

Alchemy 121

Chapter 121: Fog

Alex found himself unable to come up with any other topics to talk about at the moment so he decided to stay quiet. The rest of the journey was filled with nothing but the sound of wind hitting their ears.

Alex just took in the feeling of flying, something that was impossible to do in real life, and got happy. It took them about 2 hours just to fly to their destination.

Not only was the destination deep into the southern forest, but it was also far away from the scarlet city, so they had to take a much longer path than what others would have.

"Here we are," said Wen Cheng as he looked ahead.

Alex stuck out his neck to the side to see what was in front. To his shock, in the middle of the unending forest, there was a massive area filled with fog that was very unusual for the forest.

'Why is there fog in the middle? Is there a body of water nearby?' he wondered.

As he got near, however, his body shook. 'This!!' he was truly shocked this time. The fog he was seeing in front of him, wasn't actually a fog made out of water vapor. It was actually a fog made up of purely Qi.

'How much Qi will I be able to gather if I cultivate here?' he wondered. Just before they reached the fog, however, the group of 7 dropped to the ground.

"This is the place I talked about, Yu Ming. Ahead is a land filled with Qi, so the vegetation that grows here should be mostly alchemy ingredients. I as well as a few other elders come here once in a while to gather some ingredients, but we don't have a lot of knowledge about the ingredients, so we only take what we know is an ingredient and leave the rest to grow. "

"Thankfully, people don't visit the southern forest a lot, and this location is very unknown." Wen Cheng said. He took out a handful of empty storage bags and handed it to Alex.

"Take these bags. You will go inside to collect the ingredients. This area is safe, so you don't have to worry about monsters here at all. I don't know how long it will take you, but just go at your own pace. Us elders will go around the fog to protect you from monsters just in case they come from the outside."

"Still, if there are some inside, your escape technique should be enough for you."

"Alright, go now and gather everything you can. At least fill all of these storage bags, you should be able to do that, right?" Wen Cheng answered.

"If there are indeed ingredients inside, then that should be no problem," Alex said.

"Alright, go and do your task. We will do ours."

Wen Cheng said as he gestured for Alex to leave. The other elders also started to walk around the fog to the other side of the special place.

Alex walked just a little bit into the fog and he felt like he was getting cleaned with all the Qi. As they touched his body, he realized that it wasn't just normal Qi.

The Qi was a mixture of different elemental Qi. He could feel all of the different elements in the air. He really wanted to cultivate right now, but he didn't. He needed to get to work right now.

He made sure he had enough storage bags to fill up all of these ingredients. Other than the 5 his master had given him, he also had a few storage bags himself. Due to always having to store so many ingredients and monster corpses, he had gotten quite a few when he had the time.

"Oh, what's this?" he thought curiously when he found a talisman inside one of his storage bags.

"hmm... oh, this is the paper slip master gave me yesterday. I can't believe I completely forgot to read it," he thought.

-There are spirit cleansing lilies inside. If you do pick them up, do not let the elders know about it. Tell them you weren't confident about it and left it behind. They shouldn't be able to tell the difference between the ones left behind. -

"Oh!" Alex's eyes started shining when he realized spirit cleansing lilies inside. "So, they aren't as rare as I thought... or this place is something special."

"Did master make himself and the elders purposefully stay outside so that they don't see me pick up the lilies? I don't see another reason why." Alex thought as he looked in the surrounding.

He sent out his spiritual sense to the max without overstraining himself. The limit for that was still 20 meters. He then activated his Immortal Concealing technique and used the Veiled light technique to completely hide his body and aura.

After that, he got to work. He didn't even care what any of the ingredients were. As long as he knew them, he picked them up. Leaves, fruit, flower, root, vine, bark, thorns, stalks, stem, branch. Whatever he could find, he would pick it up.

He felt the energies the ingredients gave off and wondered, "That's quite a bit of energy. Are these about 100 years old?"

While he still wasn't experienced enough to tell the age accurately, he could vaguely guess how old an ingredient was based on their concentration of energy. And he was sure these were some of the oldest ingredients he had come into contact with. Even the alchemy gardens in Hong Wu sects which were about 70-80 years old didn't have ingredients with energies this thick.

He kept gathering many ingredients and came across many that he could even use himself. However, the best part about this was that most of the ingredients here were for pills that used True Qi. He knew about 40 different types of True rank pill recipes, and out of them, he had found about 25 main ingredients and a lot of other secondary and tertiary recipes.

This place was a treasure trove of ingredients and he was enjoying every single minute he was in here.

Chapter 122: A Tiresome Task

"Has master never been to the alchemy gardens of Hong Wu Sect?" Alex wondered as he looked at the time on the clock. It had been 3 pm already. He had been working for the last hour and he wasn't even close to clearing a fourth of this garden.

This was after having continuously used his spiritual sense and Qi manipulation at Bone tempering the 8th realm. By now he had made enough pills and also worked at the alchemy garden long enough, where even diverting his attention into 10 different things at once was considerably easy for him.

"Can I log out here? I hope there is no problem with that." Alex needed to log out to get some food but was worried at the consequences of leaving in such an open area.

He knew that his body didn't disappear when he logged out, so it was imperative he was in a safe spot when he logged out.

"Urghh... Whatever. Master and the elders are looking after me. All I can do now is hope that I don't end up losing my concealment techniques when I log out. If I can keep them active, that would be great." Saying that he logged out.

After a few minutes, he logged back in. He looked at himself and was surprised.

"Oh, wow. It's still active. So, we can log out and still have our techniques running? Wait, what about normal cultivation? Can I do that too?" Alex got unusually excited when he found that out. Only for it to excruciatingly disappear when he realized.

"I fall asleep when I cultivate, So I can't log out." He facepalmed when he remembered such a simple fact. "I can't believe I forgot about that."

After a few more seconds of self embarrassment, he got back to work. There were a lot more ingredients to gather and the time was short.

He walked around the place with his spiritual sense noticing all the ingredients and his Qi picking them all up.

"Man, there are so many ingredients here. It's like the alchemy gardens if it were left alone for a hundred years." He thought. Although one thing was confusing him still.

"Where is all of this Qi coming from though. Is the valley special? Does it have something that makes it special?" this was all he could think of as he collected the different ingredients.

About 2 hours later, he finally found a big group of Spirit Cleansing lilies. There were at least 10 flower beds in there, ready to be picked. Alex was both nervous and overjoyed at the view.

He didn't dare let himself pick them up using Qi manipulation. He went where they were and hand-picked them. After he was done picking them, he kept them in his own storage bag.

Once he was done, he was about to continue when he noticed something.

"What is that?" the thing he noticed wasn't with his vision, but with his spiritual sense. And the place he noticed wasn't around him, but rather below him.

A few meters ahead of him, there was a giant hole in the underground. It was probably more appropriate to call it a tunnel. The tunnel was about 5 meters in width and went on as far as he could sense.

He decided not to worry about what that was for now and continued with the ingredients.

It was 7 pm by the time he was done with 3 fourths of the place. 4 of the 5 storage bags his master gave him were already full and the 5 one was on its way to get full as well.

"I guess I will just keep the rest in mine," he thought. After that, he logged out. Coming back about half an hour later, he was truly surprised to see his concealment techniques still active.

"Well, even if I can't cultivate, I can at least hide in open areas and won't have to look for a safe space when I log out now."

He went on to collect the last portions of the ingredients that were still remaining. After completely collecting them all within the next 2 hours, he decided to go back to his master.

As he was walking back, however, he once more came across those tunnels in the ground.

"These are in a different location from the previous one. Did someone dig them out? Or is this something like a plot hole that occurred on its own?"

The mystery was now too much for him to ignore. "Let me go and check," he said as he disappeared right where he was standing. He reappeared in the tunnel underground.

"I love teleporting like that," he said to himself. He started walking around the tunnel trying to learn how it was made.

"Everything is so circular. Doesn't look like it's something natural. Has to be something made by someone right?" he wondered. As he was walking, he came across something weird stuck on the ground.

It was a metal rod with some sort of weird markings on them. At the end of the rod was a triangular piece of... something that looked like a mixture of paper and cloth was attached.

"That's definitely man-made," he thought and picked it up. He kept on walking through the tunnel and found other metal rods just like this. These thin metal rods were numerous in numbers and were all over the place.

After gathering exactly 24 of these metal rods, he felt something change in the surrounding. It was almost like... the Qi that was gathered in the area was leaving.

"Was this what was causing the Qi to gather here?" he wondered as he looked at the metal rod. He tried recalling anything he had heard about these metal rods and finally realized. "Wait, these are formation flags, aren't they? That means the Qi gathering here was a result of formations as well."

He felt like he had discovered something really mysterious. As he walked, he decided to leave but kept walking just a little further.

It was then that he noticed something in the distance.

Chapter 123: Worm

'Hmm... what's that?' he walked a little further and saw the object in full clarity. He was expecting to see something that had to do with the formation that was laid down, but instead, it was a corpse.

And a very old one at that. The corpse's flesh had mostly rotted away, and all that was left was the skeleton. The clothes were also in tatters and the skeleton itself was pressed to the side of the tunnel.

"Was he buried here and only showed up when someone opened this tunnel? Or was he already here and whatever opened the tunnel pushed him to the side?" he wondered.

He walked closer to the corpse and looked at it. He didn't feel any disgust or awfulness when he looked at it. Instead, all he felt was sorry for the poor guy.

"Hmm..." he noticed a small slip of talisman on his hand. "What is that?" he wondered as he picked it out. He tried to read and see what it was but realized very soon that it wasn't a records talisman. It was a talisman that did something. As for what a dying man would've wanted to do, he was not sure.

He checked the corpse a little further and found 2 storage bags on him. One of the bags had a bunch of talismans that he guessed were similar to what he was holding. The second bag, however, surprised him. The second bag had plenty of wooden boxes. When he tried to penetrate his spiritual sense into the boxes, he realized that they were all actually full of Alchemy materials.

"Using Jade or Wooden boxes to protect the energy of the ingredients from diffusing is generally helpful, but I've never done it so myself since I use the ingredients pretty much instantly. It's nice to finally see someone do that for its correct cause."

He then looked up at the corpse and thought, "so this person was an alchemist?" suddenly, the ground started shaking.

"What's happening?" he got a little scared. The shaking got larger and larger until he was a giant worm come his way. The worm was quite slow, but it covered the whole tunnel, almost as if it was the one that made all of the tunnels.

Alex was still in his concealed form, so he didn't worry about the worm, but the aura the worm sent out was stronger than anything he had sensed yet. Not even either of his masters was as strong as this worm. That did scare him well.

Suddenly, the worm turned towards him. 'Can it see me?' Alex was surprised and his fear of the worm started to rise. But then, he saw that the worm had no eyes. In the first place, it shouldn't have been able to see him anyway since he was invisible.

"Unless..." a bad premonition appeared in his head. Suddenly, he rotated his Qi, until it came to his head and all the surrounding area started to light up. The worm sped up so fast towards him, that he almost fumbled. But at the last second, he managed to use Flickering Shadow to leave the underground and come back outside.

"Huff Huff... So, that thing was actually looking towards me through its sense of smell huh," he thought.

He watched the worm dance around searching for him, but since he was no longer there, it couldn't find him anymore. The worm then went away opposite to the direction it came from.

Finally, he looked up at his current surrounding. He saw that while the vegetation was still there, there were no more fogs in the surrounding. 'Is it because I took out those formation flags?' he wondered.

Now that the elder was probably searching for him, he deactivated his concealing technique and stopped using his invisibility.

He walked a little forward and saw an elder hurriedly coming his way. "Disciple are you alright?" he asked worriedly. The elder then immediately called the rest of the elders and sect leader.

"Yes, I am fine, elder." Alex simply answered. "Wen Cheng looked at his disheveled state and asked, "What happened? Did you manage to get all of the ingredients in there?"

"Aside from a few, I managed to get all," Alex said as he handed 4 full bags and 1 three-quarter full bag. The elders also got in close to look at the ingredients.

Wen Cheng sighed and asked, "You didn't get any Spirit Cleansing Lilies, did you?"

"No, master. Those are impossible; even for me." Alex said while shaking his head. "Alright then, let's return."

Wen Cheng flew off and took Alex along with him. It took them about 2 hours again to return back to the sect. They all landed in the sect leader's backyard.

"Alright, as previously mentioned, my disciple gets half of the ingredients. Do any of you oppose this?" Wen Cheng asked. Nobody there spoke a word of opposition. So, Wen Cheng took out an empty storage bag and filled it a bit. He then handed Alex 2 and nearly half full storage bags.

Alex was surprised. 'Why did master not give me the empty bag back in the special place? Did he intentionally do that?'

The elders took their portions and left without hesitation. Only after seeing the elders leave did Wen Cheng let out a big sigh. "While they are helpful, we are all fighting for the sect leader's position. So nobody wants to give the others a chance to one-up them. If I tried to openly help you, they would shut me down without question."

Alex finally understood. He took out 3 flowers from his bag and handed them to his master. "These should be enough, right master?" he asked.

"So you can get them. Little Mei wasn't lying. Oh god, I was so worried you couldn't do it. Good. Good. You keep one and try to unlock your spiritual sense as well." Wen Cheng said as he handed one back to Alex.

Alex felt warm seeing his master treat him so nicely. "Keep it, master, I already have some more." He said as he took out a few more of the Spirit Cleansing lilies.

"Alright. Go back to your house now. And unlock your spiritual sense." Wen Cheng said and sent him back during the night.

Chapter 124: Lucky

Alex walked back to his home in the dark. He quietly entered the home numbered 168. Thankfully, his master had registered him as someone who had left the sect, or else he would have lost his home today and would have to go somewhere in the outer sect to live.

He went on to stay in the bed and finally started to think about what had happened today. All those ingredients, the tunnels, the corpse, and the worm.

He took out 6 different bags from within him. After the 5 original bags were filled to the brim, he had used his own bags to collect them. As such, out of everyone today, he had got the most profit.

"This was way beneficial than the 3 days of break I took to gather ingredients in the southern forest."

He thought back to the day and shuddered as he remembered the worm again. "Just what was that? What cultivation was it to make me feel so physically scared?" he wondered. Due to the suddenness of the situation, he hadn't managed to look at the name of the worm or its cultivation.

"I doubt it would've worked. It would've probably said Mortal like it does for all beings with high cultivation base." He decided to not think about that for now and instead looked at the 2 storage bags he had gotten from the corpse.

One of them was full of talismans that he thought did something like that one talisman he was holding. The others had a bunch of ingredients in them.

He looked through the ingredients, and while he recognized all of them, barely any of them were useful for the pills he knew about. "That's odd. I have seen some ingredients that didn't align to a recipe, but not so many at once." He started wondering what other recipes might be out there that used these ingredients. And for them to behold on to using a wooden box, the owner really must've been worried about losing its energy.

He kept the bag and looked at the next one. He had already kept the original talisman the corpse was holding in his other bag, so this bag only had the other ones.

"Let's see what they are about." He took out a single talisman and tried to see what sort of ability it could have or if he could even find that out without trying.

However, when he used his spiritual sense to look at it, he realized something different. The talismans were recording talismans, unlike the other one.

"Hmm... it's a recipe?" he was shocked. The talisman was actually a recipe. He quickly read it all, and suddenly.

<Congratulation. You have learned the recipe for 'Heaven Profound Pill'>

Heaven Profound pill, according to the recipe, was a pill that helped people breakthrough from the True realm to the Saint realm. The most amazing thing about this pill was that it was actually a Saint Rank pill.

"What? A Saint rank pill's recipe?" he was stunned. He quickly started reading the other talismans. Almost all of the talismans were recording talismans, which had one of two things.

It either recorded a pill recipe or formation blueprints. "Was the one who set the formations in that place this guy?" Alex wondered.

He read through all of the talismans in about 2 hours of time. There was truly a lot of them. Unfortunately, only a handful of the talismans were Saint Rank pills. Still, getting to learn 8 Saint Rank pill recipes and over a hundred True Pills recipes was a chance that would rarely ever come by.

He also remembered about 20 different formation blueprints. But since he had no idea how formations worked, he didn't understand a single thing. Not that he wanted to.

He looked at the time and realized it was 2 am. He decided to cultivate for the rest of the night, when he suddenly realized, his face was still the same as when he ate that pill.

'How do I stop this effect?' he wondered. There weren't any abilities that canceled the pill's effect. He calculated the time and realized that his face would change back at around 4 am in the morning tomorrow. So, he still had over an entire day to go.

'Whatever,' he thought and simply started cultivating. Before he knew it, he was already in a trance state, falling unconscious due to the cultivation.

Early in the morning, a little past 6 am, Alex opened his eyes. He logged out to have his breakfast. As he got out, he saw a notification on his phone. It was from his cousin Hannah.

They hadn't met in a couple of weeks, so she wanted to take him to an amusement park today.

"An amusement park huh. I wonder how different it is from the fairs in the countryside," Alex thought out loud. The time set for the amusement park was around 11 am, so he could only go back to the game for 3 hours at most.

He went to have his breakfast and returned back to his room. While his other 3 roommates went back to the game, he had nothing to do in the game this morning, so he decided not to.

"Guess I won't do anything for this morning then." He went back to bed and tried to sleep, but the game was too good at making him rest well, so he couldn't even sleep.

"Arghh," he said as he started tossing and turning but couldn't sleep at all. So, he took out his phone and started surfing the Internet. "Should I go to the forum?" he wondered but decided not to. "I am already making money and am getting enough information from masters in the game. I don't see why I should spoil myself with other information instead. I want to play it the way the developers intended." Alex thought.

So, he opened up his go-to video hosting site to watch some new videos. On the recommended page, there was a new video released by Deva Corp explaining their latest capsules.

Chapter 125: Capsule Presentation

"Oh, are these the capsules Eric was talking about?" Alex thought as he clicked on the thumbnail. The video opened up to show a large capsule in the middle of the room and a man ready to talk.

"Welcome to the video everyone. Today is the first unveiling of the capsules for the ever-popular game Eternal Cultivation. And Deva corp has given me the honor and opportunity of being the person to introduce these capsules to you."

The man walked up to the capsule and talked as he put his hands on it.

"These bed-sized capsules are the latest products of Deva Corp. You can open these capsules like this and enter here. Once you are inside, you will have to put nothing on your head or body to be able to play. All you do, is you press this button right near your left hand and let the lid close."

The man showed everything one had to do to log in. It seemed pretty easy to Alex.

"As you guys know, Eternal Cultivation can recognize you as the same player no matter how many helmets you chance, this is the same. As long as you log in, you will end up with the same character."

The man moved to the front and started talking about the various other features of the capsule. Saying how fast it processed everything or how much more realistic the game would look now.

"Do you know what the best thing about this capsule is?" the man prompted a question to the camera.

"It is the fact that you won't have to leave the capsule to eat or drink or go to the bathrooms at all. The Deva Corp has managed to make it so that all of your normal bodily functions slow down when you enter the game."

"So all of you game addicts can go into the game without worrying about food or bathrooms ever again. However, Deva Corp still recommends you log out once a day to eat some food and do other things. Also, don't forget to exercise guys. I know you guys only sleep and don't exercise."

The man laughed as he was handed a piece of paper from the side.

"Here we have it, folks. The official numbers. This piece of paper contains the cost and the release date of these capsules. Even I do not know what information is inside, so you guys will know it along with

me," as he said that, he started to open the piece of paper very slowly to build suspense among his viewers.

"Oh, we have the date first. And it is going to be released in..." When Alex heard the date, he was surprised.

"That is around 2 weeks from now. Much closer than I had expected." Eric had mentioned it is about 3 weeks away, but it seemed that was not the case. The capsules would be here before they even knew it.

'Where would I even keep it if I got it?' he started to wonder. While the dorm room was big, it wasn't big enough to fit 4 capsules along with the beds and the closets. He stopped thinking about the problem for now and kept on watching the video.

The man further opened the page until it was fully opened.

"Hmm..." a sound of surprise came from the man. "This can't be." The man spoke out loud in shock as he kept on looking at the piece of paper. He slowly looked up at the camera with a face of incredulous and started talking.

"You won't believe me, folks. That is how good the price is." The man stopped talking to increase the suspense more.

"The capsule will be on sale with a cost of \$600. 600 dollars guys, 600 dollars. That's a steal if you ask me."

"However, that is not the best part about the price announcements. It would seem the rumors about us being able to return our VR helmets for a discount at the store were true. Depending on the time of the purchase of your helmets, these are the discount percentage you would get."

"To anyone who bought the VR helmet within the first two weeks of sales, you get a 50% discount while buying the capsule."

"To anyone who bought the VR helmet within the second 2 weeks of sales, you get a 60% discount."

"To anyone who bought the VR helmet within the last 2 weeks of sales, you get a 70% discount."

"As for those who can't wait for the capsule coming up in the next 2 weeks, you can just get a helmet and return it back for absolutely free for a whopping 80% discount."

"Guys, you can just go buy a helmet, play for two weeks, then return it back and get a capsule for 120 bucks. That's 20 bucks more than the original price for 2 weeks worth of playing. Go get it if you haven't right now."

"Honestly, with such advanced technology, I wonder why Deva Corp is still refusing to use them in sectors like education and health care. And instead, they just focus on the game."

The video ended soon after. 'Should I get it?' Alex started wondering. Just the fact that he wouldn't have to log out 4 times a day made the capsule worth it. With that, he could play a lot more and earn a lot more money. But, there was no place to keep the capsule.

VR Helmet was one thing, but he wasn't sure if the dorm even allowed its student to get something like a capsule inside.

"The other 3 want one as well. Even if the dormitory allows us, I don't see where we are supposed to keep them." Alex thought as he looked around. 4 capsules could fit, but then there would be no place to move around in the room.

He sighed and thought, "Now that I have money, should I just rent a room somewhere near the college?"

Chapter 126: Free Apartment

"You wanna ride that?" Hannah asked hesitantly while looking at a big Ferris wheel in front of her.

"Yeah, Hannah, let's ride that. Alex, you should ride that as well. Have you been on a Ferris wheel that big?" Hannah's friend, Vinny asked.

"No. We occasionally had a small one during the fairs, but those were like half the size of these," Alex said.

"Alright then, come on. It's my treat anyway," said Vinny as she dragged both of them along.

Vinny and Hannah were roommates that rented an apartment together. She had recently completed university, so she was leaving the city next week. So, as a sort of farewell party, she had decided to take Hannah to the amusement park. When she mentioned that she had a cousin in town that might also want to come to one, she had allowed Hannah to invite Alex.

Hannah's other friend that she used to live with had also completed university and had already left. While Hannah still had a few more months of study, so she was now going to be alone.

They got up on the Ferris wheel and started enjoying the experience as the Ferris wheel brought them up high. However, Alex didn't find the height scary at all.

'Is it because I am quite used to flying inside the game?' he wondered. Hannah seemed to be less phased by the height as well. While Vinny on the other hand was having the time of her life. Although he wasn't scared, he still enjoyed the experience of rapidly falling.

After 10 minutes, they came down of the Ferris wheel. Vinny took them to a lot of other sites in the amusement park. By the time they left the amusement park, it was already past 3 pm.

Vinny took the two to a restaurant to get something to eat. There, they started talking once more.

"Where are you at in EC, Alex?" Vinny asked while taking a bite out of her fries.

"EC... Eternal Cultivation? How did you know I played it?" Alex asked with a surprised face.

"Everyone plays it, haha. Besides, I think I remember Hannah mentioning something about it." Vinny said as she laughed.

"Yeah, Alex. You didn't mention last time where you were at. What continent are you in?" Hannah asked.

"Continent?" Alex said with puzzlement. "I don't really know what a continent is, but I'm in a place called Scarlet City in the Crimson Empire."

Hannah thought for a bit and said, "I haven't really heard about any empires called Crimson Empire in the game. Must be a different continent from the East then."

Vinny suddenly spoke as she thought, "Ah, I think I have heard about that Empire in the forums. The players say that none of the NPCs know what continent they are in. But, from their description of the place, it's full of trees and greenery, so I think it's not the northern continent that is completely frozen or the southern continent that is said to be barren for the most part, right? So, it has to be the western continent."

"Oh, the Western continent? I heard that it gets the least amount of players for some reason. Also, the NPCs from there have a very weak cultivation base" Hannah said

"Speaking of that, what cultivation base do you have, Alex?" Vinny asked.

"Oh, I am only at Bone Tempering 8th realm. I should reach Bone tempering 9th realm soon." Alex said.

"Huh?" Hannah exclaimed from the side. "Hasn't it been nearly a month since you started playing? How are you not even in the organ tempering realm yet? Don't you have a good cultivation method or money to buy pills?"

"Oh no, I'm fine on that aspect. My method is good. And also, I am an alchemist so I don't have to worry about pills." Alex said.

"Then why are you so slow?" Hannah asked. She seemed to be unusually frustrated for some reason.

"Oh, people in the game told me that it wasn't good to break through very fast. It destabilizes your cultivation base and as a result, your later realms become weaker, or breaking through gets harder." Alex answered.

"I haven't heard of anything like that," said Vinny. "I don't think the forums have something about it either."

"No, I think he is correct. Breaking through too fast does make you weaker. Now that I think about it, I might have been too fast as well. No wonder I am so weak compared to the other cultivators. I will have to make sure my cultivation base stabilizes now," Hannah said as she pondered a little.

They talked about a few other things but nothing important until the conversation shifted towards the capsules that were going to be released soon.

"Ah, I want one right now. It looks so good," said Vinny.

"Yeah. Hey Alex, are you going to get one? Or you can use my helmet instead," said Hannah.

"Oh, no sister. I can't have that. I have earned some money by selling pills. I will use them," said Alex. "Although, I'm not sure if I can even use it in the first place. My dorm might not allow it. If I want a capsule, I will have to leave the dorm."

"Hmm" Vinny hummed as she realized something. Hannah and Alex seemed to suddenly realize it as well. "Woah, you guys can stay together then. That works perfectly, right?" Vinny exclaimed.

Alex thought that was a good idea as well.

"Oh wow. I can't believe I didn't think of that before. I was dreading that I will have to leave the apartment or somehow find other people. But, if you come to live with me, my problems of being alone will be solved."

"Also, it seems you can solve your problem of not being able to play will be solved as well." Hannah said.

"I think that's a fantastic idea, sister. I will talk with the dorm staff tomorrow about my leaving in a week. And I will also call my parents."

Afterward, Hannah and Vinny walked back to their room, while Alex quickly returned back to his dorm room. It was a little late, so he didn't immediately log in. Instead, he called his parents and let them know about the situation. They were happy to hear that he would stay with his cousin.

Soon, he went and had his dinner. Only then did he finally log in for the night.

Chapter 127: Late on a Saturday

Alex opened his eyes inside his brightly lit room. He tried to remember what he was doing today before leaving the game.

"Ah, that's right. Those talismans. I learned all the recipes and blueprints. It's amazing how I can remember everything in the game, yet in the real world, I can't even remember to call my parents." He laughed as he said that to himself.

"Hmm..." suddenly, he noticed something. Something was vibrating close to him. When he tried to look around for what it was, he realized that it was coming from one of his numerous storage bags.

As he looked into the bag to see what was making so much of a ruckus, he realized that it was his badge. He took out the badge numbered 168 and saw that it was not only vibrating but also flashing as well.

'What's going on?' he thought as he sent his spiritual sense into the badge. "What?!!" he exclaimed loudly as he realized there were numerous notifications in his badge, and all of them were similar.

-Number 182 has registered a match with you. You have 1 hour to fight-

-You have forfeited the match. Your number is now 182-

-Number 198 has registered a match with you. You have 1 hour to fight-

-You have forfeited the match. Your number is now 198-

.

.

.

-Number 873 has registered a match with you. You have 1 hour to fight-

-You have forfeited the match. Your number is now 873-

-Number 943 has registered a match with you. You have 1 hour to fight-

Alex was really surprised now. "Oh no. Today is a Saturday. I forgot you had to fight every hour on a Friday and Saturday." He looked at the time and realized there was only an hour and a half left before the fightings were over.

He hurriedly ran out of the house. He put the badge on the wooden panel and walked out after the door opened. As soon as he was out, the badge suddenly showed a change.

The number of the badge suddenly changed from 168 to 873. "It can do that too?" Alex was surprised. He didn't give it another thought, however. He started running towards the sect crater and reached it in less than 10 minutes.

However, by the time he was there, his hour was over, and his badge had changed from number 973 to 943.

He immediately went onto a queue in the fighting hall and waited for his turn to register. As soon as his turn came, he registered a fight with the same person with badge 168.

He had made it in time. There were still quite a few minutes before it was 8 o'clock, so even if the man didn't choose to fight and waited out his hour-long break, Alex would still win.

He calmed down a little and started looking at the fights going on all around him. It was almost as if the entire sect was down here in the crater and they were all fighting today.

"Is this how the Fridays and Saturdays are normally spent in Tiger Sect? No wonder they are so much better at fighting." He wondered.

The entire thing looked like a festival. The number of people here was way higher than the amusement park they went to today could ever hope to have.

Finally, after waiting for nearly an hour, his opponent arrived. Alex walked up to the stage and handed his badge to the elder. He then turned around to see a male disciple wearing inner sect clothes. He had a clean-shaven face with short black hair. The most interesting thing about the man was that he was in the same cultivation realm as him. The bone tempering 8th realm.

'The last guy I fought who had the badge 168 was in the 6th realm. Yet, somehow he who came from below has higher cultivation? That shouldn't be possible.'

The guy on the other hand had a confused look. "You don't match the description either," he said to Alex.

"What?" he was confused.

"Hmm... I am pretty sure the person I was supposed to fight was a tall guy with an oval face and long hair. Your face is neither oval nor is your hair long. Is that guy still in hiding? I thought he would come to get his badge back by now." the man said.

"What do you— " suddenly Alex remembered. 'My face is still different? Ah, that's right. It's supposed to go away after another 8 hours only.' He finally remembered that the effect of the Face Changing pills was still there.

'Does that mean this person came to fight me specifically? I don't remember getting into trouble with someone like him,' he thought.

"Did you want to specifically fight this guy or what? You seem to have some sort of purpose?" Alex asked.

"Uh, yeah. Sigh. Brother Huo even specifically asked me to beat him up. It seems I will have to return back with the news of failure. Urghh... now I'm frustrated. Why did you have to go and take that guy's spot huh." The man started with an annoyed look, then got frustrated and finally, got angry.

'So, it was that Huo Tu guy again. Is his ego so fragile that just one deny and he sent his entire collection of lackeys behind me? What will that even get him? He is not even the one taking his revenge.' Alex started frowning too as he thought that.

"Arhh... Screw this. If I can't beat him, then I will beat you up. You dared to register a fight against me huh, see how I torture you during this battle." The man suddenly took out a saber. It looked fancy and was definitely a high-grade weapon.

Alex got a little apprehensive as well. He deliberated between taking out the normal sword or taking out the True ranked sword. In the end, he went with the normal sword since he still had to furnish his techniques.

The elder then brought out his hands forward and screamed, "Fight!!"

Chapter 128: Battle

'He is after me?'

'Huo Tu still hasn't given up on beating me?'

'How did he even get to fight me?'

'Was he below me in the ranking? That can't be.'

'Did he purposefully got a lower badge number so he could challenge me?'

These and other various thoughts suddenly disappeared from Alex's head as soon as he heard the elder start the match. The man didn't seem the least bit fearful towards Alex.

'He can't see my cultivation base, so he is ignoring the danger.' He thought.

The man wielding the saber suddenly brought it to the side and made a giant slash horizontally that sent out energy towards Alex. The color of the man's sword was brown in color, so the element of the attack must've been earth aligned as well.

Alex sent out the second sword strike of Elusive Heavenly sword. He channeled his Qi into the sword and a green light was produced, which he sent flying towards the incoming brown light.

BOOM

A violent explosion of energies rang out in the middle of the stage. Alex took this opportunity to use his Fluctuating Friction Dance to get closer to the man. The man seemed to have the same idea, so he too came close to it.

However, unlike Alex, he couldn't see through the smoke. Alex managed to take him by surprise. With a swing of the sword, he hit the man right on the side of his chest, sending his entire body flying. With his current strength, the man's ribs must've been broken.

Alex fell back and waited for the elder to call off the battle. But the order to stop fighting never came. His opponent didn't falter either.

The man with the saber slowly got up from the ground and looked at Alex as he gnashed his teeth together. "Don't think you are amazing just because you managed to hit me," the man started shouting.

'What is going on? I clearly hit him?' Alex thought as he sent his spiritual sense inside the man to check his ribs, but suddenly, he noticed something.

Inside the yellow Tiger Sect robe, the man was wearing something else as well. Something that was hard and brown in color.

'An armor artifact?' Alex was surprised. This was the first time he had seen someone wear one outside of that blue armor in the auction.

'Can it be as good as the one in the auction? No way right?' he started questioning himself. 'Even though he didn't get harmed, he should have still been hurt. Dammit! I could finish the fight at once if I could use Heaven's impact, or the Flickering Shadows technique. Hell, he wouldn't last a minute if I went invisible.'

Alex started preparing for his second attack. He used Smiting Blade to charge up his blade with yellow light. And then, he dashed forward.

The man showed a little fear when he saw Alex move. He had severely underestimated his opponent and his body hurt like hell. His earth armor was supposed to block attacks from anyone under the Organ Tempering realm. Even Organ tempering 1st realm cultivators found it hard to do damage to him when he had his armor on.

As soon as the man saw Alex closing in on him, he used a weird technique. Suddenly, all of his body started producing a crisscross pattern of brown lines.

Alex was surprised at the change and also the fact that the man was doing nothing to dodge the attack. This time the sword hit him right in the chest, but the man didn't move a bit. In fact, he didn't even show a single reaction to the attack.

'Damn! A defensive technique?' he thought. Not only did the man have armor, but he also had a defensive technique.

'What else does he have?' Alex sent out a relentless set of attacks that forced the man to keep his defensive technique up for as long as possible. And Alex knew that wouldn't be so long.

'Let me see how long you can last like this,' Alex thought as he kept on hitting the man for a while. However, the man's defense didn't go down.

The man too started swinging his saber at him. Alex had no problem dodging that. Soon, it became a close combat fight between a sword and a saber. The man's saber arts were good, but they weren't able to hit Alex thanks to his amazing dodging ability.

The man started to run out of Qi as he constantly used his defense arts. "God damn you-" he couldn't even finish his sentence as Alex's attacks started getting faster.

'Is this all he can handle? Guess I expected too much of him. It's not like he is my master of anything.'

Suddenly, the man leaped backward, creating a distance among them. He landed right at the edge of the stage. "Damn it. I can't believe you forced me to use it," said the man as he started channeling his Qi.

Brown Qi flowed into the saber as he prepared one more attack. The saber slowly left the man's arm as it started to spin in midair. He made some weird gestures as he sent the saber flying towards Alex in a blink and you miss its speed.

BOOM

An explosion, louder than the first one occurred. Dust rose up, blinding everyone in and out of the stage. The elder got a little startled. He had expected the other disciple to block it with his own attack, but for some reason, he didn't.

"Hey, Are you alright," the elder shouted from the side with a bit of nervousness. The dust was still high, so he swiped his hands sending away the dust from the air on the stage.

"Yeah, I am alright," Alex's voice came from the other side. When the elder finally turned his head to where the sound came from, He saw Alex standing near the unconscious body of the other disciple.

'What happened?' he was surprised. Alex's clothes seemed a little roughed up, but overall he was okay. Alex walked up to the elder to take his badge and simply walked away, leaving the elder and the crowd in stun.

Chapter 129: Senior Brother

Alex looked at the badge numbered 168 and kept it in his storage bag.

"Argghh..." he softly cried in pain. "Goddammit that hurt," he said as he held his left arm that he was sure was broken even without looking at it. Although it hadn't looked like it, he had taken quite a bit of damage.

He took out a Common Healing pill of 38% harmony and ate it. Slowly, he felt the energy from the pill dissolve in his stomach and move all over his body as it healed what was harmed. His broken arm quickly got fixed as the energy washed over the left arm. He felt a bit of energy disappear when it reached his wound, but most of it still continued onward.

<Sun God's Divine body disintegrates everything>

<Common Healing Pill's energy aligns with your spiritual roots>

<You have obtained 26,000 Qi>

"Ah... that's much better." He said in relief as the pain went away. "I probably should have used the Flickering Shadow technique, but I don't want to reveal it yet. Thankfully, I learned the Jade Skin technique."

Jade Skin technique, a defensive technique, was one of the 7 techniques that Wen Cheng had brought for him. Although the name of the technique contained Jade, it had no elemental alignment to the Earth element or any elements for that matter.

When used, the Jade Skin technique would increase the defensive capability of the cultivator's skin allowing them to block attacks up to 2 realms higher. But even then, the bone in his arm was broken.

"That man's saber must've at least been a Common Heaven rank artifact to damage by bones through the Jade Skin." Alex had blocked off most of the energy of the saber, but the saber itself had damaged him quite a bit. He had taken the opportunity to dash forward at the time and knock out the unprepared opponent.

"Do I go to master's today as well?" he thought. In the end, he decided to just go. If not needed, he would simply return back to his home.

"Ah, you're here." He heard a sound before he even reached the training facility. "Hmm... why can't I see you thought?" Wen Cheng said as he walked towards him from around the corner.

Alex dropped his invisibility and showed himself to Wen Cheng. He curiously looked at Wen Cheng and asked, "Did you unlock spiritual sense, master?"

"Oh yes. It's all thanks to you. Hmm... why were you invisible just then? Is that a sort of technique?" he asked.

"Yes. It's a technique I learned a few weeks ago." He simply said as he walked towards the training facility.

"Okay, what ranking are you now? Did you improve at all?" Wen Cheng asked as he also went to the training facility.

"Uhhh..." Alex was a little stumped as to what he could say right now. "I... spent the entire day cultivating my spiritual sense master. I only fought one match to get back my badge." He decided to lie a little.

"Oh, you have a spiritual sense too? How many lilies did you use?" he asked.

"Huh?" Alex got a little surprised. "How many? Don't you only need one lily to unlock Spiritual Sense? Why would I use more than one?" he asked.

"Oh, is that what the records in Hong Wu Sect say? Haha," Wen Cheng gave a hearty laugh and followed it by saying, "No. While it is true that you require one to unlock your Spiritual sense. Using more, you can increase your spiritual sea and thus improving your spiritual sense."

Alex was surprised. "Thank you, Master. For telling me about it."

"It's alright. I have already used 2 and given 1 to your senior sister. I don't know how many you have, but if it's possible, save one for your senior brother as well. He might want it as well?" Wen Cheng said.

"Senior brother? I have one?" Alex said in surprise.

"Hmm... he didn't introduce himself to you? But he should have already met you. He became an elder a few years ago, and is currently working in the sect as the leader of the guards," said Wen Cheng.

"Leader of guards? Him? He is my senior brother?" Alex asked with a surprise.

"Yeah. I even gave him the sword to pass along to you. That damn boy should have introduced himself. Anyway, if you can save some lilies, save one for him too," said Wen Cheng as he walked into the training facility.

"By the way, why haven't you taken off your changed appearance yet?" he asked.

"I don't know how to, so I have been wearing it for now. It should wear off in 7 hours though," said Alex.

"I see. I thought you alchemists would know about reverting the changes, but it seems I was wrong. Or maybe 2 weeks just isn't long enough for you to learn it. As Ma Rong about it when you enter. For now, let's proceed with the training. Since we missed yesterday, you can take a new book today out of these 4." Wen Cheng said as he brought the 4 books out from his storage bag.

Of the 4 books, one was a defense technique, while the others were offensive techniques. Alex decided to choose an offensive one today. He didn't have any offensive technique that he couldn't use without his sword, so he decided to learn one that didn't require a sword.

It was a metal-aligned fist technique that could be used from a long-distance away. He happily learned the book for the rest of the night and went back to his home at 3 am.

He took out a Spirit Cleansing Lily and tried it to see if it could indeed increase his spiritual sea just as the master said. He looked at the red flower in his hand. 'They are never the same color, are they?' he slowly closed his eyes and started to cultivate. Soon, he fell into a trance and went unconscious.

Chapter 130: Battle of the minds

A red spot of light started floating from the brightly lit red flower in Alex's hands. They slowly entered his body, mixing into his bloodstream through his lungs, and went up to his brain. There, the little spots of lights started merging with the already available spiritual sea.

Little by little, the spiritual sea started to expand. By the end, the flower was completely gone, and the spiritual sea had nearly doubled in size.

Near 7 am in the morning, Alex opened his eyes. He looked down at his hands and realized that the flower was no longer there. "Did I use it?" he wondered. He sent out his spiritual sense to see how far he could reach with it. To his disappointment, it was still at 20 meters.

"But the spiritual sea has clearly gotten bigger. Why can't I expand my spiritual sense then?" he wondered. He tried different things like concentrating on multiple objects, sending out the spiritual sense as far as he could, and trying to deplete it to see how fast the sea would reduce.

'Hmm...' he hummed as he realized something. While his ability to concentrate on multiple things was still the same and the maximum distance he could stretch was still 30 meters, he could now keep the spiritual sense going on for double the previous time. Basically, his amount of spiritual sense had doubled.

'Oh wow, that means I don't really have to worry about it ending, huh,' he thought. Suddenly, he also realized, "Does that mean I can use Heaven's Impact 8 different times instead of just four times now?" he wondered. Unfortunately, he didn't have anyone he could try it on.

After checking his spiritual sense and spiritual sea for a little more, he decided to leave for breakfast. After half an hour or so, he finally returned back to the game.

As soon as he returned, he shouted "status". His status window appeared in front of him allowing him to view his current amounts of Qi.

"Enough to breakthrough once more, huh. I should be good enough to break through now." As he said that, he hit [Breakthrough].

<Congratulations. You have broken through to 'Bone Tempering: 9th Realm'>

[Player Name: Yu Ming

Cultivation: Bone Tempering 9th Realm (1,000,000 Qi : 100%) [Breakthrough]

Body: Sun God's Divine Yang Body

Talent: God

Spiritual Roots: 5 elements Yin-Yang roots

Cultivation Method: Starry Sky Qi Absorption Method

Qi: 219,588

]

"Urghh... it's going to take forever to break through if I just use the cultivation method. I will have to resort to eating pills and cores now." Alex said as he shook his head. The upcoming breakthroughs were going to take forever, but with the right pills and cores, that shouldn't be a problem.

He reached into his bag and took out a monster's core. It was from a monster with the cultivation of Bone Tempering 9th realm, the same as his. He looked at it and ate it.

<Sun God's Divine Yang Body disintegrates everything>

<The monster core's element aligns with your spirit root>

<You have gained 340,000 Qi>

"Sigh. That's barely any. I will have to eat 2 more of these just to have enough to level up. Thankfully, my senior sister gave me a lot so I can just use them." He thought himself lucky when he realized he wouldn't have to waste days on end, just sitting in one place, cultivating.

He reached back into his storage bag and took out another core. This time, it was the core of a monster in the 1st realm of Organ tempering. Just like the last time, he put the core into his mouth and swallowed it.

Rawr!!

A beastly scream rang inside of him. He saw the silhouette of a monster with 8 legs and 2 horns that liked to crawl around like an alligator. The beast's roar started creating turbulences in his head as the spiritual sea started splashing around.

Alex suddenly found himself in another place. He tried to look around with his spiritual sense and realized he couldn't use it. So, he simply just looked around. It didn't take him long to realize he was inside his mind floating on top of the dark and cold-looking spiritual sea.

The only thing he could see around was himself with no clothes on, the sea itself, and a weird-looking figure up ahead. It was the figure of the same alligator. It was somehow in his head as well.

The alligator came lunging towards him with all of its 8 legs and tried to impale him with its 2 horns. Alex instinctively reached to his side to take out his sword and remembered that he didn't have his storage bags with him.

"Sh*t," he shouted. The alligator was still quite far away as it seemed to be very slow for some reason.

'Is it slow, or am I just fast?' Alex wondered. Since he had no weapons, he could only hit it with his arms and legs. And he had just learned the perfect technique for that.

The technique was called the Iron Fist Punch and allowed one to send out a punch with massive energy behind it. Being a heaven-grade technique, it was not something the opponents could easily ignore.

Alex brought his arms to a fist and out of nowhere, his fist started glowing yellow. He simply punched and a massive yellow fist-shaped energy flew out from his arms. It flew directly towards the alligator and hit it squarely in the head.

"Take that," Alex said as his first proper usage of the fist technique had landed. However, when he saw the Alligator moving again, he was surprised.

The alligator seemed to be a little hurt, but it still had a lot of fight in it. "Goddammit," Alex said as he went forward to accept the fight. Surprisingly, he realized that he could use all the techniques without care for Qi as they seemed to not use any.

He sent out punches after punches with the Iron Fist Punch and used the Elusive Heaven Technique to dodge the alligator's attack. The only thing he couldn't do in his mind was conceal himself and use his spiritual sense.

After a while of tumultuous fighting, he finally managed to beat the alligator and with a final Iron Fist Punch, killed it.