

# Mystical Journey

## Chapter 8: Special Ability Enhancements

The old man brushed his fingers through his sparse hair. "Look around by yourself. Items on the left side of my shop are personally acquired from the countryside. On the right are heirlooms that have been passed down for generations." He bowed his head and started to examine the tiny object in his hand again.

The old man wore white gloves and held a soft gold pocket-watch. The back of the watch was open and he seemed to be studying the gears and mechanics of the watch itself.

Garen first glanced around the entire shop and then began to browse in detail from left to right.

A long rectangular oil painting hung on the far left wall and depicted a white castle under siege. There were a handful of armored warriors who were pushing towards the castle bearing a red banner. The catapults were constantly flinging giant rocks as oil spilled down the castle walls. Bloody corpses were everywhere.

Below the oil painting was a circular dark gold metal sheet. It was half a meter wide and a smiling human face bulged out in the center.

"What is this?" Garen touched the metal sheet. The material was hard and the surface had a rough texture similar to copper paper.

The old man standing under the bookshelf looked up. "This is the Totem of the Sun God owned by the Crimson tribe from 300 years ago. It's a very valuable object. Every time the tribe plundered new gold, the wizard of the tribe would paint the metal disc with molten gold. Other than the human face in the middle, everywhere else has been painted over countless times with gold and brass. If you are interested, I can sell it to you for cheap at \$35,000." The old man took off his glasses and rubbed the lenses with a soft cloth as he continued, "Not a lot of people know the value of these objects anymore. A few decades ago, when antiques were the trend, I could have sold that for hundreds of thousands."

"Totem of the Sun God..." The corner of Garen's lips twitched. He knew without looking that this was fake. Not only did the lack of response from his special ability signal this, there was also the fact that if the totem really was worth that much and was really made out of gold, then there was no way it would be displayed here waiting to be sold. If it was actually a huge piece of gold plated metal, any jeweler would be willing to buy it for

\$100,000. Although the shop owner even gave him a “deal” for \$35,000... the total amount of cash he had on hand was only \$20.

On his left, he saw a tall redwood table. On top was a burgundy emblem, a transparent wine bottle, and a silver cup.

Garen gently touched each of the three items. When he touched the burgundy emblem, the Potential Meter at the bottom of his vision jumped.

“Hmm?! There’s something up with this!” He quietly turned his body until his back was facing the old man. The skin on his face tensed.

He picked up the burgundy emblem and inspected it carefully.

The emblem was in the shape of a cross. The cross was burgundy with gold laurels wrapped around its edges. Garen found that in the dead center of the cross, there was a tiny patch of black paint the size and shape of a fingernail with the letter P carved on it.

He could feel the powerful concentrated cold qi inside the emblem. Compared to the black pearl and Felicity’s Halo of Tragedy, this one felt many times more powerful. For some reason, however, he could not entirely absorb this energy from the emblem. There was only a thin thread of energy between the emblem and him, with Potential being slowly squeezed out like toothpaste.

“Before, I could easily and instantly absorb all the potential from the objects I found. How come this time it’s going so slowly? At this rate, if I want to fully consume this energy, I would have to stay here for days.” A trace of excitement and disbelief flashed across Garen’s eyes.

“That’s \$6,000,” the bespectacled old man said in a deadpan voice while standing to Garen’s right side.

“\$6,000...” Garen frowned.

The old man was wearing all black. Looking at the emblem, he said in a low tone, “I acquired this Bronze Cross Emblem from a veteran family. You sure have good eyes for picking this one out. Out of all the stuff I acquired, this emblem is the most exquisite. It came from the Republic of Mengdiya over 150 years ago. At that time, the Republic of Mengdiya was so powerful that all other countries lived in fear of it. They were able to establish hundreds of colonies throughout the world and half of the land now occupied by the Yalu Confederation was also colonized by them. This emblem was one of the products left from that period of time. I believe it was a reward given to a level two military commander.”

“I’ll look around a bit more... I’m not in a rush.” Garen wanted to suppress his desire to purchase it. He knew that if he could absorb all the potential out of the emblem, then he would be able to add more than two points to his Abilities. Unfortunately, he had no money...

The weekly allowance he received was only \$20. The difference between that amount and \$6,000 was astronomical.

The old man noticed how reluctant Garen was about giving it up. “I had a soldier coming in last time who wanted to buy it off me, but he didn’t bring enough cash. If you really want it kid, take this opportunity and get it before he comes back.”

Garen’s face twitched. “I’ll look at some other stuff first.”

“Alright, up to you.” The old man smiled like a blooming chrysanthemum.

Garen peeked at the old man. “This guy... he obviously noticed that I wanted to buy it and so made up a story to push me over the edge. However, I should be careful. Perhaps there really is someone who has their eye on this. But no rush, if I’m lucky, I can find something else in this shop and absorb potential from it as well.”

He became more determined and began to browse through everything from the tables to walls. Very soon, he had touched every single item in the shop.

Sadly, the remaining items were regular objects and only the emblem had potential.

After a while, he again returned to the round table and picked up the cross-shaped burgundy emblem. He examined it for more than half an hour.

“I don’t have enough money on me at the moment. Do you think you can reserve it for me for now? I will return to buy it later.” Garen raised his head and looked in the old man’s direction.

The old man had long since returned to the bookshelf. He was wiping the dust off his antiques with a soft white cloth. When he heard Garen’s request, he turned his head with a grin. “Of course I can. However, I cannot reserve it for long. The story I told you may seem like a sales tactic, but someone really does want to buy it. There are only three weeks left until he comes back.”

“Three weeks...” Garen frowned, “Alright. I will try my best to get the money. What’s the lowest price you can give me?”

“Since you are a student, I will discount the price and only ask for \$5000. That is the lowest and final offer,” the old man said as he adjusted his glasses.

“I will not bargain with you now, but we will talk about it later.” Garen didn’t say anything more. He gave the emblem a final glance and placed it back on the table. Then, he walked before the old man. “My name is Garen. May I ask what your name is?”

“Call me Old Man Gregor. What do you want to ask? I warn you though, I don’t answer sensitive questions for free.”

“I wanted to ask where you purchased this emblem from?” Garen asked with a frown.

The old man recollected his memories, “I can tell you the answer, but...” He extended his arm with a smile.

Garen watched speechlessly as the old man opened his hand. He took out a \$10 bill and put it in the skinny chicken-like hand.

“Cheap...” the old man muttered as he took the money. “I got it from an old abandoned castle in a town more than 60 miles away from Huaishan City. The original owner of the castle was a viscount, but his successive generations were feeble. Nowadays, the highest title in the family is knight. Nobody has been able to maintain the castle for years. As a result, everything in the castle has been bought and sold – it’s practically empty now. If the castle was in a better condition and a better location, it would’ve been bought off a long time ago. The castle’s name... I think it was called Silversilk Castle.”

“Silversilk Castle... can you draw me a detailed map of how to get there?”

The old man again extended his open palm with a grin on his face.

“What the eff!” Garen cursed uncontrollably. He took another \$10 bill out of his pocket and stuffed it into the old man’s palm. “Can you please hurry!”

“Of course!” The old man accepted the bill and quickly took out a thin yellow paper from a drawer. He picked up an ink-soaked quill and drew out a simple map.

Garen scanned the map after receiving it, “Thanks for taking the time. Please wait for me.”

Before the old man could respond, Garen rolled up the paper and marched out of the antique shop.

After walking on the sidewalk for a while, he reached out and touched his empty pocket. He wanted to cry, but he had no tears. “Even if I don’t buy the emblem and only travel to the castle, it would still cost me \$50 to \$60... this means I need to save my allowance from this week and next week.”

As he walked, his brain looked for ways he could get his hands on \$5,000. He had a faint feeling that the emblem was covered by something, causing him to be unable to

truly get in contact with it and absorb all of its potential. If he wanted all the potential, he would have to scrape off whatever was covering it and reveal the actual object. The issue was that he could not afford it and therefore could not damage it by scraping.

Looking at the light red numbers in his lower field of view, the Potential Meter had broken through to 101%. A cold wave of air lingered around his brain. now, he could add points to any attribute at any time.

“There is no rush. I stood there for so long, yet I absorbed such little potential. If I want to absorb substantial potential from the emblem, I would need to stand there for days. There is no way Old Man Gregor would allow that.” Garen recalculated the estimated total potential from the emblem and felt a flame burning in his chest when he realized that there should be at least five points.

“I can try to try to get money and come here every day to absorb its potential. Small portions will eventually add up. There is no way I can’t finish consuming its potential!” He silently decided.

Walking to the entrance of Pennington street again, Garen raised his head and looked over at his uncle’s house.

Coincidentally, the arched window was wide open. A chubby middle-aged man was standing beside the window and was looking down. “Garen is that you?” The man had a very common face with very thick black eyebrows and gave off a tough vibe. “I haven’t seen you in so long. Hurry, come up!”

Garen didn’t expect to actually see his uncle. He merely nodded, walked around the stone column, and entered the half-open wooden corridor entrance.

The corridor led to a spacious lounge. The floor was covered with black carpet and a white stone statue of an angel was placed in the center. The wings of the angel were spread wide, as if ready to fly.

Garen entered from the left side stairs, jogged past a few people, and quickly reached a red metal door on the left side of the fifth floor.

Dong, dong, dong.

He reached out to open the door.

Immediately, the door creaked open. Uncle Tyr was standing in front of the door wearing a white dress shirt and black dress pants. “Hurry in! The fireplace is lit.”

“Okay.” Garen passed the door, changed into slippers, and walked into the room with his uncle.

The room was covered with light yellow wallpaper and there were oil paintings after oil paintings on the walls. Most of the paintings were not of Uncle Tyr, but were of his wife, Windsor.

After a few minutes, Garen stood by the window, listening to his uncle talk about recent local news with a bearded guest.

In the middle of their heated conversation, Uncle Tyr suddenly fixed his gaze onto Garen.

“Garen, if you want to make a difference in the future, you must remember one thing: read lots, explore lots, and think lots. The fundamental principle is to speak less, but act more.” Uncle Tyr removed his cigar and gently flicked it into the ashtray. “You are in high school now, you will be going to university in the future, and then you will start your career. Whether it’s about your academic career or your professional career, it’s good to remember this piece of advice.”

“Also, hang out with Lombarth and Phelia more often. You are all around the same age and will be cousins for life. These days, they are always playing some chess war game. They don’t do useful stuff anymore. You should talk some sense into them.”

Uncle Tyr had been managing his own business for a long time. There were very complex relationships between the legal and illegal means. Even though he appeared to be an ordinary businessman, he actually had a lot of interests in other aspects and even had a gun permit.

Garen looked down and nodded continuously. He knew that even though his uncle looked very kind, in his bones he was someone stubborn and paranoid. He hated others disagreeing with his plans since he had a very strong sense of individualism.

The bearded man laughed as well. “This is your nephew? Nowadays, young people have such valuable resources. Thinking back to our days, we did not grow up in such a nice environment.”

“Exactly, the environment is so good they have forgotten how to treasure it,” Uncle Tyr laughed helplessly and returned to discussing business news with the bearded guest.

Garen stood to the side and listened to the two adults having their discussion. Internally, he was looking for ways to acquire that \$5,000. Usually when he visited his uncle, he would receive allowances ranging from a high of a few hundred dollars to a low of \$80 to \$90. The distance to \$5,000 was still too far.

Garen had no plans to ask for money from his uncle anyways. If he did, this would be his first time asking and he might need his uncle’s help for a second or third time after today. While it might be possible for Garen to get some money from his uncle the

first time, if Garen did this multiple times then his uncle would stop accommodating him regardless how much his uncle liked him.

“I have to find a way myself...” Garen thought of the Dojo. “If I can successfully gain entrance to White Cloud Dojo, then every month I can get a small monetary reward. Usually it’s \$2,000. This is one source of income. Additionally, the school offers lots of scholarships for a total of ten grand. There are two more months till the end of the semester, but there is no way I can get the scholarship with my current level of learning unless I can get ability enhancements. Other than for ancient civilization and history, I have yet to achieve the minimum level of the intelligence requirement. I can only memorize and understand everything after achieving this minimal requirement. Otherwise, I have to follow the normal rules and slowly study.”

Suddenly, a thought flashed across Garen’s brain, “There are archery and swordsmanship competitions! Out of the two, Ying Er will participate in one. Top three are awarded and even the third place wins \$10,000, but I’m not sure how good Garen is at archery and swordsmanship?”

As soon as he thought of this question, he saw that the symbols were slowly changing at the bottom of his vision. Soon, it changed into three elements: Swordsmanship, Archery, and Basic Boxing.

Swordsmanship: Elementary. Archery: Elementary. Basic Boxing: Elementary.

“I wonder if I can add points to these abilities...” Garen speculated.

He tried to concentrate on the swordsmanship element. Inside his brain, waves of air were pouncing around, waiting to spew forth.

“It’s possible!!” He immediately stopped the flow of air, shifted his focus, and repressed the excitement he was feeling.