

Mystical 81

Chapter 81: Ranking Tournament 1

The golden haired beauty did not say anything as she got down to the floor and performed a leg sweep. Her movements were fast and precise. The part where she swepted towards was extremely accurate as well; it was in the back of Simon's knees.

Bang bang bang bang. As the sound of a series of blows rang out, Simon's expression suddenly changed. He tried to grab ahold of his opponent's long legs but was easily avoided each time and was repeatedly kicked in the same location instead. His opponent's speed exceeded his by far too much.

Even the strongest power was useless if it could not hit the opponent.

As the two of them fought in the ring, one of them was standing still, while the other was circling around the opponent and kicking from time to time. It was as if an agile monkey was teasing a clumsy bear.

The golden haired beauty's leg sweep was abnormally fast each time. Her fighting skills showed that she had a deep foundation. Her accuracy was also very astonishing. As she circled around Simon, the places that she kicked would always be the same five positions. No matter how much her opponent would try to block, she would be able to repeatedly hit the same positions from different angles.

Pa!

Finally, Simon fell down on his knees, then could not maintain his balance any longer and fell flat onto the ground with a bang. With his opponent's foot stepping on his back, he could no longer move.

"The Fighting Association wins."

Garen, who was spectating below, knitted his eyebrows. He was bothered by this type of opponents who specialized in speed as well. With his current increase in combat skill as well as his explosive force, he could easily take down any opponents that entered within a certain range. However, the other students were unable to do that. Simon did not even use the White Cloud Combat Arts. He only relied

on his talents and the Explosive Fist Arts to fight and could only be made a fool of by his opponent. It was no wonder that he lost.

"Simon lost, I'll go!" A tall and slim woman suddenly stood up. "Senior brother." She looked towards Garen.

Garen glanced at her. "Keling, are you confident that you'll win? The other party are preparing to change their member as well."

"No, I can only give it a try. I checked their information beforehand. The Fighting Association was only inferior to us by just a little the previous time. The fact that they're proactively challenging us this time means that they're confident." Keling was one of the most elite students picked out from White Cloud Gate and one of the two strongest students. She was also present in the previous exchange gathering.

"It's better if someone else goes. You can't lose here, otherwise it'll affect our morale." Garen hesitated for a moment, then looked towards another female student. "Jiali, you'll go."

"Alright." Jiali was not bashful at all. She stood up and somersaulted into the ring from the side.

"We'll let Jiali squander the opponent's stamina first," Garen whispered towards Keling. Then his line of sight landed on the other muscular male: he was the last candidate of White Cloud Gate. Out of the four candidates chosen by Fei Baiyun, the main force was the two of them. They were chosen to improve their ranking.

Jiali fought against another student of the Fighting Association in the ring. Even though her legs were sturdy, her opponent's kicking power was stronger. After a few kicks in the same spot, Jiali immediately fell down and could not get up any more.

It was just that the girl was born with a strong tenacity. When she fell over, she would get up, doing it three times.

"The people from White Cloud Gate isn't much after all. With this kind of level, you're simply too weak," the male student from the Fighting Association taunted. Before he even finished speaking, he kicked out once again and viciously struck Jiali's abdomen.

Bang!

Jiali staggered backwards and fell down on her buttocks. She could not get up for a while.

This girl was still struggling and wanted to get up.

Below, Garen immediately stood up and announced with a frown.

"White Cloud Gate admits defeat for this match!"

Ding ding ding... "The Fighting Association wins." the old man loudly shouted while shaking the bell.

The other female student standing behind him, Keling, quickly went up to help Jiali get down.

"Are you alright? How does your knee feel?" Keling had a good relationship with her; she immediately took out an ointment and used it on Jiali.

Garen was standing one side with a frown on his face.

"She's even weaker than the external student, senior brother Erwin. I really don't understand how she was even selected." Back then when he went for the core disciple examination, even the senior brother Erwin who was together with him was stronger than her.

"And if we're comparing tenacity, that girl, Daris, who joined White Cloud Gate for her family's dojo wasn't any inferior to her." Garen shook his head.

"Senior brother, she's the cousin of Keling..." Simon, who was resting nearby, moved closer and whispered.

Garen finally nodded in realization.

"Who's going next?"

"I will!" Keling stood up while coldly staring at the man standing in the ring. "I will go and educate that trash who doesn't know how to speak like a human."

Garen carefully sized up Keling. She was known as the strongest female disciple within the White Cloud Dojo and was indeed somewhat skilled.

From the luster of her skin, he could tell that her Explosive Fist Arts had almost reached the rudimentary level. Looking again at her posture and movements, there was a strong hint of the Four Big Forms of White Cloud Combat Arts. She actually assimilated the Four Big Forms into her daily movements as training. Her talent was truly astonishing.

"Your Four Big Forms is very powerful. You should be able to win." Garen nodded.

Keling was startled that her strong point was actually immediately seen through by her senior brother. She did not think much of him previously, but she was currently alarmed and did not dare to act as carefree as before.

"I am going!" She slightly bowed towards Garen, then ran a few steps and jumped into the ring.

Garen did not watch Keling's match and looked towards the male student who remained silent.

This last core student was called Rimridor. He was currently the strongest male core student in the dojo. Rimridor's elbows were slightly sharp; when his arms were folded together, it was like two blades were placed on his knees.

He was not a new student and had been in the dojo for a few years. He was currently twenty years old. Whether it was the Four Big Forms or the Explosive Fist Arts, he had already truly mastered them. He was different from Garen; Rimridor relied purely on his willpower and perseverance to master this two martial arts. Just by sitting there, he gave others a feeling of a dormant volcano.

"Rimridor, you're up next. Are you confident?" Garen was the senior brother in name. Since his master was not around, then it was his responsibility to ask this question.

Rimridor nodded. "The Fighting Association is not a problem."

Garen could tell that other than the other Secret Martial Art disciples, Rimridor was not afraid of other ordinary students. If it was not for his age, then he would already be qualified for learning Secret Martial Art.

On the top of the two storey building next to the ring, several semi-circular platforms extended out. On each of the platforms, the Dojo Masters of various dojos were seated.

Fei Baiyun was among them as well. He was seated on a white wooden chair on the right and was looking at his student, Garen.

"Fei Baiyun, is that your last disciple that you've brought this time?" A man with a red goatee was all smiles as he stared at Garen. "I am not impressed at all... He's still inexperienced compared to my Shield Strike Gate's head disciple, Pharo."

"The ability of someone is not determined by words, Gate Master Chris." Fei Baiyun glanced at him. "Even though Garen is still young, he can calmly and independently handle matters on his own. Regardless of his martial prowess, I am very satisfied with this."

He originally thought that the sixteen year old Garen would panic when handling such matters when he was not around. He did not think that he would witness Garen methodically handle things in such a mature manner. Little did he know that Garen was actually not an ordinary sixteen year old. Adding his previous life, Garen would be in his forties.

The man with the goatee snorted and did not continue further. There was no point since he already knew that White Cloud Gate did not have any intentions of competing this time.

However, an elderly man with dark skin sitting on the other side narrowed his eyes.

"Old man Fei, let's set aside this exchange gathering. Your eldest disciple, Rosetta, crippled my second disciple. How are we settling this matter?"

Fei Baiyun's expression became cold. He recognized the other party as the Faction Leader of the number ten Double Halberd Fist. He was an experienced veteran from the south.

"I see that it's Faction Leader Watson. It's just that your second disciple, Bessie, is extremely talented and was personally taught by you. How could my disciple, Rosetta, have injured him? Doesn't it seem unlikely that Rosetta was able to defeat Bessie?"

"The great detective Fisto has already thoroughly investigated the matter. In addition to the investigation on Rosetta's movements, it has already been confirmed that it was your eldest disciple, Rosetta, that injured Bessie. All four of her limbs have been crippled. Hehe... How cruel of her." Watson sinisterly laughed.

"No matter what, I will thoroughly investigate this incident and give Double Halberd Gate an explanation!" Fei Baiyun knew about the severity of the situation. The sort of move that easily cripples others was no longer an orthodox move.

"There's no need for that." The elderly man sinisterly laughed once more but he did not continue further and looked towards the ring below.

Fei Baiyun became sullen. This was not the first time he received accusations. Rosetta had caused trouble a few times before, resulting in an awkward situation for the current White Cloud Gate. A few friendly dojos that used to be familiar with them were gradually drifting apart. They were almost isolated.

"It looks like I really need to properly investigate when I get back. Right now it's the exchange gathering between sects, I won't think about such things for the time being." His gaze landed on the ring below once more.

Above a circular platform, the leaders of the Celestial Circle Gate and Crimson Sand Sword were seated together and were discussing the performances of the disciples below. The two sects had always been united. Even though there was fierce competition between their disciples, the relationship between the two sects were still friendly.

The other leaders of various sects had their own social circles and were discussing their own matters.

Soon, the disciple from the Fighting Association was knocked out of the ring by Keling and was quickly caught by his fellow disciples.

"White Cloud Gate wins. The Fighting Association has failed their challenge," the old man loudly shouted while shaking the bell.

Keling did not move from the ring and loudly said.

"White Cloud Gate wishes to challenge number sixteen White Shark Gate."

The White Shark Gate was a very strong sect. A female disciple with fair skin and tall figure casually came up and traded a few blows with Keling. Both of them did not want to expend their energies further and simply came to a draw.

It was obvious that they were conserving their energy for the disciple ranking tournament later.

These matches were just an appetizer. The true show was the ranking tournament later. It also included the true ranking competition that even disciples of Secret Martial Arts had to participate.

It was also the focus of the various sects.

After Keling returned, Rimridor did not wish to participate. His objective was the ranking tournament later as well. Garen simply stood up and announced that White Cloud Gate gave up on continuing their challenge.

The matches at the beginning was originally intended for ordinary disciples to demonstrate their skills.

Chapter 82: Ranking Tournament 2

The real focus was on the ranking tournament later. Each sect would send out five pupils and each of their rankings would be aggregated to determine the real ranking of each sect. It was also the stage to find the strongest among the younger generation.

After that, it was just more matches between ordinary disciples of a few sects. There was basically nothing to see; it was only contests between those using basic skills at the most. Without any Secret Martial Arts, they were only slightly better than general hobbyists.

Finally, the match between ordinary disciples of Celestial Circle Gate and Crimson Sand Sword ended. The elderly judge raised up the bell in his hand and was no longer listless like before.

"Next, we'll begin the official ranking tournament. Each sect will send out disciples to participate as individuals and the overall ranking of each sect will be determined by a fixed formula."

The old man waved his hand and a few beautiful young ladies appeared. They were wearing short skirts and stockings, while their hair were tied into ponytails. One of the young ladies was carrying a large box as she stood next to the old man.

"Could each sect please send out their representatives to draw lots! Then head toward your respective rings for your qualifying matches." The old man pointed toward the surrounding buildings. "The rest of the matches will take place within the surrounding buildings. The previous top three sects will automatically enter the finals and need not participate in the drawing."

Andreia from Celestial Circle Gate smiled toward Beo from a distance, then turned around and walked into the building behind him. He could not be bothered to continue watching the lot drawing.

Beo snorted and not wanting to be outdone, left as well. The two of them were far stronger than the other disciples. There was no need for them to worry that a new opponent would suddenly appear. They only had each other as opponents from the start.

Garen was queuing up within the crowd as he watched the both of them leaving. He could feel the powerful confidence and pride from the two of them. He did not understand how strong they were, but he knew that the average person would not be able to ignore all of the Secret Martial Art practitioners there and calmly leave. It was a sign of confidence from having great power and success.

He could not help but recall the words of his senior sister, Rosetta. "Every single victory will nourish your confidence... and make you more powerful."

Soon, the people in front of him had drawn their lots and it was his turn.

Garen walked to the front, then nonchalantly reached into the box and pulled out a lot. The number written on the white paper was 24.

He stood on one side as the rest of the disciples from White Cloud Gate drew their lots as well.

"Could the participants who have drawn their lots please proceed to their respective rings. The winner of each match will proceed to the next ring according to the referee's instructions. Participants that have lost will all return to this ring to participate in another round of ranking. Everyone will be given a chance to challenge any other participant, other than the winner, for their rank. Once the matches has ended, the top ten will proceed with the finals," the old man loudly announced.

Garen and the rest of the disciples from White Cloud Gate went on separate ways and headed for their respective rings.

Garen's lot number was 24. After entering a large building, an attendant escorted him through a series of corridors to a spacious workout room.

The room was white and was the size of a large conference hall. There was a white, circular ring in the middle and there was ropes surrounding it just like a boxing ring.

A young female referee in black clothing was already waiting in it.

There were also some other young people standing in the room, who were there to watch the fight.

There was also a bald and muscular man—who was so muscular that his muscles were slightly deformed—standing next to the ring. He was staring at Garen the moment he entered.

This man was wearing a black leather pants while his upper body was naked. His muscles seemed to throb along with his breathing and the muscles on his shoulders looked like malformed roots growing out of the ground.

"Could the contestants please come to the stage," the female referee on the stage loudly said.

Garen stopped appraising his opponent. He slowly walked to the side of ring and somersaulted into the ring.

Even though he was muscular as well, there was still quite a difference between him and his opponent. It was like the difference between an adult and a child. His opponent also got into the ring.

One of them was big and the other was small. On one side, his skin was dark and he was wearing a black leather pants. On the other side, Garen's clothing was entirely white and his skin was fair. As the two of them stood on the stage, the contrast between them was clear.

At that moment, a pair of man and woman entered the room as well. They were the two that went to receive Garen and his master: Jaden and that crossdressing girl who tried to sound out Garen but ended up crying.

"Junior sister, this is the ring of that Garen from White Cloud Gate. This is his first match," Jaden whispered to the girl while his gaze naturally landed on Garen.

"This guy is pretty lucky: his opponent looks strong." The girl gloatingly whispered while giggling, "He deserves it for being so arrogant at the station! This time he's definitely going to suffer."

Jaden nodded.

"His opponent is Benjamin, the third Holy Fist disciple from Holy Fist Gate, and has been practicing Secret Martial Arts for three years. Even though Holy Fist Gate's rank is only twentieth and isn't strong, the strength of its third strongest disciple definitely isn't ordinary. If I were to meet this Benjamin, I can only admit defeat as well. I heard that this Garen was only accepted as a Secret Martial Art disciple a while back. The difference between them is very clear."

"In addition." Jaden added, "That Garen's defense isn't bad. He's definitely going to be beaten up for a long time." After finishing, he could not help but laughed as well. "He's going to suffer this time."

Within the ring.

Garen moved his head from side to side while calmly analyzing his opponent. His opponent's size was indeed giving him a lot of pressure. This type of body size was already similar to his second senior brother, Farak, and the power is definitely very scary.

When Jaden and that girl entered the room, he saw them from the corner of his eye. It was obvious that they were there to watch the show.

"To meet me in the first match, you're unlucky." The muscular man grinned, revealing a set of pearly white teeth. "My name's Benjamin, the third holy fist disciple from Holy Fist Gate. You should feel honored for losing to my fist."

Garen was dumbfounded. His opponent was so egoistic that he was proclaiming his victory before they even fought.

"I am Garen, disciple of the seventeenth ranked White Cloud Gate. Can we start?" He looked toward the referee.

Ding.

The female referee nodded and shook the silver bell in her hands.

"You may begin." She quickly got off the stage, so that she would not be accidentally injured.

Garen narrowed his eyes and analyzed this Benjamin.

This was the first time he fought with a disciple from the true Secret Martial Arts World. He had Mammoth Secret Technique but his opponent had their own Secret Martial Art as well. Obtaining victory depended on the difference between their experience and strength.

"I'll test his strength first."

With his mind set, Garen slowly took a standard White Cloud Combat Arts stance.

"Go ahead."

"Your stance isn't bad, but let's see how your strength is. Rank seventeenth, don't disappoint me." Benjamin laughed and walked toward Garen with a boxing stance.

Chi!

His right fist extended and instantly disappeared into the distance. It turned into a black line as it smashed toward Garen's chin.

It was a simple uppercut but the speed was fast and the strength was strong. Before it even reached, Garen felt a slight blast of wind pressing on the skin of his chin.

"What a powerful strength." Garen quickly reacted and his stance immediately changed. His right elbow swung forward and accurately arrived in front of the fist.

Bang!

As their fist and elbow collided, both of them took a step back.

Garen narrowed his eyes as he looked at his opponent.

"He's very strong; his strength should be close to 2. If this was his normal strength, in addition with the force of impact and speed, he should be able to hit as hard as me. He's indeed strong. However, I am stronger!"

His current Strength attribute was at 2.45. Even though his body size did not stand out, the muscle density of his body was extremely high. He might not be eye-catching, but his actual explosive force was far stronger than most people.

"Kill him, Benjamin! Kill him!" the girl beside Jaden suddenly loudly shouted. Raising up her fist like a little girl, she continuously waved. "That fellow from White Cloud Gate said you're a big piece of shit! He even said that he can beat you using only one hand!"

"What a dumb way to goad someone, even an idiot wouldn't fall for it." Garen was speechless. He looked toward his opponent.

"Uhh..."

He was even more speechless when he looked toward his opponent.

Benjamin's forehead was bursting with blue veins and his eyes were bright red. It was evident that he was really angry.

"You brat... " He heavily panted. "Tyrant Star!!"

He suddenly roared. Both of his fists started to darken, turning from a normal suntanned color to a pitch black ink color.

"I am going to smash you to death!!" Benjamin charged toward Garen like a mad rhinoceros while panting heavily. The stage was trembling under his heavy footsteps, generating a series of disintegrating sounds.

A straight punch!

Benjamin's fist was like a blackened piece of metal as it rushed toward Garen's chest. It was like a heavy, gigantic hammer was fiercely swung at Garen.

"Shoot! Charge! Step!"

Garen suddenly shouted. He lifted his elbow and knocked aside the punch, then his body moved forward and charged into his opponent's chest.

Benjamin's face went pale as his body flew backwards from the impact.

Garen chuckled as his right leg rose up and stamped forward.

Boom!

Benjamin was knocked down from the air and heavily landed on the ring, causing it to shake violently. He lay there with froth coming out from his mouth and had already fainted.

With three simultaneous moves, Garen was able to knock down Benjamin—who had already been sent flying—into the mat of the ring.

With his White Cloud Combat Art having reached intermediate level, he was already considered a seasoned veteran. Dealing with someone who had not gone through brutal combat was simply too easy for him.

The intermediate level of White Cloud Combat Art allowed Garen to swiftly switch between his Four Big Forms. He was also adept at baiting his opponents with deliberate flaws in his stance and exploiting that moment to strike. On the other hand, Benjamin's combat level was still at the beginner level. The difference between them was too large. The fight was already over before Garen even used half of his strength. His opponent's Secret Martial Art did not have any effects at all.

The entire hall was silent. The referee, who was standing at the side of the ring, did not expect the fight to end so quickly as well. She was stunned for a moment before she quickly went into the ring and shook her bell.

"Winner! Garen from White Cloud Gate! The next match will take place at ring no.17!"

That was when the spectators finally reacted. With the referee's announcement, a huge uproar occurred. A few members of the Holy Fist Gate quickly went into the ring to check on Benjamin. They breathed a sigh of relief when they discovered that he had only fainted.

Jaden and that girl were dumbstruck as well.

"What a high combat level!" Jaden muttered, "Out of all of the disciples that I've seen, his combat level is enough to rank within the top ten!"

That girl who previously goaded Benjamin was dejected at the moment. Even with her level, she could tell that she was not his match.

Garen got out of the ring and headed toward the entrance while tidying his clothes. Seeing that Garen was heading toward their position, the two of them quickly got out of the way.

As Garen was walking past the two of them, he glanced toward the girl. He slowly reached out his hand and stopped in front of her neck, then suddenly clenched his fist.

"Kacha." He mimicked the sound of bone breaking with his mouth.

The girl shivered and her face went pale. She was like a pitiful little lamb.

"Little fellow, you're still too inexperienced." Garen laughed as he left. He followed the attendant standing outside to ring no.17.

Her senior brother, Jaden was also held down just now by the aura that Garen deliberately emitted. He felt that he would be instantly crushed if he tried to move. He could only watch as his junior sister was being bullied and did not dare to move.

He was only able to relax when Garen left.

"Junior sister... Are you alright?" He could tell that Garen did not have any ill intentions against his junior sister. That was just a small punishment for her previous actions.

Wa!!

The girl started to wail out loud as tears flowed out of her eyes.

Chapter 83: Ranking Tournament 3

After exiting the tournament grounds, Garen walked along the black corridor and rushed towards the tournament venues of White Cloud Gate trainees.

A medical team in white suits in the corridor rushed into the tournament grounds. They put Benjamin who was in the ring onto a stretcher then quickly passed by Garen.

Garen looked at Benjamin on the stretcher.

"I won the first round..." he mumbled.

Walking along the corridor through several corners and break rooms, Garen soon reached a small room with a sparse crowd.

He gently opened the door. The interior had the exact layout as the tournament grounds earlier.

In the ring, Collin was leaning on the pillars panting. Her whole body felt weak, and there were blood stains all over her face and body. Her opponent was a slender young man with a cool air about him. He didn't have on him any trace of having been in a fight.

From the looks of it, Collin could still hang on for a little longer. Even though she was at a disadvantage, but the outcome couldn't yet be determined anytime soon.

Garen didn't stay. He just casually looked at Collin, and let her see him, then decisively turned around and walked towards the other tournament grounds.

After that, he visited the tournament venues of the rest of the trainees.

Simon had won easily. He was up against an average opponent whose Secret Martial Art was relying on a burst of pace, but that had been completely inundated by him.

Carrie and her opponent were difficult to set apart.

And lastly, Rimridor.

Garen walked into the tournament venue.

In the ring, Rimridor silently stood his ground, and managed to strike his opponent to the ground with one punch. He had a blank look on his face, and there was a strange air about him.

His opponent was a young boy with a short stature. The youth was wounded all over his body—he must have been struck to the ground multiple times—but this time he still managed to slowly get up, albeit with some difficulty.

"You want more?" Rimridor said casually. He was wearing a pair of black cuffs; both his elbows were bent so it made his arms seem like two sharp gimlets. "If we go on like this, you'll die."

Bang!

He adopted a lightning-quick Shot Form and viciously struck the youth's chest. The blow caused the youth to rebound off the ring ropes.

"I...admit defeat!" the youth struggled to spout those few words out. His head slumped, and he fainted.

"No fun," Rimridor said indifferently. He waited for the referee to announce his victory, then somersaulted down from the ring and walked to Garen. "Eldest Senior Brother, why are you here?"

Garen frowned slightly. He sensed an inexplicable temperament on Rimridor, similar to Eldest Senior Sister.

"Your combat skills...were they taught by Eldest Senior Sister?"

"Yeah." Rimridor casually nodded.

Garen was slightly worried, but he wasn't sure why. He patted Rimridor's shoulder and didn't continue the subject. "Time to go to the next tournament."

Rimridor nodded, and followed Garen out, leaving the slightly deserted tournament ground.

Both of them came out from the door and went their separate ways. Garen found his next tournament venue based on the room number: 17.

As he reached the corridor of the room, he saw that the entrance was already crowded. Most of them were students wearing tight yellow clothes. Garen wasn't sure which sect they belonged to.

Garen furrowed his brow a little, and slowly walked forward.

Clap.

The first brawn he touched felt his whole body shudder all of a sudden, and automatically avoided him and gave up his place. Then the second one, and the third...

A series of people, those that Garen touched, all voluntarily parted to let Garen pass. Even they were confused as to why they were giving way to Garen.

Garen slowly walked into the room through the middle of the crowd, as if it was parted seawater revealing a narrow aisle; it made him unusually conspicuous.

Inside the room, Jaden and the crybaby girl from Celestial Circle Gate were already there. When he saw how everyone politely gave way to Garen, Jaden was impressed.

"See that, Long Er? That's the Vibration that can only be mastered by a true expert! This guy...so powerful!" Jaden was in awe.

"Vibration?" The girl still had tearstains on her face. She stared at Garen menacingly, and was shocked to hear what her Senior Brother had said. "He can master Vibration? Senior Brother, do you not see it? Vibration is a threshold only mastered by the top ten level of experts!"

"Stop talking. By mastering Vibration, he is already qualified enough to become a contender for top ten! Just watch this tournament," Jaden whispered as he dragged Long Er to an inconspicuous corner. He was worried Garen might make Long Er cry again.

Garen walked in through the crowd. His strong and tall body was extremely proportionate, his stride calm; his face didn't show the slightest trace of anxiety of someone about to compete in a tournament.

"You kid! How dare you shove me!" a brawny man with stubble clad in black roared and shoved Garen.

Clap.

His hands were on Garen, but he didn't manage to move him. He was stunned.

Clap clap!

He shoved hard again, twice, but there was no reaction. It was like pushing against a high wall: it was impossible to move.

"The weak can only rely on such means to win, huh?" Garen looked down at the stubbled man in front of him, and casually waved a hand.

Bang!

The brawn crashed onto the side wall like a swatted fly; his eyes rolled and he blacked out.

Woah!

The crowd was in an uproar. Everyone avoided him like the plague; no one dared to stand too close to Garen.

"So powerful!"

"Margent was dealt with just like that!"

"This guy is from White Cloud Gate, right? Who would have thought there was someone so strong in the Southern Twelve Gates?"

Garen didn't bother looking at the others. He threw away a fine needle: it was the secret weapon that the stubbled man tried to use on Garen, of which he had managed to neutralize. He walked straight to the ring and asked a stunned Celestial Circle Gate referee disciple.

"Where's my opponent? Still not here yet?"

"Uh... You just settled him..." Under Garen's piercing stare, the referee broke out in a cold sweat.

Garen was shocked. He looked at the stubbled man passed out by the wall, and shook his head slightly.

"Where is the next round?"

"...You don't have to move for the next round, your opponent will come over," the referee hurriedly explained. "Your winning time was the shortest. The future tournament venues will be determined by winning times: the shorter time would gain the home advantage."

Garen nodded, closed his eyes, and sat down cross-legged to rest.

As he quieted, the whole room slipped into a murmur of discussion. The twenty over people in the room didn't dare to speak loudly, for fear of accidentally disturbing Garen. Everyone was whispering to their companions, and would look in awe at Garen—sitting by the side of the ring—from time to time.

Jaden and the young Long Er were infected by the atmosphere too: they lowered their voices.

"An expert who has mastered Vibration... I can't believe that White Cloud Gate, one of the Southern Twelve Gates, would produce such an expert. I thought this time would be the same as before, and the Southern Twelve Gates Union would just be eliminated. I didn't expect that there would be someone like Garen."

Long Er hid behind her Senior Brother, as if she was worried she would be spotted by Garen.

"So Senior Brother, is this Garen the strongest person in the Southern Twelve Gates Union?"

"Maybe, if we don't consider the disciples trained by masters, then he should be the strongest one. The Southern Twelve Gates was originally an alliance of multiple small sects forming a strong force to counter other bigger sects and increase its influence as an organization. Most of the sects within it were of a similar level, but now with the sudden appearance of this Garen, there might be issues with the balance amongst the sects. But this isn't something for us to consider," Jaden patiently analyzed. "I've seen the strongest disciple from the remaining eleven sects, not comparable to Garen at all. This Garen could indeed be the strongest man within the Southern Twelve Gates."

"The strongest man within the Southern Twelve Gates huh?"

Garen's figure sitting cross-legged reflected in Long Er's clear pink pupils for the first time.

Upon defeating the stubbled Margent with one blow, Garen's fame was spread by the students who had witnessed it.

Margent was the elite fighter from Myriad Manifestations Gate. He broke into the final fifteen the last time around, and was the strongest core from the Southern Twelve Gates. Now he had been sent flying against a wall in one blow by Garen, and had passed out.

This instantly caused a stir amongst the spectators in all tournament venues.

In that instant, all the disciples from Southern Twelve Gates who had felt ashamed for always ranking low in the tournaments could hold their heads up high. They had always swallowed their pride in front of stronger sects, and held their tongues when they met with trouble; they were always the side to suffer. All because they didn't have strong Senior Brothers and Sisters to back them up, and it would be impossible for masters to intervene in disciple-level conflicts. After all, others would have stronger masters.

Natural selection was accepted as an inalienable principle, so the disciples from the entire Southern Twelve Gates were used to such oppression.

Now that Garen had outshone everyone, this gave all the disciples of Southern Twelve Gates hope. If he could defeat a top fifteen contender with such ease, they could have a good chance at top ten this time!

"Senior Brother Garen from White Cloud Gate is the strongest man from our Southern Twelve Gates! I heard he easily defeated Benjamin from Holy Fist Gate!"

"What about the rest of the disciples from Southern Twelve Gates?"

"All eliminated..."

"It's all up to Senior Brother Garen now!"

Within the tournament room, more and more disciples from Southern Twelve Gates crowded in. The tournament venue was packed; there were people everywhere.

The voices of the students were rowdy. These disciples who had been subdued for too long finally saw hope; they all crowded over to watch Garen compete.

Garen slowly opened his eyes, and looked at a disciple not far off in front of him.

"You said everyone else from White Cloud Gate has been eliminated?"

That disciple nervously nodded.

"Yes...yes, Senior Brother. Seventy to eighty people have already been eliminated. No one from White Cloud Gate managed to enter the third round except you..."

"So that means, I'm the only one left?" Garen wasn't surprised. He looked over to the entrance: Collin, Simon and a few others were shielding Carrie as they squeezed in.

At that moment, a stout youth with fat all over his body climbed into the ring. He was wearing a white tank top, tight against his thick layers of fat, like a large stuffed balloon.

The portly youth seemed to still be chewing something, and swallowed it with a gulp. His eyes stared straight at Garen outside the ring.

"A contestant from Southern Twelve Gates? How lucky."

Garen stood up, somersaulted onto the ring and stood his ground.

The referee rang the bell.

"Let the tournament begin!"

Chapter 84: Ranking Tournament 4

"I am Ai Luo of Asura Palm. And you are?" The portly youth had a head of blonde hair; it didn't look dyed, but instead natural. He reached a hand to brush his blonde hair off his face, and asked earnestly.

"Garen. White Cloud Gate." Garen raised his hand, put on a Four Major Forms pose, and he instantly sharpened up.

"I'll just stand still and let you hit me, how's that?" the stout youth Ai Luo said, chuckling. "As long as you manage to injure me, you win."

"You idiot!" Jaden outside the ring covered his eyes as he couldn't bear to look.

Bang!

Garen leapt forward, his elbow straight like a sharp arrow, piercing straight into the fats of the chest and abdomen of the stout youth.

The layers of white fat started to violently vibrate; fatty ripples formed in the parts that were hit.

Ai Luo's expression changed: his face was pale.

"Go!"

Garen's expression was composed. He gathered momentum with a twist of his foot, and thrust his entire body against the stout youth.

Wham!

The force caused the hill-like body of the stout youth to fly out of the ring and crash onto the ground, creating a huge cloud of dust as he landed.

"Declare it," Garen said casually as he straightened up.

"...Yes...yes, very well." The referee snapped out of his shock. "The winner of this round, Garen from White Cloud Gate!" He rang the bell hard, but the sound produced by the small bell was too soft; it was completely muted by the gasps from the crowd.

Jaden stood in a corner with a somber expression.

"Looks like we underestimated his strength. He is already qualified to challenge Beo of Crimson Sand Sword. Asura Palm is ranked seventh. This stout one was one of their best: he was ranked eleventh in the previous meet. The fat all over his body was his best defense. His Secret Martial Art is the constantly activated tough Ripples of Fat to counteract Vibration. Vibration by average experts have almost no effect on him."

To a side, Long Er's petite face turned pale.

"So...so how did he take down the stout guy in such a short amount of time...?"

"His Strength, Speed, and his technique of consecutively concentrating power onto one point; he combined all these to directly break the surface tension and counter the Ripples of Fat Secret Martial Art. What a terrifying fighting spirit!" Jayden explained with a mumble. "His Vibration, his physical coordination, and most importantly the speed of his Explosive Force, is so much more powerful than average practitioners of Secret Martial Arts! I once saw the Secret Martial Art of White Cloud Gate, the Mammoth Secret Technique. Its general effects could not achieve the toughness that he had displayed. Is it possible that he is training in a new martial art technique? Something that's not from White Cloud Gate?"

"No! He did actually use the Explosive Force Technique from White Cloud Gate," a male voice could suddenly be heard beside them.

Jayden and Long Er were both startled. They turned around, and both instantly displayed reverence.

"Eldest Senior Brother!"

"Greetings, Eldest Senior Brother."

Both of them quickly greeted him.

Standing to one side, was the one-eyed Andrela, who had just rushed over to watch the tournament. He was the strongest disciple of their generation from Celestial Circle Gate, and the most prominent youth martial arts expert in the South.

He had a black eye patch over his left eye, and a crystal clear, dark golden pupil for his left eye. A head of long, jet black hair was casually draped behind him to the waist. This gave him a mysterious and gentle impression.

"19, 23, you're still fresh. With only a few years of training under your belt, it's natural that you can't recognize his true style." Andrela looked at Garen in the ring with a trace of admiration.

"If I'm not wrong, this Garen has mastered the highest level of Secret Martial Art of White Cloud Gate. How terrifyingly talented! Mammoth Secret Technique of White Cloud Gate is merely a third-rate Secret Martial Art; many sects have a similar training method for Secret Martial Arts. I can't believe he could actually train in a third-rate Secret Martial Art to such an extent."

"It can't be... Eldest Senior Brother, you mean to say that, the Secret Martial Art level of this Garen is higher than that of his master?" Jaden asked, aghast.

"I'm not sure. The true strength of the White Cloud Gate Master is known only to the masters who have dueled with him. But it's just a third-rate Secret Martial Art, so even if he's highly trained in it, the power would be limited. Not to worry." Andrela looked at Garen who was resting cross-legged, and shook his head regrettably. "What a shame. If he was discovered by Celestial Circle Gate first, his accomplishments would be unimaginable. Shame... His Secret Martial Art is limited; he has peaked."

He used the word 'shame' twice.

Jayden and Long Er understood what he meant. Garen had trained in the Secret Martial Art of White Cloud Gate to such an extent that his physicality had crystallized. It was impossible for him to change course and train in another Secret Martial Art. Moreover, the limit of a third-rate Secret Martial Art was the level on which Garen was at; there was no way to enhance it any further.

"So Eldest Senior Brother, in your opinion, what ranking does this Garen deserve based on his true strength?" Long Er asked curiously. With the strongest Eldest Senior Brother by her side, the trauma that Garen caused her seemed to completely vanish: she was instantly more relaxed.

"It should be the same as Eastern Saintcloth from Quicksand, around fifth or sixth—provided that the true strength of the rest hasn't changed much this year," Andrela replied casually.

"Fifth or sixth?!" Jayden and Long Er were both shocked; they couldn't believe it.

Garen did not notice Andrela in the corner of the crowd. It was as if he had an unusual magic: the people around him barely gave him a second look, as if he was utterly invisible.

Garen was breathing slowly according to the breathing rhythm of the Secret Martial Art to recover his energy. Even though he defeated the stout contender from Asura Palm in one blow, he still expended some energy. He still had to prepare himself to face the next opponent in his prime condition.

Unfortunately, after waiting for quite some time, his opponent for the next round didn't turn up. It wasn't just him, even the referee started to get impatient. He sent a disciple from Celestial Circle Gate to inquire, and found out that Garen's opponent for the next round was still in the middle of a tough fight. Apart from ongoing duels, some contestants had sustained severe injuries and required rest and treatment. All contestants for the fourth round had to continue waiting. The rest were martial arts experts who had already progressed to the fifth round. According to the rules, it was impossible to arrange a duel with them in that moment.

"That means I can have a little time to rest for now?" Garen stood up and asked softly.

"Yes. You have about half an hour to rest. In the meantime, you are free to move about," the referee nodded and politely replied. In the Secret Martial Art world, the strong was always revered. Garen's true strength had gained his respect.

"Very well." Garen planned to sit cross-legged again and continue his recovery.

After sitting only for a while, a disciple from Celestial Circle Gate clad in black handed a note to him.

"Senior Brother Garen, someone outside claims to be an acquaintance of yours. He asked me to give this to you."

"An acquaintance?" Garen took the note, opened it, and his eyes widened instantly.

There was only one line written on the note.

'Want to know how Gregor died? Meet me at two o'clock at night. I'll be waiting for you outside.' There was even an illustration of a familiar tattoo design below the words: it was the graphic on the back of the hands of those psychokinetics.

He crumpled the note in shock. Garen's eyes narrowed; there was a trace of coldness in them.

"Where is the person who passed you the note?" he asked the disciple who handed the note over.

"Still waiting outside..." Before he could finish his words, he saw Garen jump straight off the ring and dash out the door. The packed crowd around the ring did not impede him at all. He was like a moving reef; the crowd automatically parted wherever he went.

He was out of the room in an instant. There seemed to be a commotion in the room on the other side; it sounded like a crowd cheering.

"Shura! Shura! Shura!" The cheers were like the tide, coming wave after wave; the atmosphere was bustling.

Garen glanced around the corridor. Suddenly the corner of a black cloak at the far end of the corridor caught his eye.

He arched his body and instantly rushed towards it. He was at the end of the corridor in a few strides. Around the corner was a ten-odd-meters straight black corridor; there were no bends in the middle, but the person earlier had vanished, all in a matter of a few seconds.

"Traveling twenty to thirty meters in a few seconds..." Garen looked at the people walking around in the corridor. He grabbed a female disciple that walked past him and asked, "Did you see someone in a black cloak pass by earlier?"

"Ouch! That hurts! No! No I didn't!" the girl repeatedly answered in shock.

"I'm sorry, I've hurt you." It was only then that Garen noticed he was using too much force, so he released his grip on her. "You really didn't see?"

"I really didn't! Who wears a black cloak in broad daylight anyway?" she rubbed her shoulder as she finished replying, then ran off as fast as a rabbit.

Garen walked on along the corridor. He kept questioning passersby as he walked, but the answer was that no one had even seen a person in a black cloak.

The other disciples from White Cloud Gate rushed over too, and followed behind Garen.

Collin wanted to walk up and greet him, but was halted by Simon, who shook his head at her.

"It must be something important to Eldest Senior Brother. Let's help him search."

Apart from Rimridor who was nowhere to be seen, the four of them kept asking everyone they met, but no one had seen a person in a black cloak at all.

Garen walked into a break room along the corridor. He slowly sat on the bench and wiped the sweat and oil off his face. The note and that corner of a black cloak were haunting him.

Shouts and cheers kept coming intermittently from the rooms around them: those were the tournament venues of other contestants.

The other three from White Cloud Gate were also exhausted, so they sat down with Garen.

"Eldest Senior Brother..." Collin looked at Garen worriedly.

"It's almost time for the next tournament, right?" Garen looked up, and reverted to his usual calm. "Thanks for helping me out in the manhunt. Let's get back to the tournament."

"Okay!" Simon and the rest answered hurriedly.

Garen stood up and sorted through his emotions.

Ever since he enhanced his Mammoth Secret Technique to the level of Achieved Mammoth, even though he didn't feel anything then, eventually he realized that the Achieved level of the Mammoth Secret Technique made his every action more coherent. The Four Major Forms of White Cloud Combat Techniques, Vibration Technique in Strength Utilization under the Mammoth Secret Technique, and Techniques in Fundamental Wrestling Arts had all harmonized into one. It was as if he was a real mammoth: his every move was calm but powerful, and integrated.

He finally understood the purpose of the Mammoth Secret Technique: it was coordination.

Coordinated practitioners of the White Cloud Secret Method, Explosive Fist Arts, White Cloud Combat Arts and the like, would be able to meld all the techniques into one, and form a naturally coherent comprehensive force.

Chapter 85: The Truth 1

This coordination was already a hard limit; anything further would just be a slight enhancement. He had understood that—the Explosive Fist Arts, White Cloud Secret Method, and White Cloud Combat Technique—were all fundamental parts, like a mammoth's limbs. Training in these martial art techniques was like honing the mammoth's limbs: the stronger they were, the better the foundation, and the stronger the integrated effect of the Secret Mammoth Technique.

The purpose of the Secret Mammoth Technique was to integrate all these together, to form a real large mammoth. Different people formed different Mammoth characteristics: this was dependent on physical quality, and the level of Explosive Fist Arts or White Cloud Secret Method they have trained up till.

Garen's own White Cloud Secret Method had reached an unprecedented level; his Explosive Fist Arts had reached an intermediate level, a minor achievement; his White Cloud Combat Technique was intermediate too. Coupled with the strong physical quality that he was most proud of—a physical quality that was beyond the physical limits of an average person—everything combined, the Secret Martial Art helped Garen attain a terrifyingly phenomenal level.

This was just a third-rate Secret Martial Art technique, but had been practiced by him to an unfathomable level with his mysterious special ability.

Other practitioners from White Cloud Gate would not practice Secret Martial Arts on such solid foundation. Basically they would start practicing it once they had a good foundation of the rest. After all, Explosive Fist Arts and the White Cloud Secret Method were time-consuming martial art techniques. If they only started practicing Secret Martial Arts after attaining a certain achievement in those, it would probably not happen even when the practitioner reached 40 years old. Even the best talents would only be able to attain intermediate levels in Explosive Fist Arts and the White Cloud Secret Method. With their White Cloud Secret Method limited to intermediate level, not even attaining advanced level, there would be too big a difference with Garen's unparalleled achieved level.

No one knew the changes that an achieved White Cloud Secret Method integrated into Secret Mammoth Technique would bring about. The role of White Cloud Secret Method in Secret Martial Arts was like the heart of the mammoth, consolidating the power and explosive force of the entire body.

Garen wasn't even sure what stage he was at. He just knew that he was stronger than before, stronger than when he went to the Golden Hoop meet!

He rushed towards the previous tournament venue along the way he came from.

"Where is Master now?" he asked as he walked.

"After the next round is the final round to determine the top ten, Master should be here to watch," Collin explained simply. "He should be with the masters of other dojos and sects now."

Garen nodded and didn't say more. The incident with the note still weighed heavy on him; he didn't know who passed him the note, but...

A trace of coldness flashed across his face. Garen sped up. All along the corridor, every disciple from the Southern Twelve Gates would give way to him out of respect.

"I heard that Senior Brother Garen has been rated as the first person below the previous top ten! And it was Senior Brother Andrela who had personally evaluated this!"

"Senior Brother Garen, together with Senior Brother Tenstar Ni, have been regarded as the Senior Brothers with the most potential to enter top ten."

"The next round is the finals. Let's go get a place, quick!"

The whispers of trainees would reach their ears from time to time. Garen turned a deaf ear to all of it, but the faces of the other three gradually shone with a trace a pride.

White Cloud Gate had never been bestowed such an honor. As a small, third-rate sect, its martial art methods were limited; even extremely talented disciples have never managed to reach such a level. Every disciple could only participate for three times consecutively, not to mention there was an age limit. Eldest Senior Sister and Second Senior Brother had passed the age limit long ago, and even they were far from attaining this degree of evaluation when they participated.

Now that Garen had achieved it, the three of them walked with their heads held high, no longer the same as before.

After he passed through a few corridors, Garen strode into his initial tournament venue. In the packed room, someone was already waiting for him in the white ring.

A proportionately muscular youth with a tall flattop haircut resembling a broom, he had white hand wraps on both his hands, and a rebellious look on his face. His upper body was bare, and he was wearing white shorts. He had a shoe only on his right foot; it looked very odd.

Garen subconsciously looked at his feet.

When the youth shifted his right foot, Garen realized that the he wasn't actually wearing a shoe, but instead there was a black shoe-like motif painted onto his foot: both his feet were bare.

"Senior Brother Garen, please step into the ring," the referee shouted.

The tournament venue quieted down almost immediately. The crowd gave way to Garen and the other three. Most of them looked expectantly at him, only a few stared rudely.

Garen strode to the side of the ring, somersaulted into it then stood up.

"Order of the Iron Fist, Carlos." The youth had a hand in front of his body, and another clenched, resting at his waist: he adopted the horse stance, and put on a solemn posture.

"Garen of White Cloud Gate." Garen glanced at his opponent, not even bothering to adopt a stance. He looked sideways at the referee and asked, "Can we begin?"

"Begin!" The referee rung the bell definitively, then somersaulted out of the ring. This wasn't child's play: duels at this level were considered to be between experts. A referee like him could be accidentally injured if he didn't take care.

As the referee's voice faded, Carlos threw a fierce punch which arced to hit the right side of Garen's face.

The few-meter gap between the both of them was closed by him in one stride. His fist pierced the right side of Garen's face like a sickle. Due to the extreme speed, only a trace of a shadow could be seen, like the sharp, curved shadow of a sickle blade.

"How fast!" Garen was stunned. He barely managed to lift his elbow; he could feel a gust from the force of the punch ripple the skin of his face.

Bang!

The two were interlocked in a fist fight. Garen blocked with his right arm and threw his left arm out towards his opponent's face. His arm flung out like a spring; he was using a standard Shot Form. The explosive force of the punch made a whoosh sound.

Clap!

Another crisp sound could be heard. All their attacks were blocked by the other.

Within less than half a meter from each other, Carlos' spike-like elbow attacked Garen like a storm. Garen blocked his crucial body parts; the rest of the attacks hit his muscles and caused them to quiver violently but the effect soon passed. His skin merely reddened slightly.

A very frequent 'tap tap tap' sound like raindrops could be heard.

Carlos looked grimmer. Even his Vibration couldn't penetrate the toughness of Garen's Body Hardening Technique. It merely caused a reddening of the skin; this was something he didn't expect.

But to be able to reach this stage in the tournament, his opponent would naturally not be a weakling. He was already mentally prepared.

"Abrupt Kick!" Carlos roared. His right leg shot up and headed straight for Garen's chin. Its swiftness transformed it into a grey shadow.

Wham!

Garen didn't manage to react in time, and got hit squarely by the kick; his head jerked backwards from the impact. But with a sly grin, he threw caution to the wind and took the opportunity to grab his opponent's shoulder with his right arm, and tripped Carlos with a foot.

There was a muffled thud, and Carlos was held down by him in the ring.

Garen didn't hesitate as he followed through with a downward elbow smash.

There was a loud crash; a small dent appeared on the ring.

Carlos rolled over and dodged the attack. He rolled a few meters away from Garen and stood up again. He looked fearfully at the dent on the ground. These rings were made from high strength, special grade cement. Apart from a high base cost, this brought with it an extremely tough rigidity, almost ten times that of average cement. Now it had been easily damaged under Garen's strength.

"If I didn't dodge that second move..." He let out a low cough. Phlegm surged up his throat, and he felt bursts of piercing pain in his back.

He turned sideways to spit out the phlegm: it was blood sputum. The blood red goop stuck onto the floor of the ring with a flop.

"Good fight!" When he got excited, Carlos' accent immediately turned into a rhotic tone; Garen couldn't make out the origin of the accent.

"You're not too bad either." Garen gave a soft laugh, and temporarily put aside all his worries. "Again!"

He stomped his foot, angled his elbow forward and dashed towards his opponent like a drill.

His left elbow complemented the Dash Form. Coupled with the impact of the Step Form, the integrated use of the Four Major Forms was his true transformation after receiving the Secret Martial Art.

This was the same maneuver he used to defeat the stout youth earlier.

When he rushed to the front of Carlos, the latter gave a cunning smile then suddenly crouched down and kicked Garen's lower body.

Whack!

Carlos caught Garen squarely in the calf, but his expression immediately changed as he attempted to roll over and dodge, but it was too late.

His opponent's calf was anchored like an iron wall. This was the result of a marked difference in strength. Moreover, his straight kick did not actually do his opponent any harm, not even a scratch.

Was this a bad joke? Usually the power of this kick was enough to rupture two sandbags arranged successively!

He saw Garen draw his hands to his chest and do an elbow drop, collapsing on him like a mountain.

It was too late.

Carlos did not hesitate; he made a ruthless decision.

"Abrupt Kick!"

Both his legs suddenly kicked upwards. The tips of his feet were like sharp spikes and stabbed Garen's chest and abdomen one after the other.

Wham!

The two collided hard into each other; the whole ring quaked from the impact.

The entire tournament ground suddenly fell into complete silence.

Garen slowly got up and looked at Carlos who was coughing up blood.

"No matter how fast you are, how fast your rhythm, I just need to hit you once."

It was only then that the referee rushed into the ring to strike the bell.

"The winner is Garen of White Cloud Gate!"

Hurrah!

The audience burst into a loud cheer; the whole tournament venue instantly became rowdy. Most of the disciples from Southern Twelve Gates were over the moon.

Garen shook his head as he watched the medical team carry the injured Carlos away. He looked down at his own chest: two red spots were clearly visible, and his skin was slightly swollen.

"He was indeed an expert who has mastered Vibration, much more lethal than an average person. Any stronger and he would have broken my defense."

"The next venue is the finals tournament ground, that is the open tournament ground outside. It starts tomorrow morning," the referee on the side cautiously announced. "Today's preliminaries have ended. Tomorrow will be the finals to determine the top ten."

"That is to say, I can go back and rest now?" Garen asked.

"Yes."

Garen leaped out of the ring. His white clothing was torn and ragged: Carlos' kicks earlier had shredded his clothes at his chest. He simply pulled off his top and walked out of the room baring his upper body.

"Eldest Senior Brother, you're finally in the finals!" Collin, Carrie and the rest were elated.

"At such a critical moment, where could Rimridor have gone?" Simon moaned softly.

"That guy isn't here yet?" Garen frowned, "It's fine, forget him. You guys head straight back to rest. I'll take a shower first."

"Yes, Senior Brother!" the three of them replied respectfully at once. Their impression of Garen now was higher and more authoritative than ever.

Garen nodded, and walked towards the left side of the corridor alone. Every now and then there would be some disciples from Southern Twelve Gates looking at him in admiration, and give way to him.

He had defeated Carlos from the Order of the Iron Fist. His reputation immediately reached a prominent height. The Order of the Iron Fist ranked ninth, but Carlos was indeed a top ten contender the last time. Now that he had been defeated, this meant that Garen could benefit from his detriment to advance further.

Chapter 86: The Truth 2

Under the guidance of an attendant, Garen returned to the accommodation arranged by his sect. He entered his own independent room, took off his clothes and walked into the shower.

He shut the door and gently turned the faucet on.

Whoosh.

Cold water rushed out first, but soon the water warmed and steam slowly filled the bathroom.

Garen stood under the faucet, letting the warm water cascade down from his shoulders. The tense muscles and skin around his body gradually relaxed under the warmth. Hot water drenched his back and flowed to his feet, washing away most of the sweat and stains.

He wiped his face with his hands and started recalling the developments in the tournament so far. Each of his four opponents had their strengths and weaknesses. The strongest opponent was the last one, Carlos from the Order of the Iron Fist; his true strength was comparable to Golden Hoop Number 9.

"Now that I think of it, Carlos and Eldest Senior Sister share a similar fighting style: both aim to kill. But compared to Eldest Senior Sister at her current level, he is slightly weaker. Nevertheless, the difference is marginal," Garen contrasted Carlos with the standard of the Eldest Senior Sister that trained with him from his memory, and carefully evaluated it.

Since receiving the Secret Martial Art, even he himself was unclear what level his true strength had progressed to; he needed a clear comparison.

"Eldest Senior Sister would not have exhibited her full strength when she was training with me. Based on several daily details, I estimate that she is slightly stronger than Carlos. I could spar with Eldest Senior Sister when I am back to find out the current extent of my true strength. But why didn't Eldest Senior Sister and the others participate in the ranking tournaments? If they were here, White Cloud Gate wouldn't be in too low a ranking."

Garen's mind kept recalling the actions, strength and other details of Second Senior Brother and Eldest Senior Sister when they were in training.

Ever since he received the Secret Martial Art, his perspective had completely changed. His strength and martial art techniques have been coherently amalgamated to reach a stage where he could organically combine moves. Naturally, his perspective of former opponents had evolved, and he would notice more than he did before.

"Eldest Senior Sister and Carlos should be on the same level, and Second Senior Brother is slightly weaker. Third Senior Brother is on the same level as the guy from Holy Fist Gate in the first round. He's really too lazy..." As he thought about Third Senior Brother Joshua, he couldn't help but shake his head slightly. Practicing martial arts once every three days could still be considered diligent. No matter how talented he was, he wouldn't be able to accomplish anything if he wasted his talent like that.

He looked down and gently clenched his fists. After a few duels, Garen could clearly feel that he had become more powerful. There were no specific enhancements to his strength and speed, but his martial arts had become more powerful. He could spontaneously apply the Four Major Forms; they had been ingrained as a natural instinct. He could easily integrate the strength of his entire body in the execution of every move.

Even though the Strength points in the Attribute Pane remain unchanged, Garen could feel that his true strength had increased by more than one fold. He could probably achieve 500 pounds of explosive force in situ. If it were coupled with the impact of a run-up, the results would be unimaginable even to him.

"It would probably reach half a tonne..." Garen tilted his head upwards and allowed the hot water to directly drench his hair. "What a shame. This seems to be the maximum extent of the Secret Martial Art of White Cloud Gate. I could still progress further, but the Secret Martial Art has peaked."

Ding dong.

"Garen, are you there?" the voice of Master Fei Baiyun came from outside the door.

"I am, master," Garen hurriedly replied. "I'm in the shower. I'll be out in a minute."

He quickly turned off the tap, dried himself, hastily dressed then pushed the door open to walk out.

The door clicked as it opened. Fei Baiyun stood at the entrance clad in black silk clothing. He was wearing a round black hat and small sunglasses. Coupled with his handlebar moustache, he made an oddly delightful sight.

He let himself into the room and sat down. Fei Baiyun stared fervently at his disciple who closed the door and sat down.

"Garen, I was chatting to some old friends and heard that you won the preliminaries and entered the finals. You've really done me proud this time!" His face shone with glee. "I didn't expect your true strength to develop so fast after you've received the Secret Martial Art! This kind of talent... Looks like I was right in selecting you to be a last disciple!"

"Well done!" Fei Baiyun patted Garen's shoulders hard. "I will meet whatever request you have when we get back!"

"Master, you flatter me." Garen was somewhat embarrassed by his master's praises.

"I am clear about what is and isn't flattery. For you to be able to reach this level in a year, no one would have expected it. Your Secret Mammoth Technique should be at the Mammoth level, correct?" Fei Baiyun lowered his voice and asked.

Garen nodded. This was not something to hide. The Secret Mammoth Technique purely relied on perception and talent. It was different from White Cloud Secret Method and Explosive Fist Arts; those were fundamentals which required hard work.

"Indeed..." The more he looked at him, the more Fei Baiyun liked Garen. The smile that he suppressed to maintain his dignified image as a teacher couldn't be contained any longer. His wrinkly face grinned from ear to ear. "Any injuries from the tournaments?"

"None..." Garen replied truthfully.

Fei Baiyun suddenly stood up and looked at his disciple Garen, shook his head slightly and said, "I can't believe that a last disciple that I, Fei Baiyun, have admitted in my sunset years, would be such a fascinating character like you. There is still hope for White Cloud Gate..."

He hesitated, looked at the confused Garen, then finally made his decision. He reached a hand into his inner pocket and took out a round indigo metal container and gently opened it.

The metal box was merely the size of a palm, but there was another small black box within it. Fei Baiyun opened that too.

On a piece of black silk inside the innermost box was a square black piece of paste, even on all sides. It looked insignificant.

Fei Baiyun looked at it and let out a long sigh.

"Here, eat this." He put it in front of Garen.

"What is this?"

Garen stared curiously at the squarish paste: it looked like hardened black toothpaste.

"Why are you asking so many questions? I won't harm you! Eat!" Fei Baiyun urged impatiently.

"Oh..." Garen picked the square paste up and put it straight into his mouth. He chewed a few times; it was sweet and sour, like eating a fruit roll-up. He swallowed it whole. Suddenly, from his mouth to his throat down till his stomach—any esophageal tract that the paste passed through—he experienced a cool refreshing feeling.

"Alright, rest well. Good luck in the finals tomorrow!" Fei Baiyun cleared his throat, patted Garen's shoulder and said as if nothing had happened. "I'll be off. You take care and condition yourself."

"Yes, master." Garen nodded respectfully.

At this, Fei Baiyun gave a contented nod, put his hands behind his back and sauntered out of the room.

When he was a short distance away from the room, he slowly turned back to look at the closed room door.

"Bloodboil Pill... Such miracle drugs are better utilized on youths. Don't disappoint me, Garen."

He turned around and slowly walked to the far end of the corridor, and soon disappeared around the corner. In that instant, even his silhouette seemed to have aged a lot.

At the other end of the corridor outside Garen's room, two other old men appeared. One had a full red beard, and the other had a pale and clean-shaven face, with skin covered in wrinkles and liver spots.

"I can't believe Fei Baiyun gave the Bloodboil Pill to that kid. That was his life's work: in order to collect all the herbs and ingredients, he almost lost his life several times. That is the White Cloud Gate miracle drug, able to cure internal injuries and prolong life, which he specifically intended for self-consumption in preparation for breaking through into the next stage. Now he's actually given it to this young fellow..." the red-bearded old man lamented as he recalled Fei Baiyun's silhouette walking away. He gently shook his head. "Without the Bloodboil Pill, Old Fei won't live for long."

"The accumulation of a lifetime of hard work, all wagered on one disciple. Old Fei is really..." the other old man didn't know how to continue.

"Life's like that. Everything is impermanent. Let's go. The matter regarding Eastern Saintcloth awaits, we have to sort it out soon. This kid doesn't let us have a moment of peace. He's getting into trouble wherever he goes!" the red-bearded old man sighed, and turned around to walk away.

The pale-faced old man took a look at Garen's room door, inexplicably let out a sigh, and turned to leave as well.

In the room, Garen was stunned to see the Attribute Skills Pane in the bottom of his vision undergo a slow but sure change.

Under the Skills column, for Secret Mammoth Technique, the word 'Achieved' after it gradually blurred, and slowly transformed into a new word: Explosive. But the wording was translucent, as if it hadn't fully crystallized.

"What's this?" Garen was shocked. He immediately thought of the thing that tasted like fruit roll-up that his master had given him. "Could it be some kind of secret medicine? What kind of secret medicine has such a powerful effect?"

The word 'Explosive' after 'Secret Mammoth Technique' floated about and looked unstable, as if it wouldn't be completed anytime soon.

Garen didn't know what would happen. He planned to observe first. This change seemed to be incomplete; maybe it would fully stabilize later.

After going out for dinner and giving some instructions to a few disciples, he went straight back to his room. He waited until it was dark outside, changed, and asked an attendant for directions to leave the Celestial Circle Gate grounds.

He went around the perimeter of the grounds and walked to the edge of a deserted forest.

Garen finally saw a figure in black cloak standing under the shadow of the woods. He stood silently with his back to Garen.

"You passed me the note?" Confident about his true strength, Garen approached him and asked loudly.

Whoosh!

The figure dashed straight into the woods without replying.

"Don't think you can escape!" Garen scorned and trailed closely behind.

The bushes and tree leaves rustled as he ran across. They were sprinting one after the other in the dark forest, but Garen didn't manage to catch up with him.

Soon, both of them dashed out of the woods. They had reached the edge of the forest, and suddenly he saw a huge loess stone wall in front of him.

Four skulls were mysteriously engraved onto the stone wall, side by side. The sound of the wind whistling could faintly be heard coming from the black eye sockets and mouths. Each skull was ten odd meters tall; it was extremely spectacular.

A wooden suspension bridge linked the forest area to the open area below the stone wall.

The figure in black rushed onto the bridge without hesitating. Garen followed, and ran past the bridge quickly. An ominous cold current of air constantly poured out from the dark abyss below. The bridge swayed side to side as they ran past, and both stopped at the loess open area below the skull stone wall.

"Who are you?" Garen stared fixedly at the figure in black.

The figure in black slowly turned around, and revealed a handsome, apathetic face of a man. His skin was pale; there was almost no blush on his face. A few strands of long, black hair were vaguely exposed around the edges of his cloak.

"Garen Lombard, the disciple of that foolish brother of mine..."

"Who are you?!" Garen narrowed his eyes as a chill flashed across them. "Do you know how Old Man Gregor died?"

"How he died?" The man calmly gazed at Garen. "I killed him with my bare hands."

"And so you shall go to hell!" Garen's eyes widened. A crater blasted open under his feet as he violently leaped towards the man. An explosive roar like a mammoth trumpet could vaguely be heard coming from behind him.

Chapter 87: Turn of Events 1

Peng!

Garen's arms stopped in front of the man's face as if an invisible wall completely blocked his attack. Pieces of broken, transparent debris shot out into the air in a crisp sound like a glass breaking.

Garen's distorted face was completely red, he made a fierce inhale and, as his muscles instantly swelled up, he grew from 178 cm to over two meters tall. His arms resembled steel pincers, and he clamped his arms with all his might.

"Roar!"

In a cracking sound, the protective screen in front of the man shattered, and the dark blue arms that looked like steel beams scissored towards the man's neck.

However, a strange thing happened: Garen's arms went through the man's neck without touching anything solid.

What he cut through was an illusion, and on the ground not far from here, the man slowly appeared again.

"Brother taught you nothing, did he?" He raised his chin, a trace of disappointment gleamed in his eyes. "I've heard reports that you killed a few psychokinetics, and I thought that I would be able to see my brother's Everlasting Night Stars... but you are just so worthless."

"Who are you calling worthless?!" Garen squinted his eyes, as he took a breath, his body inflated and deflated as if he was a real mammoth with huge lung capacity. His voice was so strong and deep that the words echoed and lingered in the air.

He stood on the empty ground, his body had an unnatural purple-black color.

"Since you are a worthless and incompetent, I will take back what belongs to my brother..." The man reached out his hand and pointed at Garen.

Shoo!

An invisible force crashed down on Garen like a clump of dried glue.

Garen suddenly felt that his whole body was immobilized.

"Trying to chain me up?" A sharp light flashed in his eyes, his arm and elbow stroke to the side with a loud crash.

A crisp crackle resounded, and the man's expression changed.

"A mortal like you..." He flicked his finger, another invisible force crashed onto Garen.

Vroom!

A giant spherical force field formed within ten meters of Garen.

The sand and weed on the ground, the daffodil seeds floated in the air, dust fell off from the stone walls, and a few dried leaves were blown airborne by the wind.

Everything was frozen and restrained.

Garen was standing in the center of the sphere, his muscles and veins jumped following his heart beat. His heart was frantically pumping blood, and his veins seemed like they were about to explode. His vigorous heart was strongly resisting against the forcefield outside.

Sss...

His skin had tightened from the pressure, and his heart seemed like it was going to blow up. A faint painful feeling came from his left chest, his heart was failing under the influence of the forcefield.

The massive force and pressure restrained his body, he could not even breathe, and his face was gradually turning purple and red.

"It's over." The man took back his index finger as he slowly walked towards Garen. "Like an insect stuck in an amber, pathetic."

Crackle!

Suddenly, an astounded expression rose on his face. "The Layered Levitation Finger... You broke free?"

Boom!

The forcefield around Garen was completely shattered, he felt his power and strength exploding like a volcano, his sight went black for a second, and a tearing pain came from his muscles.

He lowered his head and saw the necklace hidden in his shirt slowly rising up, floating in front of his face. A line of words emerged on the necklace.

"Ain Gregoria, Third Life Ritual – Protection."

"Everlasting Night Star... It was on you this whole time. I didn't expect Brother to leave this on you." The man instantly lifted his cloak, revealing his seaweed-like long and dark hair.

His eyes were glued on the necklace, this necklace in the shape of an open book was exactly what he was looking for.

"A treasure like this is such a waste on you." His hand slowly reached out and gripped at Garen.

Peng!

Garen wanted to dodge, but as soon as he took two steps to the side, he felt everything go black as an invisible hand was choking him by the neck and prevented him from breathing.

"The difference in strength is too much!" His heart was mixed with disappointment and rage. "There is still hope!" His hands tightly gripped the invisible hand on his neck, trying to break himself free. His attention turned to the Skill Pane at the bottom of his vision.

Within the Skill Pane, behind the Mammoth Secret Technique, the transparent and blurry word "Explosive" was gradually turning opaque and clear.

He had the feeling that when this Mammoth Secret Technique finally reached the point of "Explosive", his body would have a dramatic change. His strength would increase by a large margin.

"Damn it, come on, faster!" Drops of blood emerged on his face from under his skin from overusing his explosive force.

At this moment, the man in the dark cloak was already standing in front of him, he reached out and grabbed the necklace.

"Everlasting Night Stars, it's mine now."

Bam!

Suddenly, a dark blue fist fiercely punched his right cheek.

Garen finally broke free of the psychokinetic hand and swung a hard blow.

"Got you!"

He sprinted over, let out a frenzied roar, and kneed the man in the black cloak who was still staggering.

Crackle! The sound of stone rupturing came from the man's body, he froze bending down.

Garen gave him an uppercut, precisely smashing the location of his heart on the man's left chest.

"Pathetic..." the man's voice came from somewhere.

A massive force smashed into the back of Garen's head.

Pong!

Garen shuddered and froze. His vision went black, and his body felt limp and numb as he lost control of his body.

The man in the dark cloak in front of him vanished, turning into a giant yellow stone.

"A mere Hallucinogenic Force Field... could put you on the brink of insanity?"

The man's voice came from behind.

"As soon as you met me, you were hallucinated and indulged in the illusions, then you were attacking the rocks like a madman, thinking I was the stone wall."

Garen turned around with all his effort, staring at the man at the original spot he was standing on.

"Who... who are you?"

"Me?" The man chuckled, "My name is Sylphalan. Pitiful mortal... you don't even have the right to look at me straight. I have been behind you the whole time..."

Garen's vision blurred, he couldn't see the man again, and as he turned around, he saw the man standing right behind him, smiling at him with his cold expression.

Bam!

His eyes blurred again, he realized that he was still standing at the original spot, he had not moved an inch, his right fist was on top of his own chest, a strong pain came from his heart.

In a low thud, he felt pain on the back of his head, Garen limped on the ground without any strength, a foot turned his face around to face the sky.

"Your master used to lick my boot and begged me to let you go, why don't you lick it as well? Maybe I could spare you if my mood got better," the man's voice came with a glimmer of a smile.

The boot grinded on Garen's face, and the dirt and the grass mixed with some mud smeared all over his face.

"Roar!" He suddenly pushed himself up and swung his fist at Sylphalan.

Bang!

Garen was sent flying, hitting the stone wall. A few pieces of rubble shattered off the wall and landed on him. He could feel pain from every bone in his body, he was on the verge of collapse.

The man slowly strutted next to him, he could only see a pair of dark gold linen boots.

"Die!" Garen suddenly reached towards the man's feet.

Bam!

Another foot stomped on his waist, in the sound of a crackle, the impact broke one of his back bones.

"A worthless thing like you, I can't believe Gregor wasted his time on you, what an idiot."

"Talentless mortals, no matter how hard they try are still just worthless."

Garen could not speak anymore.

"I will die if this goes on!"

He felt himself getting weaker and weaker, he was exhausted and wanted to sleep.

"There's no other way... Next time I see you, I will kill you!" Garen stared at the blurry silhouette, his mind was calm. He memorized the man's handsome and cold face in his heart.

He didn't expect to get outmatched like this, he was almost defenseless! From start to finish, he didn't even know if he had touched the opponent. He didn't know if he was a friend or foe and underestimated the gap between their strengths, this was his fault.

Sylphalan... this name was engraved into his heart.

It was strange, he should be angry, but he only felt calm and peaceful. He had a feeling that the opponent did not really want to kill him.

"I have to gamble..." He slowly closed his eyes, not that he could see anything anyway. His muscle started trembling and deflating. Soon he had returned to his normal body size.

He slowly started a technique he had learned from the dojo's library, it was a simple technique that could allow someone to fake his death.

This was the first time he used it, it was a simple technique, or one could call a trick. This trick was a part of the Mammoth Secret Techniques included in the notebook. One of the predecessors experimented and invented this little trick to save his life.

When he saw this trick that day, he memorized it just in case of a dangerous situation. It was a simple technique that adjusted one's breathing patterns. But he didn't expect to put it to use so soon.

He imagined all his strength and blood to relax and rest, and gradually flowed into his brain and heart.

Then he lost consciousness.

Sylphalan raised his head and gazed at the new moon, his foot was still on Garen's head.

"He's dead?" He boringly kicked Garen again. "His life was so fragile..."

He snatched Everlasting Night Stars from Garen's neck and put it on his arms. Sylphalan put on the cloak and hid into the dark night.

Wind gusted by, lifting the hem of his cloak.

He turned to glance at Garen one last time. His expression looked complicated. He turned around and jumped, his shadow disappeared into the forest like a bird.

Right as he left, a blurry silhouette approached Garen.

"Sylphalan... Hehe... you think you could trick everyone?"

Chapter 88: Turn of Events 2

After a long while, Garen slowly regained consciousness, everything looked blurry as if something was wrong with his eyes and could barely catch a glimpse of the moonlight with his right eye.

Someone was pulling him by his hair, and he felt like he was being

dragged on the floor.

His vision was too blurry to see anything, after getting knocked unconscious, he felt as if his brain was disconnected with his body.

Sss...

He could vaguely see the dirt and the sand move below his legs.

After a short while.

Whap!

He was thrown into a deep dirt hole.

"Universal nerve damage, 80% bones broken, cardiac rupture, internal bleeding."

"Poor guy, why did you have to piss off people from Immortal Palace. Which one of those crazy bastards isn't a psycho, yet inhumanly strong?"

An aged voice came from above the dirt hole.

"Young man, if you reincarnate in the next life, try to be a common folk, don't get involved in these things."

The person exclaimed and started shoveling dirt into the hole.

Garen laid quietly in the hole and felt his whole body being buried slowly. He didn't need to breathe, but he was paralyzed and could only feel a small part of his head.

"I did it... I tricked him." He waited until he was fully buried and hearing that the person burying him had walked away. He could faintly hear the "hoot, hoot" sounds from owls.

Garen waited a bit more and slowly adjusted his breathing to lift the technique.

Phew...

He puffed out all the gas waste inside his lungs.

His body still felt powerless.

"I should put the saved attribute point to use."

He had one point of attribute unused, in case something like this happened.

His focus landed on Vitality, and after three seconds, the last attribute point was slowly added.

His Vitality went from 1.88 to 2.08

Vroom!

In an instant, Garen felt a hot stream from his brain flowing down his spine into his back. The stream spread into every muscle in his limbs like a wildfire.

The once weak body suddenly regained power. The warmth from his whole body felt comforting.

He lifted his leg and kicked up.

Blam!

The still soft dirt above was kicked open.

Garen quickly dusted off the dirt that covered his body, even though he was seriously injured, he still had enough strength to clean up himself.

Climbing out of the dirt and sitting on the grass, Garen looked around himself.

The dim moonlight shined on the grass, and the shadow of the trees crisscrossed each other on the ground while the night wind stirred up the leaves.

As Garen sat in the dirt and grass, he felt an itch in his nose and ears, he blew his nose hard, and a few ants flew out of his nostrils.

"Shit!"

He quickly found a small branch to clean his ears, a fat worm that looked like a maggot rolled out of his ear.

This worm was stuck on the inside of his ears trying to bite off some of Garen's flesh, but his skin had been hardened by the Explosive Fist Arts, so the worm could not even bite into the surface. In the end, it was squashed by Garen's hands.

Sitting on the ground resting, Garen's body gradually recovered. He felt a little strange, there was a numbing feeling coming from his limbs.

He distinctly remembered that his bones were mostly broken or fractured before he fainted.

Other than a few ribs that were still not healed, they had almost recovered by themselves without the attribute point's help.

He reached and stroked over some of the bones in his body.

"They are all joined? Is this the effect of Master's medicine?"

Even though his bones were set, some of them had grown together without aligning correctly, Garen broke them again, and bearing the pain, the hot stream from the attribute point quickly covered the broken bones and started healing.

The strange thing was that his regeneration from the attribute point was usually not this strong, but now, it has grown a lot stronger for some reason. The broken bones had healed together after twenty minutes.

"This has to be the work of that medicine..." Garen was sure the medicine caused the quickened healing.
"Looks like Master gave me something incredible..."

After resting for about two hours, the bones had fully grown together. As to his nerves, they were the first to recover.

Garen stood up, dark and bloody sweat oozed out of his skin. It was the congested blood from his internal organs which, after the healing process, discharged from his skin.

"Sylphalan..." he murmured the name. This was his first defeat, and a tragic one, without the help of his master's medicine and his attribute point, he could still be seriously injured. He might have even suffocated under the ground.

He started thinking about the words from the old man who had buried him.

At that moment, within the technique pane at the bottom of his vision, the words "Explosive" for his Mammoth Secret Technique finally condensed and became opaque.

A strange feeling emerged in his heart. It felt like blood formed a spherical and scorching hot blood ball in the center of his body, the ball radiated hot stream and warmed his body.

Wherever the hot stream touched, brand new power emerged. His recovery speed had returned to normal, and his injuries had mostly healed.

"The Immortal Palace..." Garen clenched his fists as he lowered his head. "I will find you..."

He covered the hole on the ground again and strode out of the forest.

After getting back to his room, it was already late in the night, Garen took a shower in the bathroom and changed into a white training suit.

He found it odd that other disciples were not present.

Garen drank a cup of water on the sofa and relaxed his muscles. He couldn't deal with Sylphalan at this time, he had to leave the thought in the back of his mind to improve himself, and one day he would be strong enough to go and find him.

Even though he had a new breakthrough with the Explosive Mammoth Secret Technique, thinking about the opponent's mysterious moves, he still wasn't sure if he could beat Sylphalan. It was a type of power he had not seen before, and he needed more preparation.

"But at least, I know how the old man died..." He reached in the collar, to his surprise, the necklace was still there, but the letters on it were gone.

He snapped out of the gaze and got a little worried.

"Where did Collin and the others go this late in the night?"

Suddenly he heard some footsteps nearing... a group of men were approaching.

Knock Knock Knock!

"Senior brother, are you there? Have you come back yet?"

"I just heard the door shut, he might be back!"

Garen's expression turned cold, he rushed over to open the door.

The door cracked open, Collin and Carrie were standing at the door.

Collin had his fist raised, ready to knock again. He froze for a second as he saw Garen opening the door. Then, he could not hold his tear anymore.

"Se... Senior Brother... Someone wounded master!!"

Collin's voice choked up with tears, Carrie was also crying on the side without a word.

"What!!" Garen's eyes shook and asked, "Where is Master now!?"

"He is at the tournament platform we used during the day!!"

"Come!" Garen rushed out without closing the door, pulling the two disciples with him.

Crack!

"Ahhhh!" Simon's arm got snapped by a young man with short and green hair, the arm was instantly bent backward and slumped on his back.

The young man pushed Simon and kicked him on the ground.

People from different sects surrounded the white platform in the night, the masters of Celestial Star Gate and Crimson Sand Sword sat next to each other, and watched the battle with their brows wrinkled.

Whispers and chitchat noise came from the crowd.

"White Cloud Gate is done," the master of Celestial Star Gate, Rolexia, said. "Fighting Association's president had historical conflicts with White Cloud Gate's master. To ask for a battle today, he is taking advantage of White Cloud Gate's distress."

"There are reasons." The master of Crimson Sand Sword was a handsome man with red hair, he held a glass of wine in his hand without drinking it, appreciating the beauty of the wine's color through the crystal-clear glass.

He had a faint smile on his face as if nothing mattered to him.

"White Cloud Gate's senior disciple Rosetta defected, second disciple Farak had gone missing during a mission. If I were the president of Fighting Association, I'd chose to challenge them at first instance as well. Not to mention someone had just challenged the Southern Twelve Gates and injured Fei Baiyun."

"Indeed, when strengths are equal, the deciding factor for victory is the status. Combined with getting challengers previously, the Fighting Association's President is a wise man."

Rolexia nodded in agreement. "Now that their master was injured, of the two backbones, senior disciple defected, second senior disciple had gone missing, the White Cloud Gate is over. I heard that Rosetta is affiliated with Behemoth Gate."

"I'm not sure, but not only the White Cloud Gate but also the Southern Twelve Gates will all take a toll." Crimson Sand Sword's master shook his head.

At this time, the green haired man stood with his hands in the back and watched as Simon was carried down.

"So much for the formidable Southern Twelve Gates. The masters can't beat ours, disciples are all worthless too!"

This had caused commotion and noises around the platform, the disciples of Southern Twelve Gates gathered together, surrounding Fei Baiyun and eleven other masters, some of them were unconscious, some were bleeding, some had their arms broken, they were all injured at different levels.

The disciples hearing what the young man said, though very angry, dared not to speak up. Some other sects had already stepped away from these twelve gates.

"You!"

A red haired man was about to rush onto the platform but was stopped by his companions.

"Don't! You are no match for him!!"

Fei Baiyun's face was pale like a sheet of paper, he slumped in a chair, Simon was taking care of him bearing the pain from a broken arm.

"Si.. Simon.. Go! Go find your senior brother... Tell him to get everyone out... out of here!" his head was injured, he held on to the last bit of consciousness and ordered.

"Master! Senior brother can definitely beat that guy!" Simon gritted his teeth and said.

"Those challengers... are not what I'm afraid of... they weren't heavy handed with us, and we can recover if we get back... the true danger is our enemies!"

Fei Baiyun pushed Simon with his shaky hands. "The Southern Twelve Gates have too many enemies, this is not our territory, we must... get back now!!"

Chapter 89: Adverse Circumstance 1

"You are right Simon, we must go back now and scatter out in different directions!" A disciple of the Southern Twelve Gates answered with a worried expression. "My master told me to bring you a word."

"What is it?" Simon raised his head and urged him to go on.

"Someone might use extreme measures against us! My master warned master Fei to be careful. At this time, it's every man for himself."

The disciple hurried out after these words, and only then Simon realized the disciple had a black backpack in his hand.

At this moment, Simon felt his mind was chaotic.

Senior Sister Rosetta defected, Second Senior Brother was still missing, and now Master was injured as well. Senior Brother Garen was nowhere to be found either.

"How great would it be if Senior Brother Garen was here!!" He thought to himself.

Suddenly, a few silhouettes walked in from the entrance. Leading the group was a tall and young man with a sturdy build with wine-red eyes, wearing a white martial arts training uniform.

"It's Senior Brother Garen!"

"Senior Brother Garen is here!"

"Senior Brother Garen!"

The Southern Twelve Gates' disciples suddenly found someone they could depend on; the surprised cheers gradually spread over the crowd of disciples.

"Master!" Garen immediately saw Fei Baiyun after entering the platform, lying in an armchair. Garen's expression changed and he rushed to his master's side.

"Master! How do you feel? Are you hurt?!"

"Get out of here! Take everyone and leave!" Fei Baiyun let out a relieved sigh after finally seeing Garen, his expression relaxed a little.

Garen checked Fei Baiyun's pulse and breathing. Everything was normal, so he wasn't seriously injured. He was only having a hard time speaking due to concussion, thus Garen felt relieved.

"Is that who they call the strongest among the Southern Twelve Gates, Senior Brother Garen?" The green-haired young man on the stage shouted abruptly. "Looks like the Southern Twelve Gates had put all of their hopes on you. Do you dare come up and challenge me?"

Garen stood up, glancing at the surrounding crowd.

The Southern Twelve Gates' disciples all had their eyes on him, along with that Margent he had defeated and a few other masters who were still conscious.

Garen sneered and jittered his shoulders, then jumped onto the stage.

"You are digging your own grave." His expression was ruthless; his eyes became even redder.

He was feeling down from his defeat earlier, so his anger erupted like a volcano.

"You sure talk big!" The green-haired young man mocked and dashed forward, instantly closing in on Garen.

Boom Boom!!

The two traded dozens of blows in seconds; the sound of their fists and elbows clashing filled the platform.

Peng!

The young man's face turned pale and he stuttered a few steps back while clenching his chest, unable to catch his breath.

Garen suddenly jumped back, and his whole body came to a stop. He stretched his two hands out like he was holding two invisible spheres. A manic and hot stream came out of his body, caused by his rapidly increasing skin temperature.

As his eyes turned increasingly red, his deep breath echoed like the calls of a mammoth. He looked like a suppressed bomb, waiting to explode.

"S***!!" A man with similar green hair sitting below the platform jumped on it and quickly charged toward Garen.

The masters of the other sects all had grim faces.

The masters of Celestial Star Gate and Crimson Sand Sword both leaned forward in shock.

Suddenly, the master of Crimson Sand Sword remembered something.

"That's...!" If he was already surprised before, now he couldn't close his mouth.

Kaboom!

A loud noise came from the stage. Along with it came the scattered pieces of someone's clothes.

Garen's muscles fiercely inflated and he stood there like a powerful creature from ancient history. His body towering over two meters looked overwhelming. His cold red eyes stared at the green-haired men.

"Master is out to protect his worthless disciple?"

The green-haired man held his unconscious disciple in his arms, but he was knocked back ten steps. His clothes were falling apart. He was out of breath and could not speak a word.

When he opened his mouth to speak, he spurted a mouthful of blood and bent down on the ground.

"Fine, nice, okay. Garen of White Cloud Gate, I'll remember this, and you will pay for it some day!!" He let out a sad smile and quickly ran into the crowd with his disciple; he was fast like a swallow flying in the rain.

Garen's glanced around the platform, turned back and jumped off.

"Pack your stuff, we're getting out of here!"

"Yes! Senior Brother!" Collin and the others answered. One of them supported Simon while Garen scooped up his master, and they all left through the exit. His body had not fully recovered yet, so he couldn't keep on fighting. Otherwise he would have tried to force the green-haired master and disciple to stay.

Just as they stepped out, a stream of blood came out of Garen's mouth.

"Senior brother!!" Collin saw this and came up to try to support him, but Garen raised his hand to stop her.

"We must leave now! If the words were true, we are in great danger. This place isn't safe." Garen picked up his pace and walked on.

The group followed behind him. There were a dozen disciples from other sects behind them as well.

"Why are you following us?" Garen asked with a deep voice.

"We... We are headed for the same direction as you! Could Senior Brother Garen protect us on the way back?" A silver-haired young man stood out and begged. A few disciples behind him were supporting two elders who were unconscious, they were in the same boat with White Cloud Gate.

"Follow up then!" Protecting four or fourteen men was all the same, so Garen thought he might as well help these people in need.

"My name is Rampas, I'm going to represent my gate!" The silver-haired youngster introduced himself.

Garen nodded mutely.

The men packed their belongings and asked Celestial Star Gate if they could borrow their cars. The Celestial Star Gate wanted to stay neutral and out of this mess, so they refused the request.

Inside the parking lot, Garen and the group stood together, staring down at the Celestial Star Gate disciples.

The leader of those disciples was a blue-haired man wearing a black suit. His arms were exposed and a black cross was tattooed on his right arm.

"I'm Tenstar Ni. Master gave us orders. No one is to borrow our cars at this moment, so please leave us." The man crossed his arms and drawled.

"We were invited to join this exchange, but now that we are in trouble you wouldn't even let us use your cars... you!!" Collin was so mad he couldn't speak.

"I'm just following orders. It's not just you guys, the other Southern Twelve Gates are not allowed to borrow our cars either. Senior Brother has already gone to the other side." Tenstar Ni lowered his hands and clenched his fists. "With Senior Brother here, even your masters dare not make a move. Why don't you give up now, turn around and walk back to where you came?"

The Celestial Star Gate disciples behind him had no expression on their faces. Hearing Tenstar Ni's words, they all lowered their right hand and started stretching their fingers. A thrilling sensation permeated the air.

Garen stared at Tenstar Ni with his cold eyes. He could feel the opponent's strength; it was close to his level. If they were to fight right now, the result would be up to fate.

This is also the reason both sides remained humble since the beginning; the strongest of the two groups both feared their opponent. Having improved his power, Garen could now tell the someone's strength by their slightest movements and the way they acted and talked. He could feel the threat from Tenstar Ni.

"Fine! Very well! Celestial Star Gate, I'll remember this!" Garen turned around. Even though he was confident in his own strength, this was on Celestial Star Gate's turf, and thus it wouldn't be wise to get in conflict with them right now.

More importantly, he was still injured.

"The challenge must be premeditated, it's a plot against the Southern Twelve Gates!" Simon said while holding his broken arm. "Why are they targeting no one but Southern Twelve Gates! The masters are either injured or passed out. There must be someone trying to overthrow us!"

The group quickly left the parking lot and moved away from the cars.

Tenstar Ni finally felt relieved as he stared at Garen's back.

"Mastering a third-tier Mammoth Secret Technique to this level ..." Remembering the scene on the platform, he murmured. "It must be... That's definitely..."

Garen and the group were quickly leaving toward the exit.

"It's not the time to discuss that right now. The Twelve Gates are busy with their own affairs. Collin said that every sect is having significant internal problems, is it true?" Garen asked as he led the way.

"It's true!" Simon nodded, "It's obviously a plot against us, and our enemies must have paid off Celestial Star Gate. They might have some secret agreements too! We must be careful!"

"No matter how careful you are, at times like this brute force is the only way out."

Right as they left the parking lot, they saw on their left some other disciples from Southern Twelve Gates walk out of the exit from the other parking lot. A middle-aged couple led the way, and their disciples followed.

They slightly nodded as they saw Garen, and led the way to the left.

"They are heading toward the military camps. It looks like they have connections within the army! Should we follow them, Senior Brother?" Collin asked in a quiet voice.

Garen raised his head and looked up. On the floors above them, disciples from other sects were looking at them from the inside. Among them was Raydon couple who were close to him earlier. He was wondering where they were when he was competing in the tournament. It looked like they had received words in advance.

"If they had the capabilities to help us, they would have done so. Since they have left on their own, obviously they can't help us. Let's go back the way we came. I'm curious as to what kind of methods they have prepared for us!" Garen sneered and led the way to the right.

The white cement road was wide enough for four carriages to ride side by side. The group followed Garen outside the Celestial Star Gate's front gate, where carriages were parked.

The white and black horses huffed and puffed, grubbing their hoofs. They were tied to a tree trunk on the side of the road.

Garen walked directly toward the biggest carriage, which was pulled by four horses and had two rows. He instantly pulled the rope that tied the carriage, tearing it easily.

"Get on!"

The group jumped in without hesitation.

Garen found another large carriage behind the first and organized everyone else to get on.

"Those are our carriages! What do you think you are doing!" A shouting came from behind.

Garen ignored the shouting and asked the driving disciple to lash on the horses with the whip. The two carriages quickly turned and sped onto the road. Garen sat next to the driver and squinted his eyes, immersed in his own mind to check his condition.

After his Mammoth Secret Technique evolved to Explosive level, he was not sure what his current strength was. He only knew he was stronger, a lot stronger!

A small blood sphere in his chest was spinning and rotating, radiating hot streams into his body. The streams spread out like small creeks and came back after running through his whole body. It was a continuous cycle.

His injuries were not completely healed but he still had to fight the green-haired man earlier. The strong trait of Mammoth Secret Technique is its explosiveness, but when the user fights someone with similar strength or someone with an even stronger body, this explosiveness would turn into a counterforce and injure the user as well.

Garen's injury got worse after this fight.

"It shouldn't matter too much." Strangely, the blood sphere in his chest was repairing his body like the attribute points did. "At this rate. I'll be fine and able to regain my full strength after half an hour."

Garen estimated and thought to himself.

Chapter 90: Adverse Circumstance 2

"Collin, tell me exactly what happened at White Cloud Gate." Garen turned around to speak to Collin.

"Okay!" The girl cleaned her sweaty forehead. Knowing the urgency in the situation, she tried her best to explain everything with brevity.

"Right now, Senior Sister betrayed the Gate, Second Senior Brother went missing, and Third Senior Brother could not withstand the situation. The people below our gate have always been ambitious. I'm afraid they might take this opportunity to carve up the gate.

"This is a terrible situation for us to be in! Master is still unconscious. Also, the Southern Twelve Gates had always supported each other in times of hardships, but now all our allies are paralyzed or have lost contact with us. It must be chaotic at the gate, so we need someone to stand up and take charge of it! Senior Brother, you must get back now and accept the responsibilities."

"Our enemies won't let this opportunity slip through their hands. We will surely meet some trouble on the way back!"

"We'll have to see how much trouble they could bring!" Garen's expression was cold.

At that instant, a group of masked men walked out from the side of the road. Their body sizes varied, but they all uniformly wore black bandana masks. There was a strong warrior's aura around them.

These masked men sneered and blocked the road. A skinny woman who was leading them stepped out with a smirk.

"Fei Baiyun, you didn't think there would be a day like this, did you?" The voice was dry and hoarse, and her body was young and curvy. She had a great body, but her voice was unpleasant to hear.

A little further ahead on the road, a few more people came out of the woods. They were in red and white clothing, and none of them were masked. A dozen young men followed behind them. All in all, they looked like a secret arts sect.

"The Crimson Scorpion Angela went first. Nice, let her test the water for us."

A short and chubby elderly man, whose nose had been sliced off, squinted his eyes. "We're not the only ones preying on White Cloud Gate. Countless sects are after the Southern Twelve Gates, since this is a fat piece of meat. If we don't act fast we might not even get a taste of the soup."

"We've waited patiently for so long. It's finally the time to take a slice of the cake. Fei Baiyun is still unconscious, leaving behind a disciple who is so tender we can squeeze water out of him. Two of their core disciples have gone missing as well."

"The White Cloud Gate does not have any chance to resist, we just have to watch out for others." Another woman dressed in white whispered.

"The Southern Twelve Gates suppressed us for all these years, this time we can finally get rid of them altogether!" The old man said with a chuckle. "Although we'll have to watch out for Fei Baiyun's last struggle."

"No problem, the Fighting Association's President is right behind us; he is waiting for Fei Baiyun." The woman sneered. "Our Jade Mountain Gate will take care of the others."

Garen sat on the carriage and carefully observed the road blockers. His eyes glanced through the woods on the side of the road. Who knew how many unknown threats were still hiding in the glooms.

"You guys keep going. I'll take care of them!" Garen's eyes turned cold and he jumped off the carriage without waiting for Collin's response.

He strode toward the woman in black mask up front.

"Give us Fei Baiyun..."

Shoo!

Garen didn't say a word. He simply jumped forward and brought his right arm down with a Shot Form.

The woman was swift; she dodged with a sidestep, and her hands ensnared Garen's arm. "I'll break this arm first!" She said cruelly as she infused all her force into her movement. However, just like entangling a steel beam, her arms couldn't move the opponent even an inch.

Garen's arms abruptly exerted a huge force and the woman was sent flying like a jute bag filled with grass. She was knocked into a dozen back flips on the ground, and ended up smashed into a tree trunk. She turned pale and cried out in pain, tightly covering her chest.

She was unable to speak a word at the moment.

Garen didn't stop to analyze the outcome of his attack. He charged straight at two machetes that were thrown at him. With a crackling sound the machetes broke into pieces, along with the bones of three masked men; they were blasted away and knocked out on the ground.

Garen's expression was indifferent. His arms expanded to both sides in Shot Form. He caught two masked men's hair and effortlessly pulled, resulting in two bloody scalps being torn off from their heads. The men screamed in pain, staggering.

Bang!

Along with an abrupt gunshot, Garen felt a small pain in his stomach. He lowered his head and saw a copper bullet bouncing off of his skin and it fell to the ground in a series of tinkling sound.

At that moment, everyone froze astonished.

"Even bullet can't... pierce through his skin!!" Someone said in a shaken voice. The men in masks started backing off, horrified.

Garen whipped over a masked man on his right with his foot. A cracking sound came from the target's waist while his spine bent back in an unnatural shape as he rolled back on the ground. There was no sound from where he was lying down.

Garen charged at the masked woman under the tree. He didn't need to look at her to know she was the one who shot him.

He used the Step Form and, with a huge thud noise, the woman's magnificent breasts blew up from under his foot, while a huge hole appeared in the middle of her chest. She died instantly without a whimper. The pistol in her hand slid to the side.

Garen picked up the pistol and threw it into the carriage, then turned around and sprinted deep into the woods.

The astonishment had not vanished from the faces of the short elderly man and the woman in white, their disciples spread out into a defensive fan shape. Garen was already charging at them without any emotion.

Bam Bam Bam!

With three consecutive thuds, Garen barbarically knocked three disciples into the air. The disciples hit either had their spine broken or exploded into flesh and blood under the impact. Suddenly no one else dared to stand in front of him.

The short and chubby old man pulled out a short cutlass. His hands glowed blue as he swiftly looped around to Garen's side and fiercely stabbed at Garen's waist.

The woman in white sneered. She wore a silver bladed-knuckle on one of her hands, and thus she ripped her fist through the air, attacking Garen. The fist broke into three different fist doppelgangers attacking Garen's face, chest, and stomach at the same time.

Their attacks hit Garen simultaneously, but other than scraping off some of his clothes, they were completely ineffective. The two were both shocked, pushing down their toes in a hurry to try to escape, but it was too late.

"Double Shot Form!"

Garen closed his eyes, completely ignoring their attacks, and flicked his fingers as they swept past the two opponent's necks.

With two crisp sounds of impact, the old man and the woman both slipped past Garen.

Without looking behind, Garen once more charged deeper into the forest.

The two stood in a stupor, a thin line emerged from their neck. Their heads fell from their necks with a thrilling sound of flesh and bones breaking. Blood streamed from their veins while the bodies slowly hit the ground.

After gazing for a few seconds, their disciples all screamed in terror.

"This is a massacre!"

Collin and the crew, who were still on the carriage, watched with faces pale as Garen rampaged through the enemies, anyone who dared stand in the way was blown up into a blood mist, like an air balloon. He was unstoppable.

Simon and the disciples from other sects were astonished; the gore and blood scared a few girls.

"Let's hurry out of here, we are just burdens if we stay!" Simon realized something and whipped the horse hard to speed up the carriage.

"This level of strength... Senior Brother Garen is so strong!!" The leaders of other two sects, the silver-haired youngster Rampas accelerated as well. He held down the urge to vomit and exclaimed in an envious tone.

"Senior Brother Rampas, are we safe now?" A cute little girl asked while covering her mouth, her face was ghastly pale."

"Not entirely. Even though Senior Brother Garen from White Cloud Gate could protect us for a while, we must get back to our own gates later. You have to take charge as the Senior Sister of your sect."

"The Southern Twelve Gates are in chaos, and our masters have been badly injured." Rampas looked decisive as he glanced at the White Cloud Gate disciples in front of them."

Garen raced into the woods toward two slim silhouettes with their hands in their back.

One of them was a middle-aged man, wearing a tight black leather suit with the word "Fighting" printed on his right chest. His two hands rested on a pair of dark scimitars.

The other man looked aged and was wearing a loose black training suit, with a short white staff on one hand. The shock from the carnage only left his face when he saw Garen approaching.

"White Cloud Gate's Garen! The strongest of the Southern Twelve Gates! Let's see how much stamina you have!" The old man stepped back, as the middle-aged man came forward to face Garen.

Shoo shoo shoo!

Three consecutive blades swung at Garen's face, two of them aimed at his eyes.

The man in black suit was ruthless, swinging out three attacks right at the moment he was about to run into Garen. His right knee concurrently tackled at Garen's lower abdomen with a spiked kneecap that appeared suddenly on his knees.

"Chain Swing Form!"

Garen's upper body spun around like a spinning top. His arms flexed out like the propellers of a helicopter, bouncing back the scimitars and cleaving at the opponent's neck.

The spin simultaneously dodged the knee attack.

Bam Bam!

The three blades were knocked flying, but the man's strength was surprising as he only took one step back before he continued his attack by clawing at Garen's face.

"Heh!" Garen recklessly punched at the attacker, ready to trade blow for blow.

He closed his eyes and felt his steel-hard eyelids blocked the opponent's clawing attack.

Clang!!

A sound of metal clashing came as his fist came in contact with the enemy's chest; something hard was blocking his fist.

Garen sneered and suddenly pushed down again with even more power.

Crackle!! Pui!!

After a loud thud, he heard the middle-aged man spitting blood.

He opened his eyes and saw his enemy embedded into the tree trunk. A large piece of a metal breastplate was ripped inward, showing a bloody hollow that pierced the body and sunk deep into the tree.

Without resting for a second, Garen charged directly toward the other man.

"Cain!! The breastplate was pierced through!! How is that possible?"

The old man was sweating while holding his short staff. He raised his arms and the staff turned into many shadows that surrounded Garen's upper body.

However, the strength and the speed from the attack was far worse than the ones from the middle-aged man. Apparently the man was old and way past his prime shape.

Garen used a Dash Form, raising his fist and smashing into the old man's chest.

Shoo!

A beam of silver light dashed in front of him, stopping his attack.

Garen stood still and squinted his eyes.

"You again?"

Tenstar Ni walked out from behind a tree with a smile on his face and a silver sword in his hand.

"You can't kill him. He is the president of the Fighting Association, an ally of our Celestial Circle Gate."

"Isn't the Celestial Circle Gate worrying too much about other people's problems?" Garen's voice was low and his face turned cold.

"Too much or too little, that's our problem. Do you want to try my sword?" Tenstar Ni's eyes glowed with ruthless light. As he stared at Garen's neck, a mysterious aura emerged from his body.

Garen could feel that threat.

"Celestial Circle Gate ..." He controlled his rage and turned around. He had younger disciples to take care of back in White Cloud Gate, so he could not afford to keep fighting here. Up until now he had not used his secret arts to inflate his muscles, because he wanted to save his stamina for the real danger later. The true threat had yet to come.