

Alchemy 1501

Chapter 1501: Oathbreaker

"Kill the Dragon Emperor?"

Alex felt his heart skip a beat when he heard those words. He stared at the man in shock, trying to discern if any of it was a joke. However, his serious face made it plenty clear that it was not.

The man intended to kill the Dragon Emperor and he would go to any length to do it.

Even if it meant killing the ruler of another continent.

"You have quite the grand ambition," Alex said. "But... I'm not sure you will be able to do it the way you are right now. You will need much higher—"

Alex paused. He was about to say that they would need a much greater cultivation base than just this, but then he remembered that was the entire reason he was captured in the first place.

If not for that, he wouldn't have been here.

"Don't worry about our situation, Your Majesty," the man said. "You will just have to stay here until we have received the grand pills we are looking for."

Alex frowned a little. "Do you plan on letting me leave if you receive those pills?" he asked.

"Of course," the man said, his smile returning back to a gentle one. "We have no qualms with you. I doubt you will be here by the time we are ready to do what we wish to do."

"So you're just going to let me go?" Alex asked. "Even though you told me what you have planned?"

"Nothing a simple oath can't fix," the man said. "Relax, Your Majesty. As long as you don't do anything stupid, you will leave here with all your limbs intact. Now, you should rest and give our requests some thought. As soon as you make us some pills, we will let you go."

The man turned around to leave, but Alex wasn't done yet. "Wait," he said. "One last question."

The man looked back curiously. "What is it?" he asked.

Alex looked at the man, then to his two companions to the side, and finally back at the man. "How do you know about the Azure Dragon's death?" he asked.

The eyes of the two at the back changed, and while the leader tried to keep a calm expression, his face changed ever so slightly as well.

"So, I was correct," the man said.

Alex was taken aback. "You... didn't know?" he asked, panicking that he had just revealed something he shouldn't have. But then, the man knew that Scarlet couldn't come here. So... what was going on?

"Oh, I knew," the man said. "I just wasn't sure if you were aware or not. I believed you did, and I was correct."

Alex frowned a little. "So? How do you know about his death?" he asked.

The man gave an angered look as he spoke. "I was there when he died."

For the briefest of moments, Alex believed he heard wrong. "What did you say?" he asked again to confirm.

"I said I was there when the Azure Dragon died," the man said loudly, and Alex knew he heard it correctly this time around.

Alex felt his breathing grow faster when he realized what he was hearing. Had he finally found someone that could help him get answers?

"Do you... know how he died?" Alex asked, unable to hide the curiosity and urgency in his voice. "I want to know. I will make any pill you want if you can answer me that."

The man was surprised to hear such straightforwardness from Alex. He was taken aback by the desperation. This was the most ample moment to get what he wanted. Alas...

"I can't," the man said. "I am unable to tell you how it happened," the man said.

"Unable?" Alex asked for a moment before realizing what could be the case. "An Oath?"

"I can only tell you that I even know about His Majesty's death because you already know it. It bypasses the restrictions of our oaths through an unseen loophole. However, even then I cannot tell you anything else about the matter involved in this," the man said.

"Not even a little?" Alex asked. "Not even—"

His words stuck to his throat when a strong spiritual sense crashed over him. It crashed over all of them.

Alex barely managed to protect himself by strengthening his spiritual sea, but even then, the strength of the spiritual sense was so much that it made him feel as if his soul was being torn apart.

The two men behind the leader grimaced, while the leader himself frowned quite a lot as well.

Then, the very next second the pressure on Alex lessened. It lessened for him and him only.

"This is bad," the man said. "We've been found."

Just as the man finished speaking, the world lost its color.

Alex felt the air still around him for the briefest of seconds as something cut through it all. He could feel the Dao he was familiar with—the Dao of cutting—tear through everything in the surroundings.

Then at the next moment, the top of half of the mountain was obliterated away, giving way for the open sky to shine its light down onto the ground.

Alex felt terror like never before. The strength he just saw, the intent he felt, and the fear in his heart were something he had never experienced before.

Even around Immortals and Divinities, this was something he had never felt before as they never used their techniques around him. Even dying 100 times hadn't evoked the same reaction from him as it just had.

He felt the aura of multiple individuals go out in that single strike. People cried in pain, some ran away with tattered bodies, and some ran away just a nascent souls.

Alex could feel the aura of teleportation pop up around him as they all ran away as fast as they could. Only a handful of them remained, and those too were the strongest of the strongest in the group.

Alex and every other man and woman in the group turned to the sky to look at the sole figure that stood there.

The person was a tall man with flowing blue hair, a slight goatee, and a majestic blue robe that matched his hair. He held a similarly blue spear that looked incredible even from afar.

"Shit," the leader of the group said under his breath. "I didn't think we would have to fight him this early."

The Dragon Emperor was here, and he was here to rescue Alex.

"Yating," the man spoke from the sky, his voice monotone without a shred of surprise or disdain. "To think you and your band of traitors would be here. What do you intend to do with the King of the Southern Continent."

The leader pulled out his sword and pointed at the Dragon Emperor in the sky. "We meet earlier than I would have liked to, but that is alright," the man said. "I can judge the distance between us right now and see how far I have to improve."

The man swung his sword, sending a large flaming lion that ran all the way to the sky where the Dragon Emperor stood still.

The Dragon Emperor simply swung his spear a little and the flaming lion disappeared altogether. Not a wisp of fire remained in the snowing sky.

"So, you truly have gone against me," the Dragon Emperor said. "To think you were once a man I trusted the most. How has time changed you so much that you would go against your own oath to forever serve me?"

"You know damn well why," the man shouted, pointing his sword at the Emperor once again. "You are the one responsible for me becoming this."

"What you have become is an oathbreaker," the Emperor said. "I had no hand in that."

"Oathbreaker?" the man chuckled a little with no laughter in his voice. "That's a nice little thing to call us, isn't it? Thank you for the name, Your Majesty. We were just looking for one."

"You hear it, fellow Daoists? Henceforth, we shall be known as the Oathbreakers."

Everyone in the area suddenly gave a hearty laugh as they brought out every treasure they had in their storage. With the Emperor here, they had only two choices.

Fight or Run.

They chose to fight.

"Come on, my friends," the man named Yating said. "Let us show him that oaths are not the only thing we can break."

"YAAAAH!" everyone shouted and took flight as they rushed to fight the Emperor.

The Emperor stood in the sky with a cold look on his face. "You will try."

Dozens of attacks flew at once, all aiming for the Emperor. One attack was a green flying serpent, another a green scythe. Another attack was a million flying embers, while another was a sword slash that seemed to tear space in its wake.

The Dragon Emperor didn't falter in the face of the many attacks and simply pulled out a shield from his storage ring. He held the shield in front of him and slammed his spear onto it.

The shield roared with the sound of distant thunders as a gigantic illusory dragon head appeared from it and devoured the dozens of attacks in a single bite.

The dragon's head exploded into a million different pieces after it swallowed the attacks, but none of the force it had absorbed went back to the Emperor.

The Emperor didn't even flinch in the face of the explosion and simply primed his spear. He was going to go in for an attack next.

Chapter 1502: An Epic Clash

Long Tiankong stared down at the dozens of people as he felt the aura of their cultivation base.

Saint Soul 8th realm.

Saint Soul 6th realm.

Saint Transformation 3rd realm.

His eyes shifted to the man he called Yating.

Saint Transformation 6th realm.

None of them were his enemies.

He held his Noble Dragon spear and pointed it down at the man in front of him. Wood energy rushed through his meridians, making it into his spear.

The Dragon Emperor wasn't even planning on using any skill of his own, but just the one that was in his spear. He also wasn't planning on using his Immortal Qi, just his normal Saint Qi.

Even so, the men and women on the ground felt nothing but dread. Death hung in the air, and at its center was the Dragon Emperor.

The world lost its color once again as the Dragon Emperor launched a single attack.

A singular bolt of lightning flew out of the Noble Dragon Spear, charging down on seemingly nobody. However, halfway through, the single bolt of lightning split into 5 different smaller bolts of lightning that struck 5 random individuals, including the man named Yating.

Every single one of the 5 people being attacked couldn't hold back at all. Without hesitation, they held out their treasures to stop the attack. Stronger ones that were not being attacked moved quickly and stood in front of the ones being attacked as they protected them as well.

Yating alone took on one of the bolts of lightning.

Alex looked in shock at the sky. The aura from the Dragon Emperor's attacks was one thing, but seeing the damage it caused was another.

Alex saw fractures in space being left behind by that one attack. Small splinters in space that took a second or two to heal were left behind where the lightning passed through.

Snow had stopped falling momentarily as most of it was blasted away from the surroundings.

He saw the attack land on the people on the ground and then heard the explosion. It was both blinding and deafening. The shockwave from the hit alone caused him to perspire from his brows.

He couldn't imagine a world where he could take this attack and survive it. Not as he was right now.

Alex watched the aftermath of that one attack. As the light faded and the dust settled, he saw two men on the ground, one of whom had lost his right arm. Other than that, they were mostly fine.

Everyone else had successfully managed to protect themselves from the attack of the Dragon Emperor.

A few of them returned attacks to the Dragon Emperor, but the Dragon Emperor didn't even use his shield this time around. He simply swung his spear once and the attack tore away the stronger attacks that were coming his way.

The weaker attacks landed on him, exploding on his face. The people who had attacked were surprised to see their attacks land on him. However, they weren't very excited about it. For they knew something about the Dragon Emperor that made him far stronger than a normal cultivator.

The Dragon Emperor came out of the attacks, practically unharmed. His body was as flawless as always, and he felt not even a tinge of pain at all the attacks that fell on him.

His body cultivation was simply too strong for him to care about those attacks.

The attackers grimaced. They had known that the Dragon Emperor's body was strong, but to think it was strong enough to take their attacks without any backlash from it.

He had destroyed the stronger attacks before letting the weaker ones strike him, but even then, the weaker ones together still reached the strength of the high Saint Soul realm.

That was to say that the Dragon Emperor's body cultivation was most definitely around the peak of Saint Soul realm. Perhaps even the start of the Saint Transformation realm.

The Emperor took his spear and attacked once again.

Blue lighting flew down from the sky, daring to attack many of them once again. Yating and a few others managed to protect themselves once again. However, they had to use their expensive treasures and they only had so many of them.

Any more and their treasures would most likely be destroyed. They only had so much durability after all.

Yating stood tall, staring back at the Emperor as if daring him to attack him even harder this time. At the same time, he was inwardly panicking, wondering not just how to run away, but also how they were found in the first place.

There was only one explanation for all of this, and it was Alex. The moment he had captured him, the Dragon Emperor had somehow found their hiding spot.

But how? He couldn't imagine. There were scripts and formations that ran constantly to hide them. The only way would be for Alex to have something that could pierce past their barriers and alert the Dragon Emperor.

The man looked at Alex with his spiritual sense and then back at the Dragon Emperor. Were the two of them close enough?

They could be, but there was something there that he could make use of at some other time. He got rid of the ring on his finger, as he feared this was how the Dragon Emperor had found him in the first place.

He tossed it back to Alex without looking, and Alex quickly caught it, putting it onto his finger. He let his spiritual sense slip into the ring and was happy to learn that it was fine. Nothing had been tampered with.

Then, he looked back at the man and felt his aura increasing.

The air whipped around him and burned as Fire Qi rushed out of him at an incredible speed. The other people around him looked at him and backed off.

The Dragon Emperor was about to prepare another attack and stopped when he sensed Yating preparing his own. And this was a strong one.

Yating was preparing his Immortal Qi.

The Dragon Emperor sensed fluctuations in the spiritual sense between the Saints there. They had communicated something to each other, but he didn't know what.

However, he couldn't focus on that. This was an Immortal attack. Even with his Peak Saint realm cultivation base and a physical body that was stronger than most saints here, he still couldn't take the attack made with Immortal Qi lightly.

He let go of the spear, placing it back into his storage ring. While the spear was incredible, it was not something that could handle Immortal Qi without any damage.

The Dragon Emperor did not want to harm his spear for no reason.

A green aura seeped through his skin, surrounding him in the air as it got thicker and thicker. Just as Yating was on the ground, the Dragon Emperor prepared his attack as well.

The space rippled around them, threatening to tear at any moment. The ripples of their fluctuations spread and forced everyone back.

Alex slowly backed off as well, as he did not want to be in the midst of a collision between two attacks. He didn't even want to be in the vicinity.

He flew as far as he could before he sensed the attacks being launched. He turned around, just in time to see everything happen.

On Yating's end, there was a flame arrow the size of a boat that flew into the sky.

On the Dragon Emperor's end, there was a green dragon head that roared and sent Dragon's breath down from the sky.

The two attacks launched at a fraction of a second. And in another fraction of a second, they clashed midway through in the sky.

The world lost not just its color this time around, but even its sounds. Alex felt nothing for a second or two before the colliding attacks exploded with such power that they leveled mountains around them.

His spiritual sense in that area was instantly destroyed and he felt a small mental backlash.

Alex felt his heart palpitate in fear at his imagination of what would have happened to him, had he stayed there. The ripple from the shockwave alone was enough to send him flying backward even further.

Alex currently had a cultivation base equivalent to that of the Peak of Saint Soul realm and had an even stronger blood aura. Still, he understood the damage he would've received had he been nearer.

The attacks would have torn him to shred and Alex doubted that even his Undying physique could bring him back from this one.

Alex felt the ripples of space and looked to see for cracks. To his surprise, he did not just feel the cracks in Space this time around. There was another aura hidden within it that he felt afterward.

A crack in Time.

He tried to focus on the space of impact and saw small instances of cracks in them through which the Void seemed to leak through. However, they closed just as quickly as it opened.

The sound finally arrived where he was. The loudness of it surprised him as the sound drowned everything else.

The chaos of Fire and Wood Qi flew up to him as well, but they didn't do much to him this time around. He was braced for them.

The aftermath of the attack finally made itself seen. The Dragon Emperor flew high in the sky still, he too breathing unevenly at the sight in front of him.

As for Yating, he wasn't there anymore at all. Alex tried to look for traces of him, but all he found were remnants of a teleportation aura.

It wasn't just him, there were multiple teleportation aura.

The entirety of the remaining Oathbreakers had teleported away.

Chapter 1503: Two Things

Alex was shaken even minutes after the collision of the two attacks had ended. He stood in the air, with his eyes wide, knowing that the entire northern half of the Eastern Continent had most likely felt these attacks.

A pool of water was left in the ground, with the snow overhead refusing to fall at all. The Intent of Yating's fire attack still lingered in the air, melting any snow that fell.

Alex only got out of his stupor after he saw the Dragon Emperor fly toward him.

The Dragon Emperor stopped mere meters away from him and looked at him. Alex felt a scan go through his body, and let it happen. Everything he had to hide was hidden after all.

"You seem alright," he said.

"I am alright," Alex replied, feeling the Dragon Emperor's aura and seeing barely any difference at all. He had not struggled in this fight whatsoever. "How did you find me?"

That was something Alex was curious about. From what he could tell about formations, even though he had no way to determine what they were about, it was clearly meant to hide themselves.

And yet, they had been found. That too in less than 15 minutes. Alex was curious as to what was going on.

"You have something of mine," the Dragon Emperor said. "I can follow that to you whenever I wish to."

Alex frowned a little and even felt slightly scared. 'Does he know about the sword?' he thought in panic.

The black sword with the Azure Imperium's insignia was something that no one should have known about, and yet... was the Dragon Emperor aware of it from the start?

"The Dragon Medallion," the Dragon Emperor said.

"What?" Alex asked, taken aback.

"The Medallion," the Dragon Emperor said. "That's how I found you. I knew the location of the medallion and teleported to the closest city before coming this way."

Alex stared at the Dragon Emperor for a few seconds before bringing out the Dragon Medallion. The blue-gold medallion with the Azure Imperium's insignia in the middle gleamed a little in the midday sunlight.

Alex stared at it for a few seconds and proceeded to ask the Emperor. "Do you own this or something? Have you bonded with it?"

"No, our family has a treasure to locate any of the medallions that get lost," the Dragon Emperor said. "As I've mentioned before, the Dragon Medallions authority outranks every single person in the continent aside from me and my son. So we cannot let it fall into the hands of those that would use it to cause harm."

"So, you are constantly checking where this is?" Alex asked.

"Not constantly," the Dragon Emperor said. "I only just checked today when my people frantically let me know that you were kidnapped by some strong bandits. Don't worry, I won't be checking it again. I only do so when in need."

"Okay," Alex said, placing the medallion back into his storage ring. He would have to do something about it later on.

"I have notified your people of your location," the Emperor said. "They should be teleporting to the closest city anytime soon."

Alex said nothing. "Who were those people?" he asked. He was very curious about everything that had happened from his getting kidnapped, to meeting the Yating fellow, to knowing that he was aware of the Dragon's death to the fight that came afterward.

"They were initially soldiers of mine," the Dragon Emperor said. "I do not know who most of them were, probably from the Tail reason. The stronger ones though were from the Head legion, and Yating was one of the more talented ones."

Alex listened intently.

"But then, sometime later, he decided to betray me and start his little band of bandits here," the Dragon Emperor said.

"But why?" Alex asked. "Did you do something wrong? He mentioned that he wanted to take my pills to become strong enough to kill you."

The Dragon Emperor shook his head. "I do not know why it is that he wishes to kill me, but worry not. This won't happen to you ever again. I do not take threats to myself simply. I will thwart them one way or another."

Alex didn't trust the Dragon Emperor. He had more or less always known that he wasn't a very good person, even when compared to normal cultivators who only thought about themselves. On top of that, with his own soldiers going against him, even wanting to kill him, that certainly meant he had done something.

'They were there when the Azure Dragon died,' Alex thought. Why were they there? To protect him from whatever was happening to him? Or were they there to kill him?

'Pearl's mother should have been there as well,' he thought suddenly. If his hunch was correct, Pearl and his Mother had run away around the same time the Dragon had died.

That would place the man named Yating right there when it must have happened. 'He will know more about this than anyone,' Alex thought. 'I will need to find him.'

The man seemed to have said an oath as to not reveal the Dragon's death, but that did not mean that the oath worked for Pearl's mother as well. If he could find him again, he could make him speak about the truth behind her death.

The situation around Pearl's mother had remained dark for a very long time. However, now that he had met the man, he saw an exit out of the tunnel. There was light in this darkness.

The man was his light.

"What are you thinking?" the Dragon Emperor asked.

"Just wondering how your soldiers could turn against you," he said. "Just wondering if mine will someday turn against me as well."

He did not tell the truth to the Emperor. The Emperor surely knew about the Dragon's death as well and was keeping it secret from the entire world. So, if he revealed that he knew it, then he might end up being in danger.

As Alex thought about this point, he remembered that the man named Yating knew that Scarlet could not come to the Eastern Continent because of the Dragon's death.

Then... since he was the Dragon Emperor's soldier once, did he know as well?

The thought scared Alex.

"Let us return then," he said to the Emperor, not wanting to further speak about this at all.

Alex started flying and as he did, he looked at the aftermath of the battle that the Emperor had left behind. With his very first attack, he had cleaved the mountain in half, revealing everything inside.

Alex wasn't sure if he could do something like this with just a single attack.

The Dragon Emperor nodded and started flying behind him as well, but it seemed he didn't wish to let go of the topic just yet. He wanted to learn about Yating's current situation as much as he wanted.

"What exactly did he want from you?" he asked.

"Pills," Alex said. "He apparently knew about the pills I sold back in the Golden auction, and wanted me to make more of those for him. All to use to kill you."

"He can't kill me," the Dragon Emperor said. "If things go according to plan, I will be long gone from this world before he can even become strong enough to do anything for me."

Alex looked at the Dragon Emperor in surprise. "You're planning to leave this world so soon?" he asked. "Didn't you wait for something?"

"2 things," the Dragon Emperor said. "First, to have an alchemy skill so great that I don't have to worry about being low on the food chain when I do end up being an Immortal."

Alex could understand the sentiment. The Emperor had mentioned this a long time ago as well. "What about the second one?" he asked.

The Emperor remained silent for a second. "The second one is not something I can tell you about. It's something private. It is taking a bit longer than normal, so it might be a while before I go away."

Alex wondered what it was that he wanted to do. Dao maybe?

He wondered what Daos the Emperor had at that moment. He could sense the Cutting Dao during the attack that leveled the mountain. Aside from that, the Emperor had mostly stuck to lightning attacks, which unfortunately fell under the Wood Dao.

As someone with a mediocre Wood spiritual root, he had no ability to sense any dao in those attacks, like he had sensed the Burning Dao and Heat Dao in the Oathbreakers' leader's attack.

"Do you know how long it has been since we last talked?" the Dragon Emperor asked.

Alex nodded. "Over 3 and a half years," he said.

The Dragon Emperor nodded as well. "I was busy learning from the recipe you gave me," he said. "I was in deep cultivation when I was forced to come out to help you."

Alex frowned a little, wondering what the Emperor was trying to say.

"So, would it be alright if we moved up our 2nd trade?" he asked. "I know we have another 2 and a half years to go for it, but I do not want my coming out to go to waste."

Alex thought for a moment and said, "If possible, I would like to stick with the routine."

"But I do not wish me coming out to be a waste," the Dragon Emperor reiterated.

"I think that's alright," Alex said. "I know something you can do to not make it a waste."

Chapter 1504: Qian Yanglin

Alex met up with his elders in the Snowpass city, which was nearly at the edge of the Eastern Continent. Just a few minutes of flight from here was the ocean toward the north. Toward the east, a couple of hours of flight would lead them to their Beast's Paradise.

Both Liang Shufen and Yao Ning breathed a sigh of relief when they saw Alex and couldn't help but speak out about their concerns. It hadn't even been half an hour since he had been taken away, and they were devastated at his kidnap.

"It's alright," Alex said. "I was never in any real danger. Besides, the Emperor saved me minutes after I was taken to the other location."

"But it could have been dangerous," Liang Shufen said. "We failed in saving you."

"It's alright," Alex said. "I'm fine and that's all that matters. Besides, I wasn't really ever in danger. I could've run away anytime I wanted to. I stuck around because the man had stolen my ring and I wanted it back."

While that was partially true, it wasn't an understatement to say that Alex had been afraid. When his arm had been cut off, he knew that he was in enough danger that he could lose his entire body.

After that, seeing the people using Immortal Qi as if it were nothing made him even more scared for his life. A single stray attack could have killed him back then.

While he didn't think getting out of the Oathbreakers' stronghold was particularly hard with his Dao of Space and Teleportation, running far enough away would still be problematic as he wasn't as proficient in running away.

Especially considering his captors were much stronger and faster than him.

However, he didn't let this fact be known to the elders. They would never forgive themselves if it ever came to that.

"If the Emperor saved you," Yao Ning spoke. "Then where is he?"

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The entirety of the Gold Kingdom and many from the other kingdoms were surprised to hear the dethroning of King Tan Qiu from the Gold Kingdom's throne.

After multiple millennia, he was no longer going to be the King, and someone else was going to take over him.

For the first time since the previous kings and queens were executed for treason and attempted coup, someone else was taking over as the Gold King.

The man to replace the Gold King was someone named Qian Yanglin, an alumnus of the True Gold sect, one of the biggest sects in the Gold Kingdom.

He was a tall man with a handsome look, whose past feats were spread around the continent like wildfire. 2-time winner of the Endless Shadow Abyss, 3rd in the Continental Tournament, a powerful fighter in the Transcendent Martial ground, and the Harmonious Balance Haven.

He was also a young man, barely 2 thousand years of age, and had a lot of talent running his sect before he left it a few decades ago. Now, he was going to be made the King of the Gold Kingdom.

It was 3 months later that the coronation officially happened. Many great individuals from all around the continent made their way to the Goldheart kingdom to watch the ascent of the new king.

All kings, great military figures, and many more were present there. Alex too had returned there after his 3 months of travel across the Gold Kingdom. The atmosphere was no less festive than 4 months ago when the Golden Auction was right around the corner.

The city was golden bright with lanterns floating all around. There were golden flags hung from every home, and people cheered the name of the new king.

They celebrated the arrival of the new King Qian Yanglin as the Emperor himself crowned the man. Everyone congratulated his ascent. Alex did so with a pill bottle full of pills.

The new king was more than happy to have received such a treasure and thanked Alex profusely.

Alex stepped to the side and let the others congratulate the man. The Emperor arrived at Alex's side and asked, "Well, congratulations. You successfully diverted my attention to some other thing. My time outside closed cultivation wasn't really a waste."

Alex smiled. "I'm happy to be of help," he said.

"Still, are you sure you do not wish to trade the second thing you planned on?" the man asked.

"Do you have something ready to trade for whatever I give you?" Alex asked.

"I'll have to see how important it is," the Emperor said. "I cannot prepare something of value without knowing what the value of the item I'm trading for is."

Alex nodded. That made some sense alright. "I'll let you know what it is when the time comes," he said. "2 and a half years later, or maybe 3 years later."

"Any specific date?" the Emperor asked. "I wish to enter closed cultivation for as long as is needed."

Alex thought for a bit and answered. "I hear the Cave of Frost opens up in about 3 more years," he said.

"I am not sure on the timeline, but that sounds about right," the Emperor said. "Although, I'm not sure if you'll get to enter this time around."

Alex nodded. There was a giant barrier around most of the Ivory kingdom after all. He wouldn't know if it would ever open up or not.

"If it doesn't open up, when do you propose we trade?" Alex asked.

"If it doesn't open up, trading with you would be the least of my worries," the Emperor said. "I will have to find a way to deal with the barrier somehow without making trouble for whoever created it."

"Do you have an idea of who it was?" Alex asked.

"Some immortal, surely," the Emperor said. "I'm just not sure why they were here yet."

For a moment, Alex wondered if whoever had come down was someone from the Azure Dragon's family. However, no such person would create a barrier and stay hidden. Not to mention, someone had left already.

"Well, whoever it is, as long as they let me enter the Cave of Frost, I'll be fine," Alex said.

"Why? Do you wish to enter it so bad?" the Emperor asked with a curious look.

"I do," Alex said. "I want to learn a bit about some Yin Dao if I can."

"You have a Yin spiritual root?" the Emperor asked.

Alex nodded. "I do," he said. "Hasn't been of much help though, aside from a few techniques, but it does come in handy when making pills."

"Then I suppose it is not a bad idea to enter the cave," the man said. "So, when do you plan to trade next if it opens up?"

"Right before the cave opens up," Alex said. "That sounds good."

"Let's do it after," the Emperor said. "It is never clear when the Cave opens up and it is only a rough knowledge for us. Your time inside won't be longer than a month at best, so it is better to do the trade afterward."

Alex shrugged. "Sounds fine to me," he said.

The Emperor nodded. "Then we will meet and trade after you come out of the Cave of Frost," he said. "I'll look forward to it."

Alex smiled. "I will too," he said. "I'll tell you now that while what I will be trading won't be as good as what I traded last time, and may not be of much help to you when it comes to improving the end result of a pill, it will improve the overall results on all pills."

The Emperor looked curiously. "Can you not tell what it is?" he asked. "Some sort of technique or knowledge?"

"No need to hurry," Alex said. "You'll find out in due time."

The Emperor sighed. "Sure," he said. "I'll leave for now then. I've stayed out for too long."

"Farewell," Alex said.

"Before I leave," the Emperor turned around. "Is there a chance I can persuade you to not call yourself a King? Emperor sounds better, doesn't it?"

"It does, but King is what my title is, given to me by her Highness the Phoenix," Alex said. "I cannot change it without her approval." He was confused as to why the Emperor even cared, but he didn't let it show on his face.

"Is that so?" the Emperor said. "I hope you change it soon then. Otherwise... anyway, farewell."

The Emperor flew away from the kingdom, immediately reaching a speed that left behind after images for everyone to see. Even Alex with his Demon Eyes could barely follow the blur that was the Emperor.

"Damn, he is so fast," Alex thought, looking at the sky where the Emperor had flown away from. He remembered the battle 3 months ago as well. "And he's strong."

Alex frowned as he remembered that the Dragon Emperor was most likely his and Pearl's enemy. "I can't dally around," he thought. "I'll have to get strong as soon as I can."

He was getting close to breaking through as well. Just a few more weeks and he would once again get close to breaking through to the Saint Soul realm.

"Ughh... but the Realm of Trials is opening soon," he thought. There was only a month or two at best remaining before the trial opened up. If he somehow failed during this breakthrough, then it was unlikely he would be ready to enter the trial.

Then, he would have to wait for another 10 years before it opened again.

"I suppose I'll have to delay it slightly enough that it takes place after the Realm of Trials is over."

Chapter 1505: Snowthorn Valley

2 more months passed during which period Alex improved his painting skills, and his body cultivation by a lot. His other improvements weren't as obvious, but they were there as well.

As he had expected, he was now at the peak of the Saint Core realm, just moments away from entering the Saint Soul realm. However, he didn't wish to enter just yet. He was going to go through the secret realm and then try his breakthrough.

His physical cultivation had reached halfway through the Saint Core realm as it was this and painting what he had focused most of his time on during the last few months.

He had also taken time to try and deal with the pill recipes that he had been wanting. He was getting close to none of them, but it was still good progress.

The Immortal pills especially would take longer from what he could tell. Just the fact that he had yet to properly check an Immortal ingredient caused problems, but he was dealing with it slowly using the knowledge he held in his mind. One's own experience was the best, but the Alchemy God's Knowledge was a close second as well.

The Wood Spiritual Root Improvement Pill was going to be done within a few years at most from what he had seen. By now, he had gone through every ingredient, and all that was left was for him to go through the many variations from the tens of thousands of ingredients in his head. That was what was going to take a lot of time.

Unfortunately, the Dao of Five Elemental Interaction didn't help him here as much as he would have hoped for it to do.

Beyond that, Alex trained Pearl and Whisker in his free time, not only helping them get better but also making sure his skills weren't rusted.

It had been years since he had properly fought anyone, so he made sure to keep himself active.

On the side of Daos, Alex had given up on learning at the moment. He would learn some when the time was right, but due to the fear of what learning many Daos would do to him, he no longer actively sought out Dao.

During this period, Alex also had the first time when the Heavenly Silkworms in his Beast storage had made silk for him to use. He had crafted some wooden housing for the silkworms to lay down their silk,

and after taking it out, he had gotten enough tiny threads that could be woven together to make it just enough for a necklace.

It was still thin, no thicker than a few of his hairs together, but that was enough for it to work in disrupting people's spiritual sense on him. While it wasn't thick enough to completely block off People's perception on him like the beasts did, it was just enough for it to make it fluctuate around him.

They couldn't pin down his aura just as well. When used together with the Immortal Concealment technique of his, he became truly invisible to one's senses.

However, that wasn't what Alex wanted. He wanted to make it thick enough that he didn't have to use his concealment technique or his Yang Qi to hide himself.

Although at the rate the threads were being made, that was going to take a long time for sure. He was also going to have to find a way to get more Mulberry leaves.

He did have a way of course. He was given a seed of the Mulberry tree by the Golden Lion before he had left the Lion Colony in the Beast Paradise. However, as he was right now, he couldn't grow it anywhere.

If he was too late, he was afraid that his leaves were going to run out, and his silkworms were going to die. If worst came to pass, however, he had planned to plant the tree anywhere he could. That was good enough for the worst-case scenario.

Despite all the things he did, he had, of course, still enjoyed his tour of the Gold Kingdom.

He had visited the various cities of the Gold Kingdom. And while, unlike the Emerald Kingdom, there weren't as many unique places, he still loved his time around. Most of the cities were in desolate land or snow-filled ones, but there were a few ones that were fun to go through.

The desolate lands barely had any trees or plants, and the ones in the snow were always right on top of a magma vein that flowed underneath the city.

He had been through enough cities in the Gold Kingdom and now this was going to be his last one. After this, he was going to leave the Gold Kingdom and likely never return here again. At least not in the near future.

He was currently in Snowthorn Valley, the city where the Realm of Trials was going to be held. The city was in a valley, surrounded by large mountains and the secret realm was right in the center of it all.

It was surrounded by a large wall around a hexagonal building with multiple gates leading inside. Each of the doors led you to a separate secret realm.

Alex looked down from his hotel's living room window at the large building that was known as the Building of Trials. "Just 3 more days," he thought to himself.

"The alchemists are here," Yao Ning quickly told Alex.

"Oh," Alex replied. "That's quick."

"Sister Liang did not take her time. She brought all the alchemists as soon as she could."

A few minutes later, the alchemists had arrived in the hotel room as well. Alex went to meet them all to prepare them for the upcoming event. There were 21 alchemists there in total, including Wu Shun who had joined as well.

As none of them had come here before, they were all incredibly excited about the realm of trials. As a result, they couldn't wait for the day when it opened up.

Chapter 1506: Ren Wujin

Alex sat in a relatively empty room in a restaurant, waiting for someone. He hadn't ordered anything and was contemplating if he even wanted to bother with this meeting at all.

He had been so excited about the Realm of Trials just the other day, and there were still 2 more days to go, but the Crown Prince had contacted him this morning, reminding him of something that he did not want to be reminded about.

The Snowthorn Valley was home to a great family known as the Ren Family. They had tens of thousands of years of history and were known as one of the oldest families to still exist.

In recent times, they hadn't made much news at all. However, there was one news that had spread with relative importance that people would certainly have heard about, even if they did not care as much.

That was the fact that the current family leader of the Ren Family had adopted a young girl with incredible talent as his daughter. That girl's name was Ren Wujin.

She was known as the Golden Fox of the North, that was who he was here to see.

Ren Wujin was another one of the potential queens that the Crown Prince had searched for.

After Talia, Alex didn't care much about meeting anyone. He hadn't even wanted to meet Talia at all, since the reason he had asked for potential wives in the first place was to see if he could secretly find his sister Hannah.

However, knowing that none of the 4 that had been presented to him had been her, his interest in the girls was... nonexistent.

Alex sat in the empty room, slightly annoyed that the girl was late. He had arrived in time, and yet he was already made to wait 15 more minutes.

And he didn't like that it gave him time to spend on something that he wasn't ready for just yet. It gave him time to think about his sister, who he was starting to accept was dead already.

Each day he had spent dealing with the knowledge that she could be dead and there was no way for him to do anything if that was the case. Even the Dao of Death did not allow him to bring back the dead.

Coming to these meetings made specifically to find his sister undid that and it pained him to know that. Every time he looked at the names, even though he knew that these girls weren't her, there was a part of him deep inside that hoped that this was indeed her. He hoped that this was his sister with a different name and a different face.

He did not like having that hope. Hope was what gave way to disappointment and heartbreak, and that was what had caused his Qi deviation last time. He was absolutely sure of it.

He had wanted to refuse the Crown Prince's proposal this morning, but finding out that he had already told the Ren family about his wish, he couldn't refuse anymore.

As a result, he decided to let this meeting happen. He did make sure to tell the Crown Prince that he wasn't as excited about meeting these girls, so he no longer had to spend any time trying to fix these meetings.

As Alex sighed and waited, the door to his side and a woman walked in slowly. She immediately noticed Alex as soon as she walked in and was transfixed when she saw him. It truly was the King of the Southern Continent.

"Greetings, your majesty," the girl spoke. "I am Ren Wujin, and it is my pleasure to have finally met you."

The girl had a tall body with a beautiful face. Her golden hair was braided intricately with multiple golden ornaments hanging from them. On the side of her face was a golden fox mask that she placed there at all times.

Alex could tell at a glance that the mask was some sort of artifact as well. That was what had given her the moniker, Golden Fox of the North.

She wore a multilayered red robe with a falling golden leaves pattern through it all. The leaves were made with real gold threads and the red robe itself wasn't made with anything of lesser quality.

Alex stood up and greeted back. "Greetings, Lady Ren," he said. "It is nice to meet you too."

The girl smiled back and made her way toward the seat on the other side of the table.

"Please refer to me as just Wujin, Your Majesty," she said. "Also, My apologies if I was late. I wasn't made aware of this meeting until it was too late, so I had to take some time. I had only just come out of training."

"It's alright," Alex said. "It was only a few minutes."

The girl smiled back, but it held a bit of uncertainty that Alex could see through.

"Is something bothering you, Lady Wujin?" Alex asked curiously.

"I'm just a little curious, I suppose," the girl said. "I was told that you wanted to meet me, but we have never come across each other as far as I can tell, so I was wondering why you even wanted to meet me?"

"Ah," Alex realized. It was the same thing with Talia. "I see." He hesitated to explain for a brief period, but he had to. "I had let the Crown Prince know that I was looking for someone to make my queen, and the Crown Prince gave me a small list of potential candidates."

"You are one of them."

Ren Wujin frowned for a brief moment before gathering herself to a more lady-like state. "You... wish to test me to see if I am worthy of being your queen?"

Alex shook his head. "I'll be honest, I do not wish to give you any hope. I have no intention of taking you as my Queen or anyone else for that matter."

"I had given up on that idea after I met the first candidate, and decided to no longer go on these meetings. But, I forgot to relay that to the Crown Prince, and... well he set up another meeting for me."

"I apologize that it caused you to have to come here for no reason at all," Alex said as he sent forth something. "Please accept these pills as my apology."

The girl caught the bottle and looked inside with her spiritual sense. Her eyes widened the moment she saw 5 pill veins on every single one of those pills.

"These are..."

"Those pills will help you with your cultivation," Alex explained. "They are designed to help your training speed increase by nearly 20 times for a single cultivation session, which lasts around 2 days."

The woman's eyes widened even further and her breathing got uneven. Her shock was clear on her face. The golden mask on her head glowed slightly, but Alex caught its glow.

Then, the woman's face relaxed and her emotions lessened. She took a brief moment to collect herself.

"Please forgive me if I'm impudent for not refusing to take the pills," she said. "Thank you for these, your majesty."

Alex smiled. "Since we're already here, why not make use of our time properly? Would you care to tell me about yourself?"

Chapter 1507: The Spirit of the Alchemy Trial

Alex and the many alchemists stood in front of the Alchemy gate of the Realm of Trials. His 21 alchemists stood surrounding him, while the thousands and thousands of others were there as well.

And this was just for the alchemy trials.

Each of the 6 entryways was there for individual trials. Aside from alchemy trials, there were the Talisman trials, Formation trials, Artifact trials, Music trials, and Painting trials.

There were no cooking or poison trials as he would've expected the place to have, but it didn't. As for Beast taming and Puppetry, Alex could understand why those weren't there.

They didn't fall under production at all, which these trials were set to test.

From what Alex had heard about the trials, there were multiple tests inside, not unlike the tests back in the Sundering Sanctum, but this time thousands could take the test at once.

If they passed, they moved on to the next test. If they failed, they would be sent outside, in which case they would have to wait for their turn to come again to get tested.

Given that there were tens of thousands of people waiting, one would have to wait a while for their turn to come.

Due to the nature of Alex's status, his cultivators had been given double priority when it came to entering the trials. They would be the first ones to enter, and when they failed and left, they would get to enter again without having to wait in line. It would happen just twice, and after that they would have to wait as everyone else.

As for Alex himself, he had permanent priority. No matter how many times he failed, he would always get to enter when he wanted to.

There were soldiers all around the realm of trials that floated from the sky, looking down to make sure no one threatened or tried to overtake someone else's turn. They were very serious about it all.

Alex looked around to check if he would notice any faces. There weren't many that he recognized at all. There were Talia and Fang Yimu, who were standing with the rest of the alchemists from the Cloud Iron sect.

He had already met up with them and had spent some time yesterday. Today, they did not come to meet him and were instead focused on their own thing.

Aside from them, he noticed a few more people that he recognized but only by their faces. He had seen those people in passing in the Royal School of Alchemy a few times.

Most popular folks of the empire weren't involved in production, so there weren't many people here for him to meet. Not to mention, this section was just for the alchemy side of things. There were perhaps people with big names in one of the other 5 locations.

"Everyone has a decent amount of ingredients, right?" Alex asked his alchemists. "You will need to make pills inside, and you won't get anything inside."

"Yes, your majesty," the alchemists answered in unison.

Alex nodded when he heard that and turned back toward the gate that would open at any minute now.

From what he had heard, no person controlled the entry to the hall. It was instead a spirit inside that did so, similar to the Sundering Sanctum, once again.

And it seemed the spirit was ready to take in guests as the Realm of Trials officially opened with a buzz that went through the entire area.

People could feel the trials opening up and then, the people were allowed in. From outside the walls, the soldiers placed the people into a line and sent them inside.

Alex and his group were the first ones. They walked inside the wall and went in a straight line until they arrived inside the building.

As they walked, Alex could feel spatial fluctuations around the door. His eyes narrowed a little. Something was off about this secret realm.

Spatial pockets gave spatial fluctuations as well, but this one was different from the others. It did not feel like he was walking into a secret realm.

Instead, it felt as if he was walking into the production room inside Senior Yang's mansion.

'This is no secret realm,' he realized. 'Its expanded space, made to work similar to a secret realm.'

In essence, the two did the same thing. Only one was natural and one was man-made.

Alex's pupils glowed slightly purple as he looked at the aura around the area. A large formation was running in this place.

One by one, his alchemists started entering through the door. After they were all inside, Alex brought out Whisker and had him go through as well. He had wanted Whisker to take the trial as he was no weaker than any of them when it came to Alchemy.

Once Whisker walked through, he walked in as well, curious what it was all about.

As soon as Alex walked into the room, he arrived in an entirely dark room with no light whatsoever. Even when Alex tried to use some flames to light up the area, it was still dark. Not even his connection with Whisker remained other than just the normal connection through their bond.

He could see himself and the ground underneath his feet, but not his surroundings. He moved his hands around and felt some sort of barrier there.

'I see,' he thought. No wonder he couldn't see anything. The same barrier had stopped his spiritual sense from entering as well.

He looked at the ground in front of him and saw a set of formations there for him to run himself. He had known about this before. This was here for him to use as a furnaces and would have to be run using his own spirit stones.

The first Azure Dragon that had prepared this place had not wanted to waste more energy than he had to. With everything including the space expansion running with the help of the formation, it would dry up the spirit vein underneath if they started allowing thousands of individuals to use up the Qi from the same locations every decade as well.

His eyes shifted as colors flooded his vision. Before the person in front of him had appeared, he had already looked up.

The man appeared, an illusory figure with a glowing body. At first, Alex noticed nothing wrong with the man, but when he focused on him, he started noticing discrepancies that made the man... less human.

Short illusory horns that branched into 3 segments on either side. Green hair that flowed behind his back, as if drifting in the wind. Slit eyes with green pupils.

Momentarily, Alex had a thought that came from something he had heard a long time ago through Bai Jingshen when he was still Shen Jing to Alex.

"They are just like humans. The only difference is that some of them have horns as well as colorful eyes and hair."

Alex looked at the illusory figure that stood in front of him. Without even giving the figure a chance to say anything, he spoke out loud.

"Demon!"

The Illusory figure paused right as he was about to start. His eyes seemed to drift around before landing on Alex's body.

He stared at Alex for a moment before Alex felt a spiritual sense land on him.

"I am no demon."

Alex's face changed immediately on two counts.

First, he was surprised that the spirit was not a demon at all. That made Alex curious as to what it was, but before even that, he was way too surprised because of the second reason.

The spirit had just communicated with him via his spiritual sense, which Alex didn't know was possible at all. How could spirits use spiritual sense? How could they have spiritual energy?

That made no sense to Alex at all. He tried to understand just what was happening when he came upon a possibility that shocked him to his core.

His face shifted and he spoke in a low voice. "You're not a spirit," he said softly. "You're a nascent soul."

The man's eyes changed imperceptibly and a small smile appeared on his face. "Interesting," a voice flowed into Alex's mind once again. "This is the first time anyone has recognized that I am not a spirit in a very long time. But, I must disappoint you as I am no mere Nascent Soul."

"I am an Immortal Soul," the man said. "I shall talk with you later. For now, my duty forces me."

The man's eyes looked around as if looking around a large audience. Alex looked at the black walls around him. He realized that there were other alchemists that were around him.

He simply couldn't see them.

"My name is Qing Xiaolin," the man spoke. "I am trial master of the Alchemy Trial. You shall go through various trials today, all prepared to test your knowledge and skills of Alchemy."

The man explained things that most already knew about. He explained the purpose of this trial and how it was going to be held.

Alex wasn't listening to any of it at all. Instead, he focused on the very first words the man spoke to everyone. His name.

Qing Xiaolin. Qing.

Alex's eyes narrowed as he noticed something that he had ignored previously as he hadn't known to look for it.

Scales. He saw scales on the man's arm, that were somewhat hidden by his robes. After seeing the scales, the slit eyes and the forked horns started making sense.

This man was no demon after all.

He was the Immortal Soul of an Azure Dragon.

Chapter 1508: The Trials

The Dragon Immortal Soul gave out the first trial.

"List out all the ingredients you see before you."

Images of various ingredients appeared in front of him. Thousands of them. Without waiting, Alex began naming them all.

He had to tap into a floating image that surrounded him and use his spiritual sense or just his fingers to write the name onto it. If it was correct, the image flashed away.

He wasted no time and went through the images, naming them all swiftly. Green Sparrow's striped bone here, Two-leaved Garrow thorn leaves there.

A Half-ripe Flawed Serpent fruit. A root of the Stilt Lime tree. A Dark Grand mushroom.

Alex continued answering the ingredients as he saw them and within the next 10 minutes, he was done naming all of it. Once finished, he stopped and looked up at the Immortal Soul, who was also looking down at him.

There was a strange expression on the soul's face, surely caused by the fact that he had never seen someone complete the first trial this quickly. Or at least, that's what Alex believed.

He couldn't imagine someone outspeeding him when it came to ingredients.

The Immortal Soul said nothing, however, and continued waiting. There was a time limit of an hour on the test and so Alex had to wait along with everyone as well.

He felt a little bored, but there was nothing to do. He tried to feel how Whisker was doing and gained a little feedback through his bond that told him that he wasn't feeling bad at all.

That would suggest that he was doing good, not that Alex doubted it. Whisker's knowledge of ingredients came from Alex, so there was little chance he wasn't going to be able to name it all.

An hour passed in almost no time and when it was over, the Dragon's soul spoke. "Those who failed to name it all, you will now be sent out."

Alex hadn't seen what had happened, but if he were to trust the words of the people who went through this trial beforehand, the failed individuals had all been sent back outside.

Alex hoped that none of his alchemists had failed.

"Those who passed will now go to the next trial."

As soon as the soul finished speaking, the dark walls surrounding Alex changed colors ever so slightly, going black to dark red.

The next trial included a test where a Saint pill and its description were mentioned to the alchemists. Their task now was to figure out just which of the 3 recipes provided was the correct one.

Alex looked at the question and realized that he knew the pill. It was one of the healing pill recipes he knew. It wasn't the one he liked making as the one he made was of slightly higher quality.

He chose the correct answer without hesitation and the question switched to another pill. This time, it was a cultivation pill that improved one's speed. Alex had never seen this particular recipe before, so he had to take some time for this one.

But just 10 minutes later, he had gone through all 3 recipes and saw the flaws in the other 2. Only the one in the middle made any sense at all.

He picked it and the question changed again to another pill.

Alex looked at this one, a pill that made one resistant to fire aura. It took Alex 5 minutes to recognize the correct pill for this one as the recipes had mistakes very early on this time around.

He chose the correct recipe and tapped it.

After the third answer in a row, the questions disappeared and Alex knew he had passed once more.

The Dragon Soul didn't try to show it in his face, but he had noticed Alex's quick answers and was more or less surprised once more at the speed.

He had finished it in 15 minutes when the trial itself was to last for 3 more hours. He had taken way too little time for this test.

Alex wanted to speak with the Dragon Soul, wanting to ask questions he was curious about, but he also didn't want to offend the soul and get thrown out of the trial. So, he had waited for the soul to begin talking to him first.

Still, Alex couldn't help but ask Godslayer the same questions instead.

"Do you know that Beasts and Plants can turn to humans?" Godslayer asked him.

"Yes," Alex said. "Brother Bai Jingshen told me that most beasts and plants can turn to humans once they reach the Immortal realm."

"That's not just for the body," Godslayer said. "The beasts and plants' souls are the same as well. They can change to humanoid form or retain their beast form even while in Soul. This one is probably staying as a human to not scare the rest of you."

"I see," Alex said. That made a lot more sense now that Alex thought about it. His first assumption had been that souls could only ever be humanoid. That turned out to be false.

"Still, I didn't expect to see an Immortal Soul in the lower realms," Godslayer said. "I wonder why he is here. If it was anyone else, I would've assumed it was a prisoner, but this one is an Azure Dragon. I doubt the dragons would use other criminal dragons to teach youths from a backwater world."

Alex had no answer. Why would an Azure Dragon remain as a soul?

"Souls are vulnerable, right?" he asked.

"Very much so, especially when compared to a normal body," Godslayer said. "Souls can't use absorption techniques, so they have to rely on themselves to gather Qi. That always ends up being very slow."

"Also, if you use up too much Qi, you end up breaking your soul apart until there is nothing left," Godslayer said. "There is nothing but only downsides to remaining as a soul. He should be finding a body already. Why isn't he?"

Alex felt his heart skip a beat when he realized something. "Do you think he is trying to get one from the ones that enter this trial?" he asked.

Godslayer said nothing for a while. That was certainly a possibility and he didn't need to affirm that for Alex. Alex already knew so.

"Not that there isn't a good chance that he is doing this to find a good body to take over, I don't believe that is the case," Godslayer said. "After all, how long has this trial been going on for?"

"The secret realm itself?" Alex asked. "It was made by the first Azure Dragon... so... over 90 thousand years ago?"

"Is it possible that this man has been here for that long?" Godslayer asked.

Alex thought for a bit and nodded. He had seen very old records when trying to learn about the continent and this trial had always noted the 6 different spirits that inhabited it.

Unless the 6 spirits were replaced every few thousand years, these were most certainly the old ones. Which meant that the Dragon Soul had most likely been the trial master for the past tens of thousands of years.

"If he was after a body, he would've taken one by now," Alex said. "Was that what you were going for?"

"Yes," Godslayer said. "Besides, it seems he's testing your talent in alchemy. Taking over your body wouldn't help him in that. He can't read your mind with his new soul."

Alex nodded and said nothing. That still didn't answer why the Dragon Soul was there.

Alex noticed the Dragon Soul announcing something, but the voice didn't reach him at all. He only saw his face move, and from what Alex could tell, he was addressing other people.

"Oh," Alex looked around curiously. "Are we all taking the test in the same room?"

He didn't just mean the ones taking the 2nd trial as he was, but the others that were taking the 1st trial as well. That made sense.

He hadn't sensed himself being teleported away, so he had always been in the same room. If that was the case then the other people must have come to the same room and were only separated by these walls that Alex was surrounded by.

3 hours passed and the trial was over. The Dragon Soul addressed them again. The ones that failed were sent away, and the ones that passed remained.

The dark red walls glowed brighter, the red becoming more crimson. "We shall begin the next trial for you all."

'You all,' Alex noted. There were still other people, not that he had expected many to fail yet.

The next test was simple in concept. Once again, Alex and the rest of the participants were given the names of 13 ingredients along with a recipe and the pill that formed out of the recipe.

The only problem was, the recipe had 3 out of its 16 ingredients missing. The alchemists had to fill in the blanks and write down the correct recipe.

Alex looked at the list and closed his eyes, beginning a mental simulation of the pill. Since he already knew all the ingredients, as well as the limited number of ways they could be used in a recipe, this was barely a challenge for him.

He had spent years trying out every possibility of every ingredient to fit certain criteria to form a pill of his choice, and that had taught him exactly how to go about this trial.

5 minutes later, after going through multiple simulations, Alex had arrived at the correct one. Without hesitation, he wrote it down.

The Dragon Soul couldn't hide his surprise this time around as Alex passed quickly once more.

The Dragon Soul was steadily getting more and more surprised with Alex with each trial he put forth. Finally, on the 7th trial where the few remaining participants had to make a pill as well as they could, he was surprised to see pill clouds forming in the sky.

Even being from the Azure Clan, it wasn't every day that one got to see pill clouds forming when someone made a pill. For such a thing to be commonplace, one would have to be in the Medicine realm.

So, when he saw Alex, a Saint Core realm cultivator making 5-veined pills, he couldn't stop his curiosity any further.

"Who are you?" he asked Alex directly, appearing inside the now blue walls. The red walls had changed to various shades of violet before slowly becoming blue over the course of the trials. That was a way for the Immortal soul to keep track of who was at what trial.

Alex looked up after having just finished making the healing pill. He hadn't even pulled the pill out of Memory when the Dragon's soul had arrived in front of him. Finally.

"Greetings, senior," Alex said respectfully. "My name is Alex Benton. I am the King of one of the continents of this world under the Vermillion Bird."

The Dragon soul said nothing immediately, but his spiritual sense did land on Alex. The soul was either not very strong, or it didn't mean to harm Alex since his senses on Alex were rather gentle.

The other possibility didn't even come across Alex's mind until the Dragon's soul asked a question. "Are you a reincarnation of an Alchemy master?" he asked. "Or did you perhaps take over the body of a young man as an old soul?"

Alex was surprised. Did the Dragon think he was someone important hiding in a nobody's body?

"Neither," he answered. "I haven't even formed my nascent soul yet. That's... coming up soon."

"Is that so?" the Dragon asked with a surprised look on his face. "Then... are you just a random person from this realm?"

"More or less, yes," Alex said.

"More or less?" the Dragon asked. "Why more or less?"

"I've had opportunities that a normal person wouldn't," Alex said. "As I've mentioned, I'm a King directly under a Vermillion bird after all."

"Is that so?" the Dragon looked at Alex curiously. "Then the skills you have... You learned them all on your own?"

Alex didn't know how to answer that as he didn't want to explain it all exactly. "More or less," he said once again.

"More or less," the Dragon soul repeated with a thoughtful look. "One moment."

He moved away from Alex, appeared back outside, and started saying something that Alex couldn't hear at all. He had gone back to address the trial as it was held.

After a few minutes, he returned.

"So, how did you learn to make pill clouds?" the Dragon asked as soon as he was back.

Alex was taken aback at the sudden questioning, but he showed little surprise in his expression. He hadn't expected the beast to ask such a question directly after returning.

"Uhh..." he couldn't come up with an answer immediately as he hadn't expected an Immortal soul to ask him such a question. "It's a couple of things working together," he explained.

"What sort of things?" the soul asked.

"Um, Daos, techniques, and perfect recipes, to say the least," Alex said.

The Dragon's soul touched his illusory chin as if thinking a little. He spent a few seconds in contemplation before speaking once more. "What sort of Daos?" he asked. "What Dao do you have?"

"Dao of Heat and Dao of Five Elemental Interaction, to begin with," Alex said. "Other fire-related Dao can be of help too... but that's about it."

"Hmm," the soul thought to himself. "Getting perfect recipes isn't that hard for me once I go back. What about techniques? What sort of techniques do you use?"

Alex hesitated a little. "Just some pill formation techniques," he said. "Surely an Immortal like you has some good ones, right?"

"I do," the soul said. "But what makes yours so different that you can make form pill clouds?"

Alex didn't know what to say. He was aware that making pill clouds was an incredibly difficult task that most alchemists could never do in their lives. The good ones only did so a few times in their life and only the most incredible ones could do it so often.

There were a few things working together to help him achieve that, of which he could not tell the soul about the Supreme Elemental Accord and the Vortex of Perfection technique that he had derived from the Pill Splitting Qi.

He couldn't keep the soul waiting, so he answered what he could. "I simply got lucky and got a few techniques that helped me get good pills. Once I used my Dao and trained a lot, I could make pills that could make pill clouds."

"Just that?" the Soul asked. "I can do that too. But my pills rarely go higher than 95%. I can never seem to go higher than that."

Alex was a tiny bit surprised that the soul could make such a good pill.

"What is the main issue for the last few percentages?" Alex asked. "Ingredients? Techniques? Recipe?"

"I doubt my problem is with the recipe," the soul said. "The recipe is rarely the problem in the higher realm. Everyone is talented enough to improve it to the best of its capability."

"As for techniques, I do have good techniques," the soul said, thinking to itself. "Maybe I could use some better ones. My Ingredients are surely not the problem though. I can guarantee that."

"And Dao?" Alex asked.

"Well... I don't have any good Dao suitable for making pills," the Dragon said. "But I shouldn't need it. I have my own pill fire, so it's not necessary."

"Pill Fire?" Alex asked curiously.

"Yes," the Soul said, not really paying the question much attention.

"What's... Pill Fire?" Alex asked again.

The Dragon was about to answer when he realized something. "Oh, right. The lesser worlds rarely have different types of flames, don't they?" he asked. "Have you never seen a fire that's not really... fire?"

Alex thought for a moment and asked. "Do Phoenix fire count?" he asked.

"Absolutely," the Dragon said. "It absolutely counts. Although, I wouldn't know how you would cultivate phoenix fire. It's not something that you can easily take."

'Take?' Alex thought. Was that possible? Could he take phoenix fire? Regardless of how strong it was?

Alex was reminded of the Zhou family at the moment. The family from the Luminance Empire in the Western continent could use a white fire that burned multiple times hotter than normal fire.

'They were born with white fire. It was in their bloodline,' Alex remembered. 'Just like Scarlet's bloodline gives her Phoenix fire.'

"I can get new fire easily?" Alex asked the soul.

"I wouldn't call it easily, but it's not very difficult either," the soul said. "Especially when you're rich."

Alex nodded. He had another thing he wanted to do when he reached the immortal realm. 'I should ask Scarlet about her fire first. Surely Phoenix Fire would be the best one to get.'

He quickly shook his head, realizing he was getting distracted, and looked at the soul in front of him. "So there isn't much I can help you with then," he said to the dragon soul.

"You can help me with the techniques," the Dragon said. "What techniques do you have?"

Alex frowned a little. "I have one for pill forming," he said. "Do you want it?"

"Is it really good?" the Dragon asked expectantly. "It's... decent."

"Can it help me form Pill Clouds?" the Dragon soul asked.

"I'm not sure, senior," Alex said. "You are much older than me, senior. Surely you know much more about it than me."

The soul got curious. "How old are you?" he asked.

"About 70 years old," Alex answered.

"SEVENTY YEARS OLD?!?!" the soul shouted. "You... you're so young. How are you so young? How can someone so young man pill clouds?" The dragon was certainly surprised.

"As I mentioned, I've had some opportunities come along my way," Alex said.

"This... this is incredible," the dragon said. "Give me the technique you used. I want to see if it's as good as you say."

Alex nodded and was about to bring out a talisman to give to the soul when he paused. "I can give it to you, senior," he said. "But what do I get in return?"

The dragon soul paused. "You want something in return? Being able to help me should be an honor to you," he said.

"Honor is good, but it's not what got me this far in life, senior," Alex said. "I will require something something of value in exchange. Surely an Azure Dragon such as yourself will have something of value with you that you can part with."

The Dragon paused for a second. "What did you say?" he asked. Before Alex could say anything, he spoke again. "Did you call me an Azure Dragon?"

Alex frowned a little, confused as to what was happening. Had he offended the Dragon somehow?

"Are you not one?" he asked.

"Why did you think I was?" the Dragon asked.

"Your name," Alex answered. "Qing. That is the surname of the Azure Dragons right?"

"It is," the Dragon said, suddenly bursting out into laughter. "But that doesn't mean everyone that has it is an Azure Dragon."

"If I were an Azure Dragon, why would I ever be in a lower world in the first place?"

Chapter 1510: Trade

Alex frowned a little after learning that he was wrong. Had he been mistaken? Godslayer made no sign of him being wrong. But then again, the one standing in front of him was just a soul.

"You're not an Azure Dragon?" he asked the soul again, looking his all over. "My apologies then, senior. I was just mistaken by your horns and your scales. The features made me think of a dragon, and adding on that name, I was sure you were an Azure Dragon."

"You were not wrong in your assumption all the way," the soul said. "Not all the way through at least."

Alex looked up at the soul, trying to discern what he was trying to say. The soul's expression gave away nothing at all, forcing him to speak up. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"I'm not an Azure Dragon, but I am a Dragon still," the soul said. "And I am from the very Qing family that houses the Azure Dragon."

Alex took a moment to process what the soul had said. "What?" he asked, a confused look taking over his face. "How can you be a—"

He paused.

Then, it finally clicked.

"Ah! You're a descendant of the Azure Dragons!!" he said out loud. "You just don't have the bloodline."

The Dragon soul gave an awkward smile when he heard that. "That... that is the case," he said, not knowing how to feel about the words that came from the young human in front of him who wouldn't know anything about him. The same words that had haunted him as nightmares for most of his life.

As a child of the Azure Dragon, one hoped to gain a bloodline belonging to the Azure Dragon as well. When one didn't, they still had a possibility to become one eventually if they happened to evolve somehow in the future.

"Thank you for telling me that, senior," Alex said.

The Dragon quickly shook away any thought about the past he had and returned to the present. "So, does knowing what I am make you less likely to trade with me?" he asked.

"Absolutely not," he said. "I don't judge who I trade with. Well, at least not when I don't know their personality."

"Then?" the Dragon asked. "You will trade with me?"

"Yes," Alex said.

"And the technique is a good one?" he asked. "Is it the main thing you use to make Pill Clouds?"

Alex hesitated at that moment. He hid any expression on his face, but he alone knew that it was not it. The technique he wanted to trade was the Profound Revolution of Myriad Combination technique.

As an Immortal technique, it was quite useful and thus anyone would like to have it. However, the moment he traded the technique and was forced to make another pill during the trial, he would be found out.

He couldn't trade away this technique at all.

Alex sighed internally at the end, grimacing at the thought of what he had to do. "Yes, it is the main thing I use to make pill clouds," he answered. "But, before I trade it away, I will require senior to make an oath that you will not trade the technique with anyone else. Ever."

The Dragon frowned a little. "I have to trade with a disadvantage?" he asked. "Why can't I just get what I trade for?"

"Because the technique I trade with you will be the one force that will make it possible for you to form pill clouds," Alex said. "Will that suffice?"

The Dragon didn't say anything. He was ready to make any kind of offer for the opportunity to learn how to make a pill that could form pill clouds.

"I'll say the oath," the Dragon said in the end. "But you have to tell me what it is that I'm speaking the oath for. What exactly is the technique going to do?"

Alex thought for a moment and explained the best he could without giving away anything about it that could clue in the soul as to what sort of technique it was.

After listening to Alex's words, the Dragon thought for a moment. "Let me see what I can trade you with," he said. "Give me some time."

Alex did.

The dragon went back to handling the trials, while Alex waited for the 3 hours of his own trial to come to an end.

It was such a long time that he didn't believe it would come to an end any time soon. Before it ended, the Dragon returned.

"Alright, I know what I am giving to you," he said. "A Saint pill recipe from the Immortal realm."

Alex narrowed his eyes. "... have a lot of recipes, senior," he said. "I'm not sure I need another one. You will have to think of something else to trade with me."

"No, no, don't be so quick to dismiss it," the Dragon Soul said. "You haven't even heard what the pill is."

Alex nodded. "You're right," he said. "Please tell me what the pill is about, senior."

The Dragon smiled. "The pill I'm going to trade you with is one that will make you an Immortal," he said.

Alex thought for a moment that he had heard wrong. Had the Dragon really said what he had said?

"A pill that makes you an Immortal?" he was confused. "How is that even po—"

"Temporarily!" the Dragon quickly added. "Sorry. Temporarily. It doesn't permanently make you an immortal. I should have mentioned that."

"Oh!" Alex felt a little better hearing about the pill. It didn't sound so impossible. Taking the new information into context, he was genuinely surprised by the existence of this pill.

"A pill that can give you the strength of an Immortal, huh?" Alex thought. "That's amazing."

"Mhm." The Dragon nodded to Alex.

"Any downsides?" Alex asked him. "It sounds too good to just improve your cultivation base by that amount. Some pills improve your cultivation base, but each one of them causes a problem afterward. What about this one? It must do something truly bad."

The Dragon's expression changed the slightest amount, which Alex failed to grasp. He thought for a moment and sighed. "Depending on the gap, it... It destroys most of your cultivation base," he said. "If you're close to reaching the Immortal realm, say you're in the Saint Transformation realm, then you probably will just drop a bunch of cultivation realm after going through Qi deviation."

"However, if you are weaker, say... barely starting at the Saint Soul realm, then you will wreck your body to the point where you will lose your cultivation base," the Dragon said.

Seeing Alex's face change told the Dragon that the trade wasn't going to go well. "I'll come up with something else to trade you with," the Dragon said. "Just wait for a bit for me to think of something. I don't have anything on me at the time, so I can only give you what I remember."

"No," Alex said quickly after thinking for a bit. He remembered the fight between the Dragon Emperor and the Oathbreakers. The two attacks at the end had made him scared in a way he had never been before.

"I will take it," Alex said. "I will take the pill recipe."

"Are you sure?" the Dragon asked. He had been trying to dupe Alex with the pill recipe as someone from a higher realm. However, hearing that he actually wanted the pill recipe made him frown.

"You... do you feel like you need this recipe?" he asked.

"For a worst-case scenario, yes," Alex said. "It's good to have it if I end up having nothing else to save myself in certain situations."

"But you'll destroy your body and cultivation," the Dragon said.

"Better than dying, don't you think?" he asked.

The Dragon nodded. "That is how you're supposed to think of it with this pill," he said. "I had assumed someone from the lower realm would not have the same mentality."

"Are you looking down on us, senior?" Alex asked with a smile.

The Dragon smiled back. "It seems I have," he said. "Give me an empty talisman. I'll write down the recipe for you."

Alex didn't hesitate and quickly brought out a talisman before handing it to the Dragon.

The Dragon levitated the talisman next to him and used his spiritual sense to write on that talisman. He held onto the talisman and looked at Alex. "Bring out your technique," he said.

"Please speak the oath first, senior," Alex said.

The Dragon thought for a moment and nodded. There was nothing he could lose from this anyway. "I vow to never reveal the pill-forming technique you will pass along to me," he said.

Alex waited and felt the familiar aura of the heavens lock onto the Dragon. He felt the oath fall into place and the Dragon's soul shuddered a little. "Are you fine with this?" he asked.

Alex nodded. "That works for me," he said and brought out a talisman that held the technique. He passed along the technique to the Dragon's soul and the dragon passed back the talisman that he held.

Alex took the talisman and quickly looked through the pill recipe. A few of the ingredients in there seemed hard to get, but mostly it was an actual recipe.

It would take him some time to tell if it did what the Dragon said it did or not.

"If you are somehow not able to break through to the Immortal realm by the time I am supposed to leave this place," the Dragon said. "Come find me. I'll take you back with me."