

# Mystical 571

## Chapter 571: Youth 3

"Listen, Garen." His mother Trish bent down and said to her child, "I've decided to send you the Kindergarten, otherwise you'll be idling around in the house everyday bullying your older brother. At this point, he starts trembling just at the sight of you. What do you think of this decision?"

Garen nodded his head.

"Kindergarten? You mean the one in town?"

"Yes, although you may be a bit too young, but your father and I agree that you should already have met the entry requirements." Trish answered seriously.

"Jason's going to primary school, right?" Garen suddenly changed the topic.

"Yes, the primary school in town."

"Then I also want to go to primary school." Garen definitely didn't want to spend his days in kindergarten playing house with the other brats, that would definitely be a waste of time.

"Primary school requires pre-school education, do you know what is pre-school education? Also, you should call him 'Brother', not Jason."

"Is that so? Well that's regretful, but I still want to go for Primary School." Garen said affirmatively.

"Regarding pre-school education, haven't I already went through all that?"

"A 2-year-old is not allowed to go to primary school, you're still too young, dear," Trish started to feel that talking to her son is getting a bit tiring.

"Do the laws and legislations of this country state that 2-year-olds are not allowed to go to primary school?" Garen countered.

"Where did you even learn the phrase 'laws and legislations'?" Trish started to get a headache.

"Anyways, even though you can now speak fluently, the basics of Art, Music, Math and Languages all require a strong foundation."

"Like Jason?"

"Like Jason."

"But he always gets beaten by me to the verge of crying, he's far too weak."

"..." Trish took a deep breath, "Dear, sometimes issues cannot be resolved purely through using your fists."

"But those things have nothing to do with me beating him up."

Garen said calmly.

"Holy..." Trish felt as if she was gonna go mad. As a psychologist, she completely could not understand what her child was thinking.

"Mama, what do you think about my suggestion? As a parent, you should have more confidence in your own child!"

The result of this conversation was that Trish had fled from the room.

She didn't know how she could persuade her own son, or maybe she needed to hatch a plan against his overly mature son, let him understand that not everything can be solved with physical strength.

"He's completely unlike a 2 year old, in fact he seems to be more mature than even 5 or 6 year olds! Emmer, I've run out of ideas on how to teach our son....."

Trish's voice could be heard from outside the room.

"Don't worry, I told you, our son is a prodigy!" Emmer said proudly.

Garen helplessly shook his head and walked over to the bookshelf, picking up a random book.

"Hey Garen!" Jason came out of nowhere, cockily waving around a plastic bat.

"This time I'm gonna make you cry uncle!" Jason boldly exclaimed.

Garen just glared at him and walked straight up to him, putting his book back on the shelf.

With a left hook to the jaw, following it up with an uppercut to the gut, his opponent fell.

"Bang!!"

"Mama!!!" Jason threw away the plastic bat and crawled out of the room.

Garren then proceeded the walk back to the bookshelf to continue reading.

After this incident, Garren was once again dragged off by his father for some ideological education. The 30-minute long nonstop ideological speech was said to be his father Emmer's special move, and it was also his pacifist way of teaching that he was so proud about.

However, when it came to Garren, the effects of this education method seemed to be less than obvious.

Garen was definitely listening to it seriously, he confirmed that as Garen continuously nodded in agreement to his words. However, what was worrying was that there weren't any visible effects from it. After listening to the talk, he'd just go back the way he was immediately after.

This kind of peaceful lifestyle continues on.

Garen was still forced into Kindergarten in the end, along with their neighbors' Lil' Serin. They were both enrolled together in the town's Kindergarten. The reason was that as a human, a social creature, too much interaction with people of a different age than you can cause problems. Garen had no choice but to agree, though clearly Serin was very obviously not ready for Kindergarten.

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The kindergarten was located on the west side of the town near the suburbs, it was about 300 meters away from Garen's house. It was the only rainbow colored building in a sea of gray blocks.

The white outer wall was covered with drawings of strawberries, apples, bananas, and pineapples. The building was also surrounded by a walled fence, and within the fence were slides, tire swings, seesaws and other children's playground items.

Inside was a wide classroom, it had white walls and a black blackboard. On the left of the classroom were 3 wide window panes.

There were 3 big, long tables in the middle of the classroom, with reddish-brown surfaces covered with varnish, while the sharp corners were covered with a rubber protector.

A woman wearing red sporting attire was raising both her hands, imitating a cat while singing. Although she was already 30 years old, her actions made her look like she was a lot younger.

"Everyday is the kitty's birthday, she can eat fish every day ~"

"Kitty likes to catch mice, yarn she also likes~"

"She can jump and can climb, she can even swim and dive~"

"Cute meowing in the end, kitty is our best friend~"

Every line sang by the teacher, was then followed up by a chorus of tens of cheery kids. It combined to form an unintelligible song of gibberish, but since a child's voice was crisp and youthful, it didn't sound that bad.

"That's right, this is Music class." Garen was sitting at the very end of one of the long tables, he was cringing slightly as he looked out at the swaying trees.

Under the bright morning sun, the dried yellow leaves of the parasol tree were falling one after the other, creating a thick layer of autumn leaves on the ground. The janitor lady swept up the falling leaves, preventing it from being infested by caterpillars.

This was 2 months after he had enrolled in the kindergarten, he was already bored out of his mind.

He was pondering if he should actually display his actual maturity and intellectual level, so he can escape this torture that is being surrounded by numerous snot-nosed brats.

"Eileen! Eileen Kurt!" the teacher shouted again.

This was an everyday occurrence, this little girl called Eileen Kurt would always get into trouble for sleeping in class.

Garen glanced over at the little girl in twintails, who was now standing up. She had big, watery black eyes, yellow skin with a tender complexion, and a face that still had baby fat, but still weirdly cute. However, at the moment, she had a troubled face, looking like she was on the verge of tears.

"T-Teacher... I'm s-sorry... It was an accident..."

Eileen said softly.

The teacher helplessly reprimanded her just for a bit, after all, children this age were very prone to crying, except for a few exceptions of course.

"Garen! Garen!" The child next to him asked in a shouting whisper, "Do you know why birds can fly?"

"Of course, it's because they have feathers."

"What are feathers?"

"They are hairs that grow all over the bird's body."

"Really? You can fly if you have enough hair? But my dad has a lot of hair, why can't he fly?"

"Because his hair is growing in the wrong places."

"Is that so?"

"Yes it's true, you can go back and ask your father about it, Serin," Garen said to his small friend.

"Ok..."

The 1st period was finally over, now they had Maths class.

"Garen, come to the board. What is  $2 + 5 =$ ?" The Maths teacher was a bespectacled young lady who looked like she was in her early twenties, wearing a white T-shirt and a gray knee-length skirt. She was sporting a long ponytail.

Garen immediately became the center of attention of all the kids in the class. He wearily dropped his pen he used for doodling to pass time, and walked up to the board.

It was already autumn. He was wearing a gray turtleneck shirt, looking as if he was completely snuggled in the shirt; he looked adorable.

He took a long chalk and mindlessly wrote a big 7 on the board, then promptly walked back to his seat.

"Did everyone see that? The answer was 7 !  $2 + 5 = 7$  ! Great work Garen! Let's give Garen a round of applause!" The teacher enthusiastically clapped loudly.

At that moment, the students in the class also started applauding for him.

Sigh...

Garen let out a long sigh, how many more days do I have to spend like this...

He felt the chill in his chest getting colder and colder, but his body felt no discomfort at all. On the contrary, it felt quite comfortable, that icy chill wasn't just comfortable, it felt as pleasurable eating a cold and juicy watermelon on a hot summer day.

However, even though his Heart of Frost training was completed, this type of modification made Garen's body temperature much lower than the average child, it also seemed to have affected Garen's body growth and facial features.

His build was becoming more and more unisexual, if you looked at him from a distance, you wouldn't even be able to tell if he's a boy or a girl.

Yet, Garen didn't mind that, he was still a kid after all, and kids generally don't look overly masculine or feminine anyway.

The subjects taught in the kindergarten include Nature studies, Social studies, Maths, Language, Arts, and Music. 1 period was only 20 minutes long, so class ends very quickly, after that, they have lots of different playtimes. They have group play, outdoor play, playing house, and sometimes, even the teachers joined in.

At these times, Garen would usually just sit at a corner and quietly draw, his loyal admirer and friend Serin would also sit right beside him, attempting to mimic his actions.

No matter if it were crayon, watercolor or a pen, Garen was able to use it in a strangely mesmerizing manner.

He was actually not very good at art, and even then he was purposely doing badly to prevent from blowing his cover. Hence, although his drawings look complete, they were nothing more than childish scribbles.

Houses, sunsets, birds, watchdogs, etc. Garen would just draw anything that came to mind. However, in actuality, though no one managed to see it, Garen was secretly testing out the extent of the modification from the Heart of Frost.

With the Heart of Frost modification in place, just by visualizing it, Garen could manipulate the movement of the chilliness, gathering it at his fingertips. This level of chilliness could only lower his finger temperature by about 10°C, it would only make the skin feel slightly colder at most, hence it had no extra functionality. However, Garen just took this as a form of training to control the balanced unleashing of power, and whilst unleashing this power, silently assess the origins of it.

Life in Kindergarten was boring, other than training his secret techniques, everything else was boring. Especially since he had to interact with the other brats and the teachers, all whilst trying to hide his actual intellectual level.

Chapter 572: Youth 4

It was good that his ability to make time pass quickly was decent.

Soon, winter came and a snowstorm engulfed the entire Grano town, turning it snow white. A thick layer of snow covered the streets and plazas, and crisp crackling sounds could be heard from footsteps upon the snow.

After Christmas, Garen received a set of high-end drawing equipment, as well as a pretty-looking violin. Mom intended to make him acquire artistic and elegant musical skills.



Surprisingly, Trish got pregnant again soon. Days passed in boredom.

As the autumn of the second year came, the third kid was born.

Vivien, Vivien Thomas was his sister's name.

The good news was, Garen's kindergarten life would soon be over, as the four-year-old him would soon enter primary school.

His brother Jason's body had also become stronger; he was 4 years older than Garen. At 8 years old, he was now indulged in music and football. He went to the preschool when he was five, and as he entered third grade, his height had grown rapidly even for someone of the puberty age, he was already about one head higher than Garen.

"I heard you're coming to school soon?" Jason screamed while rushing into Garen's room on one random day.

"Yes."

There was only one primary school in the town, so both siblings would be in the same school, which made Jason excited.

"Is there something that matters?" Garen was practicing his violin, that redwood violin was pressed between his shoulder and neck, the precise control of his power allowed him to pull out a pure, uniform sound with ease.

After a month of teaching her son, Trish no longer taught him; after she taught him the standard pose, she decided to let him self-learn online. After all, simple things like violins were completely possible to self-learn so long as the pose were fine.

"No... nothing." After that glare from his brother, Jason shivered, and he hurried out of the room. He wasn't entirely sure why was he excited, but being happy was all that mattered.

Compared to kindergartens, primary schools were much more normal, grade schoolers were so much stronger than kindergartners, in terms of intelligence and socializing.

As he saw Jason run out the room, he continued his own violin training course.

Mono practice, scale transformation, complex music variation Etude.

With only one glance on the video's bow style, Garen could replicate any sounds without any mistakes, as he was sensitive to minute changes to the vibration, it allowed him to swiftly master the technique.

That was why he could be this masterful in a month.

But, oddly enough, the tunes that he played had a cold icy feeling, instead of a melodious feeling, it spooked people.

The more precise his controls, the more obvious this feeling became, just like a psychopath who played violin in a puddle of blood after murdering his victims.

Oddly, this oddity didn't attract his parents' attention under his cover-up, he suspected that this was a problem originating from the Heart of Frost.

Following the Heart of Frost's peak modification, he'd achieved a realm whereby he could exude a calming aura just by standing around them.

Heart of Frost's official second level was to use the frost breath for battles, but Black Claw of Sethe's strongest point was not about its near infinite control on cold poison. Instead, it was the ability to absorb the chill from organic enemies. This Secret Technique's complete philosophy revolved similar to the Yin-Yang philosophy. In its system, all creatures were made from Yin's Coldness and Yang's warmth, and if one had mastered the Black Claw of Sethe, it would cause two special damage effects, one being the Yin Coldness' damage, and the ability to absorb opponents' Yin Coldness in their bodies.

Once the opponent's Yin Coldness was absorbed, their body's heat would not be contained, and the outer cold poison which had berserk properties would continuously destroy the balancing ability of the body. This way, it could cause immense internal injuries.

If the opponent wasn't an expert who specialized in healing, they would find it extremely hard to counter such complicated moves.

On the other hand, the yin coldness absorbed by Garen could be used to strengthen Garen's Secret Technique and enhance his vitality.

Following the greater realms achieved in Sethe's Secret Technique, its damage and absorption power would also be strengthened.

As Garen played the violin, he identified that he had indeed reached the peak of the first level. It was just that he wasn't aware of when he could make a breakthrough.

After his violin session, he wiped the pine oil off the strings to prevent corrosion of the strings, he then carefully stored the violin in the box.

The time to enroll in primary school soon arrived.

Little Serin was still the same class as Garen. This was neither luck nor was it planned, but because the primary school only had one preschool class...

Aside from the two of them, all the children of age would join this class.

Serin's father was a security officer, whereas her mom was a housewife. Compared to the three children in Garen's household, they obviously looked more well off, hence Trish asked Serin's mom, Mrs. Feller, to pick up her children when she fetched her daughter from school.

The primary school was on the right side of the town's central plaza, up ahead were some shops, including a buffet restaurant, a stationary shop, florist, and some eateries.

The life in primary school was better compared to kindergarten, but the actual situation was about the same, the curriculum was like to torture to Garen, and he had to act like his peers sometimes.

The saving grace, however, was the fact that he could now freely use a computer, not the notebook that belonged to his mother but the desktop that he built.

This was greatly useful for him in understanding the knowledge system of this world.

His daily life continued to repeat itself, schooling, eating, finish school, goes home, violin practice, computer games, sleep. This repeated in an endless loop.

Preschool, Standard 1, Standard 2, time flew by without any mishaps.

Everything was calm as time flowed by.

Garen observed that nobody surrounding him had any trace of abnormality, except that the families living in the town maintained their ancient prayer ceremony where they prayed to their own ancestors. Aside from that, there were no differences or anything special.

Not only that, there seemed to be a certain barrier between the residences of the northern bound town and the rest of the territories. The people of the north were seen to be the representatives of the pastor, whereas the remaining villagers were seen to be the representatives of the mayor. The territories of the pastor had a small river stream, and as there was a deeper, more dangerous forest nearby, there were cases of wild animals attacking human beings outside of the forest. There were even cited cases of people being poisoned by venomous snakes or deaths from cheetahs' and wolves' attacks. Hence the primary schoolers typically refrained from playing near the river on the north.

"That place is very dangerous, big grey wolves will come out to catch children for snacks."

This was quoted from the teacher, word for word.

According to Garen's own observations, the north side did have fewer inhabitants, and the situation there was slightly worse. The thugs of the town would sometimes be seen on the streets and were mostly the familiar faces of the town, and they would normally join the festivals organized by the town.

They usually donned an attire that obviously looked like a thug but at the same time, they also seem to be a bunch of organized folks. They were oddly disciplined and aside from the occasional brawl in the north, the rest of the citizens of the territory were all lawful people.

As though there were someone pulling the strings from behind,

The primary schoolers' lives were boring, but soon there would be an interesting event.

A school-organized picnic.

As the two classes of Standard 2 students merged, including the school ten-odd teachers' participation, they all set the journey to the forest nearby.

Totalling over 40 students, wearing an assortment of clothes, each of them was excited, and so were the accompaniment of the parents.

The forest vicinity of the picnic was guarded by the security officers, and there were patrol officers passing through this area daily, establishing it as a safe zone.

Garen had just advanced to Standard 2, but aside from Serin, he didn't have any friends, hence he preferred to stay at the back of the line.

The group followed in a line and soon, they reached the safe zone and put out the tablecloth, took out their ready-made lunches from their bags. As a primary schooler, it would've been way too tough to have them find food out in the wilds.

Some of the teachers were guarding the outer boundaries of the forest, and the rest of them brought the children along for preparatory works.

The so-called picnic was actually bringing ready-made food from home to be eaten in the forest....

Garen found a shady area to lay out his own white tablecloth, beside him was Serin who wore a white skirt and had a left ponytail tied. She always liked to follow Garen around at all times with shimmering eyes.

Sandwiches with roasted meat, corn-mixed vegetable salads, canned fish, canned fruit, little bear-shaped biscuit, sandwich jam with toffee... Each of them was taken out from Garen's bag and were placed on the tablecloth.

"Can we be a group?" His classmate since kindergarten, Serin came over and squatted in front of Garen's tablecloth, she looked at her own pitiful two-piece sandwich and fruit juice, and looked at Garen's awfully scrumptious preparation, her tender face almost couldn't contain her drooling.

"Eeleen, then let the three of us form a group." Garen nodded without being bothered. Actually, it was the same, be it two or three people. Compared to those naughty kids, Eeleen liked to nap more compared to the rest, while Serin was quiet.

Of course, there was another reason, it was that these two Lolitas turned out cute and tender, even though he didn't know how they would look like when they grew older, the kid version right now looked very cute. Just that, in comparison, Serin's skin was better, while Eeleen was slightly darker, a little bit scrawny, maybe due to malnutrition.

All the good food on the tablecloths made the kids surrounding them distracted, and have glared in their direction.

The kids in town rarely had that many delicacies. As there wasn't much interaction with the outside world, there were many ingredients that were hard to find. These snacks and sweets were bought by Trish and Emmer during their occasional trips home from college. Of course, these things were way beyond any child's imagination, as most of the things could only be observed from the front of the television.

Just the toffee alone had 5 brands, it was exceptionally luxurious.

To be honest, Garen didn't like these, but a kid should have a kid's mannerisms, so he didn't prepare anything else.

Sitting on the grassland, the shade was obviously more cooling. As the sunlight brightened, the grassland was baked in golden rays, and it got warmer.

Chapter 573: Strange 1

Garen was that independent kid who did not need tender loving care in the class, who also consistently churned out good grades. The most teachers did were just occasional glances, to make sure he was safe.

Sitting on the grassland, he watched the two lolitas greedily munching on the snacks, Garen reclined against the tree in boredom, completely disregarding his own white shirt and jeans' cleanliness.

Suddenly, an ice cold cylindrical object lightly caressed his right arm.

"Hmm?" Garen glanced down, it was a small snake.

A black snake with a yellow plaid pattern, with a length of about a palm.

"Ahh!" suddenly, a primary school boy screamed. "A snake! Teacher, there's a snake!"

That little boy cried out with his nose dripping, as he crawled and rolled away from his own tablecloth. The students around him also gradually drew away from the area.

Both of the more experienced teachers were shocked as well, and they immediately approached Garen carefully.

"It's a Ghastly Snake! Oh God, how can there be such venomous snakes around?!" One teacher immediately identified this snake.

The Ghastly Snake was impeccably venomous; any adults who were bitten would die within 10 minutes from their heart numbing if no antivenom was administered on time, nevermind a grade schooler aged 7-8 years old. Once they were bitten, who knew what would happen.

A few teachers were unable to conceal their horrified emotions.

After a while, another Ghastly Snake showed up on a different branch, scaring the students into an even more chaotic state of panic.

There were two now, and soon, a third snake appeared as well. It was another kind of snake, which was also highly venomous.

Little Serin who was next to Garen had turned pale from fright, whereas Eeleen was less afraid and was staring at the venomous snake attentively.

Garen frowned, and he looked up at the tree he was leaning upon.

Among the branches tucked away in the dark, there was another Ghastly Snake, furthermore, this snake was much larger in terms of girth and close to the length of a forearm.

The triangular eyes of the snake gazed coldly at Garen. This snake which had the widest girth was not discovered by others aside from Garen, but it was just a matter of time.

At this point, multiple snakes had already surrounded the primary schoolers, gradually appearing and growing into tens of them.

Some teachers had begun calling the security squad and their faces had all paled, unsure of what to do. Now it wasn't just the students who were in danger, even they themselves were in trouble.

Garen frowned and with a change of gaze, he glared at the largest venomous snake.

Unknowingly, a cold breath seeped towards the snake and touched its body.



Hiss.....

This venomous snake shuddered, and as though it met its nemesis, it turned around and fled immediately.

In that instant, all the venomous snakes surrounding them fled into the forest, as though they had never appeared.

"Aura?" Garen did not anticipate this, that with an intent, the Heart of Frost which had reached its peak long ago actually made a breakthrough to the second realm of Sethe; Yin Coldness' Hand.

What surprised him the most was that his Standard 2 body could exude Aura already.

Aura was the combination of the mental and spiritual energy, and as he'd always had overbearing spirit but lacking mental energy, it resulted in an obnoxiously weak body which could not activate Aura.

With this breakthrough to level 2, he could finally directly activate his Aura. It was a pleasant surprise.

However... This congregation of snakes made him wary, as these snakes would not venture into human territory without reason.

He carefully looked around, but all the venomous snakes seemed to have fled along the largest snake.

They did not harm any of the kids, other than giving them a huge scare.

Suspicious, Garen began observing the kids and teachers carefully when he suddenly realized that there was a girl with platinum-colored hair staring in the direction where the snakes fled with a petrified expression. She stood close to Garen, completely stunned, while she wore a white skirt that was smudged with green juice from the grass.

This girl was different from the rest, she didn't look only terrified of the venomous snakes, she even had some unknown complex mixed feelings.

The regular kids had relaxed as soon as they saw the snakes retreating. Aside from the few who cried from the shock; the rest had begun regulating their emotions. But this girl didn't, she seemed to have felt even more frightened by their absence.

Garen made a mental note about this girl.

This picnic was abruptly ended, as the teachers were afraid of further incidents. They were sent back to their school as soon as possible.

Garen also had a strange wariness of this picnic... This world appeared to be more complicated than he thought.

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The Northern area of the town.

In a large, white steeple church.

In the large well-lit church, devout couples could be seen praying in the pews.

Vagar, a pastor in a white robe, stood in front of the podium, murmuring to a pale, muscular young man.

"Your people have been a little too active."

"Only a small disciplining, it's just a traitor."

The man snickered and laughed without a care.

He has a strong physique and he wore a shirt that bared his chest, showing off glistening chest muscles. A metal belt was looped around his waist while a diamond earring adorned one ear, and his white handsome face was mysterious and wickedly charming.

"The mayor sent his words that you should tone down, they have been dissatisfied with your recent actions." the pastor whispered, while he made some actions similar to a prayer.

"No worries, hasn't the issue been resolved? This is just a small incident." The man bowed his head while the pastor drizzled holy water over him.

"I sure hope so." the pastor nodded.

After the man was drizzled with holy water, he drew a cross sign on his chest out of devotion, and then murmured a few sentences of prayers. He turned around and left the podium towards a pew for a seat.

Soon, someone sat next to him and spoke to him softly.

The man suddenly frowned.

"Those troublesome women..." he looked into the air, as though he was thinking.

After a while, he tapped the shoulder of the man next to him.

"Were there any outsiders coming in recently?"

"The foot traffic wasn't high, but most of them were tourists."

"They only drove the snakes away?"

"Yes, it seemed like a threat, or showing some sort of attitude to others." The subordinate replied softly.

"Get someone to warn them. Following the agreement, the first to disobey the rules will be punished." The man said emotionlessly.

"Okay."

"I do not wish to see Grano's peaceful reputation to be tarnished by them. After all, we do receive a sizable portion of tourism income every year." The man shook his head as he muttered.

"But Leader, these women have recently become more radical, what if...." The man's subordinate asked reservedly.

"Then we catch a few of their men, and deal with them as usual." The man's eyes narrowed coldly.

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The class was rowdy; the grade schoolers ran about while chattering away, and the teacher was busy reading books on their own.

The evening light glowed through the windows, warming the room.

Garen's table was surrounded by a few classmates. Each of them was concentrating on the Rubik's cube in his hands. The three-by-three cube was played like a magic trick in his hands, and he managed to get all the sides to the same color in less than a minute. And then Garen would mess it up again to repeat the entire process.

The children would let out some surprised exclamations from time to time.

Most of the children in the class were from the town and they were not very well-dressed, with grey, red and black hues being the majority. There also weren't many fancy accessories or good looking hairstyles, as they all dressed simply.

In their eyes, Garen's tender white skin and shiny golden hair, such a doll-like boy was as eye-catching as a television star. It was rumored that he knew how to play the violin, and even how to use a computer to surf online. Such rumors were unintentionally spread from Serin, making Garen a legendary character in the class.

Even the few strongest and jumpiest boys in the class dared not offend him, even though he looked weak and soft. But for an unknown reason, he felt very strong.

"That girl over there, do you know her name? Garen glanced at the platinum-colored hair girl at the corner of the classroom while playing with the Rubik's cube.

That girl was the one who had reacted strangely during the venomous snake incident. She was no beauty; she was scrawny and had an unhealthy skin tone, one that indicated a lack of exposure towards sunlight.

After a buffer period of several days, Garen suddenly recalled the event that day, so he asked away while there were many classmates around him.

"I think she's called Syves." One child answered.

"She's Syves Latin, I heard that her mother passed away a few days ago, I think she was drowned to death."

With this reply, the surrounding children quietened. They were not even ten-years-olds yet they were discussing mature topics, and it was even on matters such as death, which was rather frightening.

"It happened after our picnic?" A voice next to Garen cried out suddenly.

"Eh?" A flicker of suspicion crossed Garen's mind.

"Let's stop, she has it bad enough," Serin called out in dissatisfaction.

"Garen, don't offend Syves, she's weird." A cute girl who was near Garen spoke softly. In her eyes were unadulterated admiration, perhaps she didn't know anything about restraint.

"Weird? How so?" Garen asked.

"She doesn't like to play with everyone, plus, she talked back to the teacher. I heard that she was even kidnapped once, and is no longer a good girl." she murmured softly.

"Stop yapping." Serin stood up abruptly from the side and glared at the other girl.

The girl was frightened by the aura let off by Serin, and she bit her lip while glancing at Garen. She felt that she couldn't afford to lose her reputation in front of the boy she adored, hence even though she was terrified, she let out a hmph and left.

The kids around them were also taken aback by this and dispersed.

Chapter 574: Strange 2

"Why were you so feisty, Serin?" Once again, Garen gently nudged Serin to sit down.

"Nothing, I just thought that it's not right to talk behind someone's back." Little Serin replied with a huff.

Garen suddenly felt a little strange; Serin had always been nice since their childhood, but as they grew up, Serin slowly began having her own opinions.

Even Eeleen was the same. Also, a few girls in the class were the same and had become very proactive, as though they'd matured over a short period.

Comparatively, the boys were much slower to mature. Aside from the two boys who were the most active, the other boys actually seemed to be submissive. Sometimes, they were even frequently bullied by the girls.

This phenomenon was utterly absurd.

Garen's couldn't help but glance over at the weird girl with platinum-colored hair.

"Syves Latin?"

After the incident with the venomous snakes, the school had slowly returned to a peaceful state.

Standard 2 soon ended uneventfully, and Standards 3, 4, and 5 without any major incidents. There were no anomalies that happened again. Garen's violin skills had improved tremendously, but following the greater mastery of the Black Sethe Claw, he occasionally lost control during his violin practice and that bone-chilling aura would leak into his music.

The third child, Garen's sister Vivien, had also finally been enrolled in primary school, and she proudly became a member of the primary school.

Standard 5 was the time when one would graduate to the next tier of education, but to everyone, it was an undeniable fact that Garen would qualify for the only junior high in the town.

As the matter of fact, this place should be called Standards 6, 7, 8.

Tick...

The bell for recess had rung.

Garen, who was now about 1.5 meters tall, stood up and began packing his notebooks into his backpack.

Following the end of the final year examinations, the straight A's on his report made the teachers smile from ear-to-ear. As his graduation approached, the teachers prepared a dinner, with the finale being Garen's violin play.

The twelve-year-old Garen now looked physically close to perfection. Unlike his past life, he now boasted a slender, well-balanced body, bright golden hair and his face had a hint of gender-neutrality. As he immersed himself in music all year round, he now exuded a mysterious femininity.

He was very polite in his daily engagements too; with a kind temperament, Garen soon became one of the top two popular boys in his class.

As for the most famous boy, Jimmy was a handsome boy with a strong physique and amazing athletic abilities. Garen had observed him from afar before, noting that this person has a healthy charm and a wild personality. He excelled in basketball, football and baseball, and had even been appointed the head of the school's PE department. With a skin tone slightly darker than wheat, he was wildly popular among the girls.

"Hey Garen, shall we go home together?" Serin and Eeleen came by in pairs, the trios were best friends who have grown up together.

Serin was dressed in a red T-shirt and washed out bell bottom jeans and was about Garen's height. Her fair and lovely face seemed a little rougher nowadays, as the pores became pronounced. However, her black pixie cut matched her handsome facial look, which was rather tomboyish at times.

Eeleen, on the other hand, had become much prettier, she'd gone to dye her hair one random day, and her previously black hair was now a lovely hue of burgundy. Moreover, her hair had become silkier, and one could even see the individual strands of her hair when the lighting in the room was good.

Eeleen had a stereotypical Asian look and was completely different from Serin's Caucasian appearance. As both of them grew older, Eeleen now stood about 1.4 meters, and her skin condition was much better as compared to her childhood as her skin's texture had smoothened, and her eyes were like a pair of crescent moons when she laughed. She was comparable to the two most beautiful girls in the class and was one of the most typical crushes among the boys.

Aside from the differences in their physical appearance, Eeleen's personality was very similar to Serin's. She was slowly becoming more independent and opinionated, and when they were met with issues or conflicts, they might even brawl it out.



"Is there anything more important than the final graduation dinner?" Serin snickered while covering her mouth.

Just as the three of them walked out of the classroom and were descending to the second floor, a voice suddenly called out to Garen.

"Garen, could you wait for a moment?" a group of upperclassmen girls appeared behind them.

The three of them turned around. The leader of the group was a girl with shoulder-length hair and silky smooth skin. Although she looked slightly snobbish, her tall body had appropriate womanly curves, probably a student from the junior high Standard 6 class. It was apparent that this girl was confident in her body, as she wore a white skin tight tee as well as figure-hugging white jeans, showing off her perfect figure. A pair of brown leather boots gave out loud clear thumps with every step.

The students who were passing by started to slow down when they noticed that there was some juicy drama waiting to happen, they lingered with interest in the 2 groups, waiting to see what would happen.

"I am Raffaele." the upperclassmen proudly swept her voluminous hair back, while her boots thudded with every step she took towards Garen. "I have observed you for a long time, Garen. Why don't you become my boyfriend? Aren't you bored of being together with these two underdeveloped brats?"

She puffed out her chest in a seductive manner. The fourteen, fifteen-year-old had already learned the ways to exhibit her body's charm.

Garen was taken aback. Even though there were girls who wrote him love letters, they no longer approached him if he didn't reply to them, but it was certainly a first to him, for a girl to be this brazen and confessing to him in public.

Deep inside, he was still a conservative Eastern man, and to suddenly encounter events like a public confession from girls, he couldn't help but be shocked.

Just as he snapped back to reality and was prepared to reply, two silhouettes suddenly walked past him and blocked his path.

"Who did you refer to as 'underdeveloped'?"

Serin's face turned cold.

"Raffaele Dockman, I know you, Class 2 Standard 6, are you here for trouble?"

"Two tomboys, having absolutely no femininity, do you think Garen would like people like you two?"  
Raffaele sneered as she crossed her arms.

The girls behind her began snickering too.

"Only our lady boss is fit for Garen, the two of you are better off blending in among the lowerclassmen, you're sorely lacking in both breasts and butts."

"Our lady boss is the boss beyond the Standard 6, how dare you oppose her?"

"They are children, after all, it's normal to think that they would be of the same class after graduation, we have to be considerate and forgive their silliness."

That group of girls started chattering and laughed non-stop.

Serin chuckled coldly for a moment.

"Are you all made of only mouths?"

She clenched her fists, which let out a crisp crack. Her expression turned darkened, and she was unusually angry.

In actual fact, both Serin and Eeleen had secretly liked Garen for a long time. It was just that Eeleen had become more beautiful while she only became worse, and as they grew older, this gap only became wider. Serin then buried her affection in order to encourage Eeleen to be with Garen, it felt like the two

of them had become more compatible with each other, but now, an outsider had appeared, with the intentions of ripping apart their friendships.

Garen frowned; in his eyes, this was all but a childish drama, but as he realized that her words were a bit too offensive and that Serin and Eeleen might have been hurt, he moved his body slightly in order to stand out to talk.

"Don't you dare meddle in!" Serin suddenly blocked him, "This is an issue among us girls, just sit back and be quiet." She sounded determined with no hesitation in her tone.

Garen gazed at her and Eeleen beside her. Their eyes held a firm determination and sincerity and clearly, they didn't want him to mediate this disagreement.

"Very well."

He no longer resisted while he nodded slightly. Kids have to face these difficulties eventually in life, as this was a part of growing up.

"How do you want to do this?" Raffaele began laughing and folded her sleeves, showing her fair, slender arms, "One-on-one?"

"Don't even bother us again if we win!" Serin began to flex her shoulders.

"Let me do this, you take on the other people." Eeleen took a step forward and spoke in a low voice.

"Okay." Serin's dad was the squad leader of security, so she'd learned many combat techniques from her dad. It wasn't her first couple of times in a brawl either. "Do you remember the techniques I taught you?"

"Yeah." Eeleen nodded.

The two girls took their stance and were prepared to fight.

"Right here?" Raffaele frowned as she looked at the crowding spectators. "Let's change the venue, it wouldn't be fun if the teachers come over."

"The grove of trees behind," Eeleen said impassively.

"Sure."

The two groups then walked down the stairs, they stormed off to the grove behind the school with a strangely grim vibe.

"I was saying..." Garen was speechless, he'd a small suspicion after he started primary school, but he didn't expect that these indicators had begun to exacerbate and become more obvious.

The townspeople of this place were disproportionately female and here, the women took up the role of breadwinner. The women were also the ones who resolved conflicts, and this phenomenon was not unique to the schools, he'd also observed similar experiences outside.

Aside from working outside, women took charge of most of the similar issues. The patriarchy system of the outside world seemed to be reversed here,

Just like now.

Two gangs of girls prepared to fight it out over a boy, "See you at the grove after school." Wasn't that what boys would say?

If it was the outside world, the situation would be the inverse. Two groups of men fighting for a girl, that would be the logical way...

To be a protagonist being fought over, Garen felt weird, but Serin insisted that he didn't follow, it's a woman's matter and men should stand aside.

It didn't feel logical no matter how he looked at it.

Speaking of which, he didn't have any heterosexual attraction towards any of those girls, he was an old man inside, after all, if he was attracted to these kids, then he was truly twisted inside. Of course, this was related to the fact that Serin and Eeleen were slow to grow. If it were to be Raffaele's figure, it would have been normal to have some lust and react to the body's natural reaction at this age. Otherwise, he would have to assess if this body had any issues.

Chapter 575: Strange 3

But in comparison, Garen was still much closer to Serin and Eeleen. After all, he had been so familiar with them for so long, making them friends at the very least, so he should still go check them out.

As he thought that, Garen could not resist but walk towards the direction that they had left in. On the way, however, he encountered two girls who seemed to be there specifically to block his way.

"Big Sis Raffaele doesn't want you going there." One of the larger girls growled at him, she was much larger in size than Garen.

Garen looked into the distant woods, but could only see a sea of pitch black.

Soon he would need to prepare for the event at night too, so he just shook his head, turned around and left anyway. In any case, elementary school and junior high students would not harbor any deep grudges, and even if they fought, there probably should not be any accidents.

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The beautiful music of the violin slowly rang out on the stage.

Garen wore a small white suit, raising his violin and playing it with his eyes slightly closed, he needed to work hard to control the sound, so that it sounded normal, if he really played as he wanted, that creepy aura from before would appear again.

In the hall, all he could see was a sea of black, eighty or ninety percent of the school's students and teachers were here.

Serin, Eeleen, and Raffaele's group were there too, Serin looked somewhat depressed, her neck all red, while Raffaele was completely unharmed, so the result was evident.

Garen put his violin down lightly, and bowed towards the bottom of the stage. There was an instant wave of thunderous applause.

He turned around and walked off the stage, hearing the emcee speak on-stage, but that already had nothing to do with him.

Once he got off the stage, he had not even changed out of his clothes before he saw Raffaele standing beside the stage, waiting for him to come down. She was even surrounded by some curious students.

"Good work, Garen, come have a drink." Raffaele greeted him with a seductive smile, handing him a wet towel and a bottle of mineral water.

Garen glanced at Serin who was nearby, she was also walking towards him, but seeing that Raffaele was there, she actually stopped walking, clenching her teeth as she waited there.

"What happened between the two of you?" he asked, frowning.

"Nothing really." The smile on Raffaele's face sank, but after a pause, she smiled again, still that calm, proudly appreciative smile. "Do you want to walk with me? Just the two of us."

Garen ignored her, walking right up to Serin and Eeleen, Eeleen even had a fresh scratch on her face.

He looked at the two of them exasperatedly, and quietly told them a few things, asking them if they wanted to go back with him. By then, the students in the audience were already beginning to scatter.

Some of the students that had come over to call the three of them sensed something amiss in the atmosphere, and there was still the stone-faced Raffaele and crew, so the newcomers instantly fell silent, and had no idea what to do.

Garen was surprised to find that Serin and Eeleen had lost, and were refusing point-blank to go back with him, what was up with that expression that said 'since we lost, we need to admit it'?

Watching Serin and Eeleen leave the crowd by themselves, Garen's feelings got a little out of pace, are all the kids nowadays so self-determined?

"Now there's no one left to disturb us, right?" Raffaele said with a triumphant smile. She very naturally hugged Garen's arm, lightly leaning her well-developed chest onto him.

Garen felt like he had a headache coming on, and decided he was too lazy to bother with these little kids' problems, things would probably go back to normal soon enough.

He glanced at Raffaele next to him, she had shoulder-length golden hair, a seductive face, smooth skin, long and slender legs, as well as her supple breasts pressed tightly against his arm, but he could smell a faint virgin fragrance in his nostrils.

He could tell that Raffaele's actions were making even herself slightly nervous.

The people around them were already noticing the movements here, and there was the occasional whistle.

Raffaele picked up Garen's hand and put it around her tiny waist, she was very confident in her own figure, leaning her entire body onto Garen's, her face flushing pink.

"Don't you like me?" She reached her face closer, so that their lips were almost touching. "Am I not sexy enough?"

"Although I won't exactly look a gift horse in the mouth, but you gotta at least let me know, exactly what do you like about me?" Garen asked exasperatedly. He knew that he did not really communicate with the others except for how he chatted with Serin and Eeleen sometimes.

"I just like you, do I need a reason?" Raffaele retorted, "I want you to become my man."

Garen opened his mouth, but did not know what to say.

"Even if I can't get your heart, I want your body," Raffaele said forcefully.

Uhh...

Why did that sound so familiar?

Wasn't that something men usually said to women?

Garen was feeling rather confused, there really was something wrong with the trends in this town...

Raffaele dragged Garen everywhere and showed him off to all her friends, not just her girl friends, but even some of the other girls and schoolmates in the school were beginning to raise a commotion.

After the ball ended, Raffaele sent away everyone else and offered to send Garen back.

On the way back, neither of them said anything, they just advanced forward quietly.

It was only when they could vaguely see Garen's double-story house ahead, that Raffaele finally stopped walking.

"Tomorrow I'll come get you, just wait at home like a good boy, okay?" She approached Garen, temptingly letting her twin peaks brush against Garen's chest.



"If you listen to me, I can give you a little incentive~~~"

"We're so soon, does this count as puppy love?" Garen asked, somewhat flabbergasted. "Although I don't dislike you, I'll still be with Serin and Eeleen tomorrow. So you don't need to come get me..."

"They won't come." Raffaele laughed, "The competition between us has already decided everything, this is a battle between w...women, no one can break an ancient oath like that."

When she mentioned the ancient oath, there was a looming and strange feeling in her eyes.

This got Garen's alarms ringing slightly, it seemed that the duel was not just a skirmish between kids as he had first thought.

"You are already mine," Raffaele stressed again. "Even if you don't choose me, they can't break the vow and approach you."

"That's why I hate presumptuous kids who act like adults the most..." Garen felt a headache coming on.

"Aren't you a kid as well?" Raffaele could not help but laugh. She reached over her soft hand to touch Garen's neck, and then left as fast as the wind, disappearing into the night in an instant.

"See you tomorrow."

A clear voice came from the distance.

Garen watched Raffaele leave speechlessly, shook his head, and walked towards his own little home.

"Mom, I'm back!"

Opening the door, Garen changed out of his shoes and walked inside, closing the door behind him.

"There's cream of corn soup in the microwave, I added some black mushrooms, go heat it up yourself." His mother Trish's voice came from the study, she was evidently hard at work again, recently she was writing a research paper, and hid in her room all day. She never left her computer once she sat down in front of it, and even most of the house chores were left up to his father Emmer recently, all she did was occasionally make her children some nourishing soups.

"Got it."

Garen threw down his bag and violin case, putting them back in his own room, and he saw that the door to his brother Jason's room opposite his was wide open, Jason himself was sprawled on his bed, reading a book.

"Jason, do you know Raffaele? She's an upperclassman."

"Raffaele?" Jason turned around, he was already in high school and almost as tall as his father, having undergone a growth spurt, his room was covered in posters of boxers and the King of Boxing, each poster full of muscles and sweat.

His dream was to become a great boxer, in other words, the legendary King of Boxing. Perhaps Garen had contributed in part to this dream as well, having grown up with countless beatings at the hands of his little brother, Jason had always had an almost perverse craving for strength, he trained his muscles every day, increasing the power of his boxing.

"I know, Raffaele Dockman, right, she's a huge force in the school, pretty, confident, proud, she and her people have dominated the school's changing room, tennis club, music club, about a third of the territory there, she sets the rules in those places, and is a very forceful kind of girl." Jason turned around and glanced at his younger brother, "Why are you asking about her suddenly?"

"Big Brother~~~" Their little sister Vivien ran over to them with a spring in her step, and threw herself into Garen's embrace, the little fella had inherited their mother's good genes. She was already in third grade, and looked like a pretty little loli, unnaturally adorable in her small white nightdress, her long golden hair let loose, her huge eyes blinking, and her little mouth pouting.

"Big Bro, you look so handsome in this outfit!"

His little sister gave Garen a thumbs-up and a huge grin.

"Was the performance a success?"

"Since Vivien helped me rehearse, of course, it was successful." Garen reached out his hand to pinch his younger sister's cheeks, those fair and puffy cheeks were his favorite place to pinch, he yanked them here and there, appreciating their texture.

"I drew your portrait in art class today, do you wanna see it?" Little Vivien looked at Garen expectantly.

"Of course I do."

So the night passed quickly with all of his sister's shenanigans, Garen slept very early, and he did not even know when his old pops who had gone out for a survey returned.

After completing his routine secret technique training, he soon fell asleep, and it felt like the first time he had slept so well.

The second level of the Insidious Poison Hand was truly focused on building up Insidious power, to the point where it could be used on the enemy. He could also gather up all the poisonous substances in his body in one place, turning it into Insidious power, a side effect of that being a better quality of sleep for Garen himself.

The only thing Garen was not satisfied with was the speed of advancement in this level of his secret technique, it had already taken him so long to reach the second level, but he was still stuck here after all this time. Although he could feel himself making progress, it was simply too slow. If he continued training according to this speed, he would need at least several years to reach the third level. The time required for every level of the Black Sethe Secret Technique increased proportionally, Garen's own talent had already drastically decreased the time needed, but even if he did decrease it, it would still mean he could only reach the third level when he turned twenty, and who knows how long it would take to reach the fourth level.

There was only one way to solve this problem -- potential points.

#### Chapter 576: Strange 4

He had to find something that could increase his attribute talent's potential points, that was the only way to reduce the training time. It was just that Garen had no idea how to go about it at all, all these years, he had already learned about many sorts of ancient items, but he had not sensed a hint of potential power in any of them.

He had also tried secretly killing wild animals, like snakes or wolves, but to no effect. This made him reconsider his thoughts, he might have made a mistake in his conjectures about the source of potential points.

If the source of potential points was merely the mysterious power of Antiques of Tragedy, then in the subsequent Totem World, killing should not have been able to increase his potential points as well.

But in the Totem World, be it killing totem users or Aberrated creatures, each of them gave him a substantial amount of potential points, so that was strange.

The conclusion Garen came to, was that he should make more attempts based on soul power.

This is because the upper limit to his attribute-increasing power was the power of his soul, just as how the Evil Technique Soul Seed deep in his soul would increase the limits of his attributes slightly every year. Ever since he was born up until now, his limits had far surpassed his attribute limits from before, and was now at thirty points. It was terrifying to have an average upper limit of thirty points, but the modification power of the Soul was not limitless either, after he went from the twenty points to thirty, it had gone utterly quiet, that modification power and effect was still there, but it had stopped strengthening his soul and upper limit.

This meant that the power of the Northern Trident Frost-Fire True Water Evil Technique could only modify this body to an excess limit of thirty points.

Since the thing increasing his attributes' upper limits was the power of his soul, then in order to obtain attribute potential points so he can progress to the next level, he should probably need something related to the soul as well.

Thinking of the special tragedy effect of the Antiques of Tragedy, and then thinking of the unique qualities of totem users with their totem power, Garen vaguely felt that his general direction of study should have something to do with the soul.

But this world was still an unknown place to him even now, he had yet to see even a natural phenomenon that seemed to show unnatural power, much less something to do with the field of the soul, which was considered higher class even among the unnatural.

Waking up feeling refreshed, Garen sat up, and pulled away the covers. He picked up the cool drinking water by his bedside and gulped straight from it, drinking a cup of plain water in the morning helped to wash out the toxins in the body.

After getting out of bed, he walked up to the window, and pulled apart the pale yellow curtains with a whoosh.

"Hey!!" On the clean white streets below, a pretty girl riding a bicycle was waving at him. It was Raffaele!

She had changed into a white sleeveless T-shirt, and was wearing the same bleached jeans from yesterday, riding her bike as she smiled at Garen, waving. Her fair and supple skin reflected the glaring white light under the sun, add that to her similarly golden hair, and it seemed as though Raffaele's whole person was glowing.

"Hurry up, Garen!" She seemed to be worried that everyone around them could not hear her, her voice unnaturally loud.

Garen walked out of his bedroom, feeling confused, and saw Jason was also walking out with his messy golden hair opposite him, evidently frustrated by Raffaele's shocking actions as well.

"Is this why you asked me yesterday?" He glanced at his younger brother, feeling extremely emotional. "That girl has been waiting down there since half an hour ago..."

Garen was speechless.

As they ate their breakfast, their father gave Garen a big thumbs-up, his gaze encouraging, and he grinned happily, looking just like their little sister Vivien. As expected, their little sister had picked up this ugly habit from him.

Their mother Trish had even gotten up and was about to invite Raffaele into the house to have breakfast with them, but Garen rejected that hurriedly. He drank his milk, hastily polished off his fruit and vegetable salad, took two more slices of toast from the toaster, and rushed out of the door, just in time to see Raffaele smiling dazzlingly as she waited by the road on her bike, chatting with an aunty from the neighborhood.

"Kiddo, what's your relationship with lil' Garen? You sure came here early to wait for him."

"I... I'm his... you know..." Raffaele lowered her head shyly, a blush rising in her cheeks.

"What am I supposed to know? Wait, could you two be..." Aunty had a vivid imagination, and was instantly surprised.

"That's right..."

"You're so young, you have to take care of your body." Aunty was in disbelief, "Have you two really done that? That thing?"

Raffaele lowered her head in embarrassment.

Garen walked up to them speechlessly, if they spoke any more the misunderstanding would worsen, Raffaele clearly had an ulterior motive.

The neighborhood aunty greeted Garen smilingly, and left in a hurry, claiming that she did not want to get in their way.

"I'll take you, hop on." Raffaele smiled at Garen cheerfully.

Garen looked left and right, usually he should be able to see Serin and Eeleen now, but neither of them was anywhere to be seen. He had no choice but to reconsider what that so-called oath did.

"Alright." Garen let out of a breath, and took the bicycle's back seat.

"Hold my waist, be careful not to fall."

"It's okay, you just go ahead, I'm stable here." Garen replied off-handedly.

"Alright then."

Raffaele did not say anything more, and stepped down hard on the pedal, making the bike shoot forward abruptly.

The entire way there, she pedaled with all her might, making the bike go faster and faster, faster and faster, if it was anyone else under these circumstances, they would have long since gone pale with fright.

Why isn't Garen holding my waist?

Raffaele thought with her ulterior motive, and turned around to glance at Garen, but he had actually fallen asleep. No matter how the bike swayed, he just sat there, perfectly balanced and sound asleep.

"This guy..." Raffaele was helpless.

They went past the few streets in no time, and soon they had arrived at the school.

The bike stopped at the school gates with a screech, and Garen opened his eyes, waking up as if on cue.

The two of them dismounted separately.

"Oh yeah, Garen, do you remember our promise from yesterday?" Raffaele spoke suddenly.

"You mean the reward?" Garen raised his eyebrows.

"This is for you." Raffaele suddenly stuffed something small and round at him, it felt cool in his palm.

Garen raised his hand to look at it, it was an ancient black-silver badge, there was the image of a buck on it, and most of the carvings at the sides had been rubbed away, as though it had spent a lot of time in someone else's hand.

"What is this?"

"My grandma gave it to me, it was passed down from before, don't lose it, 'kay?" Raffaele said with a smile, and then, surrounded by her many underlings, she pushed the bike away from where they stood.

Garen stood at the school gates, his expression slightly strange as he looked at the buck badge in his hand.

Some wisps of familiar aura darted into his arm from the badge. It was just a little, of something he used to be extremely familiar with.

"Potential points?!" Garen's heart pounded heavily.

"No... This little bit of potential power can't even form one potential point, it's just a tiny bit of the energy left on it..." Garen glanced at his attribute pane, the pane for his potential points jumped a bit, and blurred ever so slightly from 0%, but that was all.

That little bit of energy from before could only make his potential point value blink slightly.



"This is... an Antique of Tragedy?" Garen picked up the buck badge.

Throughout class that morning, he constantly played with his buck badge, and noticed that when two of the girls saw the badge in his hand, their eyes sparkled somewhat.

These junior high students obviously seemed to know how to hide things better than elementary schoolers, but compared to an adult like Garen, they naturally could not hide anything.

"Or maybe this thing also has some special meaning?" He caressed the badge as he mused.

He noticed that Serin and Eeleen were sitting at the other far end of the classroom, but their gazes drifted over now and then, glancing at him, and then quickly moving away.

"Garen, could I ask you how to solve this?" During recess, the boy behind him patted Garen's back, and passed him a little notebook with math questions.

Garen took it, explaining the question to the boy as he watched Serin's and Eeleen's movements.

The more he thought about it, the more he felt something off with that ancient oath, in his eyes, it was supposed to be just a minor conflict between girls, but he had not expected such a surprising outcome.

Just then Garen saw Raffaele standing at the classroom door, dressed up all pretty, smiling as she chatted with one of her besties, their voices extremely low, as though whispering.

Right now almost everyone knew that Raffaele and Garen had a relationship going on, even the male teacher who was packing his things and leaving the room gave Garen a mischievous look.

Raffaele chatted quietly with her bestie, in a voice only the two of them could hear, nobody knew what they were saying, but they laughed together happily.

They waited until all of the students had more or less left for lunch.

Raffaele pushed away her friend, and walked into the classroom alone, going up to Garen's desk.

"Come, let's have lunch together, I prepared some good food especially for you."

Garen glanced at Serin and Eeleen again, they were talking among themselves there, not meeting his gaze at all.

"Alright." He had already sensed something amiss, and decided to look into the mysteries here properly, plus the strange and ancient trend of having active girls and passive boys in this town, all of the things hidden here were piquing his interest.

The two of them got up and walked out of the classroom, Garen practically being pulled forward by Raffaele.

"That thing you just gave me was pretty good, I really like it."

"I just knew you would like it, I remember you used to really like antiques." Raffaele laughed as she replied, "Don't think I was joking before, I really did pay attention to you since a long time ago, even my grandma has approved of our relationship."

"Hah? Your grandma?" Garen felt as though his reaction was slightly delayed, "Isn't this development a little too fast?"

"Fast? How so? If you like 'em, get 'em! Do what you want to do! Whether it's fast or slow, what's the point of comparing yourself with others?" Raffaele replied with disdain, "That was the principle my grandma told me since I was young, if I find something good, I gotta act fast, if I'm slow there won't be anything left."

"Your grandma sure is... bold... haha..." Garen did not know how to comment, wasn't her grandma worried that her granddaughter would come out of it badly?

Chapter 577: Secret 1

In the vast canteen, the silver metal tables and chairs were fixed to the ground and neatly arranged on the floor, the clean white walls around them were covered with pictures of ducklings, apples, and pears.

The students sat on the chairs in twos and threes, eating the food on the trays, while others were lining up at the canteen window to bring out their trays.

Garen and Raffaele sat opposite each other on the right end of a long table, the two of them eating the sandwiches on their respective trays, occasionally dipping them into the cheese sauce between them, drinking some of the tomato and potato beef stew.

There was a low buzzing around the canteen, the sound of many people talking reflecting around the empty canteen, mixed with echoes. It felt as though he could hear what they were saying, but after listening closely, all he could hear was a blur.

Garen raised his head and looked at Raffaele sitting opposite him.

"You haven't answered my question from last time."

"What question?"

"What exactly do you like about me?" Garen picked up a piece of apple with his fork and put it into his mouth.

"Everything, probably..." Raffaele's expression was completely open, "If I have to choose, it's probably because you look good, so wouldn't it be really cool when I bring you out?"

"....."

"Then what other reason do you want?" Raffaele shrugged.

Neither of them said anything more for some time.

Garen felt that this person was slightly strange, she was obviously a girl, but acted like a boy.

"Can you tell me what promise you made with Eeleen and Serin?"

"I can't tell you that." Raffaele smiled, "But you just need to know that the power of the oath cannot be stopped. This is more than just me and them."

"Is that so?" Garen narrowed his eyes, thinking that he might have to go back and ask his parents about these secrets of the town. The two of them had lived here for so long, they might know some of the mysteries here, more or less.

This secret might very well involve his potential points problem.

"Let's go play ball after eating, I have a girl friend waiting at the court for me, you can cheer me on then." Raffaele still acted as though all this was completely natural.

Garen wanted to know more about her too, to get into the secrets of the place, so he just nodded and did not refuse.

After eating, they went to the court for a game or two of basketball, and after class in the afternoon, Garen was escorted home by Raffaele, Raffaele insisted on sending him all the way home, just like how a boy would send his girlfriend all the way to the gate of her house.

At home, he played with Vivien, who kept calling him Big Bro adorably, and finally waited until his parents returned home one after the other.

In the study during the evening, Garen distracted his older brother and younger sister, sitting alone as he looked at his mother opposite him, her expression confused.

"Is there something up? You look so serious, just like a little adult." His mother Trish laughed, reaching out her hand to pinch Garen's face. "Alright, did you get bullied at school?" She asked gently.

Shaking his head, Garen avoided his mother's hand.

"Mom, I wanted to ask, is there some ancient traditional oath in this town, that you must obey after you promised to make it?"

"An oath?" Trish thought about it, perplexed, "It's been many years since we moved here, true, there is something like a ritual here, only the locals will follow it, as outsiders who moved here, we've only heard it but haven't actually seen it. They call it something like the Oath of the Ancestors."

"A ritual?"

"Mn, more or less, the locals treat it like a very formal and solemn thing, their ancestors are something that you must be careful around, you can't even joke about it, if you swore at someone using their ancestors, for example, it might end up costing your life." His mother Trish told him straight-facedly. "Oh yeah, I hear a girl is pursuing you? And she's really pretty to boot? Is that so?"

Seeing his mom's face instantly turn mischievous, Garen also figured that he would not get any more information from her. After talking for so long, she had basically said nothing.

His mom's expression seemed to really not know anymore, so he had to give up on her end.

After chatting idly with his mom for a bit longer, Garen left the room. He grabbed his computer notebook, a birthday present from his dad last year.

Hammering out a line of words on the keyboard, he entered a web address into the search engine.

There were many hits about oaths, so to reduce the range, he added a space and once more typed in America, Grano.

Smack.

He pressed the Enter button, and there were only five results left on the screen.

It was an oath from something like a religious ritual, four of them were local public ritual oaths, and one was the oath students made to the national flag, swearing to uphold the American spirit.

He read all the information about the religious rituals carefully, they were all public affairs, rituals that required many items in preparation beforehand, and they were either for the spring harvest or fishing, or an event for a holiday, with no other worth whatsoever.

Turning off the computer, Garen sat by his bed and mused. In this town, many of the women, especially the local women, all had a special common secret, a secret that was ancient, solemn, and one that everyone seemed to obey the rules to.

"Looks like the best way to get to the bottom of this is to use my relationship with Raffaele... once we get close enough, many secrets won't be secrets anymore..."

His life after that did not change much from before, the only difference was that the two girls who had always stuck with him, Serin and Eeleen, became just one girl, Raffaele. Raffaele would run over here every day, precisely on time, to meet and send Garen to school, occasionally giving him some little presents, which were always decent old gadgets and little antiques. Garen wanted to chat up Serin and Eeleen several times, but they kept avoiding him, so he had no choice but to give up.

The days passed one after the other, and he slowly got used to Raffaele's existence as well.

Sometimes he would give Raffaele some little items back, and their relationship began to grow warmer, like best friends but also like lovers.

To children like them, their completely unchanged lives passed by extremely fast.

Slowly, Eeleen and Serin gradually faded from Garen's vision, and his relationship with Raffaele became better and better. He was never someone to approach others himself, pursuing his own target, so he had no time to get to know the people around him. But the type who approached him of their own accord, such as Raffaele, slowly became an exception for him.

There was not much difference between his junior high life and his elementary school life, the only thing was that the students grew up slightly faster, and their thought processes were slightly more mature.

Garen practiced his secret technique every day, but his power stayed on the second level, his progress was extremely slow, and he had subtly asked Raffaele about the buck badge several times, but every time she just said that she did not know, only her grandma would know more about it. This made Garen, who was basically stuck where he was, more and more curious.

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On the bright blue sea, the golden-red waves of twilight kept rippling about.

A beach a hundred kilometers away from Grano.

On the pale yellow beach, a golden-haired boy in his early teens was walking slowly toward the ocean, wearing nothing but black swimming trunks, his clothes tossed far away on a black coral rock.

The boy had handsome features, with a hint of gentle androgyny, giving off a feeling of tender weakness. He was obviously a boy, but somehow he had a gentle beauty that made people want to protect him.

He walked toward the seawater slowly, step by step, his feet getting submerged, followed by his calves, then his knees, thigh, stomach, chest.

In an instant, wisps of ink-black mist extended from his body, spreading everywhere with the tide.

The mist was like ink, rapidly dying the water around the boy black.

The boy seemed completely oblivious to it, however, continuing to walk towards the depths of the sea.

Strangely, the seawater that had reached his chest did not go any higher than that, even as he left the shallows and walked towards the depths, the water level did not budge at all, reaching his chest and no further than that.

Whoosh!!

Suddenly, there was the rippling of waves on the surface of the sea nearby, and two triangular fins rushed toward the boy from the distance. Under the mixed blue surface, there were two large blue-black giant sharks, they swam towards the boy rapidly, their fins cutting through the waves like submarines, drawing out two lines of white waves behind them.

Just as the fins swam into the black water around the boy.

The boy's weakness changed abruptly, his hands as pencil-straight as two sharp knives, stabbing down into the water hard.

Psst!

The two giant sharks exploded abruptly with two popping sounds, becoming two chunks of bloodied meat, the bloody water was quickly integrated into the black water territory around the boy, the color of bright blood quickly covered by the black, and then everything returned to the same peaceful scene at the very beginning.

Garen raised his hands, frowning.

"The progress is too slow..." He sighed.

The Black Claw of Sethe's power had already achieved the same level as a Grandmaster of Combat, and his current body was already capable of just barely releasing his aura, so he had indeed recovered some of his power.

But the laws of this world are different, it seemed that he could no longer fully condense his aura, and even at his current state, he could only insert his aura into an item and then use that to influence other



external objects, he could no longer simply release it as he used to, and overwhelm the enemy with it alone.

But this way, he merged his aura into the water, and into the air, turning it into something ordinary people could see as well, and not just something only for the eyes of Grandmasters of Combat. It was just that this required a lot of energy, and right now Garen could only sustain this aura release for ten minutes max, the area covered by his aura included a radius of about ten meters with him in the center, within these ten meters, any and all creatures that enter this area would be subjected to a terrifying psychological illusory pressure, while at the same time the materialized Black Sethe Insidious Palm Power would also seep into the enemy's body together with his aura, slowly weakening the opponent's vitality and speed.

Right now, rather than saying his aura was a product of the merging of his spirit, it was more like a pure poisonous gas released from Garen's body. This poisonous gas had a powerful hallucinatory effect, and could even weaken the opponent's vitality and speed, plus it was soluble in water.

"Garen! You went into the water again!" Far away on the beach, a slender golden-haired girl was waving at him hard. "Come up to shore, there's something I want to tell you."

Garen turned around to look, it was Raffaele, he was very into training these days, so he would ride his motorbike to the beach for a swim every day after school, but in truth, he was practicing his application of the Black Sethe's Insidious Palm Power.

This secret technique seemed to truly be an evil technique, it could actually absorb and dissolve the blood and flesh of other creatures, external blood and flesh even boosted his palm power significantly. Since randomly hunting and killing in the forest might attract unwanted attention, he decided to go further away, and ended up training here in the ocean, so no one actually noticed anything at all.

As an evil technique, the Black Sethe was unique in its poison and also its potent ability for camouflage, perhaps even Grandmasters of Combat at the same level as him would not be able to sense that Garen was using any secret technique power at all. That was also something Garen was extremely satisfied with.

Garen quickly pulled back the poisonous mist that had melted into the surrounding seawater, and turned around, heading back to shore.

His movements were extremely natural, the lines of his body unnaturally gentle, and with every stroke, his body would swim ahead quickly, like a fish.

## Chapter 578: Secret 2

He quickly went back to shore and accepted the dry towel Raffaele handed him. Ever since they got to know each other, in these past two years, they had gotten so close that there was nothing they could not tell each other. Of course, they still had their respective innermost secrets that remained hidden from each other, Garen could sense that, and he could tell that it was the same with Raffaele.

The Raffaele right now was no longer as childish as she used to be, in the past two years, she seemed to have undergone some special education, her thoughts becoming more and more mature, while her personality grew more and more aloof, other than Garen, she had fewer girl companions, and more underlings who looked up to her.

Before she knew it, her reputation among her peers became stronger and stronger, and now that she was in her first year of high school, she had already become the most powerful boss lady in the school.

Raffaele was wearing white swim clothes, her chest was still not very developed but small and delicate, peeking vaguely from beneath the swim clothes, her fair white arms, and smooth white long legs were her most eye-catching assets.

Her skin was unlike other girls, as she grew older, rather than growing coarse, her skin grew smoother and softer.

"There's something I need to handle at school, I need to go back guest." A trace of exhaustion flashed past Raffaele's face, "You ride back on your own later, I won't send you then."

"No problem." Garen nodded, seeing the exhaustion on Raffaele's face, it was her true face that she only showed him. "You're too tired, why don't you give that organization or whatnot to someone to handle, we're just students, we don't need to create an organization or summat to trouble ourselves."

"It's fine, I can do it." Raffaele waved her hand, she had always been a forceful kind of woman and was equally formidable. "It's just a minor problem, I can get it settled in no time."

She was just like a ferocious lioness, powerful, fierce, but also had her proud and beautiful side.

As she grew older, that quality of hers also intensified, she could always make the best decisions, until her many peers and even her elders silently approved of her leadership.

Simply said, she was just like a natural-born leader.

But there was something that Garen could not understand at all, and that was the reason behind Raffaele creating a Blood Pact Group. The core members of the group were also all shrouded in mystery, and could not be seen anywhere, but there were a ton of outer members everywhere, be it boys or girls, a large portion of the excelling students had all joined this club.

Watching Raffaele turn as though to leave, Garen suddenly pulled her back.

"Don't rush, let me show you one last magic trick."

Raffaele smiled, turned around and looked at Garen, her expression full of anticipation. Sometimes Garen would show her some magic tricks that looked very magical, they were very interesting, and also very fun.

Garen smiled slightly as he held open both hands, his palm upturned in front of her.

"There's nothing in my hands, right?"

"And then..."

He gripped his hands lightly, and then, right in front of Raffaele's eyes, he gripped them slowly, as though he was holding something in them.

Abruptly, he spread open his fists.

There was a small red pebble in the middle of his palms. They came in a pair, very organized and delicate, and there was a seemingly natural carving of a girl's blurry features on them.

"Close-distance magic! Impressive!" Surprise flashed through Raffaele's eyes, her mood apparently lightened, "One each." She just took one of the pebbles, putting it in her palm carefully, and then she looked at Garen with a smile.

"Alright, one each." Garen smiled too.

Raffaele's thoughts had always been very mature, and also slightly odd, she seemed to be very insistent on something, an aim or ideal that was extremely hard to achieve, that was also why Garen was slowly beginning to accept her, although Raffaele's growth was incomparable to his, but compared to the other, even more childish normal students, he would naturally choose Raffaele, who he could communicate more with.

With that subtle acknowledgment, over these past two years, the two of them had become a pair that was like friends, but also like lovers.

Keeping the red pebble away, Garen suddenly felt a touch of warmth around his right wrist, and his hand was pulled into Raffaele's.

Raffaele's hand grabbed his, placing his right hand on her right chest, and then pressing down slowly.

That perky, full, and bouncy feeling, that warm touch, tinged with the bodily fragrance of a young girl, slowly permeated into his nostrils.

"This is your reward..."

Raffaele turned around and jogged away, leaving behind only her chiming, tinkling laugh.

From afar, Garen watched Raffaele put on her shirt and trousers, get onto her own white motorbike, wave in his direction, and then kick-start the engine, beginning her journey back.

As the motorbike picked up speed, the female rider's golden hair began to wave backward in the wind.

In a place where Garen could not see, the pretty face under Raffaele's helmet began to grow colder as she left the beach.

"Since you won't listen to warnings, looks like we have no choice but to start the war."

She murmured, and the image of that stout white person with the earstuds seemed to appear in her eyes.

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Garen remained where he stood, raising his right hand slightly and sniffing it, there was still the girl's fragrance lingering on it.

"I never thought..." He shook his head and laughed, an ancient monster like him who had lived for so long, was actually beginning to truly feel something for that child-like little girl.

In that instant, it was as though he could see his cousin Hathaway's shadow on Raffaele.

Turning around and continuing to walk into the water, his exceptional swimming skill allowed him to tread water in the depths of the ocean, and he would not sink even if his body was upright, that was also the reason why his family had slowly begun to put down their concerns and gotten used to this habit of his.

Returning to his previous position, Garen immersed himself into practicing the channeling of his secret technique once more, and he would occasionally use himself as bait, to lure some sea sharks that wanted to eat him, and then he would 'eat' them in a few strokes, using them to increase the Black Sethe's Insidious Palm Power.

Thinking back to how Raffaele had hurried back just now, Garen suddenly thought of something. "Why don't I follow her quietly and see what she's up to?"

Raffaele had always been secretive, he had no idea what she was doing, and he had also tried to investigate once before, but it never came up to anything. This time, however, it seemed like something important was happening, so Garen's curiosity was ever so slightly piqued.

Looking at the sky, he saw that the setting sun was almost about to sink under the sea's horizon, and only a tiny bit of the arch was still poking out.

Garen trained for a little longer, and only turned around to swim back to shore when the sky had nearly gotten completely dark.

Just then, a shadow seemed to flash before his eyes, a black shadow.

"Hmm?"

Garen frowned slightly, and felt something was amiss, stepping onto the sand bare-footed, he suddenly turned around.

He had no idea when, but somehow there was a delinquent standing behind him, with his hair dyed red and white.

This man was wearing flashy clothes that practically sparkled silver, his hands in his pockets, his head cocked and his expression unhappy as he stared at Garen.

"Who are you?" Garen asked in shock.

"For some reason, looking at a guy like you, who's so perfect you don't look like a man, really pisses me off..." The delinquent said, his expression condescending.

"Looks like you're not a normal person?" Garen asked, ever so slightly surprised.

"Very smart, I like talking to smart people. Alright, look at my eyes." The delinquent's eyes stared hard at Garen, and his voice suddenly became softer.

Garen felt slightly dizzy, his eyes seemed to have some strange pull and whirlpool, luring him into meeting his gaze. Garen was just about to resist, when something occurred to him, and he forced down the urge to retaliate.

"When Raffaele comes back at night later, you find a chance to send a message to this number using your phone, a blank message. Then you do your best to keep Raffaele there, perhaps truly making her your woman would be a good way to do that." That delinquent's bleary voice seemed to come from far, far away. At the same time, he showed Garen a paper slip with a number on it, letting Garen see it closely.

Garen relaxed his body and heart, carefully feeling this sudden feeling of foginess, this new and unfamiliar feeling was as though his own body was reacted automatically. The delinquent in front of him was like a natural enemy, just one glance, was enough to affect most of his main bodily functions.

Despite himself, he knew, if he just obeyed his instincts, he might actually truly have to obey the other person's instructions.

This strange feeling of being controlled was extremely new and exciting to him.

Unfortunately, although this feeling of being controlled might be very powerful to normal people, to the point where they could not resist it, but to him, he just needed to move his already-formed aura slightly, and he could already easily break through this feeling of being controlled.

It was like tying an elephant with a string as thick as a hair... or covering a powerful time-bomb with a paper lantern.

By the time this feeling vanished, there was already no trace of that delinquent anywhere.

That extremely terrifying speed, as though he teleported, also left Garen in awe.

It was as though his physical body had no weight at all, just like a shadow, moving and stopping at will, completely disregarding momentum.

The night breeze blew softly.

Garen stood alone on the beach, looking at the empty space in front of him, as though that scene just now was just an illusion, and a feeling of excitement rose instantly in his heart.

"This world... is finally not so boring anymore..." The corners of his lips curved slightly, and he turned around, walking toward the rock with his clothes on it.

Soon enough, amidst the roar of a motorcycle engine, a white motorbike rode down the twisting paths, headed towards Grano.

Not long after the motorbike left, behind a rock on the beach, a brunette girl walked out slowly, she looked at the direction Garen had left in quietly, taking out a black cell phone and quickly calling a number.

"The target has left, the plan is a success." She said softly.

"You be careful, don't let that woman notice your movements." There was an attractive man's voice coming from the other end.

"Don't worry, I'll just distract the guardian for less than a minute, and I'll just be giving some psychological hints to control them, I won't do anything more than that, so I surely won't be discovered."

"That's good." The male voice on the phone paused, "I'll come find you at night, wait for me."

The woman's eyes immediately lit up with a burning passion.

"Mn, I'll wait for you..."

She put down the phone, turned around, and disappeared into the crack between the rocks.



## Chapter 579: Secret 3

Brrr...

Amidst the buzzing of the motorcycle engine.

Raffaele rode like the wind down the path between the forests, her body leaning onto the motorbike, her hair flying in the wind, her gaze as sharp as a hawk.

Large swathes of forests flew past her, the bike leaping up suddenly, and then falling down again hard.

Bzzz...

All of a sudden, the bike moved sideways, turned a few rounds, and abruptly stopped in a small clearing in the woods. The tires seemed to emit faint wisps of white smoke.

Raffaele took off her helmet, looking at the few figures who walked out slowly from the surrounding woods, they were all young girls, of around her age.

"Is Vixie back yet?" She asked nonchalantly, leaping off the bike.

"She is, she just arrived in the afternoon train, and rushed here from the city, now she's catching up on some sleep." One of the black-haired young girls surrounding her replied respectfully.

"What about the others? How many of those who had gone out came back?"

"About six of them came back, the rest of them are occupied and can't come back for now." The black-haired girl said softly.

"That's enough." Raffaele nodded, "The Blood Breeds on that side are getting too much, Grano is still our Grano, it's where our ancestors are buried, not somewhere those outsiders can show off."

"President, you want to open fire?" A brunette girl frowned. "I don't think Serin's group would agree."

"It doesn't matter, this is just a small lesson." Raffaele tossed her long golden hair, her eyes cold as she said so. "Their hands are reaching too far."

"Do we need to report to the elders?" A girl asked.

"No, this was originally their intention." Raffaele smiled, her skintight black clothes showing off her slender body, in the forest that grew gradually darker, matched with her dazzling golden hair, it showed off how deep and powerful she was.

She looked around her, "Gather half of our people, tonight at eight, let's go to the north area together."

"Yes."

All of the girls around her replied respectfully.

\*\*\*\*\*

Brrr...

The white motorbike slowly stopped in front of Garen's house.

Garen leaped off the bike in his black skin-tight riding clothes, in the dark of the night, on the street leading to his own house, there were several suspicious-looking people around, mixed in with the regular passersby, surrounding the whole house quietly.

Garen looked around subtly, and noticed these people all had a common characteristic, they all looked like small-time delinquents. They seemed to be chewing gum, with their hands in their pockets, but in truth their eyes would occasionally be fixed on his house.

"Watchmen?" Garen pushed his bike into the yard, he could feel that as soon as he pushed his bike into the house, the people watching him slowly retreated one by one.

"Big Brother~~"

As soon as he opened the door, his little sister Vivien bounced out and pounced onto him, the little scamp was in third grade now, wearing a dark red silk skirt, white children's stockings, her pigtails sticking up at the ends, and add that to her cherubic face, all of it made her a very standard image of the adorable loli.

But as usual, she idolized Garen, and liked to stick to him all day.

"Big Bro, does this look good?" Vivien darted out of Garen's embrace, and spun around on the spot, her short red skirt flying up slightly, giving off a light and pure feeling.

"Sure, our Vivi is the cutest of all, you'll definitely be a great beauty who's loved by everyone in the future!" Garen picked Vivien up in his arms and closed the door behind him.

"Did you bring Vivi a present?"

"Of course."

Garen flipped his hand and brought out a red pebble-like the ones from earlier, this one had the picture of a duckling carved onto it, and looked quite quaint.

He tossed it at the little scamp, and little Vivien instantly bounced away, bringing the stone to show off to Jason. And then there were the sounds of impatient yelling and bright cheerful laughter, evidently the little devil was causing Jason trouble again.

It was a completely different treatment from what Garen got.

Garen went back to his bedroom speechlessly, pulling out his computer notebook, turning it on, and then connecting to the Internet.

With a pitter-patter of the keyboard, he entered in the word, Grano.

Hitting Enter, a list of the most recent news in town appeared.

The most recent result was from one day ago.

‘Two rangers from the Grano Forestry Department were attacked by wolves, the scene too gruesome for words.’

This headline caught his eye at a glance, and Garen moved his cursor, tapping this news piece lightly.

With a light clicking sound, the page was opened.

In the darkness, under the illumination of the white computer light, Garen carefully read that short piece of news, which only had words and no pictures.

‘... The victims’ necks had canine bite marks on either side, and most of their organs had been dug out and eaten by the wild wolves...’

He noticed these words in the news.

Ever since he noticed something was wrong here, Garen had always been paying attention to the different news happening in Grano.

These past few years, he had been constantly collecting news articles, and by now, he had collected up to a hundred different articles.

"This thing again..." Closing the web page, Garen mused slightly. "There are at least about a dozen of these cases every year, a few tourists getting lost in the forest, or drowning to the bottom of the ocean, so that even their bodies could not be found. Haha... what flawless camouflage..."

He let go of the mouse, laced his fingers, and propped his arms in front of the computer.

"Wild wolves? I've lived here for so long, I know there are barely any wolves here, even if someone walked in the dense forests away from the main roads, and walked for half an hour, they might still not come across any wolves, they've practically been cleared out by the hunters, to have a dozen wolf mauling incidents every year, what a joke."

Turning off the computer, Garen stood up and walked to the window, reaching out his hand to peel the curtains open ever so slightly, and looking out.

There really was still someone watching him, but it had reduced from the multiple people just now to just one.

"Looks like Raffaele's problem is tonight." Garen was thoughtful, he mused for a bit, pulled open in his closet, and found a large black raincoat from inside, this raincoat was one that everyone in town wore, and this one was adult-sized.

He put it over him, and in an instant his whole person was covered in that raincoat, looking just like the wide black hoods from the Totem World.

Pulling on the good as well, and lowering his head, he instantly became a stranger whose features could not even be seen properly.

Garen stood in front of the closet's dressing mirror, and took a slight breath.

Crack-crack...

His body abruptly began to emit a series of loud cracking sounds, and soon his whole shape had changed slightly, his shoulders were slightly broader, and he utterly hid his presence as well, standing in front of

the mirror, it was as though he was merely a fashion dummy in a raincoat, with no indication of life whatsoever.

"After investigating for so long, it's about time I figured out the truth."

He buttoned up his raincoat, walked up to the window, and lightly opened the window.

The person watching him on the street down there was still smoking as he looked this way.

Garen went around the windows by the side of the house, the back of the house was facing the woods, so the side facing the back was completely quiet, and there was barely anybody to be seen.

He opened the window lightly, with a whoosh of wind and a flash of a black shadow, Garen darted straight out of the window, landing soundlessly on the surrounding wall underneath him, and then he landed, as though floating, into the dark recesses of the woods.

Without a moment's hesitation, Garen walked at a normal pace into the depths of the forest, dressed in his raincoat, he was familiar with the lay of the land around here, so he was completely capable of taking a long road to the place Raffaele's house was.

The surrounding forest was completely dark, so that he could not even see his fingers in front of him, but every so often he could see moonlight shining down from the cracks above, that was the only signpost he could see in the darkness.

Before long, Garen suddenly stopped in his tracks.

"Who are you!" A black shadow had somehow stood in his path before he had noticed it. It was that smoking watchman. He was dressed fully in black, and his hair was dyed white, his head tilted slightly as he leaned against a large tree.

He was the one who asked that question.

"Speak."

The watchman was cold, and slightly impatient.

Garen did not reply, and instead stood quietly on the spot, not making a sound.

"Could you be Raffaele's..." White Hair's expression changed suddenly.

Psst!

Instantly, he disappeared from where he stood.

A piercing wind appeared behind Garen, pale but sharp nails grabbing towards Garen's back like sharp thorns.

Smack!

White Hair's fingers were blocked by one arm, and he looked shocked, his figure flashing away, appearing again on Garen's other side, and this time both his hands grabbed towards Garen mercilessly.

At the same time, he opened his mouth abruptly.

Scree!!!

A piercing soundwave instantly crashed into Garen's brain.

Bam!!

The four arms crashed into each other hard.

White Hair instantly separated from Garen, both of them taking several steps back, their chests rising and falling heavily.

"You...!" White Hair opened his mouth and was about to say something, when suddenly he saw his opponent disappear in a flash, he instantly knew that was bad, and he quickly used his arms to block the front of his body.

In that instant, there was a loud sound in his mind, and all the hairs on his body stood on end, the arms blocking in front of him did not touch anything, even at such high speeds, his opponent could still change the direction of his attack, and he was hit straight in the stomach, causing him intense pain.

With a bam, his whole body flew into the air, his backbone very obviously bending in the center, like a wooden plank broken in half.

He rolled onto the ground and went quite some distance, all the way until he crashed into a large rock and broke it into smithereens, only then did he finally stop, his body a mess of blood and flesh.

"Damn you!" White Hair leaped up, and with a crack, he actually managed to recover his broken spine, but as soon as he got up, a black shadow instantly appeared in front of him, and reached for his heart with his claw.

White Hair hurriedly avoided it, but with a tearing sound, his right arm was forcefully torn off, and yet strangely, there was no blood coming from the wound at all.

"Ahh!!" White Hair screamed. Using the momentum from his dodge, he instantly began to run away.

But immediately, a fist-sized rock came shooting at his back, piercing through his chest, and dragging out a trail of flesh and blood behind it before it embedded itself into a tree trunk.

White Hair fell face-first onto the ground, a large hole blown straight through his chest, but he immediately bounced back up, his face twisted as he continued to flee.



"His speed and strength are about the same as mine, but his techniques are much stronger!!" White Hair was both angry and terrified, "He's definitely an experienced Vampire who's much older than me!! Damn it! Why is there suddenly an experienced Vampire here!!?"

He accelerated madly, but did not sense any hint of killing intent or movement anywhere around him. This just emphasized how well-trained his opponent was.

Psst!

A white arm suddenly pierced through his neck, and a large hole was blown straight through it, creating a mess of flesh and blood.

White Hair stiffened where he stood, his speed instantly coming to a halt.

"The leader... won't forgive you!!" White Hair forced out these few words.

With a tearing sound, his whole body was torn into four or five chunks, scattered onto the grass and the bottom of the trees.

Garen's figure slowly appeared on that spot. Glancing at the corpse around him, he turned around and was about to leave.

Smack!

Something seemed to have grabbed his ankle abruptly, a piercing pain coming from the bottom of his foot.

Garen gave it a jolt of power.

With a bam, he instantly jolted away from the thing at his ankle.

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He looked down, it was White Hair's severed hand, its sharp nails furiously scratching about. It was this thing that grabbed on the his ankle earlier, the one that left 5 deep scratch marks.

From afar, White Hair's skull suddenly split open wide, revealing a gigantic fanged mouth, roaring at Garen.

"Intruder! Chief won't let you off that easily! You're dead! Dead!! Hahahahaha....." White Hair loudly laughed.

Garen bit his lip.

"What strong life force..." Looking at his opponents ferocious fangs, those bloodshot eyes, and that pale skin, it all reminded him of a certain familiar species.

"You're a blood breed?" He unconsciously said aloud.

White Hair's laughter suddenly came to an abrupt stop. He looked at Garen, stunned.

"You... You're not a Vampire?"

Bam!

With a strong stomp, Garen bust open White Hair's head. Inside, the inside was absent of blood or flesh, just a clump of black dust, nothing else remained.

Taking a quick look at his surroundings, he felt a twitch in his chest. Garen had a fairly clear idea as to what kind of world he was currently in now...

Quickly looking through White Hair's clothing, he stood up and quickly left the scene. After walking around the woods for a bit, he dumped the clothes and walked back home.

Following the same route, he stealthily went home, without anyone noticing his presence.

In his own bedroom, Garen swiftly closed the curtains.

In the darkness, without even tuning on the light, Garen started inspecting the wound he got from the fight.

It was completely unexpected to him. The fact that when its body had already been completely torn apart, White Hair could still move freely, even to the point where it could wound his body. This kind of monstrous life force, completely eclipses the abilities of the Grandmasters of Combat.

Seeing that his wound didn't have any infections or scars, he breathed a sigh of relief.

Checking his Attribute Plane, his potential points did not increase at all from killing that vampire. This made him feel slightly disappointed.

Recentering his focus, he started to ponder about the whole issue surrounding Raffaele and the Vampires.

"This vampire, and also the delinquent from the beach, all of these signs point to Raffaele as the cause of them trying to monitor and trying to control me. Being someone who gained the attention from the Vampires, Raffaele's Blood Pact Group must not be any ordinary group... Raffaele herself must also have some sort of ability comparable to the vampires as well. That kind of power... coupled with the strange phenomenon and culture in the town, it must be a power only this lady can use..."

Garen suddenly remembered, no matter if it were the Earth or the Secret Technique World, there had been legends about Witches.

"What if she's a witch?" From the collections of messages he's received in the past and all the ancestral rituals taking place, he gathered that, "She's most likely a witch."

Coming to 2 possible hypotheses, Garen immediately turned on the laptop in front of him.

"Maybe it's time for me to start improving my technological skills, it would be good to create a programme specifically for collecting and sorting out the messages..." He searched the web for legends revolving around vampires and witches, but unfortunately for him, most of it were either about novels, television series, or other forms of entertainment. There were also a few search results about myths and urban legends, but most of them had been read before by him, serving no real value.

Connecting to the website of the National Security Agency of the USA, Garen was hoping that there were some relevant records for this issue. However, maybe these kinds of confidential information wouldn't be uploaded to the Internet. It was highly possible that the information would be saved in the internal Local Area Networks of the agency, sealing it away from the public. As such, even the best hackers in the world would be rendered useless, since the Network wasn't even connected to the Internet with any cables or optical fibers.

Unlike before, when looking through the national criminal records this time, especially the murder and disappearance cases, Garen made a new discovery.

All the criminal reports by the government had been carefully selected. Some of the resolutions of the cases seem perfect, but it still somehow felt off. Even some of the testimonials given by eyewitnesses, they seem to be slightly flawed and occasionally had some mutually contradictory statements.

Connecting the dots, a thought started to form in Garen's brain.

The situation was becoming more and more clear, he was more and more sure of his hypothesis.

"Blood Breed, Vampires, and Witches, even if they weren't exactly the same, something similar to them exists here."

Closing his laptop, he sat back down in the darkness.

He heard the sounds of the door closing, his parents were home. He could vaguely hear his sister and her mother, Trish, talking,

Garen was sitting on the edge of his bed, thinking back about his battle with White Hair.

The battle was quite easy. Even though his body hasn't returned to the level it was back in the Totem World, and his average stat points sat only at slightly above 2, he had his years of battle experience and his secret technique, so beating White Hair was pretty effortless.

"His speed and strength was almost close to mine... No, it might even be better than mine. He also had that absurd life force and regeneration..." Garen said while caressing his skin, "It was only because his technique was bad, or rather he didn't have any technique, just average level street-fighting skills. His speed was so fast to the degree that he himself wasn't able to control his movements. This kind of vampire was nothing to be feared. But that life force though..."

Thinking back to the hand that could continue to attack its opponent, Garen's knowledge of vampires had increased.

"For a pawn used to tail me, he already had strength and speed on par with me... Blood Breed's advantages over an average human being sure is overwhelming."

Garen was worried that this was not just a normal species of Vampires. From their rank, it seems like White Hair is quite a low-ranked lackey. If even a low-ranked vampire could possess this absurd speed and strength, along with that life force and regeneration, how strong would a high-ranked vampire be?

In addition, the Blood Breed in the legends are immortal creatures.

This point garnered Garen's attention, could they really live forever? Were they truly immortal?

He was really curious about this.

"Though it's probably better not to rush to find out at this time... I should take it slow." He felt his slow growth of his Secret Technique - Black Claw of Sethe, although its regenerative ability was quite decent as compared to normal humans, when compared to the Blood Breed, it naturally pales in comparison.

If the Blood Breed were all at the same level as White Hair, he could easily take down a few more of them, but if a stronger Blood Breed appears... Against an absurdly strong unknown lifeform, even Garen felt a bit worried.

After all, the Blood Breed in the legends were monstrous immortal beings. Even in the Secret Techniques world or the Totem World, there wasn't anything that was truly immortal.

At best, there were only beings with extreme longevity, who can live up to thousands of years, like the Demon Phoenix. However, Vampires were different... If we go according to the legends, it's wasn't just thousands of years, they could even be millions of years old...

"This world was not as normal as I thought..."

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"What? We lost a tailing agent?"

In the church at the North of the town, a muscular man with earrings squinted at the minion giving a report to him.

It was the middle of the night, a group of blood-covered delinquents, most of them had some sort of injury or wound, with some major injuries such as the loss of 2 of their limbs, to minor ones like a few mere scratches.

However, even some of the minor injuries looked absurd, there was even a guy with a metal pole impaled in his chest. The entire church looked like a horror film makeup room.

"Yes, when it was time to change shifts, I went to find Carl, but that guy totally disappeared. I tried looking around in the surrounding areas but he was nowhere to be found, he might have left himself." The guy who was speaking was a dark-skinned, muscular male with a bandage wrapping his head, covering one of his eyes. Blood could be seen slowly seeping through the bandage.

"Looks like it was Raffaele's work. She must've found something out." The white chief calmly said, "This bastard seems to be much more of a handful as compared to her grandma..."

"Since this line has been discovered, what are your plans for this?" The Reverend Father suddenly walked out from the side, frustratedly looking at the chief.

"Let's leave it be for now. We've suffered quite a bit of damage, but it should be the same for that bloody witch too. In my estimation, both parties would be needing quite some time to regroup and recover." The white man hesitated, "I can't shake the feeling that Raffaele is scheming something, that bastard is known as Grano's strongest witch, tonight's actions were definitely not just a warning shot."

"That Blood Pact Group or whatever, except for that old Witch, have less than a hundred core members. As long as you don't break your contract with the ancestors and willfully destroy the balance, no matter how strong she is she won't need to initiate in breaking the rule." The Reverend Father shook his head, "And what about those other Vampires who are roaming about outside? How are you gonna take care of that?"

"What do those random vampires have to do with me?" The white male laughed coldly, "Let that witch take care of them. I have already sent them a message before they entered my turf: 'Those who don't obey me, Jaern, shall all die.'"

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BumTskBumTskBumTsk... My heart is ways onn fr you....cleary yt unser dain sky...

In the nightclub, the DJ was mixing the music tracks with a strong rhythmic beat, with loud foreign lyrics howling through the speakers.

The people on the dancefloor were twisting their bodies to the music under the flashing strobe lights. Some were screaming, some were clapping, and there were even couples tongue-deep with each other.

Two big, muscular men were at the centre of this dance floor, each with a hot girl in their arms, moving their body to the beat.

As the burly men were grabbing a handful of the girls' breasts, a loud sound suddenly started ringing in their ears.

The men's pupils suddenly dilated. They looked at each other, then pushed away their respective girls and forced their way out of the club.

Ignoring the calls of the girls behind them, both of them left the bar. After talking a few turns, they arrived at a dead end alleyway.

It was nearing midnight, the alleyway was completely empty.

Poof!

Two strong women appeared out of nowhere and pinned the two men against the alley wall.

"You broke the rules."

At the exit of the alleyway, a beautiful young lady with long blond hair appeared. She coldly glared at the two guys.

"A witch? What rules? We didn't do anything!" One of the guys frantically said. "We just arrived today morning!"

With a loud "bam", one of the girls kneed him in the gut, rendering him unable to speak.

"No sucking blood in the public, this is the rules of our Grano..."

"Bullshit!" The other guy interrupted, "Humans are nothing but animals, we will eat what we want whenever we want! If it wasn't for you bitches and that bunch of traitors!"

Bam!!

This time, the impact was much louder.



The guy rolled back his eyes, nearly completely unconscious.

"Traitors?" The blonde shook her head, "Slaughter them. They are not welcome in Grano."

As she walked out of the alleyway, she could vaguely hear the sounds of the two girls' ferocious hits, coupled with the men's desperate cries.