a look at the castle gates, but they were now locked shut. The gates that were ajar earlier were now locked from the outside.

Garen resisted the pain from his shoulder dislocations, took a long look at the castle, then turned around to sprint into the distance.

He passed the castle fence, but did not show any signs of stopping. He headed directly along the mountain trail that he had come from, rushing to Canoe Town.

[From that push earlier, an ordinary person definitely would have been killed by the fall. In that position, falling head first, the neck would have snapped. If I wasn't someone trained in martial arts, I would have been crippled even if I survived!] Garen still had a lingering unease. Fortunately, he didn't go up to inspect the third-floor bedroom. If he had fallen down from the third floor...

Recalling the report on the previous three masters of the castle, there were multiple incidents in the records about servants falling out of windows to their deaths while cleaning the rooms.

[I thought those were accidents, possibly due to a flaw in the castle design. But now it seems that they must have been pushed like me!] Garen felt sure of it because the servants had all fallen head first to their deaths,, the exact posture they would have been in if they were pushed.

As the pain from his shoulders grew, Garen rolled up his sleeves to take a look: they had swollen into a red mass.

“I need to hurry into town to get treated!” His pace accelerated.

\*\*\*\*\*

Snap!

“OUCH!!” Garen’s left shoulder was swollen like a red pastry bun. Baring his upper body, he was sitting at the pub where he previously had tea with Dale Quicksilver.

A doctor in a grey suit was sitting beside him. He grabbed Garen’s left arm and forcefully shifted it back into place.

Garen instantly gasped as the pain made his whole body sweat. A crisp ‘crack’ came from his joints.

“Done, it’s relocated!”

“Thank you very much, Dr. Ash.” Garen nodded, then took out a stack of cash notes with his freshly relocated right arm and put it on the table. “Money for the treatment.”

“Very well.” Dr. Ash was the veteran healer in town who often treated the locals. Although he lacked a formal license to practice medicine, his bone manipulation skills were very reliable. After all, in small towns like these, most patients were afflicted with similar minor ailments.

Once he arrived back in town, Garen had immediately paid the townsfolk to call for Dr. Ash. Now his dislocated shoulder is fixed.

“I’ll prescribe you some medicine. Apply a little to the injuries every day according to the dosage on the label and you’ll recover in no time.” Dr. Ash took the money, smiled, and said, “It’s rare to encounter a major patient like you. I’ll gladly take this \$1,000.”

“You deserve it. After all, I woke you from your afternoon nap for treatment. Think of the extra money as compensation for your troubles.” Garen nodded indifferently. “Sorry to have inconvenienced you.”

“Not at all, not at all.” Ash rummaged through his portable small white medicine box and took out a milky white glass vial, then put it on the table after checking the label.

“This is the ointment that you have to apply every day. Remember not to be too vigorous and you should be fine. I’ll take my leave first.”

Garen nodded.

“Thanks.”

He watched as Ash carried his medicine box and left, walking along a narrow path before disappearing past the bushes.

Garen sat at the table, gently lifted the wooden cup, and downed the coffee inside.

“Boss, another cup!” he turned and shouted into the small building.

“Of course!” A plump middle-aged man with a black beard came out, carrying a glass coffee pot. He carefully poured Garen a fresh cup of coffee.

At that moment, two fit-looking farmers carrying hoes walked in and plopped down at one of the tables.

“Two beers please!”

The boss hurried inside and carried some beer out.

Garen sat in place, sensing the constant cool flow of energy from the Black Jade Disk that he had just acquired. For a moment, the pain in his shoulders seemed to have diminished.

When he was training at the dojo with the seniors, shoulder dislocations were a common occurrence. He could still handle the pain and did not find it too unbearable, so it did not really affect his normal activities.

While sitting in this small pub, he had recovered enough to reevaluate Dale Quicksilver's actions.

[Putting aside the oddities of the castle itself, I didn't expect Dale Quicksilver to leave the case and deliberately live in a small castle in the countryside for so long. It's unusual no matter how you think about it.] Garen took a sip of the coffee.

[But from another perspective, some people from the Golden Hoop had appeared around the castle. Assuming Silversilk Castle was their intended target, Dale Quicksilver might have been after them instead of the castle. Then it all makes sense.]

[Golden Hoop's target is Silversilk Castle. Dale Quicksilver tracked them because of the case, and out of random luck I got mixed up in all of it. As someone whose identity is unclear, letting me face the Golden Hoop was a way to test if I was a spy sent by them. There's probably more to it, but that should be the gist of it.]

[If that's the case, where is Dale Quicksilver now?] Garen subconsciously wanted to rub his eyebrows, but couldn't raise his shoulder. A piercing pain followed and he let out a wry smile.

Nearing noon, the sun turned red. Business in the pub improved as more and more people came in and the boss brought a few more chairs and tables out to accommodate. Noise filled the entire pub as farmers and townspeople ate, drank, and conversed loudly.

Garen moved to sit alone in a corner. Unlike the rowdy crowd, he sat quietly on a chair drinking his coffee.

“Boss, mind if I ask you something?” Garen called out when the boss passed him.

“What is it, sir?” The plump boss stopped in his tracks. He remembered that this Mr. Kelly was the one who had tea here previously with the gentleman with extraordinary flair. Customers with such elegance were not something the average townsfolk could match up to, so he treated them with a careful attitude.

“I’d like to ask whether the man who had tea with me yesterday has come back to the town yet?” Garen inquired casually with a whisper. With the detective experience that Dale Quicksilver had, if he intended to hide, he wouldn’t allow himself to be so easily discovered by someone like the boss.

“He has, he has! He even came here for tea earlier today,” the plump boss answered quickly.

He didn’t expect the boss to react immediately and answer him so definitively.

“He’s back?” Garen was stunned. “Did he have anything to say?”

“Oh, no he didn’t. He merely ordered the same black tea as you had yesterday and sat in the exact same place,” the boss replied quickly.

“I see...” Garen nodded thoughtfully. Obviously, this spot was a clue that Dale Quicksilver had intentionally left for him, but Garen did not intend to find Dale at the moment.

[Seems like getting myself mixed up with this detective has been somewhat detrimental... It’s better if we go our separate ways. If what Dale said is true, then he’s tracking the Antiques of Tragedy and the secret contained within. If that’s the case, I can follow in his footsteps anyway since it would be difficult to find the Antiques of Tragedy using the normal routes.]

[If my speculation proves accurate, coupled with the fact that the Golden Hoop seems to be searching for the same thing, both of them could help me track down the Antiques of Tragedy. I’ll just have to find the right opportunity to approach them and exchange something for it.]

Garen made preliminary plans for what was to come. Although it had been dangerous, he had managed to benefit. Even though he lost the Bronze Cross Emblem, he acquired the Black Jade Disk. The latter was much more valuable since it still had potential left to be absorbed.

## **Chapter 39: Felicity (1)**



When he reached the city from Canoe Town, it was past eight o'clock at night. Garen headed straight home, washed up, and went to bed.

His parents were not home. They were probably at some work gathering together. His sister Ying Er, who was reading on the sofa, raised the book to cover her face when she saw him come in. He couldn't figure out what was up with her.

Garen still felt some pain from his shoulder dislocation even though he had applied the ointment. Coupled with everything that happened at the castle today, he was too physically and mentally exhausted to take notice.

He had been resting at home for a week. The swelling in his shoulder had reduced, but he still couldn't do exercises that were too intense, including training in martial arts.

Garen couldn't bear to stay at home any longer. His sister was always sulking and didn't talk to him. Things like computers and television, which could occupy free time, did not exist in this era and world. He took a little change with him and went directly to the library in the city.

"This is your library card. Keep it properly, and don't wear out the serial number."

The receptionist at the lobby service counter handed a black square card over to him with both hands, a smile on her face.

"Thank you." Garen took the card and glanced at the serial number: 233. "Is the serial number based on the number of people?"

"Yes it is, sir." The receptionist nodded. "Turn left for general reading, and head right for classics, rare books, and the special and foreign language collections."

"Okay."

Holding the card, Garen directly headed down the left corridor.

It was slightly dark inside the black corridor. On the walls on both sides were yellow wall lamps that dimly lit the whole corridor.

Only after entering the corridor did he notice two young girls walking in front of him, one in front of the other. The ground was covered with thick black carpet. There was almost no sound of footsteps.

"There are too few people, mainly because it's too expensive. 5000 dollars for a card, someone has to introduce you, and you're only allowed to loan for a month. Most of the

people who are really interested in coming here to read can't afford it, and the people who can just don't have the time."

Nodding slightly, Garen followed them for a distance and turned left into a small, narrow room.

The room was illuminated with a pale yellow light. All the walls were covered by bookshelves, and the densely arranged red-covered books had completely blocked the walls behind. In the room were two single red sofas and a black wooden table full of books.

Looking straight across from the entrance, there was a door on the opposite wall that led to another room similar to this one, and there was another door opposite of that room, connected to the new room.

The rooms linked into a straight line like meat on a kebab, door to door, until they reach a corner at the far end. Guests could walk in a straight line through all of the rooms.

The two girls walking in front of Garen didn't stop. They kept walking on until they stood in front of the third room.

Garen retracted his line of sight and scanned the books on the walls. Wooden category signs hung below the wall lamps. The books in this room were history books.

He kept walking on through to the next room. The second room was geography.

The third room was dance, drama and illustration arts. The two girls weren't pretty, but as they stood there with a book in each hand, they looked quite ecstatic.

The fourth room was mathematics, chemistry, and philosophy.

The fifth room was marriage, sex, and healthcare. In fact, it was the place where they stored those books.

The culture in the Confederation was influenced by the Weisman Empire: it was very liberal. Even though there weren't many of these types of books, but they could be publicly published.

Inside the room, a 30-odd-year-old woman sat on the sofa immersed in her reading.

In the sixth room, once he stepped in, Garen noticed a girl in a white skirt with black lace sitting on the sofa. Her pale blonde hair was draped behind her with a white hairband tied in the middle. She looked extremely ladylike.

"Felicity? You're here today too?" Garen was slightly surprised but instantly laughed. He walked to the girl and sat down beside her on the sofa.

“What a coincidence.” The girl looked up, showing her delicate and pure face.

She had porcelain white skin which had a slightly translucent quality to it. Her eyes were big and clear, the dark blue irises focused coolly on Garen. She gave off the impression of a cool young girl, completely different from the arrogant rich girl at the riverside picnic.

This was her in real life, the mild side that only showed when around recognized friends.

Felicity sat on a wide comfy sofa. Her petite frame almost sank into it, enveloped by the sofa’s redness. She had a large red-covered book on her lap. The book covered most of her upper body, which made her look dainty and cute.

But Garen already knew that this pretty girl was the type that was cool on the outside but friendly on the inside, so he wasn’t deceived by her appearance. It was, after all, Felicity who introduced him for his membership at the library. Otherwise, he would not have gotten in because he had no idea about the existence of such a library in the city in the first place.

Garen switched to a more comfortable sitting position, took a red-covered book from the table and casually browsed it. The book was a record about coats of arms. It had detailed entries about the coats of arms of famous families within the Confederation and throughout the world.

“Even though it’s a holiday, how did you find the time to come over to Huaishan?”

Felicity continued to read with her head down. “It’s quiet here, unlike in Manroland, where I’d be bothered by a bunch of flies.”

After they had previously met, they chatted about Jewelry of Tragedy. Garen’s immense interest in Antiques of Tragedy had fueled Felicity’s eagerness to chat about the topic, given that she had always been fond of unique and mysterious antiques and jewelry.

Felicity could tell that Garen wasn’t the type of person that would deliberately approach her for ulterior motives, so she let down her guard. When it came to her favorite topic of mysterious antiques and jewelry, he showed a very serious attitude and seemed very eager to listen. Felicity couldn’t help but have a good impression of Garen, and the both of them chatted in a small café for five to six hours before reluctantly calling it a day.

Since then, Felicity had taken the initiative to help Garen apply for access to the library and a library card. Both of them could be regarded as pure antique and jewelry enthusiasts.

“That must be tiring for you, always hiding.” Garen smiled. “Oh yeah, I thought you said you found a new goodie the last time? How’s that going?”

Felicity put down her book. Her brows furrowed; she seemed frustrated.

“It’s difficult for me to get my hands on it. The seller wouldn’t sell it, even after I made him two offers. Looks like he is genuinely reluctant to part with the item.”

“What is it?”

“A lucky bow from the great maritime era—a mermaid bust that has been said to bring luck.”

“A mermaid bust? How much did you offer?” Garen licked his lips and asked.

“Two-hundred and fifty thousand.”

“For a mermaid bust bow, two-hundred and fifty thousand is indeed a bit low.”

“But this is the maximum amount of cash I can move recently, any more and I can’t afford it. I don’t even have much pocket money.” Felicity’s small face looked distressed.

“Let’s not talk about that then. Oh yeah, any news about the two pieces of jewelry I asked you to help me investigate?” Garen changed the topic.

“That’s easy.” Felicity paused, and started recalling, “Those two pieces of jewelry, one of them is Marceline’s Blue Fantasy. According to legend, it was an antique jewelry created by a master jeweler named Marceline for her lover. The master passed away due to illness shortly after finishing the piece. But peculiarly, the lover wearing this jewelry had continuous good fortune. Soon, he grew from an ordinary person to become a jewelry master himself and became very wealthy. The jewelry in question was displayed in one of his jewelry stores as a store treasure. Later after it was stolen, a series of countless forgeries kept appearing, and this made it impossible to recover the real thing.”

“This person isn’t dead?” Garen was surprised.

Felicity rolled her eyes at him. “He’s alive and well. Why would he be dead?”

She enjoyed this relaxed feeling whenever she chatted with Garen. In front of others, all they cared about was her beauty, family, and background.

In front of this ordinary boy her age, he didn’t care about her appearance and background, but instead valued her most for her knowledge, her understanding of antiques and jewelry, and especially her knowledge of mysterious jewelry.

“Hehe... I misspoke.” Garen gave an embarrassed smile. “What about the other piece?”

Felicity leaned back, caught a black rope hanging from the wall, and gave it a light tug. "Wait a minute. What do you want to order?"

"Uh... Cuzzolini Black Tea then," Garen casually said.

Felicity nodded.

A while later, a girl in a black-and-white maid uniform entered the room. "Anything I can get for the two of you?"

"A cup of Tornado Coffee, a cup of Cuzzolini Black Tea, both warm," Felicity ordered softly.

"Your order is coming, please wait." The girl maid bowed in ceremony then left the room.

To a side, Garen was laughing at her. "I thought you liked cold drinks?"

"What are you laughing at?! Can't I occasionally have a change in taste?" Felicity's cheeks turned red and started to get defensive. "Do you think I'm copying you?"

"Yes, yes, yes, I know, I know." Garen kept waving his hand and suppressed a smile. "I understand," Upon saying that, he couldn't help but burst out laughing.

"Alright, get serious!" Felicity hit the top of Garen's head with a book. The force seemed heavy, but it was actually light. "Let's talk about the other piece, also a store treasure owned by this jeweler. Called Avril's Eye, it was inspired by a princess of the Weisman Empire named Avril. According to legend, she was blind from birth, but had a pair of extremely beautiful eyes. This piece was named after her eyes. It doesn't have any mysterious background, but it is said that the piece was blessed by Weisman the Third, in hopes that the princess' eyes would forever be as clear as the jewelry. Rumor has it that ever since this piece of jewelry went into circulation among the masses, it hasn't been seen for years, and it's unclear whether it is even real."

"It should be real..." Garen touched his chin and whispered.

"How do you know?"

"Just a guess."

"..."

Garen smiled then got serious. "Alright, down to business. Last time you mentioned there was a new change in the Halo of Tragedy you bought. What change? Mind letting me have a look?"

Felicity pondered but did not say anything. At that moment, the maid entered bringing in the black tea and coffee, served it in front of them, and then quietly left.

Hot steam rose slowly from the brown cups. Suddenly, the room seemed unusually quiet.

After a while, Felicity started to open up. She frowned and rubbed her temples, seemingly bothered.

“I can’t put my finger on it... It’s just... it’s just a peculiar feeling. Nothing has gone right recently: my pocket money has been restricted, friends quarreled with me for no good reason...” she paused.

“You know that I don’t have many friends in the first place. My circle has always been narrow. Ever since I bought the Halo of Tragedy, it’s been like this. Do you think it’s really the effect of that thing?”

“Where’s your Halo of Tragedy? Let me have a look.” Garen started frowning too.

Felicity’s face went scarlet in an instant.

“I didn’t bring it with me. I’ll bring it over to you next time.”

“Felicity!”

Suddenly, a blond young man wearing a black overcoat walked into the room.

“Why are you still here? Still researching your antiques and jewelry? Stop fooling around, go home. You have to catch the afternoon train. Quickly go home and pack.”

The young man glanced at Garen who was sitting at the side. He could tell that Garen was close with Felicity.

“Don’t keep obsessing about jewelries and antiques all day. Can you please apply yourself to something more meaningful?!”

“Felix, I can decide my matters for myself. I don’t need instructions from you!” Felicity bluntly replied. “Researching antiques and jewelries isn’t meaningful? Doing what I want to do, that’s meaningful!”

“You!” The youth’s face turned scarlet. “You only know how to talk back at me! You leave the family business unattended, you leave your own company unattended, and you come to this godforsaken countryside to do research about jewelries and antiques! That’s just perfect. You’re doing great! I dare you to not go back today!”

“So what if I don’t?!” Felicity coldly replied, then turned away to ignore him.

“Hanging around with these jewelry and antique freaks all day, skipping the family banquet... I want to see how you manage on your own when you get into trouble!” The young man was fuming. His gaze turned to Garen.

“One moment you’re meeting this enthusiast, the next moment, another. I tell you, Felicity, these people who only know how to research antiques and jewelries, the most they can be in their lifetime is a jewelry appraiser. Hang around these people all day, and see what you’ll become!”

“Mind your words!” Felicity brusquely stood up. “He’s my friend!”

“Hmph!” The young man expressed his disdain. “Father already knows about the nonsense you get up to, researching antiques and jewelries all day. He’s not happy. I want to see how you explain yourself to him.”

“That’s none of your business! Don’t think you can lecture me freely just because you’re my brother! How rude!”

Garen, who was sitting at the side, frowned too. This young man, Felix, was Felicity’s biological brother. His tone seemed to convey his displeasure about his sister’s preoccupation with antiques, and naturally, that made him dislike the person discussing antiques with Felicity as well.

“Please keep your voices down!” A bespectacled middle-aged maid came in and whispered. “This is a public place. It’s the library. Please keep silent.”

“Apologies.” The young man nodded before striding out the room.

Felicity apologetically smiled at the middle-aged woman. “Sorry about that. How embarrassing.”

The woman nodded and left with a strict look on her face.

Felicity sat back onto the sofa, her expression distraught.

Sitting at the side, Garen frowned and said, “Go back first if you’re busy. Our discussions aren’t that important.”

“My brother was rude. I apologize on his behalf.” Felicity was slightly frustrated.

“It’s nothing. I can tell your family seems to disapprove of you researching antiques and jewelries.”

“Yeah. They think I’m loafing around. I’ve been reprimanded for this multiple times,” Felicity helplessly said. “My family situation is complicated. My parents allocated more

resources to me than others, so my peers aren't too happy about me. They keep finding trouble with me."

"You can't help it either." Garen had known about Felicity's family background from Fayne.

That wasn't any ordinary business family. It was a mega family with ties to the upper class of the Confederation, with assets and businesses across several big provinces. Compared to Garen's uncle and his master Fei Baiyun, they were on a completely different level.

Felicity's family even had their own private militia, and her father was one of the most significant figures in the family.

They sat for a while before a middle-aged man with a mature look walked into the room. He wore a black suit, had a fit physique, and looked polite.

"Miss, it's time to head back. The time you set is up."

Felicity nodded and sat up straight on the sofa. "Got it."

"This is my bodyguard, Anchor. I'll be going first, you take your time."

"Okay." Garen nodded. He glanced at the man called Anchor, and he couldn't help but narrow his eyes.

He got a trace impression of Golden Hoop No. 102 from him, yet he seemed even stronger than Golden Hoop.

Garen's took a quick glance at the man's waist: it seemed to bulge slightly, like there was something stuck there.

"Someone with his skill, if coupled with a handgun, as long as his marksmanship is not too bad, I'm no match against him. They are veritably a powerful family. Metropolitan are indeed different."

The pride he felt from his big display of skills earlier instantly evaporated.

After Felicity and her bodyguard left, Garen sat on the sofa alone. There was still a hint of girly fragrance in the air.

"If the Golden Hoop that day were good with handguns, I wouldn't have been able to defeat him so easily. Firearms are indeed the natural enemy of martial art practitioners..."

He sighed and took a sip of black tea.



“Fortunately, I have the Black Jade Disk. I now have new Attribute Points to enhance myself.” He scanned the Attribute Pane at the bottom of his vision. The Strength on it had increased by 0.1 due to the White Cloud Secret Method: it was at 2.11 now. Potential had also increased to 164%.

“It’s just that this is too slow a speed. Only one point increase in a week.”

He took a look at the Skills Pane. He skipped through the academic subjects and directed his line of sight at the White Cloud Secret Method. He paused on it for three seconds. The White Cloud Secret Method didn’t move; apparently, it could no longer be increased.

“So it has indeed peaked?”

“I give up. I’ll just add it to Intelligence. Recently, the situation has been chaotic, let’s see how adding to Intelligence will help me sort it all out.”

He hesitated, then directed his line of sight onto Intelligence.

Snap!

A clear force streamed into Intelligence.

It increased from 1.20 to 1.50 in an instant.

Garen felt his brain cool over. His stale mind instantly became unusually clear. It seemed that his reasoning, response, logic, and memory were markedly enhanced. However, this kind of enhancement was vague; there was no way to practically compare the effects before and after.

“According to the standard units that I initially formulated, the average level for an ordinary person would be at 1. So now, I have more than one and a half of an ordinary person’s average intellect. The intellectual restrictions for certain subjects should be gone.”

Under the Skills column, many subjects were restricted to a base value of Intelligence. Without reaching that limit, one could only acquire the skill in accordance with normal progression. Once that base value was reached, one would have photographic memory skills. Any content from a subject would be easily absorbed, thought processes would be quicker, and one would rapidly attain the level of mastery expected from enhancing with points.

Now that he felt much more clear-headed, Garen started to contemplate the current situation.

“If I want to obtain Antiques of Tragedy without risk, I could pull out now and let Grace keep track of the case progression of Dale Quicksilver and the others. I could also approach Golden Hoop through Grace’s original company to buy the Antiques of Tragedy. Once they find a new Antique of Tragedy, I could offer them the highest bid possible to get it. My only worry is that I wouldn’t have enough money to buy it. This is a way, but the amount of capital required is huge.”

“I could also come at this from another perspective. I am able to analyze whether an antique is real by absorbing Potential. That way, in respect of Antiques of Tragedy or mysterious jewelries, I have the absolute appraisal authority. As long as I improve on my knowledge and experience of identifying jewelries and antiques, it shouldn’t be difficult for me to become the expert Antiques of Tragedy appraiser for the detective and the others.”

“It is likely that Dale Quicksilver isn’t aware of the Potential within Antiques of Tragedy. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have handed the Black Jade Disk to me so easily.” Garen already had dealings with Dale Quicksilver, so he was clear about that key point.

In others’ eyes, Antiques of Tragedy were just mysterious precious objects backed by a strange legend. In his eyes, they were valuable objects from which he could absorb Potential to strengthen himself.

“I don’t necessarily have to own them. I could plainly gain contact with the Antiques of Tragedy with my hybrid identity as appraiser and collector. I just need to let both sides, the detectives and Golden Hoop, recognize that I am the only one who is able to identify a real Antique of Tragedy without error. This way, I could stay out of the whole ordeal, yet achieve my purpose.”

It had to be said that since adding points to Intelligence, Garen felt much more clear-headed. He had everything planned in a flash, and he even found a suitable role for himself.

“Right now, all that’s left is to improve my knowledge of antiques appraisal. The old man should be experienced in this.” Garen instantly thought of Old Man Gregor from Dolphin Antiques.

“Then, there’s the book that Old Man Gregor mysteriously took out the other day. I have no idea what it was. It seems like the old man has secrets of his own, but it doesn’t matter as long as it’s not troublesome.”

As a man of action, Garen stood up and searched for books on antique appraisal in the series of rooms, but unfortunately, there were none. He went over to the right side of the library and searched in the special collections room, but there was nothing there either. It was a pity that there was only a handful of books in the right side of the library.

Coming out of the library, Garen hailed a horse carriage and headed straight for Dolphin Antiques.

Sitting in the carriage, Garen had a faint sense of irritability in his heart. He had added so many Attribute points on himself, his strength had reached a high level, but when he met Felicity's brother earlier, he nevertheless failed to counter his condescending tone.

Regardless of whether it was at Fei Baiyun's White Cloud Dojo, or his uncle's shady company, he was just an ordinary small character in their eyes. Even with the martial art prowess that he was so proud of, never mind firearms, he couldn't even defeat his Senior Brothers and Sisters; martial arts weren't a pure contest of strength.

He slightly closed his eyes to rest them. Hearing the crisp clatter of hooves and the sound of wheels rolling through pavement, Garen recalled everything he had been through since arriving.

"Even though I have special abilities, I am currently still a common disciple at the dojo, a student at Shengying Academy, and the son of an employee at a common company. I still have to take everything one step at a time; I'm still miles away from being a true great force..." He then recalled his encounter at Silversilk Castle, which made him even more conscious of his feebleness.