

Alchemy 1351

Chapter 1351: The Pill's Effect

The two monarchs finally walked out of their corners moving toward each other in the center.

"Congratulations on finishing early," Alex said as he arrived next to the Emperor who had a weird look on his face.

"You managed to finish as well," the Emperor said. "I thought you were going to fail."

"Why would I have failed?" Alex asked. "Because of the ingredients, you gave me? No, it only helped me come up with an amazing pill."

Alex's bright smile served as a source of frustration for the emperor. He truly wanted to see him fail so that he could gain what he had without having to trade anything important for it.

However, seeing as that he had managed to make a pill, one with a pill cloud showing up, the Emperor started to get worried.

"What sort of pill did you make?" the Emperor asked.

"Isn't it better for everyone to find out at once?" Alex asked. "The headmaster should begin any moment now."

"Everyone, it is time for the judging," the headmaster said. "I have both of the majesties' pills in these two storage bags on my hand. I will choose at random and tell you what it is about."

"Please give it a score out of 100 on what you think about the effect of the pill," the headmaster said. "We will not be judging the quality of the pill itself."

Everyone nodded.

The only woman pulled out a talisman at random. She ignored the part that included the recipe for the pill and instead started with the description.

"This pill is a poison pill that when eaten or fed will corrode the person's flesh as soon as it dissolved in their body. Their body would melt from the inside, and even Qi will have a hard time containing it."

"As a pill its effect is also many times greater than what it would be if it were just a normal poison paste, giving it potency that was hard to achieve with normal poison."

"Since it was a specifically made poison pill rather than a naturally available poison, it will also require a pill specifically meant to counter it. Normal antidote pills may slow down its effects, but it will require a tailor-made pill to remove the effects completely."

"The ingredients required are also generally cheap and easily available, with the main ingredient Spotted Fire Lizard's scales being traded in from the Beast Paradise all the time," the headmaster spoke.

She turned toward the 6 kings and queens that sat on the stage and spoke. "Please score the pill between 1 and 100 in terms of how useful and usable it is."

The 6 kings thought to themselves and talked to each other to get their view on the pill.

Being a poison pill and a strong one at that, it could easily kill someone. However, for that to happen, you needed to be able to feed the pill to someone.

If you could do that forcefully, you would never need that pill at all. But then again, they were worried this pill could belong to the emperor, who they wouldn't want to anger by ranking it low.

After a series of talks, the kings came to a score of their own and wrote it down before handing it over to the old headmaster.

The headmaster took the scores and tallied them.

"The poison pill has achieved a total of 435 points out of a possible 600 total," the headmaster said. "That gives the pill an average of 72.5 points from each of the kings."

The audience cheered as they felt that the pill deserved that score. They were all more than happy about the pill's score, except for the Emperor himself.

He didn't show it on his face, but internally he frowned rather deeply. This was a pill he made without much work. He had expected Alex to lose, so he didn't think of putting more effort into making the pill.

Now, it was coming back to bite him. He knew that the pill didn't deserve such a score. As a poison pill, maybe. But as a pill in general, it wasn't one of the best.

Any pill you needed to feed someone without their knowledge or consent usually ranked pretty low in terms of scores if all it did was kill that person.

The Emperor looked toward Alex who was calm throughout it all. He had hoped for Alex to fail, but here he was.

'Well, I still have a chance,' he thought to himself. 'Let's see what sort of pill you have managed to make.'

The headmaster pulled out the second talisman.

"This is the other pill," the headmaster said as she started reading from the talisman again.

"This pill..."

She paused for a moment before carefully reading what it said. Her eyes widened while her face drained color at a simple shock at what she had just read.

"Headmaster?" the Crown Prince called out to her. "Is everything okay?"

"Huh? Oh yes, yes," the woman said, but her eyes said something else.

"Okay, then please continue. We are waiting for the explanation," he said.

The woman nodded and looked at the talisman again before taking a deep breath. "This is a pill prime full of Water elements that when eaten... can temporarily turn your regular spiritual vein to Water Spiritual vein."

She paused for a moment, letting the words sink in for everyone.

The kings and other figures on the stage nodded for a second before their heads stopped moving and their faces grew serious.

"What did you say?" the Gold Kingdom's king's eyes narrowed as he spoke up on his own for the first time.

"It is as I say, your majesties," the old woman said. "This is a pill that can turn one's neutral spiritual roots into Water spiritual roots temporarily."

Everyone was too stunned to comment on it as they dwelled on what it meant to eat that pill.

Nearly every person in the world was born with a regular spiritual root that was capable of moving around normal Qi. Most also had other elemental spiritual Qi on top of that, but due to there being 7 possibilities, the chances of one having a Water spiritual root were generally low.

Because of that, many people weren't able to learn various skills and techniques that asked for one to have a Water spiritual root, which made them miss out on a lot of opportunities.

However, if what was being said was true, then it was possible for someone to be able to use Water Qi as well, as long as they were ready to temporarily give up on their normal Qi.

The Emerald Kingdom's king stood up and moved toward the old woman. "I have a Fire and Metal spiritual root, and have no Water spiritual root. Let me eat that pill and see if it really can do what you've said."

The king didn't even care that the pill could belong to the emperor anymore. The possibility of the pill itself made him move up.

The headmaster hesitated for a moment as the pill veins would easily give up the reality. At that time, the Emperor arrived next to them, making the King back off.

"Give me the pill," he said. "I will test it out."

Chapter 1352: End of the Competition

The King and the headmaster backed off after giving the Emperor the storage bags. The Emperor took the talisman and started reading it. He looked through the ingredients and how they interacted before coming to the conclusion that it did in fact work.

Without hesitation, he took the pill out and ate it. He didn't even spend a moment looking at the 5 magnificent lightning scars on the pill that was called veins.

In the midst of everyone's gaze, the emperor stood there as the pill dissolved inside of him and the intense water energy inside of it started flowing through him looking to go to the dantian.

They stopped right outside of the emperor's dantian, where he only had 4 different spiritual roots. Other than the neutral spiritual root, one was a Fire Spiritual root, another a Wood Spiritual root, and finally a very weak Yang spiritual root.

The energy repelled itself from all the other types of elemental energy, falling into the one neutral spiritual root, where it slowly started transforming the neutral spiritual root to have a water attribute to it.

It took about 10 whole seconds for the change to happen, but given the significance of the change, the emperor did not care how long it took.

As soon as the change was completed, he tried using a technique he knew. His Qi flowed through his veins, coming out into the palm as Water Qi which genuinely surprised him.

The Qi flowed out, but it did nothing. His skill did not activate.

"Huh?" the Emperor frowned for a second. He tried again and again, but the technique didn't work at all.

"Techniques that require regular Qi won't activate with Water Qi," Alex said. "Unless you've trained a water technique, it won't necessarily help you."

"Then there is no use to this pill, is there?" the Emperor asked as he looked toward Alex who had just walked up.

"Come on now, Dragon Emperor. You know that to be wrong yourself. Just because it doesn't help you, won't mean that it won't help others," he said. "Test how strong your spiritual root is at the moment. It's nearly comparable to Superior Water spiritual root."

"Give the pill to someone who has been learning water attribute skills their whole life with inferior spiritual roots, and you will make him feel like he found a new life."

"Give the pill to someone without water spiritual root, and he can also learn to use important water-related skills from early on. Aren't most healing techniques water related? One wouldn't have to look for others to help heal them. They can always heal themselves."

The Emperor couldn't help but frown at the fact that Alex was correct. The sheer amount of possibility the pill opened up by the mere fact that anyone could now have Water Spiritual root whenever they wanted was insane.

Especially the fact that most had not even considered after hearing about the pills.

Having a water spiritual root meant that you could also learn Water Dao in due time. If that information were to be made public at the moment, the amount of chaos it would cause in the market would truly be insane.

The Emperor clutched his fist in annoyance, but he couldn't lie that a truly amazing pill had been created here today.

"I concede. My poison pill is nowhere near as good as the Water pill King Alex has won. It is his victory."

The announcement left the crowd in awe as they couldn't believe that their emperor had lost. Their emperor, a man who had reached the unthinkable Level 10 of Alchemy knowledge of the Eastern Continent, had failed against another king.

"Do you want to give your victory speech?" the Emperor asked.

Alex thought for a bit. "Sure, why not?" he said and looked toward the crowd.

"I am Alex Benton, King of the Southern Continent, the direct subordinate of her majesty the Phoenix herself," Alex started. "Thank you all for watching this small competition between our two continents."

"I hope this has served you all as motivation to improve yourself, especially to the alchemists out there. Please do not think you can't do it yourself. Just half a century ago, I used to be just a young farm boy, living in the Maplewood region of the Central Continent."

"After entering the game and being teleported out of the Central continent, I have managed to make it this far in just 50 years. I am certain you all can do so as well."

"Good luck."

Alex waved at them and turned around to see the other kings' confused looks.

"Your majesty," the Ivory Kingdom's Queen spoke. "What... do you mean you came from the Central Continent?"

"Exactly what I said," Alex replied. "Oh, has the news now come to here? I thought you would have all known by now."

"What news?" the other Kings asked curiously.

"That the players come from the Central continent. There is a small piece of land in the central continent where a settlement of humanity exists, completely unaware of the outer world. That is where we all came from, and 3 years ago, we got to return back."

The kings were confused and surprised at the same time. They hadn't expected that there was another world in the Central Continent.

The Emperor was somewhat surprised too. He had heard about people teleporting to the Central Continent, but he hadn't expected there to be an entire civilization.

So had all the different things that the players had mentioned not belonged to some higher realm? Was it really all just the Central Continent?

"I can tell you more if you want," Alex said. He was more than happy to let the people learn about the Central continent if he could. It would just make Hao Ya's work easier and also jog up a bunch of players into wanting to go back.

"Actually, your majesty, can you tell us about those lightning strikes? What were those?" one of the kings asked.

"It's called a pill cloud, and no, he will not teach you anything about it," the Emperor said. "He has only just accepted my trade offer to teach me to form the pill clouds in the first place."

"Manyin, end it now," he told the headmaster.

The headmaster bowed and left to announce to the audience about the competition coming to an end.

The crowd started leaving one by one and the people on the stage were also forced to leave. They bowed toward the Emperor and Alex as they left, most requesting Alex to visit them when he had the time.

The emperor watched them all leave and sighed. "The competition took more out of me than I expected it to," he said. "Let us leave now."

Alex nodded and walked along with the Emperor. The Crown Prince had already left with his fiancée, so it was just the Emperor and Alex, followed by their subordinates in another carriage as they returned back to the palace.

They both got off the carriage and the Emperor turned toward Alex. "You can go and rest for now, or we can act upon our agreement and start the trade right now. What do you say?"

Alex smiled. "Let's start the trade right away."

Chapter 1353: The Oaths

Alex and the Emperor arrived in a secluded room that Alex hadn't been to before. The dark room had little to no furniture, so the two monarchs stood around.

"So, let's get it done," Alex said.

The Emperor nodded. "Make the oath then," he said. "In 20 years' time, you will give me everything you can for me to make pill clouds."

Alex closed his eyes and thought through what he wanted to say.

"I swear to the heavens that in the next 20 years I will offer a trade for everything I have that can help you call the pill clouds, so long as you can offer me something worth double what I am offering back if we come to a settlement," Alex spoke.

The oath landed on Alex, but they didn't bind him just yet as the oath had yet to be completed. It was a two-sided oath and unless both sides agreed to the words that were being said on the oaths, it didn't activate.

The emperor gave the words some thought and spoke his own words. "I swear to the heavens that I will pay you for every offer I accept at double its value, and I shall not share them with anyone for the next 100 years if we come to a settlement," the Emperor finished.

Alex listened to the oath and nodded. "I agree."

"I agree as well."

The moment the Emperor spoke, the oath landed on the two of them, binding their words to heaven. Their agreement was finally done.

"Now that it's settled, will you start by trading something or do you intend to wait?" the Emperor asked.

"Yes," Alex said and reached around his storage ring for a while, gathering up the various stuff.

The Emperor looked at Alex's storage ring for a bit before looking at his own blue ring. "Did the Phoenix give you that ring?" he asked.

"Hmm? Oh yes," Alex said without paying much attention. He finally took out the stack of nearly 100 different talismans and handed it over to the emperor.

The Emperor looked confused for a moment. "What... is this?" he asked, wondering if they were some techniques.

"Pill recipes," Alex said.

The Emperor frowned for a moment. "Pill recipes?" he asked before quickly looking through the talisman and realizing that Alex wasn't lying. He frowned for a moment.

"I don't need pill recipes. I have plenty," he said, about to refuse.

"Yes," Alex said. "But do you have ones that are guaranteed to not have any error, with a potential to reach 100% harmony in each turn, so long as the other variables are perfect?"

The Emperor frowned for a bit. "Are you certain?" he asked.

He had a few recipes like that, brought over by the Azure Dragon the last time around, that had been passed down from his father. However, there weren't nearly enough of those that were brought back. Merely a dozen or so.

The other recipes were good, but they never gave a good enough result.

So, if Alex was telling the truth then these 100 pill recipes would help him improve a lot. In fact, they might be the biggest change for him overall to learn about Alchemy as he had more recipes to learn from.

He knew that these recipes weren't going to help him call pill clouds at all. He had reached 97% or even 98% in rare cases with the dozen perfect recipes that were brought back.

However, that still was a good start.

"How did you get these recipes?" he asked.

"I don't suppose I have to answer that question, do I?" Alex asked. "It isn't part of the agreement."

"No," the Emperor said. "No, you don't."

He started thinking of what he had that he would consider double to value of the offer he was being made. He couldn't even lie and make a low offer as the oath bound him into making only valid trade suggestions.

"I do not yet understand what you would consider as double the value of the recipes," he said. "Do you have any idea?"

Alex looked away for a bit, thinking to himself. "What about a visit to the Azure Dragon? I wonder if he will have some knowledge for me to prepare for my eventual breakthrough to the Immortal realms in the future."

The Emperor frowned a bit. "Don't the Phoenix have something like that for you?" he asked.

"Her Majesty has told me quite a bit about it, but I still wish to learn more if I can," Alex said. "It doesn't hurt to ask multiple immortals, does it?"

"No, it doesn't," the Emperor said. "But I'm afraid you cannot visit His Majesty. As you may have learned already, there was an attack in the Central continent long ago, where his majesty was injured just like your Phoenix and needed recuperation."

"He is still recuperating to this day, so I cannot allow entry for anyone," the Dragon Emperor said.

"I see," Alex said. "That's a shame."

That was quite the excuse that the Emperor had for the Dragon's absence. It was damn near the same thing the elders had told the entire world when Scarlet was missing.

He wondered if the emperor knew something was wrong back then too and if he was still playing the part of an oblivious emperor.

"Then I guess I will accept something else," Alex said.

The Emperor thought for a bit. "I will need some time to think of what I can pay you with. Please return back for now. I will send someone to get you when I know what I have I can give you," he said.

Alex nodded and left the room, going back to the Swan Courtyard where the two elders were waiting for him.

"Your majesty," Elder Yao quickly called for him as he entered. "How did it go? What did you trade for what?"

"I traded 100 of my recipes," he said. "Don't worry, I kept the better ones out of the trade and only gave the generic ones."

"And what did you get in return?" elder Liang asked.

"He doesn't have anything for me yet. He will decide what he wants to give me later, so we can relax for now," Alex said.

"I hope it is something good," the elder said.

"I hope so too," Alex said. "Alright, I'm gonna go rest for now. You two should go and cultivate as well. Now that we've finished what we wanted to do, we can go visit the other places in the city tomorrow."

The two elders nodded and bowed before leaving.

Alex went into his own room and sat on a seat before calling out Pearl and Whisker to have them cultivate along with them.

While he started cultivating, the Emperor was in his own room, alone, thinking of what he could trade for those recipes.

The problem wasn't that he didn't have anything valuable to trade for those recipes, but that he didn't want to give anything valuable that he owned.

After thinking for a long time, he came up with something that he believed was valuable enough for Alex to want to trade it with him.

Once he figured it out, he sent someone to let Alex know that he was ready to trade.

Chapter 1354: Dragon Medallion

"You've come," the Emperor looked at Alex as he walked in.

"Yes," Alex said. "I was just about to leave to roam the city when your message got to me. Have you finally decided what to give me?"

"Yes," the Dragon Emperor said and handed over something to Alex

Alex took the object and saw that it was a medallion made up of some sort of strong metal that looked a lot like silver. On the medallion was the emblem of the Azure Imperium, a single sword with the azure dragon coiling around it.

Alex poured some Qi into it, but nothing seemed to happen to it. "What is this?" he asked curiously.

"It's a Dragon Medallion," the Emperor said. "It gives you the highest authority in the continent aside from the Emperor and the Crown Prince, making you effectively the 3rd most important person."

Alex was a little surprised. "And you're giving this to me? In exchange for the pill?" he asked.

"Yes," the Emperor said. "On the condition that only you can use this. No one else."

Alex looked at the medallion for a bit. "Can I deploy your military with this?" he asked.

"Do you want to?" the Emperor asked.

"I'm just asking," Alex said with a bit of a chuckle.

"Yes, you can," the Emperor said. "You can deploy troops, change kings, and do whatever else you want in the continent. As I said, you have the third highest authority."

"Even above the other princes?" Alex couldn't help but ask.

"Even above both of my other sons, yes," the Emperor said. "But of course, you should know its not as free as you might be thinking to yourself. In the first place, you can't perform a lot of significant actions because they will be reported back to me or my son, and we will have complete control over if we accept that choice of yours or not."

"That makes sense," Alex said. "And what about the other kings? Can I make decisions for them as well?"

"Those kings can report back to us as well, so I don't really see the point of trying," the Emperor said.

"Then what exactly is the point of this thing?" Alex asked.

"It gives you freedom in all of the empire. To go anywhere you want without restriction, to do whatever you want as long as it doesn't conflict our rule," the Emperor said. "There are much more uses that I'm sure you can find out on your own."

"I can," Alex said, looking at the medallion with a curious look. This was definitely worth it for the 100 pill recipes according to the Emperor, but Alex wasn't sure if that was true or not.

"You also don't have to pay to enter a lot of different places that you otherwise might have to," the Emperor said.

"Alright, I will accept it," Alex said and pulled out the 100 talismans that he handed over to the emperor.

The oath buzzed between the two of them as it was partially fulfilled.

The Emperor sighed in relief. "Alright, I will now go into closed cultivation to learn more. If you need anything, which you shouldn't thanks to that medallion, talk with my son."

"Okay," Alex said. "Good luck on forming a pill cloud. I'll return when I have another thing to trade."

He walked away from the room, leaving the emperor to himself. With the Emperor going into closed cultivation to train his alchemy skill, Alex wondered how many years it would be before he saw the man again.

2 years? 5 years?

He would certainly use that time to explore the land.

He left the palace afterward, going out into the city. He wanted to visit the various schools, but he left that for the middle of the day. For now, he was going to visit the rest of the city and see how it differed in the Eastern Continent.

For one, it actually looked like the Dragon Capital had some city planning done with how it was set up and not just based on how people set up in the early days. That way, the city looked wide and open while also having enough space to take in everything.

Most the buildings still followed the same traditional pattern with the red tiled roofs that curved outwards onto a tip with its pagoda like features. There were various trees planted along the side of the road, each of which was there to improve the city's overall quality.

The city was prosperous, with regular stores and shops selling whatever a cultivator needed. It almost seemed like there were no mortals in the city.

Alex went through a few shops, seeing the quality of the items that were sold and was quite genuinely shocked.

Perhaps it was it was the capital of the entire continent, the items sold here were of generally extremely good quality. He had went through a few alchemy shops to find that most of the regular ingredients sold were capable of reaching more than 80% harmony with a good recipe.

In most other places, one would have to go to auctions and similar places to acquire such good ingredients.

Alex didn't have many things he wanted to buy, so he just window shopped for the day. After going around, looking at what sort of activities one could do in the city, he didn't find any that particularly interested him.

There were some recreational facilities and even some gambling houses, but Alex didn't find any interest in those.

So, he decided to finally visit one of the schools for the day. His choice of school to visit was the Poison school for the day.

He wanted to see how they dealt with the problem he had thought of.

The poison school was similar to the alchemy school in how it functioned. The school had levels to the teaching that was done there, each including requirements before every level.

The headmaster of that school, a middle-aged man with streaks of gray hair told Alex about everything that went on in the school, clearing up his confusion.

The poison arts required one to have a intensive knowledge about the poisons and how they interacted with each other. The poisons didn't simply belong to plants and animals, but also anything that could be synthetically created from other materials that were naturally found or made by the poison masters.

They were mostly taught to make 3 types of poisons. One that needed ingesting, one that needed breathing, and finally one that simply needed contact.

There were also some weirder poisons in how they needed to be applied, but those were the main there. And they were taught to each person that wanted to learn.

"How do you make sure what you're teaching isn't being used by the wrong person in the wrong place?" Alex asked the headmaster.

"Before each level, our students are made to swear an oath that they will not use what is taught here on anyone unless the order came from the royal family, or their life is in danger," the man said. "That way, we can stop our students from exploiting what they have learned here."

"I see," Alex said, nodding to himself as the words made sense. "Do you think I can test my poison knowledge to see what level I can reach?"

Chapter 1355: Level 10 Poison Master

The test to become a poison master was not that different from the tests the Alchemy school provided him with. He had to first spend some time recognizing the ingredient to see how capable he was, and then he had to go into making poisons.

There were several types of poisons with their own unique traits. Some poisons were lethal, some were not. Some were instant, and some took a long time.

Not all poisons were the same, but most could be treated with one or two specific antidote pills. However, when it came to specific poisons designed for a specific purpose, those were the ones that were the hardest to cure.

Alex made as many poisons as he knew from his various lessons. He had not only learned about poisons back in the Luminance Empire, taught by the Princess Xumei of the Royal Wei family, but also from the Nether Poison sect, who had provided him some things in secret for saving them from the mad immortal.

The treasury back in his own palace also contained a few different recipes for poisons, and along with what else was available in the continent, he had learned quite a lot about poison.

However, the knowledge about poison wasn't enough for the test. You also needed to know how to counter poisons, and those Alex had a hard time with.

Most of the time, he simply made pills that could destroy most poisons. Especially with the pill veins improving an antidote's potency by a lot, even poisons that couldn't be cured by them were.

However, here he wasn't allowed to do that and had to force himself to try and come up with a combination of natural ingredients that he could make an antidote out of that cured that very poison.

Thanks to his knowledge of alchemy ingredients, he knew a lot about how they would interact and how they could cure poisons, but it wasn't enough for him to do very well in the task.

Especially since alchemy ingredients and poison ingredients weren't completely interchangeable.

In the end, with everything he had learned about, Alex managed to reach Level 6 in the poison test. He could have gotten a lot higher had he been even slightly more knowledgeable in the topic or even had given himself some time to test it all out.

"Amazing," the headmaster said. "Not only do you have such incredible alchemy knowledge, you also have quite the knowledge in poison, your majesty."

"It's alright," Alex said. He wished it was a little more, but he didn't complain. It wasn't like he focused much on poisons anyway.

"So what I know is enough to bring me up to Level 6, huh?" he asked. "If I knew a bit more about different poisons, I could've entered Level 7, right?"

"Yes, your majesty," the man answered. "We can teach you everything you might want to know."

Alex thought for a bit. "Sure, I'll spend some time and learn here. I have nothing else to do anyway," he said. The elders behind him didn't mind at all.

"Great," the headmaster said excitedly. "Let's just have you speak the oaths and we can start teaching you the things."

"Oath?" Alex paused. "I don't want to speak the oaths. I just want to learn the information, nothing more."

"That's... not how it works I'm afraid, your majesty," the headmaster said. "It is a rule of the school that you must speak the oath before we let you learn from the school."

The elders frowned a bit. They did not want their king to be bound by any oaths that weren't necessary.

"Do the Emperor and Crown Prince have to speak the oaths too if they want to learn?" Alex asked.

The headmaster quickly shook his head. "They are way beyond us for us to force them to make such an oath," he said. "Besides the oath won't even stop the emperor since his words are the rule."

"Alright then, I won't say them either," Alex said as he brought out something. "This should stop you from asking me to do what you're saying right?"

The headmaster looked at the silver medallion with the insignia of the Dragon Emperor and was surprised. "The Dragon Medallion?" he looked back at Alex in shock. "Did... did his majesty give this to you?"

"Yes, just today. With this, I'm supposed to be just below the Dragon Emperor and the Crown Prince," Alex said.

"Then I have no authority to stop you from learning what you want from this school, your majesty," the headmaster bowed.

Alex finally smiled. "Great," he said. The medallion was already coming in handy. "Come, let me see what else I can learn here."

Alex went around the school, checking out where the rest of the buildings were, especially ones he would want to visit, like the library.

He also asked the headmaster a few other questions, which the middle-aged man answered without any hesitation.

"There are currently six Level 8 individuals and no Level 9 individual in the student body, but I and a few staff are Level 9 poison masters and quite a few of the staff are also at Level 8 and 7. " the headmaster said. "As for Level 10... I'm afraid we don't have those."

"None?" Alex asked with a surprised look. "Is it that hard to reach?"

"Rather than difficult, it's more like it's dangerous. To reach level 10, you must create a poison so potent that even a whiff of it can kill just about anyone."

"We had a Level 9 poison master try out a test to become a Level 10 poison master, and he ended up creating a poison so potent that he died from it right after making it."

"We had to evacuate the entire school back then so that they weren't affected either," the headmaster said.

"What?" Alex was surprised. "Was it that strong?"

"Yes," the headmaster nodded. "So we don't encourage people to go for Level 10. Thankfully his majesty came in time and took away the poison so we were fine, but we don't know what could have happened otherwise."

"Oh, the Emperor wasn't affected by the poison?" Alex asked, a bit surprised. Had he eaten some pill by chance?

"Oh, no. Not his majesty, the Emperor. I meant His Majesty, the Azure Dragon," the headmaster said. "He came out for a moment and quickly took away the poison so we weren't hurt."

Alex's eyes widened in shock when he heard that. "The Azure Dragon?" he asked.

"Yes," the headmaster said. "If not for his majesty coming out, we would have most likely been doomed. Even as wounded as he was, he took care of the poison."

Alex was very much surprised as what he heard didn't go in line with what he knew.

"When did this take place exactly?" he asked.

The headmaster thought for a moment and answered. "About 4 or 5 centuries ago," he said. "It's a short time ago for Saints like us."

The headmaster continued speaking, but Alex's mind wandered off elsewhere as soon as he heard the time.

'The Dragon was alive until just 5 centuries ago?' Alex thought. 'Then when the hell did he die?'

Chapter 1356: Cooking School

Alex left back for the palace afterward, constantly wondering about what he had learned.

The Azure Dragon was alive just 500 years ago, and he had been seen by regular folks. Has that been an illusion perhaps? To show the people that their ruler was still alive?

Alex didn't believe that was the case. Especially because the poison had been strong enough to kill the poison master himself. A regular saint could not have cleared that up in that case.

It had to be the Azure Dragon himself. But if that was the case then... he had to have been alive just 500 years ago.

Then... how was he dead?

The headmaster had told him the dragon was injured, so... maybe it had lived until now. But then... why was it dead now?

Surely the White Tiger wasn't wrong.

Alex thought for a while about this, but he eventually had to stop caring. He wasn't going to get the answer from just thinking, and asking wasn't going to work as the death of the Dragon wasn't made public yet.

Not that knowing when the dragon had died really affected any of Alex's plans in the first place.

He returned back to his room and decided to make some pills as he wanted to prepare some of the new pills from the recipe he had just come up with.

He let the palace staff know that there was going to be a lot of lightning going on on this side of the palace and that they had no reason to be scared. Once the people were alerted, Alex began making those pills.

He spent nearly 6 hours making the pills he now named Water Root Transforming Saint Pill. It was a long name, but it got the point across.

After getting done, he returned back to his room, only to find the head servant waiting in front of his room with a tray. There was a glass on the tray and some juice inside of it that looked quite good.

"The elders asked me to prepare some refreshments for you, your majesty," the woman said. "Please have them."

"Thank you," Alex said and took the glass before drinking it all in one go. He truly felt refreshed, as if the deep coldness had touched deep inside of him, making him feel quite alive.

The mental fatigue that came with making pills for nearly 6 hours simply disappeared as the last gulp of the juice went down his throat.

"This is quite good," he said while he looked at the glass. "Huh? Maybe I should go visit the cooking school too. Thanks again."

He returned back to his room. "I will have to get some food made for Whisker and Pearl too at some later date," he thought to himself. "How do I make them not know it's for beasts though?"

Maybe he could just ask them for some generic food. That should still be quite good.

He cultivated for the rest of the day, and when tomorrow came around, he went back to the Poison school to learn a bit more throughout the day. He sent the elders back and learned about poisons and how to cure them on his own.

There were many students that were in the library, but none of them dared to come close to Alex as they all recognized who he was.

He was left alone as he learned what he could for the entirety of the week.

It was at the end of the week that he finally left and went back to the palace again to rest. This time around, he asked for some sort of meat to be cooked for his beasts.

Pearl and Whisker were quite happy that day.

The next day, Alex went to check out the school for cooking.

As a school, this one apparently had the least number of students, which made quite a lot of sense to Alex. Of the many schools, this was the one that made the least sense for a cultivator, even before the music school.

At least music helped you during fights. This one was only useless for when you weren't in battle, and even then there were pills that could do a lot better than cooking, certainly.

Still, he kept an open mind, willing to learn what it was that made this school even a school in the first place and went in. He met with the headmaster, a young woman who looked to be in her 30s, who gave him a small tour.

Alex had no intention of trying to test himself here, so he only learned what the headmaster told him.

His answers were quickly answered.

As it turned out, while the benefit of cooking was not all that much when compared to pills, they were also much easier to make at the same time.

Cooking didn't need perfect control like making pills did, so one could cook something as long as one could focus on the task and not lose track of what they were doing.

Anyone could become a cook this way. So, the only thing separating them was the amount of dedication that they put into learning the various recipes and the way the tastes interacted with each other.

It wasn't exactly the same as pills, as the cook cared very much about how the final product tasted and not just what it did.

"I'm assuming people don't have a hard time climbing through the levels?" Alex asked the headmaster.

"They do not," the headmaster said. "But they also don't spend their entire time learning to cook, so it kind of doesn't matter in the end. Most end up leaving after they think they are good enough, compared to other schools where they try to be the best."

"I see," Alex said, understanding a bit better. "If I may ask, what level are you?"

"I am level 9," the headmaster said. "A few people stick through and most actually end up at 8 or 9. The Palace accepts them, so most end up leaving at that point anyway."

"And the students?" Alex asked.

"We have one Level 8 who is going strong, but no one else," the headmaster said. "I can't tell when we'll get another Level 8 at all."

"I see," Alex said. "I hope you have more people enthusiastic about this profession then. Now that I've learned about it, it doesn't seem truly that bad."

"It isn't, your majesty," the headmaster said. "It's just looked down upon a lot by the regular people who don't know much."

Alex nodded. Just moments ago, he was the same as well.

"What about Level 10?" he asked. "If it's so easy, certainly someone must have reached Level 10, right?"

"Yes, one person has," the headmaster said excitedly. "Senior Zhou Linfan, the head chef of the palace. You can meet him in the pa... err... he's out with the second prince now that I think about it. But yeah, he reached Level 10."

"I see," Alex said. "Someone at least stuck through it all."

"Yes," the headmaster said.

Alex conversed with her for a bit longer as she showed him the whole school. After a while, he finally left the school once he was done learning what he wanted to.

Chapter 1357: Royal School of Beast Taming

Nearly 3 months passed since the day Alex started going to the poison school. He learned what he could in those 3 months, becoming ever so learned about how poisons and their antidotes worked.

It was only when his knowledge rivaled that of a Level 8 poison master that Alex decided to no longer visit this place. He was done with what it had to offer.

To get any better than he had, he would have to practice on his own, and as such the school visits held no meaning anymore.

Alex had visited a few more places in this time, going around the city to take part in auctions or gambling houses. He also visited fighting arenas that one could pay to fight in, where others could watch and bet on him.

Seeing the level of the fighters there, Alex held no interest at all. Besides, it wouldn't fit a king like him to fight some regular person just to show his dominance.

He went over to the Alchemy school a few times, to see how they were doing. He also met up with Hao Ya, who was already gathering a few people to spread the news about the player's home being the central continent and that they should be allowed to go back.

Alex's small speech at the end of the alchemy competition had helped her cause quite a lot. She had mostly talked with those that were in the school itself, as well as those in the residential area.

She knew that the population of players in the Eastern Continent was quite a lot, so the number of people she could find was also quite a lot. Most of them were weaker players, but there were also quite a few strong ones.

Finding the weaker ones didn't help her cause as much as finding stronger ones did, as weaker people had little to no voice in making the emperor move, even if they themselves were the ones that needed to leave the most.

At the same time, finding strong ones would help her a lot, but it could also backfire in her case as those would be the ones that wouldn't want to go back.

There was a delicate balance she had to find here through the hopefully kind hearts of the people.

After that, she would have to wait until the Emperor was out of his closed cultivation.

Alex continued visiting the other schools to learn about them. He had decided to take some classes in the artifact school at some point before visiting it, which he was going to go to last. There were still 2 other schools that had to visit, and he had decided to visit them both now that he was done with the Poison School.

The Royal School of Beast Taming had a headmaster that was surprisingly a long-beaked Crane. The crane had a name, Blackdot, apparently named by the man that had bonded him many millennia ago when he was just a young bird.

Now, he worked in the Royal School to help new cultivator meet and learn about beasts, as well as bond with each other.

"Is it that surprising, your majesty?" the bird asked. "Seeing a beast, instead of a human as the headmaster of this school?"

"Absolutely," Alex said. "But just because it's surprising, doesn't mean that it is necessarily something I hate or disapprove of. I mean, who am I to judge? Our ruler is a beast as well."

"Haha," the Crane laughed a bit. "I shouldn't have worried about visiting your Alchemy competition in that case. I thought I would ruin the mood and did not visit."

"I wouldn't have," Alex said with a bit of a chuckle in his voice.

"Then I apologize for assuming something about you that I shouldn't," the Crane said.

"Um, can we start the tour?" Alex asked.

The crane nodded and took Alex to see the school. The Royal School of Beast Taming was quite different from the other schools in that there weren't many buildings there.

Aside from some places for the students to stay and a few libraries and such, most of the rest of the area was just an open space where the people trained with their beasts.

There was also no level system in this school as anyone with a beast easily became a beast tamer.

"Everyone seems quite happy with each other," Alex said, looking around at the students that were running around the place. Most of them actually turned out to be little kids.

"We let youngsters come and meet with infant beasts that live in the school," the crane said. "Most are offsprings of beasts that remain in the school or those that have either been neglected by their parents or were just orphaned."

"We let the youngsters come and play around with the beasts, try to see if they're compatible so that they can maybe bond with each other," the crane said.

"This all seems quite a friendly environment," Alex said. "So I'm assuming there is no bond of servitude here."

"No," the crane shook his head. "While there are many that do that, we in this school only allow bonds of equals. If anyone is found forming a bond of servitude, we often force the person to break their bond and do it again."

"That's... something, I guess," Alex said as he looked around. "How many beasts does a person bond to on average?"

"On average?" the crane thought for a bit and answered. "I would say they mostly just bond one. But if you mean how much they can, then it's usually two. We discourage trying to go for even 3 as it thins out your spirit quite a bit, allowing for it to get damaged easily."

"Given how hard it is to heal a wounded spirit, we stay away from multiple bonds," the crane said.

And here was Alex who had spread his spirit into 6 directions already with his 3 beasts and 3 artifacts. He started worrying a little about his future.

The 8th Undying god had died due to some spirit injuries as well, so he needed to be careful.

"Do you have bonded beasts yourself, your Majesty?" the crane asked.

"I do," Alex said. "But they're quite shy and like to spend their time inside their beast space most of the time."

"Oh, you should force them to come out once in a while, your majesty. We also teach how to increase confidence in beasts by having them interact with other humans," the crane said.

"I'll think about it," Alex said. "Thank you for the tour."

Alex returned back to the palace afterward, leaving the school. That now only let the painting school that he had to visit.

After returning, he asked for a few glasses of refreshing juices to be brought over and had the elders as well as Pearl and Whisker drink it.

He was deciding to go make some pills as it had been quite a few days, when a servant came and passed along a message.

The crown prince wanted to meet him.

"Oh, send him in," Alex said and waited for the Crown prince to arrive while he placed Pearl and Whisker back into their beast space.

Chapter 1358: A list of Four

Alex invited the Crown Prince in, letting him into his room where the other two elders had already arrived.

The crown prince had come to visit him a few times during the first month, and then twice in the 2nd month. In the third month, he visited not a single time.

He had yet to visit him this month either and at this point, Alex had simply stopped expecting for him to come. However, it seemed he had come this time around

"Your majesty," the crown prince bowed in his presence. "I hope you've been having fun. You must've felt alone with me and royal father being absent for quite a long time."

"I can't say I have been lonely, but I've certainly missed the occasional company, Prince Fangyu," Alex spoke.

"My apologies," the Crown Prince said. "But I hope you haven't been bored in this time, however. I heard you've been visiting quite a few of the royal schools."

"Yes, I have. I can't say I'm bored either. I have been having fun and learning quite a lot these days. They weren't lying when they said Eastern Continent is the most advanced. It truly deserves its reputation."

The Crown Prince smiled at the compliment. "Your words mean a lot to us, your majesty," he said.

"So, what brings you here? Just a little meet and greet?" Alex asked.

"Actually, no," the prince said. "I've actually been going around, looking for what you asked me to find."

Alex paused for a moment. "What I asked you to find?" he asked. He didn't remember asking the prince anything in the last 2 months that would explain his absence.

"Uhh... the queen candidates, your majesty?" the prince asked.

"Oh!" Alex only then realized what he meant. "Right, right. I thought you meant some ingredients or something."

"No, I was busy outside of my military hours looking for the perfect candidates for you, your Majesty," the Crown prince said as he brought out a few talismans. "Here are the ones I found. I'm certain you will like them."

Alex hesitated a bit, but quickly took the talismans and saw that there were 4 of them exactly.

"4?" he couldn't help but ask.

"Well, your requirements were quite stringent," the prince said with a bit of an awkward smile.

"Haha, right," Alex said and started looking into the talismans.

The first talisman had a girl whose name was Talia. She was clearly a player, and the prince had somehow managed to find her age to be less than 70 years as well.

She was from the Emerald Kingdom, with a cultivation base of the late Saint Core realm as of half a year ago when she appeared to take part in the Endless Shadow Abyss. She belonged to the Cloud Iron sect from the western parts of the Emerald Kingdom, where the major sect was set around the mountains.

Alex saw her image in the talisman. She was a short girl with thick black hair and a pair of gray eyes. She wore a green and white robe, while her hair held quite a few pearls on it.

The girl was quite pretty, even by Alex's standards. Not enough to make him feel anything, but he wouldn't be surprised if most regular men were smitten with her.

There was quite a few more description about her what weapon she used, what sort of techniques she had, and even if there were any rumors that she had any romantic partners.

None of that really mattered to Alex, but it was good to see the prince put thought into who he was suggesting.

Given the information, the girl was truly one of the more well-rounded, better females he had seen in a long time. However, there was one big flaw in her that made Alex frown.

She was not Hannah.

The entire reason why Alex had made the prince search for very young girls that were also powerful enough to be his equal was to find out if he could meet Hannah.

Given her body constitution, she should have been quite strong by now, so he expected her to be on the list.

Given that this Talia girl wasn't it, he moved on to the next talisman.

The next girl was someone named Ren Wujin.

This girl was taller than the previous girl, wore a red robe with falling petal designs all over it, and wore a golden mask on her head as a form of jewelry through which her bright blonde hair was tied up.

This girl was quite pretty as well and was apparently an adopted daughter of the Ren Family that existed in the Gold kingdom.

However, just like the other one, she wasn't Hannah that he was looking.

'Well, they seem to be using a different name, so maybe sister is doing the same as well,' Alex thought and pulled out another talisman.

This one had a tall girl that looked quite masculine in the way she dressed. She had dark black hair that was tied up in a ponytail behind her with a piece of ribbon.

While her dress was masculine, her face was ever so feminine. She also wore a lot of jewelry around her face that enhanced her beauty even more.

She wore milky blue robes with no additional design added to it, and from what he read, she was an elder in the Ice Mist Palace of the Ivory region.

Once again, this was another sect where only females were allowed to join. However, unlike the Frozen Heart sect of the Northern Continent, it didn't seem like the girls had any restrictions forced on them by either the sect or the cultivation method.

It was really just a sect that didn't want men to join them.

The girl's name was Su Railin, one of the more awkward names that Alex had heard until now, that he could guess was chosen by the girl herself without knowing much about the names of the outside world.

'Once again, not Hannah,' he thought and shook his head.

The final girl had a head full of red hair, immediately catching his attention. She wore a dark blue robe with long pink ribbons floating around her tied-up hair.

The jewelry that dangled from her hair shaped her pretty little face giving her quite the charm.

Her name was Layla and she was from the Immortal Saint Pavillion of the Ebony Kingdom. However, evident by her name, she wasn't Hannah either.

None of the 4 girls the prince had brought back was Hannah.

Alex started worrying that the worst-case scenario was true and that Hannah had died at some point since she was teleported here.

His Aunt Liz had just recently been heartbroken after learning of her husband Rob's death. She could not handle knowing that her daughter was dead too.

'No, I must find sister under all conditions,' Alex thought. He looked at the girls once again. While they weren't Hannah, they gave him a pretty good idea of what an average girl with strong talent could achieve.

What these girls could do, his sister could certainly do. If she was alive, she had certainly made a name for herself somewhere on the continent, even if the name she used wasn't her real one.

All Alex had to do now was go out and find her.

Chapter 1359: Royal School of Painting

"So, you like anyone, your majesty?" the crown prince asked. He looked quite excited to hear Alex's response to the ladies he was presenting to him.

Alex smiled a bit and shook his head. "I can't tell from these talismans alone. I must visit them all and meet them in person before I make any judgment. They all might be who I am looking for, and so can none of them be it. Only time will tell," he said.

"Oh, right," the Crown Prince nodded. "When do you plan of going to meet with them?"

Alex looked at the talisman again and thought about the information he had gathered in the past 3 months regarding various things in the Eastern Continent.

One of that information was on when and where the various events were going to take place.

The next one was in the Emerald City.

"I'll go meet this Talia girl first," Alex said. "The Endless Shadow Abyss opens up in 6 months, right?"

"Yes, I believe so," the prince said. "Do you wish to meet her and then go to the abyss at the same time?"

"Why not? It sounds like it'll be fun," Alex said. He could also search for Hannah there.

The prince nodded. "I had thought you would be visiting the Azure Lake first, and maybe going to the Boundless Enlightenment domain to gather up some dao knowledge."

"I had thought of that, but I realized I could do that whenever I wanted to, but I need to take the chance with the Abyss right now to see what I'm capable of," Alex said.

"Hmm, when do you plan on leaving? I'll let King Jin know that you'll be visiting him soon," the prince said.

"No need," Alex replied. "There's still 6 months remaining. I can go at the last moment. I have quite a few things to do here anyway."

"Oh, uh... then please let me know when you plan to leave. I'll let King Jin know about it then," the prince said.

Alex nodded and thanked the prince.

The crown prince left the room after that, leaving Alex and the rest alone for the time being.

"Your Majesty, can we see those talismans?" Elder Yao asked.

"Why? So you can see if there's a suitable queen for the continent?" Alex asked.

The elders gulped, not saying anything. "It would be great if you could get an heir, your majesty," Elder Liang said. "Even if there is little to no chance you will leave them behind."

Alex sighed. "Would that even matter?" he asked. "What if the next phoenix just dissolves the human royal family after they come?"

"Umm... " the elders had no answer for that. They simply hoped that such a case wouldn't happen. They had spent the past 5 thousand years trying to fix a mistake that they thought they did, and as a result, they had come to greatly care about the Southern Continent.

Now, they wanted to do whatever it was in their power to keep it prosper, even if they wouldn't be here to see it happen.

Alex sent the elders away and went through the talismans once again before putting them away. He called Whisker and Pearl back out and continued cultivating along with the two of them.

He spent quite a lot of time cultivating, going well into the day before he finally got up to leave. He wanted to go and join the artifact school to learn there as soon as he could, so he decided to get done with the other remaining school that he had yet to go to.

The Royal School of Painting.

Alex arrived along with the elders who were curious about the school as well. Someone notified the headmaster of his arrival, and soon an older man in a graceful white robe walked out to welcome him.

He bowed to Alex, greeting him.

"It has been a while, your majesty," the old man said. "I had heard that you were going around the other schools, and I have been hoping you would come by this place eventually."

Alex smiled. The old man had been there that day during the alchemist competition along with many other people. While he hadn't talked to Alex, they had still greeted each other.

"I had planned to visit all the schools. This just took a while longer to get to," Alex said. "I was hoping you will give me a tour of the school, and help me understand the purpose of this place."

"Absolutely, your majesty," the man said. "Please come with me."

Alex walked in with the man.

The Royal School of Painting was mostly full of buildings all around. There weren't just many buildings but they were also quite tall.

Alex looked around as he entered the first building. There were a lot of different cultivators that were staring at the wall, looking at the paintings that hung by them.

He was quite surprised by the number of people that were there. "Where would you rank your school in terms of the number of students you have amongst the 10?" he asked.

"Amongst the other Royal Schools? Hmm, we certainly have more students than puppetry and beast taming, and given how few there are in the cooking school, I would say we come around 5th or 6th."

"The others are a bit more attractive to the students, so they end up going there," the headmaster said.

"I see," Alex said and walked around, looking at the paintings that the students were looking at. The paintings were quite beautiful from what Alex could tell, but... they weren't that great.

Alex didn't see the point of staring at them for so long. Were the students trying to learn from it?

"Does the school not teach their students how to paint?" Alex asked. "Or are they just looking at those paintings to try and get inspiration for their own work?"

"Them? No, they aren't doing either of those things," the headmaster explained. "They are actually trying to absorb whatever Intent is in the paintings to try and understand them in hopes that they learn something from them."

Alex paused for a moment when he heard that. "I'm sorry... Intent?" he asked looking around at the paintings on the wall. "Those paintings have intent?"

"Yes," the headmaster nodded. "The Intent of the painter is carved into those paintings, allowing the viewers to experience what the painter might be thinking or feeling, giving them a better understanding of the painting."

Alex was quite surprised. He slowly walked toward one of the paintings and looked at it for a while.

The painting on the wall was of a man sitting on top of a tree with a flute in his hand. The painting was okay at best in terms of quality, but the longer Alex stared at it, the more beautiful it seemed to become in his eyes.

The green leaves became luscious, the man's clothes fluttering in the wind. And soon enough, Alex felt like he could hear the sweet melody from the flute that the man in the painting played.

Alex's eyes widened in shock.

It was only now that he realized that paintings were one of the best ways to hone one's Intent.

Chapter 1360: Importance of Paintings

"This painting doesn't have much Intent actually, your Majesty," the headmaster explained. "if you want to see ones with better Intent in them, I can take you to our hall of fame where the best of the best paintings are kept."

Alex slowly moved away from the painting still quite surprised. "That painting had quite the intent too," he said.

"Yes, but you have to spend some time concentrating on it to feel it," the headmaster said. "You can actually feel the intent from the good ones by just glancing at them."

Alex nodded and walked away.

"I wasn't aware that such a thing was possible," Alex said. "So you can train Intent with paintings too huh?"

Was that why the room for painting was on the highest of floors in the Sundering Sanctum? Were the immortals aware of how useful paintings could be?

Now that he thought about it? Was his paintings back then just bad or had he just not put any intent into what he was making?

Alex stopped thinking about the playground for now. He had other questions he wanted the answers to now.

"So the students can train their intent with their painting, huh? But is there a reason why they are being placed openly for others to see? You mentioned something about them trying to learn from the painting."

"Yes," the headmaster said. "Well, they're actually trying to learn from the Intent more precisely. Given that the intent comes from a cultivator, usually what they understand about a topic can also be learned from their intent."

"It's mostly impressions, but it's a lot more helpful than one might think," the headmaster said. "After all, with impressions one is not taught about the topic, but is considered to learn on his own."

The elders were a little puzzled as to what the man was talking about. Alex was the same for the first few seconds, but quickly a piece of information floated into his mind that he mostly didn't care about.

One could not learn a Dao if they were taught about it entirely. One had to search for the answers on their own if they wanted to learn the dao.

"Teaching is bad, but with impressions... one is still searching for the answer," Alex spoke softly. "Are you saying... most of these students are trying to learn a Dao right now?"

The headmaster smiled. "Haha, I don't even have to explain anything. Your majesty understands everything I'm trying to say before I even say it," he said.

The elders behind him were quite surprised as well. "You can learn Dao from paintings?" they asked.

"Oh yes," the headmaster said. "As long as the person who paints knows of that dao or has some ideas about it, they can put it into the painting with their intent which the other person can look at and read from."

"Of course, not all paintings have those, but even then there is a chance to learn from it," the headmaster said.

Alex frowned a little. Why were the other continents not aware of this?

He could understand the Western Continent losing every bit of knowledge about it in the last 5 thousand years. Hell, they didn't even know much about Dao.

However, what about the other two continents?

"Is this information a secret? It hasn't spread to the other continents yet," Alex said.

"Hmm, I wouldn't say they are a secret exactly, but I can see why the information isn't widespread," the headmaster said. "Even most of the people in the eastern continent don't believe this to be a good way to learn about Dao, especially because in the end, what we are doing is just an imitation of the actual thing."

"Imitation?" Alex asked. "Of what?"

"The Boundless Enlightenment Domain, of course," the headmaster said. "You must have heard about it by now, haven't you your majesty?"

"The Boundless Enlightenment Domain? The place that's supposed to teach you about Dao but people use it now as a tourist site?" he asked.

"Haha, yes, that's it," the headmaster laughed at the description. "The secret realm is actually filled with various paintings and other objects created with an intent to help people learn about the various Dao. As such, people would rather go there than try and learn here if they can."

"Oh! That realm has paintings too?" Alex asked.

"Amongst other things, yes. Paintings are actually the majority of what is there," the headmaster said.

"I see," Alex mused to himself. "Then I must visit that place soon. But then why are there students trying to learn Dao here?"

"Umm... " the headmaster hesitated a bit. "It's actually quite expensive to go there. They charge based on the days you want to stay inside and trying to learn Dao in a short time is not exactly a very easy task."

"So most of them spend what they can there, and then try to come here to follow through to learn whatever else they missed," the headmaster said.

"It's the same as going to a fancy restaurant to eat an expensive meal, only to then go to another cheaper restaurant to fill yourself up because you are still hungry by the end."

Alex chuckled a bit at the explanation. "I understand now," he said. "So the painting can help the painter hone their Intent, and it can help others learn Dao from it, huh? Honestly, I never imagined the paintings to be this good. Had I not come, I would have thought it to be a complete waste, this and the cooking school."

"I can assure you, they are not," the headmaster smiled. "If it was useless, this place would have been shut down ages ago."

Alex nodded.

"Also, painting is not just a way to hone your Intent, but it can also help in learning the dao for the painter themselves," the headmaster said. "It can be a form of meditation where you lose yourself in the paintings for hours and hours on end."

"While your hand and brush wander on the canvas, your mind can wander on the concept of what you are trying to learn. Honestly, it is one of the best ways to try and learn a Dao. Even more so than looking at paintings from others themselves I would say."

Alex gave a surprised look. That sounded quite good now that he thought about it. He had the Dao pills, but this wouldn't hurt to do either.

Learning Dao and honing Intent at the same time sounded quite good to him.

"I'm assuming one needs to have a talent in painting before they can start honing their intent," Alex said.

"They don't exactly need the talent to hone their intent," the Headmaster said. "While it can help, there have been objectively bad paintings with great intents to them. However, it does make it hard for the person looking at the painting to get a clear picture of what is going on, and as such the intent that comes through the painting can be a little confusing at times."

"I see," Alex said, thinking of learning some painting skills soon.

A building appeared in the distance just then, one that was more of a tower than anything.

"That is our Hall of Fame, your majesty," the man introduced the building. "That is where we keep the best of the best paintings that have been made throughout the entirety of our school's existence."