

## Alchemy 1451

Chapter 1451: Some Alone Time

Alex opened his eyes, having learned the Dao of Ductility.

It took him just a moment to quickly figure out the applications of the dao. Aside from making it vastly easier to create strings out of metals during artifact creations, he could also now make his Metal attacks thin without losing much damage.

It was the same with Dao of Malleability that he had learned so long ago.

As soon as he opened and stopped thinking about his Dao, Alex realized that the coldness he felt in his body had deepened. He felt the coldness for a while.

"6 days?" he thought. That was the amount of time that would have passed for his body to gather this much, Yin. It was hard to judge exactly as he didn't remember how much Yin his dantian had when he started learning about the Dao.

He had been so focused on it that he didn't took the effort to remember anything else.

"Surely 2 weeks haven't passed," he thought. He closed his eyes and started cultivating to get rid of the Yin Qi in his body.

Getting rid of the stronger Yin Qi took some time, and by the time he was done with it he remembered that he had missed his appointment with Lady Zhan.

"I told her we could meet just a week later," he thought and sighed. There wasn't anything else he could do. He would miss that meeting every single time if it meant learning a new dao.

He walked out and decided asked one of the attendants there the time. It was close enough to the time of one of the teleportation, so he left.

He walked out of the formation platform outside the secret realm some time later and quietly made his way back toward the palace.

There was someone that wanted to take him back, but Alex didn't let him. He wanted to go back alone.

It had been a while since he had found some time to himself, where he could just walk around the city without anyone else to follow him.

"How long has it been since I've been to a city?" he thought. He couldn't remember. "Has it been a year?"

The last time he could remember was the city before Brightfalls City in the Emerald Kingdom. And even those visits were with other people, guided by tour guides all the way through.

That was no fun at all. Not like this one.

He took a deep breath and walked on his own. At some point, he saw the sun slowly go down toward the west, shining what he realized was the water of the Azure Lake.

'Azure Lake,' he thought and decided to visit there too. It wouldn't take him that long to go there anyway.

He arrived at the city and walked through the sidepaths. Walking down the streets gave me a much better understanding of the city than a carriage ride could ever.

He walked around, looking at the various shops and stores he wasn't going to buy from. He sighed and continued walking.

He roamed the city all the way until night fell and finally decided to go to Azure Lake.

The Azure Lake would have been fit more to be called the Azure Sea. It was multiple kilometers wide, with the other shore of the lake barely visible because of how small it was.

Lanterns glowed all around the side of the lake, lighting up the shore for the people that visited at night.

Alex took a deep breath and immediately realized that there was something mixed into the air. He could tell from the distinct smell that it wasn't a normal smell at all.

He couldn't figure out just what the smell was, but he did figure out that it was of no harm. Instead, it gave a peaceful mind to anyone who breathed in this substance, giving them a serene calm that everyone boasted the lake had.

'I wasn't aware it was because of this air,' Alex thought. It was probably something that many of the higher-status people were aware of but were simply not talking about it.

Alex walked along the edge of the shore to try and find a source of the smell, but he couldn't. He could only imagine that it was something that the first Dragon Emperor and the Azure Dragon had used when making this artificial lake.

He walked around the lake thinking about various things, one of which was about the Daos that he wanted to learn.

He judged his own recent experience and came to a conclusion that he would have come to had he given it any more thought.

"I can't just learn Dao," he thought. "I cannot just force myself into learning the mysteries of the world."

That was what he had tried to do from the various paintings and objects he had seen in the secret realm.

"I will need to at least have some understanding of the subject before going in. That way, I can learn it easily," he thought. "Just like I did today."

After thinking for a bit, he nodded to himself and made sure to not try and look through everything that interested him more than just find out what they were.

The ones he truly had to spend his time on were the ones that he was already familiar with.

After coming up with the thought, he stopped giving much of his attention to the Dao and instead enjoyed his time at the Azure Lake.

It was a while before the Azure King came and found him.

"Your majesty! What are you doing here all alone?" he asked.

"Just checking the lake," Alex said. "Are you here to take me back?"

The King nodded. "I heard you left the secret realm all alone today. Did you succeed in learning the Dao?" he asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "It was easy as I had learned about it for a long time now. All I needed to do was gain that dao."

"Ah! Congratulations," the king said. "It isn't easy for many to learn dao that easily. Your Majesty learning it in just 15 days of entering."

'15 days,' Alex thought.

"Did my Elders leave the secret realm?" he asked.

"Once, after 9 days," the king said. "They returned the very next day, so they should still be inside."

"I see," Alex said. "That's good to hear. Let them spend their time learning. We should be returning now."

The king nodded. "Let us returned then," he said and quickly took Alex back to the palace.

"Do you wish to stay and talk about your Dao, your Majesty?" the King asked after they entered the palace.

Alex smiled. "I would like to take my rest for now," he said, rejecting the king's offer. He was about to leave when he remembered something.

"Ah! Can you let Lady Zhan know that I am free to talk with her tomorrow? I promised her a meeting a week ago, but I couldn't keep it at all."

"Oh!" the Azure King said with a startled voice. "Lady Zhan is no longer here, your majesty. She returned to her home in the Ebony Kingdom a week ago."

Chapter 1452: Learning about other Daos

"Oh, Lady Zhan left already?" Alex asked in surprise. "I would have thought she would wait for me to discuss the pills with me."

"I believe she had some success in her pill," the king said.

"Oh, did she? Good for her," Alex said. "But then... why rush home? Is one of her family members sick or something?"

"I don't believe so," the King said, thinking for a bit.

"Well, that's not something for us to think about," Alex said. "I will go rest for now."

"As you wish, your Majesty," the king said.

Alex went to his room and cultivated overnight, even bringing out Pearl and Whisker to let them cultivate as well. He let them know about the insides of the secret realm and the new Dao he learned.

The very next day, he went back once again.

He found Yao Ning easily in the Metal section of the realm. As for Liang Shufen, he didn't find her at all.

She was either in an obscure location of the realm, looking at paintings and objects of weird importance, or she was in one of the rooms at the edges learning Dao.

Either way, Alex didn't worry about her and quickly went back to the Metal section to see if he could learn a lot more about the various Metal Dao.

Aside from the Dao of Magnetism, there turned out to be only a single dao from the Metal Dao that he had yet to learn about. To his surprise, it turned out to be the Dao of Conduction.

Alex already knew about the Dao of Heat Conduction, so he didn't think it would be that much harder to learn about the Dao of Conduction. However, he couldn't have been more wrong.

Not only did he need to be well-learned in the conduction of Heat in Metal to learn the Dao, he also needed to be well-learned in the conduction of Lightning in Metal.

Alex shook his head when he remembered that he did know about this dao beforehand. It had just been so long that he had forgotten about it.

Dao of Conduction was one of the Daos that Bai Jingshen had told Alex that he knew back when he appeared as Shen Jing.

After spending the entire day in the Metal section, Alex finally left and went to the next section, which was Wood.

From the very start, it was a question of whether he should even spend his time in this place at all. With how bad his Wood Spiritual root was, there was little point in trying to learn.

Still, Alex went in with little hope in his heart that he would get something out of this visit. If nothing, he could at least learn of a few Dao and maybe work toward it in the future.

The fact that Wood Dao had the most sub-Daos of all did not help Alex's cause at all.

Not only was Wood responsible for its own Dao, but it was also responsible for its variants such as Wind, Lightning, and even Sound.

Learning about the Dao of Wood and the Dao of plants was already hard enough. Adding things such as Gale, Rot, thunder, Music, Swiftiness, Stillness and many other Dao made it almost impossible for Alex to understand much of what was going on at all.

Alex spent 2 days in the Wood section before leaving the place out of frustration.

The next section was the Earth section, and it was filled with Daos that Alex found easy to understand but hard to master.

Dao of Earth was something he had already learned about. So if he tried to for a few days, he was certain he could learn the Dao of Sand or Dao of Soil too.

But he didn't want to spend his few days here trying to gain the dao when he could do that when he was outside.

After learning as much as he could about the two Dao, he moved on to the more unfamiliar ones and tried to understand what they meant.

The Dao of Crystal was a dao pertaining to the quartz and other crystals that formed inside of the earth.

The Dao of Glass was a dao that was related to the Dao of Sand which could be used to turn to glass.

The Dao of Mineral was also a dao pertaining to minerals that formed inside of the earth.

The Dao of Gravity was the first dao that did not have to do with the physical appearance or property of Earth.

The Dao of Hardness was the dao that understood the Essence of being as durable as the rock itself.

The Dao of Heaviness was the dao that understood the Essence of being as Heavy as the mountains themselves.

After going through these various Daos in what took him 4 days, Alex walked out and went for the final section of the 5 elements, the Water section.

Alex knew absolutely nothing about Water dao. Having been born in a place where Oceans weren't a thing, he never really knew much about water.

Even now, there wasn't much he knew about water as he knew about Fire, Earth, Metal, or even Wood for that matter.

So, the trip through the Water section ended with gaining almost nothing out of it.

He learned a thing or two about the various daos that he could learn from them.

The Dao of Water, the Dao of Steam, the Dao of Ice, the Dao of Mist, and a few others. But he still struggled to understand the other ones that should have been so obvious to him.

'Later,' he thought to himself and walked out of the Water section.

In total, he had spent nearly 27 days inside of the secret realm already, and in 3 days, it would be time for him to leave.



With 3 days to go, Stanley entered the Yin section.

As soon as he was in there, he felt uncomfortable. Perhaps it was because of his body, or just because this was Yin, but he felt a weird atmosphere here that he didn't feel elsewhere.

As soon as he saw the very first item, he understood why that was.

On the very first object was a sealed corpse of a beast, slowly decaying. It was sealed inside a spherical glass container, the beast being a large fox-type animal, based on what remaining hindlimbs he could see.

The beast was decaying, but it would never fully decay as it had been stopped in time, the decay lasting forever now.

However, it wasn't just decaying because it was dead either.

Alex could tell that the decay happened because of someone's Dao. He could feel a strong intent coming from the corpse that was decaying the beast.

'Dao of Decay,' Alex thought immediately. He didn't even have to really feel it or understand it to know what it was. He just knew that was what it was.

Decay.

He felt repulsed by the sight of the decay and the intent behind it. That was the weird atmosphere he had been feeling.

He shook his head and quickly walked away to the other parts of the Yin section.

The very next section he arrived at had a painting with a strong aura of Darkness.

Corruption was how Godslayer had described Darkness's aura. Corruption of everything that was good and moral.

Shadow darkens things, but Darkness corrupts them, that was what Alex needed to remember. He looked at the painting for a long time, trying to understand the corruption, to try and see the darkness.

Could he really understand anything from here? He wasn't sure, but he tried.

"What's going on? Darkness? Huh?" Godslayer woke up in a hurry as the Intent Alex took in entered his Spiritual sea.

"Ah, my bad. Weren't you asleep?" Alex asked.

"I was, but I woke up. Did you find the Darkness aura as I asked?" Godslayer asked.

"No, I was just looking at a painting drawn with the Intent that held Darkness aura," Alex said. "I'm trying to see if I can learn anything."

"You better not," Godslayer said immediately. "Unless you want to turn like me, unable to discern right from wrong, forever stuck with a single goal to kill all gods."

"Oh," Alex said. "But don't you still have that goal? Albeit a little less."

"No," Godslayer said. "My new goal isn't so much one-tracked. I'm not only looking for vengeance. To kill the ones that I know are my enemy... and to find out why they are."

Alex was surprised by the seriousness in Godslayer's voice. "You do not remember anything prior to your corruption?" he asked.

"Just bits and pieces, I think. Faces and names," Godslayer said. "Not something I want to talk about right now."

"Ah, okay," Alex said. He began explaining to Godslayer where he was and what he was doing.

After listening to him, Godslayer gave a single suggestion to Alex.

"Don't learn too many Daos before reaching immortality."

It took a bit of explaining from Godslayer, but Alex managed to understand what he meant.

Dao was something that made one able to cross the threshold to immortality. But it was also something that could be a crutch.

Each Dao had tribulation lightning associated with it that one would have to face. If Alex continued learning as many Dao as he could, he would have to face dozens of tribulation lightnings, each stronger than the last.

And that could be the thing that failed him from becoming an Immortal.

The heavens truly did not allow for something good to exist at all.

Alex accepted Godsayers's advice, and after just briefly looking through the secret realm, he got out.

#### Chapter 1453: City of Gold

"I hope you will be returning here again, your Majesty," Long Weiyuan said, standing in front of the flying boat that was ready to take away Alex and the others to the Gold Kingdom.

The Goldheart City was about a half-a-day ride from where they were right now, and the scenic route they were taking would most likely make it last longer.

Alex planned on having it take the entire day.

"Of course," Alex answered the Azure King. "I have many more Daos that I plan on learning from here."

After Godslayer's words, he had planned on no longer randomly learning many Daos. But he still wanted to learn a few that would aid him in the long run.

Learning Dao after becoming an Immortal was said to be a rather difficult task, but Alex was sure he could do it. It was more important to make sure that he made it to the Immortal Realm than anything else.

The ship flew away, making its way to the destination.

Along the path were many other cities that they had to fly over. Alex saw the various cities and was quite amazed by how different they all were from each other and from the cities in the Emerald Kingdom.

It took them nearly 11 hours to cross the Azure Kingdom and enter the land of the Gold Kingdom. It became apparent when they entered the Gold Kingdom as they had to pass a small mountain range that spanned all the way to the west.

From what Alex remembered of the map he saw, this mountain range would bend and end up becoming the mountain range that blocked off the Silver Kingdom from the rest of the kingdom.

The mountain range had a lot of vegetation and similarly also held a lot of beasts. There were enough beasts here despite the people that hunted them or tried to capture them to sell.

However, the ones that did so were people with weaker cultivation bases as the beasts here weren't particularly strong, especially when compared to a location like the Beast Paradise.

Crossing the mountain range, Alex saw a region that was somewhat sparse on trees. It wasn't exactly barren, but it wasn't fertile either from the looks of it.

From what the general that was with him said, this region's soil had a lot of metal in the soil, so they weren't very good for plants.

Alex had started feeling the drop in temperature at this point, and a bit later, he saw the first sign of snow.

The land was a little more fertile here and the snow was not as much. However, the further north they went, the more snowy it got.

At some point, they even came across a snowstorm. It wasn't dangerous enough to hamper their journey, but it did stop them from seeing anything around them.

The ship continued on its path as well-experienced soldiers flew it forward. When they came out on the other side of the snowstorm, one of the soldiers exclaimed.

"We are here!" she said. "Goldheart City."

Alex quickly looked up front as well and saw the city in the distance.

Surrounded by soaring mountains, in the middle of a thick settlement of snow, there lay a city that stepped in golden splendor. The morning sun shined on the city, reflecting a deep golden light everywhere around it, making it look all that more mystical.

Alex stood and looked at the city more closely.

The city was large, surrounded in a nearly invisible barrier that stopped excessive snow from getting in. The inside of the city was dense with buildings, all of which were golden in color.

When he got close, he realized that it wasn't just golden in color, but rather that it was actual gold. The buildings were covered in gold.

In fact, the entire city was covered in nothing but gold at every place that it could be covered with gold.

"So this is Goldheart city, huh?" Alex said. "Also known as the city of Gold."

The ship landed in the snow where a path had been made by cultivators and carriage that regularly made their way to the city.

Alex got off and looked at the city that was in front of him. From this close, the magnificence of the city only increased in everyone's eyes.

The two elders next to him were also just as surprised.

Alex's eyes moved to the mountain that surrounded it to the north. The mountain looked non-descript. In fact, the entire mountain range was of barely any importance to anyone's eyes when the city of Gold stood in front of them.

However, any decently informed person would be interested in this mountain range and even place quite a bit of importance in this mountain range, which was what gave birth to the City of Gold.

After all, this was the Golden Mountain range. The mountain underneath which was a large gold vein that spanned hundreds of kilometers.

"Your majesty!" a man walked up to him and the others. "Welcome to this humble one's city."

"King Tan, it's nice to see you again," Alex said with a smile.

"It is a pleasure of this one to meet you again, your majesty. Thank you for gracing this one's kingdom," the Golden King said.

King of the Gold Kingdom, Tan Qiu was a lean man with a thin mustache. He didn't speak more than what was necessary and liked to remain unassuming.

The clothes he wore, while covered in gold, still somehow didn't made him look like a royal at all. His clothes were also a little baggy and gave no indication as to the king's physical shape on whether he was muscular or not.

The two members of the Head legion army greeted Alex as well as the elders behind him. Once the simple greeting were passed along, they all got onto a carriage to go to the palace.

As soon as they all entered the city's borders and entered the massive formation, Alex and the rest immediately felt the change in temperature.

The city was so much warmer on the inside.

"Are you running some sort of formation to generate heat in the city?" Alex asked immediately.

"No," Tan Qiu answered. "The city has a formation to keep heat, but not to generate it."

"Oh," Alex said. "Then this warmth, where does ti come from?"

"There is a layer of magma beneath this land that heats it up at all times. That is where we got it from," the King said. "The formation is made to stop that heat from leaking away too fast."

"Oh!" Alex said with a bit of a surprised look. "There is lava running underneath this region?" he couldn't help but ask.

"Yes," the king said.

"That's... something," Alex said. He wasn't surprised by the fact that lava was running underneath the ground here, but the fact that it happened here as well.

That was the exact thing that happened in the Northern Continent as well, which was where many people lived in.

"Are there many such regions in this land?" Alex asked.

"With lava flowing underneath the city?" the king asked. "Yes. In fact, every single major city here is exactly like that."

#### Chapter 1454: Into the Palace

Alex wondered what was the connection between the Northern Continent and the Eastern Continent. How was it that both of these continents had similar geographies in the colder regions?

Why was there, not a single hot region where lava flowed underneath a land, warming it up more than the other pieces of land?

The thing that concerned him more was that he had a certain feeling that these were not the only two places he knew where something like this happened. He had a feeling he saw something in the inheritance he received.

However, he didn't want to check it at all.

He ignored his concerns and looked around at the city.

Compared to most other cities he had been this, this one seemed a lot more cramped. The size of the roads was small, the houses stacked next to each other with not a bit of space in between.

The houses were all covered in gold as if liquid paint had been used to cover them. Other than that, golden drawings were inscribed where there wasn't any paint.

Golden this and golden that. It was all golden in this city, which had given it the name.

"You came at a very opportune moment, your majesty," one of the two guards of the King said.

"Outsider population at Goldheart is at an all-year low. You will have a very easy time going through the Golden Mine."



"Your next month of mining should have no problem," the other guard said as well.

"Is that so?" Alex asked. "And the auction starts in 2 months, right? So I will have 2 months to go through the mine?"

"Yes, but I will suggest you do not spend more than a month inside the mountain. During the final month, people will start gathering for the Auction and the mountain is where they will go to visit every single time."

"I see," Alex said. "I will leave if I feel like I've stayed there enough. Speaking of Auction though, I'm very curious about this auction. Do you think it will have something for me too?"

"I..." The two guards hesitated a bit.

"I'm sure you will find something of interest in the Auction, your Majesty," the King spoke finally. "If not something of interest, I'm sure you will at least find entertainment."

Alex nodded. "That's not bad. I don't really believe there will be anything here that is going to be worth my attention. As long as I have a fun time, I will consider this a successful visit," he said.

It was a rather arrogant declaration in front of the King of the Golden Kingdom, but that was what he felt like, so there wasn't any reason for him to worry.

He doubted there was much in this city for him and he let them all know.

"Don't know the possibility just yet, your majesty," the King said. "You never know what you will come across here. Speaking about that, will you be participating in the auction by any chance?"

"Of course i— ah, you mean as the seller," Alex asked.

"Yes, as one of the people that provides for the auction. Do you have anything that you will get rid of that others will be happy to get their hands on?" the king asked.

Alex thought for a bit and shook his head. "I'm afraid that I don't have anything on me that I can give away," he said. Anything he could, he would rather give to his own family.

"What about pills?" the king asked somewhat excitedly. "An alchemist like you would definitely make one of the best pills out there."

"That I can do," Alex said. "Sure, if I have some time, I cook up a few pills to sell to the others. I can add to people's enjoyment."

The king gave a small smile and nodded.

"I'm sure you will be more than happy to do it," he said. "It will be in the spirit of the auction."

Alex said nothing and looked around. He looked at the many houses and buildings and soon reached a river that was not a river.

A blue glacier flowed through the city, going perpendicular to the largest road in the city. It, along with the road, cut the city into four different. Quadrants.

The corner of the 2nd Quadrant was where the palace was.

Alex and the others were welcomed into the palace. The palace was also golden inside and outside, with more gold than anywhere else in the city.

Each piece of furniture, each door handle, and each painting frame were all made out of gold. It got to the point that Alex wondered if it was just a little too much.

The King took Alex to a hall where he provided him with some refreshments. The King didn't really seem to want to hold a conversation, but the other two heads weren't of the same mind.

They wanted to learn more about Alex and asked questions which Alex continued answering without much hesitation.

The king also tried to participate with questions of his own, but it was clear that he wasn't the social type at all. He would rather not have to deal with people if possible.

"Your majesty came from a long journey, so it would be wrong of us to keep you here for any further. Let me take you to your resting area," the king said.

King Tan himself stood up and led Alex and the two elders toward the guest rooms where they would be staying.

He showed the elders the room and took Alex to his.

Alex entered the room and saw more golden items. He could only sigh at the sight.

"Please rest for now, your majesty," the king said. "I will prepare for your trip to the mines in the next few days as per your wish."

"I can leave tomorrow," Alex said.

"Then I can have it set up for tomorrow," the king said. "Rest well, your majesty. You will be mining for a long time starting tomorrow."

#### Chapter 1455: The Gold Mine

"People consider the mining here to be a traditional thing more than actual labor," King Tan explained to Alex in a very unenthusiastic voice. "I do not know when it started, but it has been here for a very long time."

"I don't believe it was a tradition at the start. It was nothing but a way for people here to earn their living."

"At that time, the mine wasn't fully developed and they only mined the outside parts where there wasn't much gold. However, when they dug in deeper one day, they found that there was way more gold in there and had the entire town dig here for days."

"The gold they dug was enough to bring them all out of poverty, to make them rich enough not just to buy their necessities, but to also buy resources that would help them on their cultivation journey."

"After that, the mining became even more intense and after some time, they didn't need to do much at all. They made the city better and started dragging in people from all over the continent to come and buy the gold here."

"The city had so much gold that they couldn't maintain the flow. So, at some point, the person that ruled the city at the time setup an event in which they could sell as much gold as they could."

"The event would last for a month and would bring the city all the riches they could ever want."

"After some time, the event no longer brought in as much people as most people already bought all the gold they could. Due to the abundance, the value of gold also lowered quite a bit."

"So, they had to think of other ways to bring in more people or else the city would go back to being poor again."

"That was when someone came up with the idea to charge people to mine for gold. In exchange, the person would be allowed to take away half the gold they mined. Since the city had an abundance of gold, this was a good way to bring not just a flow of money, but also a flow of tourist to the city."

"Since they would mine gold for the city, they were more than happy to let the others work for them. Of course, that meant that the event they had set up a few years earlier would now have to be stopped."

"Since everyone could now mine for gold on their own, barely anyone would come to an event where they could buy gold. That was simply idiotic."

"However, to the town, the event had become something to look forward to every year and they didn't want to let go of it. In an attempt to save it, they changed the event."

"Instead of selling just gold, they started selling whatever they could think of selling. This became an attraction for the tourists who came to the city as they would spend a month searching for whatever they could find."

"It became big enough that others came and started selling what they wanted right here. Soon enough, it became a festival for everyone to follow. It became difficult for people to follow every year, so it was changed to become every 10 years."

"Except, it would be much larger, much more important. At the same time, instead of just selling, it became an auction where anyone with money could buy it all."

"That is how the Golden auction came to be, and is now one of the most important events in all of time," the King said.

"Woah!" Alex exclaimed. "I wasn't aware there was such intricate history between the mining, the city, and the auction. This makes me appreciate it all the more."

"Yes," the king said. "This mine was what let us survive, so we all celebrate it by doing what they did. We mine here and go to the auction afterwards."

"How many people do you think will be arriving?" Alex asked.

"Impossible to say," the king said. "There are so many that we will soon have to start setting up places for people to stay in. We will most likely hold smaller auctions outside the city too, leaving only the major ones on the inside."

"How many auctions will there even be?" Alex asked.

"About 70 different ones altogether," the King said. "You won't be visiting it all."

"I can guess that," Alex said. He looked at the snowless path he walked on to climb the mountain alongside the king, his elders and the few soldiers.

They arrived at the top of the mountain, at the mouth of the mine. "These people here will tell you everything you need to know about the mines. They are more aware of the inside than me, so I will let them take it from here."

"Thank you for your assistance, king Tan," Alex said. "You can let others handle it from here. You can go ahead and spend your time preparing for the Golden auction."

The king nodded and gestured Alex to continue to on.

Alex nodded back and turned to go along to the mouth of the mine where he could already feel a deep metal aura from inside the mine.

'There must be a huge deposit of gold here if they have been mining for ages and still haven't run out of it,' he thought.

"Welcome, your majesty," the man at the gate spoke up. "It is a pleasure of mine to have met you."

Alex looked at the young man and smiled. "What do we need to know about inside exactly?" he asked and looked at the other people that the other guards were handling. "Do I have to leave my storage bags at the gate too?"

"Of course not," the man said. "Who would dare ask your majesty to not get all the gold you can."

Alex smiled. "Alright, go on," he said, waiting for the man to continue speaking.

"There are mainly 3 rules that you have to remember and follow just for the sake of others," the man said.

"First, please do not fight inside the mine. I don't think this is very necessary as one would have to be an idiot to start a fight with you."

"Second, please set up a base where you will mine, and do not invade the spaces where others have already set up a base to mine."

"And finally, please mine in narrow paths. If you make a wide path, there is a chance of the mine collapsing, so for the sake of stability, keep the mine as constrained as possible."

Alex listened to the rules and nodded. "These aren't so bad," he said. "I can follow it easily."

"Thank you, your majesty," the man said. "You can go in whenever you wish now. I wish you all the best in your mining results."

Alex smiled. "You all got that right?" he asked his elders.

"Yes, your majesty," the two Elders said.

"Good," Alex said. "We will now enter."

He walked into the golden mine along with the two elders and quickly made his way deeper. After they went in, the 3 of them split up, going in their own direction.

Alex planned on being alone for the month he was here.

Chapter 1456: The Collapsed Wall

A week passed easily inside the mine where Alex actually spent his time mining.

He had set up a base deep inside the mine and had mined there for a week. As someone who had been to the Endless Tunnels where the strong Starforged Tungsten ore was damn near impossible to mine, the Golden mine felt like a walk in the park.

All he had to do was heat up the wall in front of him in a small radius up to a certain temperature and the gold would simply melt down the wall, forming clumps in the bottom.

Once the gold was out of the mine wall, Alex could use just a bit of Qi to strip the wall of any other material, clearing it up, and showing a new wall behind it.

He continued doing this for an entire week before he stopped. He had collected plenty of gold and he didn't feel like he needed any more of it.

The Yin Qi in his dantian was also piling up and he needed to take care of it.

Alex looked toward Pearl and Whisker that were next to him and asked, "Do you still want to continue mining?"

Pearl nodded. "I don't really want to cultivate, so I'll continue mining," he said.

Alex shrugged and let him. Whisker wanted to do so too, so the two beasts continued mining while Alex simply cultivated.

There wasn't much else to do inside the mine so he brought out some ingredients and started practicing with them. He still had the Wood pill to make and the Spirit pill to downgrade.

He continued making the pill, focusing every so often on the progress in the mine. The two beasts were strong enough that they could move the mines many meters in a single day.

Alex looked back and could see that they had moved hundreds of meters from the original portion. And there were hundreds and hundreds more meters to go up front.



Alex went back to cultivating and learning about the ingredients while the two beasts focused on mining.

Alex could vaguely tell that another 2 weeks had passed, in which time they had come another hundred meters further. It was only a week more before they were supposed to walk out.

However, the monotonous journey here ended when Pearl smashed the wall and it came crumbling down to reveal an opening on the other side.

Alex was surprised by the sound and looked toward the wall to see that it wasn't there anymore. What was there was dust and glittering gold in the air, illuminated by light coming from the other side.

It wasn't natural light, however, and was instead lantern light that hung from the ceiling. There was a more spacious room on the other side of the wall and in it sat a young man whose eyes were wide with surprise at the sudden collapse of the wall.

The young man seemed around the same age as Alex and had long braided hair coming down his side. He wore a golden robe that was completely covered in gold from head to toe.

He had a pretty face, which right now had an open mouth as the young man was in shock.

The young man was seated on a chair with a leg perched on top of his other leg. He held something in his hands that looked a lot like a brush.

Alex quickly stood up and cleared away his station before walking up front. He looked around the other side of the wall and realized that he had come crashing into the base of someone else.

"My apologies, brother," Alex said quickly. "I didn't realize that there was—"

Alex's words stuck to his mouth when he realized something. He looked at the man, especially his eyes. They were staring at something.

Alex looked in the direction of where he was looking and saw Pearl.

At first, Alex didn't think much. However, the very next moment he realized something that he should have worried about from the start.

Pearl's fur was white.

"Is that white... tiger yours?" the young man asked.

"Shit!" Alex realized he had made a mistake. Midnight flew out of his storage ring and he teleported next to the young man with the sword next to his neck.

"Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait," the young man shouted in panic. "Don't kill me. Don't kill me."

Alex frowned a little. "Make an oath right away that you will never reveal to anyone what you saw here today," he said.

"I promise, I do. I don't know what you are talking about, but I will never tell anyone what happened here today. I promise," he quickly said.

Alex felt the oath slowly settle on the young man and finally sighed.

"Pearl, eat your pill please," Alex said.

"My pill?" Pearl asked before quickly looking down and seeing his own fur. "Oh!"

He quickly pulled out a pill from the storage bracelet he always wore and ate the pill. Within seconds, the white fur on his body turned slick and darkened to the point that it became black.

At that point, Pearl was barely recognizable from the white tiger he was just moments ago.

"Woah! That is so cool," the young man in the chair said. "Wait, don't kill me. I won't tell anyone."

Alex pulled away the swords and placed them into his storage bag. "I won't hurt you now that you have spoken the oath," he said. He moved forward and took Pearl into his beast storage.

It was better to keep him away.

Whisker climbed up onto him and settled on top of his shoulders, looking around from there. He looked back at the gold and wanted to gather them, but he had to wait for whatever was happening here to be done with.

Alex looked at the young man and frowned a little. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "You don't seem to be mining at all."

"I wasn't mining," the young man said, raising his hand to show the brush he held. "I was painting."

He looked to his right at the rubbed where his canvas lay.

"Oh, my apologies if my beasts caused your painting to be ruined," Alex quickly said.

"That's alright," the young man said. "I hadn't started yet."

"I see. That is good," Alex said. "What were you drawing exactly? The mine?"

"No, a mountain," the young man said.

"A mountain?" Alex asked with a confused look. "Why not draw it outside where you can see the mountain."

"I wanted the mountain to be made up of gold," the young man said.

"Okay..." Alex said. "You could just use golden paint to draw the mountain outside then."

"How am I supposed to understand what gold's aura is like if I stay outside?" the young man said. "I needed to be here to understand gold's aura, Metal's aura. Only by learning it all can I make my next masterpiece."

"A masterpiece that will certainly enter the Hall of Fame once again," the young man said.

"Once again?" Alex was a little surprised and turned curious. "May I know what your name is, brother?"

"Me?" the young man turned to Alex. "I am Tian Honglui. What is your name, brother?"

Chapter 1457: Tian Honglui

"You are Tian Honglui?" Alex asked the young man with an amazed expression on his face.

"Hehe, have you heard of me?" the young man asked in a gleeful expression.

"I have," Alex said. "I have seen both of your paintings in the Hall of Fame. The Player's Descent and the Lightning God's Anger."

"Oh, you've been to the Hall of Fame, brother?" the young man said with a slightly surprised face. "You must be someone important to have been let in there."

"You could say that," Alex said softly. "Do you not know who I am?"

"Nope!" the young man said. "Should I?" He looked Alex up to down, judging him for a moment. "I can't really place you from anywhere at all."

"I assume you haven't been up to date with the continent's news for the past 3 years then," Alex said.

"Oh no," the young man said. "I've barely left this place for the past 3 years."

"I suppose you can't make a masterpiece without putting in the work. I'm sorry my beasts disturbed you," Alex said.

"That's alright," the young man said. "I'll just go back to learning about the Metal aura."

Alex got a little curious. "What do you want to learn about the Metal aura?" he asked.

"Do you know about the metal aura?" the young man asked.

Alex moved his hands and Metal Qi flowed out of it to form a small image of a sword. At the same time, the Metal aura from around the room coalesced in his hand, adding intricacies to the sword that wasn't previously present.

"Woah! Is that... dao of Metal?" the young man asked. "Is that what is it?"

"It is," Alex said.

"Can you teach me about the Meatl aura, brother?" Tian Honglui asked.

"I can," Alex said. "But are you sure you want to learn it from me? If I teach you about it, it will be harder for you to learn the Dao."

"No, no. Don't teach me directly," the young man said. "Just use your aura so that it is stronger than the aura in the mine. If I can notice stronger Metal aura, then I'm sure I will learn Metal aura within 2 months."

Alex shrugged. "I can, but what can you do in return for me?" he asked.

"Uhh... what do you want from me, brother?" the young man asked. "Ooh, how about a painting? I have a few paintings with me that I can give to you in exchange for helping me."

"If not... I can always give you some money?" the young man said.

"No, I don't need your paintings or your money," Alex said. "Instead, I want your painting skills."

"My... skills?" the young man was a little confused.

"Yes," Alex said. "I want you to teach me how to paint."

"Oh, teaching... I'm not sure I'm the right person to teach anyone anything, brother," the young man said. "I don't really know what I'm doing really. I just do what I want and the thing comes out generally good."

"You can teach me whatever you want," Alex said. "Even if you fail to teach me altogether, I will accept that as my fault."

"Oh, okay then," the young man said. "But that will mean you will have to wait here for 2 months. Is that okay with you?"

"Yeah, that is fine with me," Alex said. "Except, wait. Why are we staying in here for 2 months?"

"To see if I can learn Metal aura enough to paint the golden mountain," the young man said.

"Yes, I understand that, but why 2 months?" Alex asked. "I have to leave this place in a week. I might be able to extend it to a month, but any more than that and I will miss the auction."

"Auction? Isn't that in 2 months?" the young man asked.

"No, it's in 5 weeks," Alex said.

"What!?" the young man suddenly got up from his seat. "Then I'm getting late. I must quickly draw the golden mountain, or else I won't have anything to sell."

The canvas flew out of the rubble, setting itself in front of the young man. The young man started clearing up the canvas and Alex went to seat on a giant rock next to him.

"Why are you in a hurry to complete it before the auction when you are looking to sent it to the Hall of Fame?" Alex asked.

"Hall of Fame?" the young man shook his head. "Not every painting gets into the hall of fame. I have made thousands of paintings and of those only 2 have made it, and those two are miralces by themselves."

"I can make paintings that are very good, but none that are worthy of the Hall of Fame. Its just that I try to make every single one as if they are going to be the next one, and that helps me do the best I can."

"I see," Alex said. "Your two paintings in the Hall of Fame were quite amazing. I will hope this Golden Mountain becomes as good."

"Thank you," the young man said. "And of course, if it doesn't, I'm still going to be rich selling it in the auction, so I have to do it before it starts."

"Ah, I see," Alex said. "I need to hurry along too. I have some pills to sell as well."

"Let us begin then," the young man said. "Can you show me your metal aura?"

"Sure," Alex said and brought out his Metal Qi while using the Dao of Metal with the strongest Intent he could manage at the moment.

The young man was a little surprised and looked at Alex for a second. He didn't imagine that someone that was barely at the 9th realm of Saint Core realm could bring out such a strong aura.

He smiled after seeing that. "You might just make for a great painter," he said and started focussing on the aura in front of him. He didn't have much time to learn as much as he could.

#### Chapter 1458: Intent

Alex sent out a steady stream of Metal Qi while doing his best to keep the Intent as strong as he could. The first few minutes were fine, but after that, he started noticing strain in his body that came from applying too much Intent.

He got a wild mental pain similar to when he had to deal with Intent from outside.

'What's going on?' he wondered. He had never had to send out Intent for this long, and it seemed to be causing some problems. At the same time, he noticed for the first time that his intent was causing his Spiritual Energy to decrease by a decent amount.

It wouldn't be very noticeable if the Intent usage was short, but this long he noticed the lack in his Spiritual energy. Either the spiritual energy was dealing with the ramifications of him sending out Intent, or it was fueling the Intent itself.

Either way, his spiritual energy was depleting and his Intent was the cause for it.

The speed at which his Spiritual energy depleted was slow enough that Alex could go on for multiple days without any problem.

However, he wasn't sure if he could. Before that, he would certainly have to stop because of all the pain.



He continued for as long as he could before stopping. He had to.

"What happened?" the young man was taken aback when he noticed Alex stop just a few hours in. "Are you alright?"

"Yes, I'm alright," Alex said. "I used my Intent for a bit too long. I have a slight headache. Do you mind if he rest for a bit before we start?"

"Oh, sure," the young man said. "Did you overuse your Intent?"

"Yes," Alex said. "I thought I could keep it going for longer, but it seems I only had a few hours in me."

"Oh, were you not aware that you can't do that?" the young man asked.

"I've never pushed my Intent to the full for this long before," Alex said. "I had only ever used it in bursts."

"Oh," the young man said. "Yeah, this is what happens generally. Although I'm surprised that you don't know this when your intent is this strong. Didn't you ever notice it when you make pills for a long time?"

"Made pills for a long time?" Alex thought to himself. "What does that have to do with this?"

"Uhh... everything?" the young man said. "You make pills, which you do by using your intent to make it happen. You do it for too long, you get a headache because you overused your intent."

"You make formations, you use Intent when you carve something."

"You make talismans, you use Intent when you draw the runes."

"You make artifacts, you use Intent throughout the whole process."

"You make paintings, you use Intent when you put the paint on the canvas."

"Everything we do is fueled by intent. You raise your hand, that's Intent. You move your legs, that's Intent. You use your Qi, that's Intent."

"Most of the time, you won't notice it much, because the things you do don't require much Intent from your side at all. Even if they do, your Intent is strong enough that the requirement becomes minuscule to you."

"However, even then when you do it for a long time, you start feeling the loss of Intent. Fatigue, headache, sleepiness. These are all side effects of you using your Intent for a long time."

"When you use a lot of your Intent, it manifests in various different ways, all negative."

"When you used it as fast as you did just now, the lack of Intent manifested as mental pain," the young man said. "And that is why your head hurts."

Alex's eyes went wide in shock when he heard that. He couldn't believe what he had been just told.

He had been led to believe that Spiritual energy was just spent when making pills or other things. but to think that it had instead been Intent that he had been using, which had spent his spiritual energy.

It was a wild thought to be forced to think all of a sudden, but Alex did and he was more than captivated by the information. Intent... there was so much about it that he still wasn't aware of.

'If everything that happens is because of Intent... just what else can it do?' he wondered.

His knowledge of intent grew by a large magnitude that day, but because he had been taught the information, there was no chance for him to gain any Dao from it.

Alex wasn't sure there was even any Dao on Intent, to begin with.

"Relax and rest for a while, brother," Tian Honglui said. "I will try and understand what I can from the Metal aura that you showed me for the past few hours. They are certainly way stronger than your normal Metal aura that is available in this mine, so I should be able to learn a lot more from it."

Alex nodded and sat down. He began to cultivate in order to rest while the painter in front of him did the same and tried to understand the Metal Qi.

After a while, once Alex felt the mental pain subside to the point that there was none of it anymore, he began providing Metal Qi for the young man to learn from once more.

Tian Honglui did the best he could to learn what he could from the aura and went back to meditating when Alex inevitably ran out of Intent.

This happened for a while, almost 5 whole days, before the young man understood what he felt was enough.

"I think I can make my painting now," he said and brought out his paint board.

Alex opened his eyes to the side, fully rested, and looked at the young man. He quickly stood up when he realized that he was about to start making the mountain.

He took a deep breath and removed his presence as much as he could in order to not pull away the young man's focus.

Tian Honglui closed his eyes for a few seconds. When he opened them back up, they were full of concentration. Then, he placed his brush on the canvas and drew a stroke.

A single stroke was left on the canvas with a golden color. The moment the brush left the paper, Tian Honglue drew another stroke on the other side, creating the initial sketch of the golden mountain.

While only partly into the Saint Core realm, the young man was certainly not the strongest person Alex had met, but the intent he was putting out was certainly something.

Alex could feel the stress each stroke took for the young man to make. He could feel the Intent of the young man to now draw a golden mountain, but rather a mountain of gold.

He was putting his all to make a painting that anyone could look at and tell that it was a painting of a mountain of gold.

Alex didn't just watch how the young man drew his painting. He consumed it.

He watched every stroke, every flick, and every little detail that went into drawing a painting.

A fast motion of hand, and a slow one. One where the brush merely touched on the canvas. One where the brush was pressed onto the canvas.

Alex looked at all of it.

And through it all, the young man produced as much Intent as he could.

The golden mountain slowly came to be. Once the base of the painting was made, the young man added details into it, showing not just the mountain but its shine and its shadows.

He added texture to the mountain, showing that the mountain wasn't a single piece of gold, but a large body with smaller golden rocks and stones scattered all around it.

He added clouds in the sky, showed where the sun was shining from. He added a river by the golden mountain and a forest at its base.

However, no matter what he added, all of them only added to the magnificence that was the golden mountain that stood tall at the center.

The young man added a few flying birds in the sky and stepped back with his arms spread to the side.

"I did it!" he said in absolute glee. "I made the Golden Mountain."

Alex felt the strong Metal aura coming from the golden mountain on the painting and was surprised just how much the young man had managed to learn without actually learning the Dao itself.

He took step back as well and saw the painting in its entirety and could feel the awe that came from the painting. He was more surprised than anything at how well the painting come to be.

"This... this is a masterpiece," he said.

"It is, isn't it?" the young man asked before quickly running back to the painting and activating some sort of formation that was on the back of the painting.

"What are you doing?" Alex asked.

"Activating a protective shield so that something doesn't accidentally destroys the painting," he said.

"Ah!" Alex thought and nodded. He watched as the young man packed up the painting and started trying to understand what he had just watched.

He hadn't been taught how to paint a painting at all. However, just now, he had been taught on how to make a masterpiece with Intent.

'Should I try?' he thought. He didn't think it would be too difficult to make a painting with a strong intent. Although, since he had already asked for a lesson, it would be better if he learned something before trying it out first.

"I am done, brother," the young man said. "I can leave now."

Alex nodded. It was still 2 days before it was time for him to leave, but there was nothing for him to do here anymore.

"Let us leave," Alex said and started walking out along with the young man.

They left the section of the mine and made it to the outside.

Tian Honglui took a deep breath of the fresh air. "Nothing like a breath that isn't filled with dusty smell or gold particles," he said. He walked toward the guards that were responsible for the storage bags and asked for his back.

After a few seconds, he was given back his storage bags and turned around toward Alex. "Did you get your bags, brother?" he asked.

Alex shook his head. "I didn't give them any to start with," he said and started walking away.

The young man looked at the guards who saw and heard everything and was surprised to see them no act at all when Alex walked away without taking anything.

The young man quickly ran up to Alex and whispered into his ears. "Did you give them the gold you got at least?" he asked.

"Why?" Alex asked. "Those are my gold now."

"Huh? No, I'm pretty sure that's not how it works," he said. "You need to give those gold back to them. Or else..."

"Or else what?" Alex asked, turning to look at the young man.

"Or else... I don't really know actually," he said. "I haven't ever seen anyone walk out of the mine without giving half of what they mined."

"First time for anything I guess," Alex said with a grin. It was fun teasing this young man, making him think he had seen someone do something illegal and yet completely fail to comprehend how he got away with it.

Alex had let the guard know that he was leaving on his own and to send his elders directly to the palace when they came out 2 days later.

"What do you even plan on doing with that much gold?" the young man continued.

"Whatever I want," Alex said. "Anyway, are you going to stop talking about it any time soon?"

"Oh, should I?" the young man asked. "Okay, I'll stop talking. Do you have anything you want to talk about?"

"Yes," Alex said. "About that painting of yours actually. It turned out great, but... is it Hall of Fame material?"

"I don't know," the young man said. "I will have to go and find out right now."

Alex smiled. "Mind if I come with you?"

#### Chapter 1460: Painting Guild

The young man led Alex into the city, walking amongst the severely crowded streets as they went toward a golden building with a giant set of words on the top.

Goldheart Painting Guild.

"Oh, a guild," Alex said softly. He knew about the guilds that existed throughout the continent, all of which belonged to the Imperial family.

He had seen almost all 10 different guilds with various levels of availability.

Painting Guild was one of the least available guilds in the entire continent because of how utterly useless it was for most people.

Tian Honglui entered proudly and was greeted by the ones that saw him. He greeted back and made his way inside.

Alex followed with him a step behind and the ones that saw him were simply speechless to even say anything. They couldn't trust their eyes and thus couldn't believe if the person they were seeing was truly the King of the Southern Continent or not.

It was made very clear nearly a month ago that Alex had arrived in the Gold Kingdom. That news had spread wide and nearly everyone knew about it.

So, everyone that saw Alex recognized him easily.

All, except Tian Honglui who had remained in the mountain and thus had no idea who he was.

The young man arrived in front of a room and knocked on the door. He waited for a moment before someone responded from inside, asking who it was.

"Senior, it's me, Honglui," the young man answered.

There was a few seconds of silence followed by a sudden opening of the door. An old man with long white hair walked out. "Honglui! You're back," he said quickly. "Did you do it?"

"Yes, but I'm not sure if I did it properly or not," he said. "Can you gather up some other painters so you can jud— senior? Where are you looking?"



He followed the old man's gaze and turned to see him looking at Alex who was standing at the side.

"Is that..."

"Oh, that's the person who helped me with the painting. He helped me understand Metal aura so I could make my painting," the young man said. "Let me introduce you to him. This is..."

Tian Honglui searched through his mind but no name came up. "Wait, I never asked you your name, did I?" he asked.

"No, you did not," Alex said.

"Ah! My apologies. I got distracted because of the painting I had to make," he said. "If it is not too much, would you mind introducing yourself?"

"You are King Alex, aren't you?" the old man asked.

Alex smiled. "I am," he said

"Your majesty," the old man immediately bowed toward Alex. "It is this one's pleasure to meet you. I never thought I would ever get to see you."

"Please straighten your back. I am not your king. You do not need to show me such respect," Alex said.

"No, I must," he said. "You are the messenger of her majesty the Phoenix. I cannot show any disrespect in your presence."

Alex found the old man quite intense but found it hard to tell him as such. "Please get back up."

Tian Honglui was still quite confused by all of what was happening. "You're... a King, brother?" he asked.

"I am," Alex said.

"You didn't—"

The old man slapped him in the back. "Don't call him brother. Call him 'your majesty'. He is a king," he said.

"Oh, you're right," the young man quickly said. "Your majesty is a king?"

"If I wasn't one, would you be calling me that?" Alex asked.

"Oh... so you are one?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," Alex said. "I am the king of the Southern Continent."

"Oh! That king. I remember now," the young man said. "No wonder. You didn't look like the other 6 Kings that I've met on some occasions."

"You have met the other kings, huh?" Alex asked.

"On occasions, yes," the young man said. "I can't believe I met a King from another Continent and didn't know about it."

"You need to start paying attention to news," the older man said.

"I will try," Tian Honglui said before turning to Alex. "Anyway, this is senior Ran. He... is the closest thing I will ever have to a teacher when it comes to painting."

"Oh," Alex said and turned to the old man. "You have taught him quite nicely, senior Ran."

"Of course not. It is all him doing it, I barely taught him anything," the old man said.

"Anyway, senior. I made the painting. Can you gather up the rest of the painters please? So they can judge my painting?" the young man asked.

"Sure, but it won't happen in a single day," the senior said. "It will take at least a week. Show me the painting first so we don't waste their time."

"Ah, right," The young man said and quickly brought out the painting that he made. He placed it in front of the old man and instantly, the corridor was filled with an intense aura of metal that permeated out of the young man's intent that he had carved into every stroke of the brush.

The strong aura made the old man falter a bit.

"This..." he couldn't help but say. "This is the best painting I have seen anyone make since your Lightning God's Anger."

The young man smiled. "Is it that good?" he asked. "Is it better?"

"It's..." the old man frowned a bit. "It is good, very good in fact. But... I'm not sure if I can say it is better or not. I can't even tell if it is good enough or not."

"If it was me, I would put it in the Hall of fame," the old man said. "But... since we need the other people's approval, we will have to wait."

"Oh, I see," the young man said. "Then I will wait."

He took away the painting. "It will take a week, correct?" he asked.

"Maybe more, not less," the young man said.

"Alright," the young man turned to Alex. "Your majesty wanted to learn about painting, correct? Come with me. I can help you get started."