

Alchemy 151

Chapter 151: Attack and Defense

Alex felt like he had just realized the importance of body cultivation. Everything his master had said until now had barely influenced his thoughts against body cultivation. At best, he would reluctantly accept the pain and cultivate.

But now, he had an incentive to. "Even if I could cultivate more than this with Qi cultivation alone, I still wouldn't get as strong since continuous breakthroughs are bad for your foundation. But, this seems entirely different."

"This is quite exciting."

Now that he knew how strong his Qi-less body was, he decided to check how strong it was with the Qi. "If I'm remembering correctly, my fists did the same damage as my cultivation base. So, with the Body cultivation, it should be higher, right?"

"Although, I don't know how much more damage a simple muscle tempering realm can add to my current strength." Alex let go of the withheld Qi and let it fill his body.

He prepared his fist once more and punched the metallic puppet as hard as he could.

BAM

This was a much louder sound than he was imagining. He looked up at the puppet to see what the result was.

<Organ Tempering 2nd Realm>

"Or-Organ Tempering 2nd Realm?" he blurted out, shocked at the result. "But..how? My body isn't strong enough to show that kind of result. Was I mistaken earlier?" he wondered.

The last time he had tested his physical strength was when he had just gotten the Smiting Blade technique. After that, he had trained under the assumption that all of his damage would always be equivalent to his cultivation base.

"Even master had said the same thing. Due to one's Qi, your strength without any external techniques or artifacts would be equal to your cultivation base under normal circumstances—"

His eyes went wide. "Is there something more to my strength other than the weak body cultivation right now?" he tried to think of the reasons.

"I see..." he finally said after a minute. "It has to be either because of the Yang Jade, the Mortal Cleansing I went through, or the unknown blood essence, right? But which one? Maybe even all three."

He punched once more just to be sure it wasn't a fluke and the puppet indeed showed 'Organ Tempering 2nd Realm' once more.

He took out the normal sword and used it this time.

<Organ Tempering 1st Realm>

"Woah! Even a normal Common Mortal grade sword's damage increased by so much? What about my actual sword?" he thought as he took out the Steel sword and used it.

<Organ Tempering 3rd Realm>

"Yeah, that's more like it." He went on to test on a few more techniques. He managed to deal a realm higher worth of damage with his Smiting blade. Sadly, techniques like the 2nd and 3rd strike of the Elusive Heavenly sword which were more focused on the Qi were the weakest of the different techniques Alex knew now.

Iron Fist Punch, however, had become amazing.

<Organ Tempering 5th Realm>

"But, it's not even focused on the body. Why is only this Qi-based technique so strong?" he couldn't help but wonder. After going through Mortal Cleansing, his strength had gone a realm higher. But he didn't know that yet.

"I should see if cultivation truly had no influence on body cultivation," he thought as he opened his status page, and pressed on the button, [Breakthrough].

<Congratulations, You have broken through to 'Organ Tempering: 1st realm'>

'Finally, on the 4th minor realm.' Alex once more reeled in his Qi and tried to punch the puppet with just his body strength.

<Muscle Tempering 4th Realm>

"As I thought, it didn't increase."

He went on to test the other techniques and realized that they all had increased by a realm in damage. "I should test defense next," he thought and walked up to the puppet to flip the 'Defense training' switch while switching off the other one.

Out of nowhere, the puppet moved to the side, hitting him with the stick it was holding. His reflexes kicked in as he put up his arms to protect himself, only to realize that it didn't hurt at all.

The puppet returned to its original state, and Alex could see the words 'Skin Tempering 1st Realm' written on it. The puppet moved once more attacking him. This time, it's damage one step further.

Hit after hit, it increased its damage with every hit, returning to its initial position with each one. Still, Alex didn't feel any damage whatsoever.

Even after the damage entered the threshold of the Bone Tempering realm, he was barely feeling any damage. "Is this how good body cultivation really is?" he couldn't help but wonder.

Only around the 5th realm, did he start to get hurt a little. Still, it was more of a pat on the back, than actual damage. Another attack came from the side, dealing a bit higher damage.

Another attack with 7th realm damage came and he finally thought it was a bit substantial in damage. The 8th realm damage started to get him worried.

The 9th realm damage finally hurt him a little. He braced for the next attack.

Finally, an Organ Tempering 1st realm's equivalent damage-dealing attack appeared in front of him and hit him, sending him flying backward.

"Urghh, that hurt. But I can take another one." The puppet was already back to its original position, moving once more. Alex walked forward and braced himself again.

BAM

He was sent back flying. "Arghh," he shouted as that was the highest bit of damage he could take right now. "Urghh..." he stood up once more and waited for the attack to come back.

Qi started flowing through his body as his skin started to get textured, making it look like it was made up of jade. Alex had used the Jade Skin technique and waited for the attack to hit him.

"Umphh," he stopped the attack and felt a little damage. He smiled at the situation as he watched the puppet rotate back to hit him once more.

Chapter 152: Quick Library Visit

Organ Tempering 3rd Realm had hurt Alex a little through the Jade Skin technique, but he could keep going.

He waited for the 4th realm attack to hit and braced himself. "Mmm," he screamed as the hit just now actually hurt. It wasn't enough to make him suffer or anything, but it did hurt quite a bit.

Alex started to wonder if taking the next shot was a good idea or not. Alas, he took a little too long to decide. The puppet had already spun, swinging its staff at him.

Alex prepared his Jade Skin technique the best he could and blocked the attack.

BAM

He was sent flying back to the wall when he hit and fell down. "Argghhh," this had hurt him quite a bit. He immediately looked up, scared another attack was coming, but the puppet had stopped moving at all, and its body had nothing written on it.

It took a few minutes for the pain to subside. "I can barely take the 5th realm attack, which I can easily survive a 4th realm's attack. Maybe I can do better if I cultivate my body," he thought. But the thought alone was enough to make him shiver.

"I will think about that later." He went to the puppet and switched off defensive mode. "How does movement training work though? Will it tell me what realm my movements are at? But that doesn't seem like a quantifiable value, unlike cultivation base, which normal persons have the equal amount."

Still, he decided to check it out, so he flipped the switch.

Suddenly, multiple holes appeared on the white walls around the room. Alex prepared for what was coming. A burst of small air appeared near his face that he managed to dodge easily.

Another burst of air came from behind him. He ducked to dodge this one as well. After that, burst upon bursts of air were sent out of the holes at a steady rate.

Alex started with Elusive Heavenly sword's evasion skills but soon realized that it wasn't going to be enough. So, he started to use Fluctuating friction dance as well.

He kept on dodging for at least 15 minutes, before finally, the number of air shots was just too much for him to dodge. Without a way to move out of the way, he got hit.

All the openings in the wall closed off and Alex heard a 'click' sound. He looked around to see that the Movement training switch was turned off.

"This is actually quite a good way to train your movement technique."

Alex left the room and walked out of the training hall after paying the spirit stones. He looked at the time and realized not much had passed since he logged in, so he went to the library.

The library wasn't as different from the library in the Hong Wu sect. It was in a pagoda shape with around 8 floors. He walked in to see not that many shelves of books. However, there were quite a few disciples in here, sitting around a table, reading the books. Somewhere even copying them into a talisman.

"Finally, this feels like an actual library," he said out loud. He walked around looking for the different things to read. "Oh, most of these are just introductory books," he realized as he saw that most of them were just basic knowledge regarding the fields they were about.

Cultivation books taught how to cultivate, Alchemy books taught how ingredients were required, and so on. So, he skipped the first floor and walked up to the second floor.

"I can't waste much time here today. I still need to go register a fight."

The second floor was much the same. With the content being a little more advanced, it was still there for outer sect disciples to read. Alex wanted to skip this one too, but he found a beginner's guide on beast companions so he quickly read it.

There were other fun books too, but he had to ignore them for today. He walked up to the 3rd floor and found more books on beast companions, but they were still very basic.

They mostly just explained how beast companions worked, how they formed bonds, and how they were stored. Although, he did learn the beast companions required no sustenance to survive after bonding with a cultivator, which relieved him regarding not feeding Pearl at all.

"Still, I should give him some food from time to time just for enjoying a meal," he thought.

He decided to go to the 4th floor. An Elder stood guard on the staircase that led to the 4th floor and asked for a spirit stone.

"It costs me a spirit stone just to enter the 4th floor?" he asked in surprise. The elder seemed to be used to this question so he answered in a very practiced manner.

"No, you do not. We will remove the cost from the book you will borrow. However, if you won't borrow anything, you will not get the spirit stones back. This is a way to not overcrowd the upper floors with people who don't mean business. All the books on the 4th floor cost 5 spirit stones. If you don't have it, you can return back."

The elder had a very monotone voice when he explained this. Alex decided to just go up and read whatever he could find there. He started searching for 3 different things in here. First, he looked for books on beast companions. Second, he looked for books on alchemy. Third, he looked for books or records that could give him the knowledge that was more trivia-like.

He actually wanted to find information on the different bodies and see if his body was written in it or not. He sent forth his spiritual sense to check for everything in the area. Once he found what he was looking for, he started reading it. Time slowly passed, and before he knew it, it was time for him to leave.

Since he had just used a single spirit stone, he didn't bother renting anything else and just left the library.

Chapter 153: Palm of the Sun

Alex stood over his opponent he had just fought. The opponent was a lackey of Huo Tu. He had found it quite funny when the person he randomly chose for fighting today was actually one of the lackeys.

The opponent was quite surprised when he realized who his opponent was. The fight itself was pretty easy since his opponent was only at the Organ Tempering 1st realm, the same as him.

"Fight Over!" the elder shouted.

Alex walked over to the elder to get his new badge, numbered 105. As he left, he heard the lackey saying in a low voice to himself, "I must tell brother Huo. This master-less bastard is starting to target us."

"What?" Alex thought to himself, confused. "Is he misunderstanding the coincidence?" he thought but didn't bother explaining. It was already 9 PM and he was late for his training with his master.

"Ah, you came, finally. I thought you decided to skip today as well." Wen Cheng was waiting for him outside of the training hall.

"The fight I registered today took a little too long to end master, I didn't purposefully be late."

"Oh what badge did you obtain?" he asked.

Alex took out the badge and handed it to Wen Cheng. Wen Cheng looked at the badge and was shocked. "You are already this far ahead? In just a little over a week too. And here I thought those new people that keep joining and leaving were talented."

'Talented new people? He must be talking about the players,' he thought.

"Are these people really talented, Master?" he asked.

"Well, not as much as you. But, they were pretty fast at learning techniques too. Such a shame they just leave the sect after learning a few more techniques." Wen Cheng shook his head at remembering all the new talents he lost.

"Although, they were still slow in cultivation so I guess its not that big of a loss. Some of them we actually expelled because they kept destroying the copies of the techniques they took and couldn't pay the fine."

"Honestly, I don't know where this new surge of cultivators came from, but they are as talented as they are annoying." Wen Cheng seemed to change his opinions on the player quite frequently.

"Nevermind them, since you did what I asked you to, take this offensive technique and learn it. I will come back around 2 am. After that, I will stay with you to make sure your body cultivation goes well. "

Alex suddenly was horrified at the thought. "I will have to cultivate body tonight as well, master?" he asked. He had thought of doing it once more, but a little later down the line. Having to do it immediately after suffering yesterday, made his palms and feet sweat from anxiety.

"Don't worry," Wen Cheng said, "Since you already went through it once, it won't be as painful as last time. Especially, since you also went through Mortal Cleansing. That should at least help you keep your mental bearings."

Alex thought for a second and nodded. Wen Cheng handed him the book he had and left. Alex looked at the book he had with him and read it out loud.

"Palm of the Sun?" he read with interest. 'Is it what I think it is?' he thought. He read the introductory page and realized that it was in fact 'Yang Qi' related.

"Palm of the Sun. Throw a palm strike with Yang energy from a distance away. Works better for people with Yang-type spiritual root, but doesn't necessarily need it."

"This is quite good. Hmm... will my body affect it at all?" he wondered. It didn't take him long to learn the technique, so he started practicing it immediately.

It didn't take him long to realize that the palm strike was as strong if not stronger than the fist. "Hmm... does this mean that I have something too that is making the fist strong?" he wondered, but couldn't think of any answer even though he had a big suspicion that it had something to do with the blood essence.

After an hour of training the palm, he started to get bored. He had done the same training for the last week or so and he didn't want to do that either. "What do I do now?" he thought.

He so desperately wished to make some pills right now, but there was no fire.

"Hmm... the books did say that beast companions needed no training for fights, but it can't hurt to try, right?" he thought as he called pearl out.

"Meow," Pearl looked around and realized he was in the same familiar place as yesterday. He immediately started to lay down and meditate as that was what Alex had been asking for him every time he was called out.

"Wait, no." Alex's heart skipped a beat as he immediately stopped Pearl from cultivating. "We are going to practice fighting today buddy."

Alex brought Pearl to the center of the training hall and proceeded to train him. "Alright, bub. Come attack me."

"Meow," Pearl tilted his head in confusion as he didn't understand what Alex meant exactly. Alex gestured by punching himself in his own arm. "Come hit me here with your hands."

Pearl finally understood what Alex meant and suddenly, jumped towards him to attack.

BAM

Or so Alex expected to hear. But what he heard was just a small 'pat' sound on his arm. He barely even felt anything. "Are you weak? Or am I just too strong now?" he wondered and asked.

He decided to check Pearl's status.

[White Cat (Child) - Bonded

Name: Pearl

Cultivation Base: Muscle Tempering 4th Realm

Evolution Chance: 40%

Cultivation Method: ????? ?????'s Dominating Body (Shared)

]

"Oh, you already reached Muscle Tempering realm? That is very fast. As fast, if not faster than why I cultivate normally. Are you stealing Qi from me by any chance?' Alex jokingly asked. And then, he noticed something weird. "Wait a second..." Alex was surprised. "Is your cultivation realm the same as my body cultivation realm?"

Chapter 154: Progress

Alex thought for a bit. Pearl's cultivation base had come from sleeping for a few weeks in his tattoo, then eating the blood essence, and then finally, cultivating. Only one of which was responsible for his body cultivation right now.

"So that can only mean that it is a coincidence right?" he thought. He then wondered 'Since we have the same cultivation base in a way, maybe it will be equal if I take back my Qi? Although it feels really uncomfortable, I should try it.'

He started pulling in the Qi into his meridian and leaving his body Qi-less. "Alright, hit me again buddy." Pearl didn't wait for him to say anything else and immediately slapped his arm with his paw.

Alex stumbled a few steps back as the hit was a bit harder than he thought it would be. "Shouldn't be surprising that I took so much damage. We are the same cultivation base technically after all. Although, it doesn't hurt as much as I expected it to."

He then looked at Pearl and said, "Alright buddy, come attack me."

Pearl once more hit him, but this time Alex dodged it. Alex did nothing but dodge as Pearl tried to hit him continuously. In the end, they had to stop because Alex realized that Pearl just wasn't good at fighting.

"I can't even teach you how to fight, can I?" Alex fell into a dilemma. 'How do the normal monsters know how to fight then?' he wondered.

He continued fighting with Pearl once more. This time, he went on for as long as he could, however, Pearl barely learned anything once again.

"Is it because he is still a child that he can't learn how to fight? Or am I just that bad of a teacher?" Alex thought. "Guess, I will have to wait until he is an adult then."

Alex decided to solo train for the next few hours. It was a shame, but he couldn't train his Flickering Shadows technique in the brightly lit training hall. So, he just kept the training to the things he had learned in the Tiger Sect. But that was getting boring.

Perhaps he was getting really good at it, or he just didn't see the point of training solo for so long. He just wanted to stop for once and do something else. But his mind told him this was important.

"Urghh... I just want to go back to making pills. That is so much more interesting. But I also need to learn to fight so that I could protect myself."

He reluctantly practiced for a bit longer until Wen Cheng came back around.

"Did you learn it?" he asked.

"Yes master," he proceeded to show exactly how good the attack was. "Hmm... did your yang-type spiritual root amplify the damage a bit?" Wen Cheng said as he felt the dangerous aura radiating from the palm.

"I think so master," Alex said.

"Alright, let's get on with the body cultivation. I will stay with you until the end to make sure nothing bad happens," Wen Cheng said.

"Uh..." Alex wanted to complain some more, but reluctantly agreed. "Alright, master."

He called out Pearl and told him to cultivate. Within minutes, Pearl's fur was glowing bright gold, while Alex was gritting his teeth trying to not scream.

Wen Cheng looked at Alex in surprise. "Wow, he isn't screaming at all. Did the mortal cleansing actually help him that much? Or is his body just that strong that he doesn't feel as much pain anymore?"

Alex was grunting the entire time, but he never outright screamed. Morning came by and before Wen Cheng could even ask Pearl to stop, Alex did it himself.

"Huh? You could think properly despite the pain?" Wen Cheng asked.

"The pain... it wasn't as horrible as last time. So, I could maintain some thoughts," he said. Alex checked Pearl and realized he had gone up 2 realms. 'Is it the same for myself?' he wondered.

"Alright, go now." Alex didn't go through mortal cleansing again, so he did not require any bath this time. Alex returned back to his room and decided to visit go sell some pills before visiting the library once more.

In such a way, a few more days went by. Every day started with Alex opening his eyes after the intense pain of body cultivation subsided. He would then go back to his house to log out for breakfast.

After his breakfast, he would visit the library for 3 hours, before logging out to go to his university classes. After school, he would return to visit the library once more for a few hours.

Afterward, he would go fight some disciples in the training fields. After reaching the top 100s, it was getting really hard to progress higher. Everyone in the top 100s was a genius when it came to cultivation or fighting. Unless he got better in either, he wouldn't make it far here.

The problem with this was that he was only focusing on body cultivation the last few days so he was forced to eat a few monster cores. Monster cores however started to create more and more fights in his head.

He could still fight the monsters quite easily, however, the monster spirits he had to fight seemed to be getting closer and closer in strength to their real self. With not having a spiritual sense or his body and having to only use Qi to fight, he was worried that sooner or later something bad would happen.

During the night, he would train with Wen Cheng. He had learned another fighting technique and defensive technique, both of which he liked very much because they used swords. He would practice these techniques and train with Pearl until Wen Cheng came back.

After Wen Cheng did, he would start to body cultivate once more. As such, by Friday, he had managed to reach the 3rd realm of Bone Tempering for Body Cultivation and 3rd Realm of Organ Tempering for Qi Cultivation.

Chapter 155: Unexpected Match

Alex was on the final floor of the library walking around looking at the different books and records on the shelf. From time to time, he would stop in front of a shelf, pick a book, look at it for a big and then put it back. Any outsider looking at him would think that he wasn't able to find something that suited him.

But, on the contrary, his spiritual sense was in full focus, reading a book regarding Beast Companions. Finally, there he found some information that he had been desperately searching for.

"So, that is how beast companions learn to fight, huh," he sighed in relief knowing that Pearl wasn't an anomaly.

Beast Companions were born with inherent memories, or it might be more accurate to call them instincts. These instincts would allow them to learn how to fight, as well as learn new techniques.

Also, another thing the book mentioned that caught his eyes was that the more potential or talent a beast had, the longer a child they would remain.

"So, Pearl won't necessarily grow up from his child form until he has overcome his latent potential, huh. I wonder how long that will take." He then looked all over the book, trying to find specific information, but there just wasn't any.

"What about evolution though?" he kept searching but didn't find an answer. He decided to skip it for now and look at the other records. He walked up to another shelf and sent out his spiritual sense to search for other records that were free.

He needed to see if there was any record of his body in here. "Hmm..." he suddenly sensed an unusual record among the many. "Ah, is this one of the records that survived that fight 50 some years ago?" he wondered and started reading it.

The information in the record was very broken and scattered. From what he could gather, it mostly spoke of the writers wanting to return to the land where no one entered.

"Is this the sacred lands where nobody placed their foot on because it was so holy to them?" he kept on reading. The Tiger Sect was set near the land where no one stepped in. But they had to move locations to where they were now. The records spoke of their reluctance but gave no reasoning as to why.

"What was so sacred about that land?" he wondered. Finally, there was one bit of information that he managed to read.

Where the Fiery Earth embraces the Yin-like Water, the Golden Wood of Yang emerges.

"Fire, Earth, Yin, Water, Gold, Wood, and Yang. All of the 7 elements are in one place. Is it talking about some sort of Alchemy garden?" that was Alex's first thought. "Yin like water... what does that even mean? Also, Fiery Earth... why would earth be on fire? Not to forget the Golden Wood of Yang... huh?" the more he thought about the record, the more confused he was.

Maybe his master was confused as well, which was why he didn't mention this part.

He stopped thinking about it and read the other records. None of them had any vital information. Suddenly, his badge started vibrating. He took it out looked at it.

"98? I'm 12 levels higher than him. Why would he want to fight be? Whatever, I still have an hour." Alex decided to look around for a bit first. He spent the next 45 minutes reading as many of the records and books as he could and took a random book before leaving the library.

After the fourth floor, each additional floor had cost him 5 spirit stones each to enter. By the 8th floor, he had spent 21 spirit stones and didn't want to let it go to waste. So, he took a book that looked interesting.

He paid an additional 20 spirit stones for the book and left.

He quickly reached the fighting stage where the disciple with the 98th badge had registered for a fight with him. By the time he made it there, only 10 minutes were left on his timer.

"Number 86 and 98" the Elder called out. Alex walked up to the Elder and handed him his badge. His opponent also walked up to the elder to hand in his badge.

Alex turned around to see who his opponent was. When he saw who it was, he was shocked.

In front of him was a young and fat man about the same height as him. "You!!" Alex said in surprise.

"Not only did you disrespect me, but you also purposefully target my subordinates now. I will show you what the result is after you mess with me, boy." The man in front of Alex was Huo Tu.

The last few days, 2 of the people he fought had turned out to be lackeys of this guy. So, he had started to assume that Alex was targeting his subordinates on purpose to mess with him.

Alex started getting concerned. He had never expected the man in the 18th ranking himself to drop his ranking to the 98th position just to fight him. 'Sh*t. This is going to be troublesome,' he thought.

He looked at Huo Tu and saw that he was still in the Meridian Tempering 3rd realm like the last time he saw him. Alex being in the 3rd realm of Organ tempering was a bad match-up right now.

"Hey, isn't that senior brother Huo? What is he doing here?" someone recognized Huo Tu after he got on the stage.

"Did that kid challenge senior Huo?" somebody else asked.

"No, their rankings were 86 and 98. I think senior brother dropped his ranking to teach that guy a lesson."

"Who is he? Does anybody know?"

"His name is Yu Ming. He disrespected brother Huo, so he has come to take revenge today."

The lackeys started making noise, so more people started to gather to watch the match. The match between the two was turning out to be a spectacle before it even began.

Chapter 156: Explosive Talismans

People started gathering just by the ruckus that was being made. Some recognized Huo Tu, some recognized Alex, some just came to watch what the hub hub was about.

Knowing that a core disciple had registered a fight with an inner sect disciple, many other people started getting called by their friends watching the fight too.

"What's the point? It's not like the inner sect disciple is going to win," someone said.

"Yeah, but that's not the point. It's not every day you see a core disciple fight. Don't you guys want to see it?" someone else said.

"You sound like you've never seen Huo Tu fight. You must be quite new here then," another person spoke.

"Huh? does he fight violently or something? Since he is a core disciple, he must be really good right?" the previous person asked.

"Haha, quite the opposite actually. Just watch, you might be surprised by his fighting method," the person spoke once more.

On the stage, Alex heard the person speak. 'Not good at fighting? Does he have a different fighting method?' he wondered. He took out his Steel Sword for this fight. This fight was way out of his league, and he was not going to bother limiting his abilities only to get badly hurt in this fight.

He looked around the stage. It was around 3 PM and the only shadow he could see was either his own or the opponent's. 'I can't use it then,' he thought. 'Well, it's the last option either way.'

He got into a fighting stance, waiting for his opponent to take out his weapon as well, but he never did.

"FIGHT!" the Elder started the match.

Alex got cautious. His opponent was just standing there with a smile on his face. "Come," Huo Tu gestured with his hand, inviting Alex to attack him.

'Is he not scared of my attack?' Alex wondered. 'Whatever.' He dashed straight to the front and swung his sword. Dark lines appeared on Huo Tu's skin as he placed his single hand forward to block the blade.

CLANK

As if he just hit Iron, Alex's hand shook from the rebound damage. 'He knows Jade Skin? How strong is his hand?' Alex thought in pure shock. Huo Tu smiled in contempt when he saw the shock on Alex's face.

"Now you're going to get it," Huo Tu said as he tried to punch back. However, Alex was fast and managed to run out of the attack range in good time. Huo Tu's face got serious for a second when he realized Alex was faster than him.

Then he started to get angry. He started to run towards Alex with his fat body and tried to punch him once more. However, Alex was too fast for him and managed to get out of his way.

'Why is he so slow? Does he not know any movement techniques?' Alex wondered. If that was the case, then there was still hope for him. Alex started to run around the stage.

From time to time, he came in and struck Huo Tu from his blind side. But not one of those managed to deal any sort of damage. 'Damn it,' he thought and used Smiting Blade. Yellow Qi flowed into his sword, dying the whole blade yellow.

With his strong body and his amazing movement technique, Huo Tu could no longer keep track of him. Alex started attacking more and more. His skin started to show some scratches after he used the Smiting blade, and also Huo Tu's robes were slowly being cut apart.

Something blue in color shone underneath, Alex cut more and more until the robe was in tatters and the underbody was visible.

"That is..." Alex thought in shock. He looked at the shiny blue armor underneath the man's body. 'That's the armor from the auction house. I thought it was taken by that merchant guy. Why does he have this?' he thought.

"Haha, you shocked. This is a Common Earth Grade armor artifact that my father got for me. Your physical attack does nothing to me. Not even Luo Mei or Du Yuhan can harm me with their attacks when I'm wearing this." He started to laugh manically.

The situation started to seem grimmer and grimmer by the second.

Alex ran away after realizing that he couldn't beat him by just attacking him. So, he decided to try some Qi-based techniques and see if those worked. Green Qi filled his sword and he got ready to swing it.

He used the 2nd strike of the Elusive Heavenly sword and let the attack fly. Huo Tu didn't do anything and simply let the attack hit him.

An explosion rang out, but Alex could tell that Huo Tu wasn't injured at all. 'Dammit,' he thought and prepared another attack. Darker green light filled the sword as Alex got ready to attack.

At the same time, Huo Tu did something as well. He reached into his storage bag and took out something. Alex looked at it and was surprised. 'A talisman?' he thought.

He let swing his sword and used the 3rd strike of the Elusive Heavenly sword. A green slash flowed through the air towards Huo Tu. Huo Tu as well threw the talisman directly at the incoming slash.

BOOM

Massive energy erupted where the two attacks met. Huo Tu had no problem standing through the shockwave, which Alex was pushed back a little.

"What was that?" Alex looked at the explosion in shock. He hadn't expected Huo Tu to use a talisman for fighting. He had remembered his master speaking about such things but had finally seen it for the first time.

Suddenly, Huo Tu took two talismans out and looked at Alex with a smile. Before Alex could even prepare another attack, he immediately threw both the talismans on either side of Alex, trying to sandwich him in between the explosions.

Alex got terrified. Without any other immediate ideas, he switched his holding of the sword from over to under and threw it right at Huo Tu just as the talismans exploded.

BOOM

Before Alex could even use any defensive techniques, the explosions devoured him whole.

Chapter 157: Penta Blade Technique

Huo Tu smiled seeing the explosion, but suddenly Alex appeared in front of him and hit him directly on the head with his blade. The attack did absolutely nothing to Huo Tu, but Alex's presence did anger him.

Alex immediately stepped back. His heart was beating crazily as he realized how close he was to being hurt. If he hadn't sent out the sword in time and teleported to its shadow, he would've taken serious damage right there.

He looked at the two small holes in the place where the talisman exploded. 'Was that damage in the Meridian tempering realm? I need to be more aware of my surrounding,' he thought and activated focus mode.

Suddenly, time slowed down. All the senses around him amplified, including what he picked up from his spiritual sense. His beating heart was just as loud as the rest of the crowd watching the fight.

The lights around him were brighter and he could more distinctly see the hideous face of Huo Tu. The smell of smoke and dust was in the air from the recent explosions. He could feel the fluctuations in the air made by the last 2 explosions.

He saw Huo Tu reach into his storage bag once more. This time, however, instead of a talisman, he took out a pill. "How did you survive that?" Huo Tu asked but got no response.

He got angry and threw the pill right at Alex. Alex was prepared, however. He simply made a fist and punched out. A massive golden fist flew out from him and traveled towards Huo Tu. In the middle, the pill and the Fist met, creating another massive explosion.

This time, Alex too stood unphased by the shockwaves. Huo Tu got angry and took out another 2 pills. Alex wanted to use another technique but wasn't given any chance.

The two pills flew out and struck just below Alex. Alex didn't move.

BOOM

Another giant explosion rang out. This fight had ended up being a battle of explosion. The audience waited with bated breath to see what happened as the smoke and dust cleared.

Alex emerged out barely damaged at all. He definitely took the damage, but the most it seemed to have done was make him disheveled. Alex's heart, however, was beating faster as he realized he just survived another close call.

'Like I thought. Elemental Guidance technique works with the pills explosions,' he thought. Huo Tu started to get even angrier.

He took out dozens of talismans and pills at once. 'Just how many of those does he have?' Alex was shocked to see the many pills and talismans with him. 'I guess that makes sense since he is the son of that fat merchant. He must really spoil his son to make him turn out like this,' Alex thought.

Huo Tu started to throw pills after pills talismans after talismans. Alex too threw whatever he could at the incoming attacks.

Elusive Heavenly Sword 2nd and 3rd Strike, Elemental Guidance, Iron Fist Punch, and Palm of the Sun. 'Sh*t. I don't think I can stand the onslaught anymore. I will have to finish this match in one shot,' he thought.

He kept throwing whatever he could at his opponent and waited for his opponent to end his current supply of 'attacks'.

Finally, the moment came. Huo Tu threw his last pill and Alex threw a massive yellow palm towards the incoming pill. Immediately afterward, he slid his 2 fingers from another hand across the blade.

Suddenly, the sword started glowing golden. He then made an arc around him with the sword. At specific intervals, the sword left a golden after image where it passed through.

After leaving the final golden image, the light in the sword disappeared, and all that remained were the 5 golden sword images on top of him. This was the final attack technique he had learned called the Penta Blade Technique. It was a heaven-grade technique that made 5 images of the blade using Qi. All 5 images would be as strong as a normal attack from the sword.

The technique could only be learned by people with Metal spiritual roots. This was the final technique Wen Cheng had given him and perhaps his strongest Qi-based attack.

The 5 blade images on top of him slowly started to tilt on his command and targeted Huo Tu. When he saw this, Huo Tu disregarded the need to take out more pills for now and prepared to take the full brunt of the attack by himself.

Dark lines appeared on his skin as he used Jade Skin to protect himself.

"Go." With a single command, all 5 of the sword flew directly towards Huo Tu. Golden light shined through the air as they passed by and hit Huo Tu.

BOOM

No explosions occurred but shockwaves still appeared. Huo Tu blocked the attack with just his body and smiled.

But then, suddenly, his eyes turned white and he fell to the ground.

Huff Huff

Alex breathed heavily as he stopped using focus mode and finally caught his breath. Huo Tu was in front of him unmoving, and the Elder waited for him to stand up.

But Alex knew he wasn't going to, at least not for a while now. He doubted someone in the meridian realm could withstand a full onslaught of Heaven's Impact, an attack that made Ma Rong nearly lose consciousness.

Hidden Behind the brilliant golden light of the Penta Blade technique was an undetectable fist made up of Spiritual energy that attacked Huo Tu's mind, suddenly fainting him.

"Elder, the match is over," Alex said, jolting the Elder out of his delusions. The Elder walked up to Huo Tu to make sure he was in fact unconscious and then looked at Alex in horror.

The stage was full of holes and needed repair. That was what these two people's fight had done.

The Elder couldn't imagine how an Organ tempering 3rd realm cultivator had defeated a Meridian Tempering 3rd realm cultivator. The result was just way too absurd.

"Elder, the result," Alex reminded once more.

"Ah, Fight Over." The Elder shouted out shocking the entire audience. Alex slowly walked up to the Elder and took his badge number 86 and left. Leaving the Elder and Audience in total silence.

Chapter 158: Lunch talk

"Huh?? He just won like that?" someone said in shock.

"What was that last attack?? It was so dazzling." Somebody else said.

"Look at that stage. The Elders must be angry right now."

"Of course. If they had known that the fight was going to take this turn, they would've sent them to a higher numbered stage."

"Is brother Huo Tu alright?" another person spoke.

"What was that inner sect disciple's name again? Yu Ming, right?" People started remembering his name.

"Is he a core disciple now?" another person asked. Numerous people were talking about the outcome of the battle just now.

Somewhere far away, a middle-aged man with a bald head and no facial hair was looking towards Alex who had long since left the stage and walking out of the sect valley.

At first, when he had heard that the match was between a core disciple and an inner sect disciple, he had given no attention to the match, but after the first few explosions, he had turned his attention to the match and watched it ever since.

"Who is that? His fight with Huo Tu left even stage 15 in tatters," he asked. Next to him were two people, both around the same height and wearing yellow robes with orange lining.

"I have never seen him, master. He must be new here. Maybe he is one of those new disciples that keep joining and leaving?" The young female spoke up. She had fair skin, with long black hair tied behind her back. She looked like she was 20 years old.

The male on the other hand didn't bother speaking at all. He seemed to be in his early 20s and had no facial hair on him. His stoic and handsome face showed no emotions at all.

The master didn't wait for the male to speak up either. He knew how his disciple was.

"Go and find out who he is and what his rank is," the bald man gave the order and the young female immediately ran off towards the fighting stage where Huo Tu was being carried out.

After a minute or two, the female disciple returned. "His name is Yu Ming and his rank is 86. Apparently, he has been improving his ranks very fast. Like I thought, he must be one of those new disciples that are very talented. I think we should rope him in master," the female disciple said as she chuckled.

"Hmm... beating a core disciple as an inner sect disciple, that is quite a feat. I hope he hasn't...," the bald mumbled almost to an incoherent level. He then looked at the Huo Tu that was being taken away.

"Do you think you could've beaten Huo Tu as he did?" the master asked.

"Absolutely not. I doubt I could've even won against him normally without his annoying pills and talismans. Not to mention, The pills and talismans do Meridian Tempering 1st realm damage. Thankfully, he doesn't have higher-ranked pills and talismans" said the female disciple.

"His father and master know he is trash, so they won't let him get anything more expensive," The master explained and then turned to the young man next to him and asked, "Would you have problems fighting him?" he asked. The young man thought for a while and spoke, "The armor would be annoying."

"Other than that, there is no problem, right?" the master asked with a smile and the disciple nodded.

* * * * *

Alex was walking back to his house. Along the way, there was only one thought in his mind.

"If I register for the 18th rank right now, I will be a core disciple too." That was all he could think of.

"No, I can't. That will only make the other core disciple's target me. And after some time, I will have to fight against someone that would withstand Heaven's Impact. I can't handle them right now."

He soon reached home and logged out for some afternoon lunch. This would be his last afternoon lunch in the dormitory. Just as he was about to leave, he saw his phone blinking. He opened it up to see that he had missed a call from his cousin.

He immediately called back.

"Oh, Alex. You finally picked up. Were you in the game?" Hannah was on the other side of the phone.

"Yes, sister. Did you need anything?" he asked.

"Yeah. I just called to tell you that you should pack your luggage today so that you won't have to worry about early tomorrow. You did tell your parents you were moving, right?" she asked.

"Oh yes, of course. Everything is ready. I just need to pack my luggage, which isn't a lot."

"Alright. I will send you the location tomorrow morning. Grab a cab and get there, okay?" she said.

"Ok, sister."

Alex went to have lunch with the rest of his roommates.

"You are leaving tomorrow, Alex?" Logan asked.

"Yes," Alex replied with a hint of melancholy in his voice.

"Where will you be living?" Matt asked.

"With my cousin, a few distances away from here. Her friends all left, so she was alone and asked me to move in with her."

"What about university?" Eric asked.

"Oh, it's not that far away I hear. It should take me at most half an hour to get to the university," Alex said.

"That's not bad."

"What about you guys? You guys decided to stay or leave?" Alex asked. The dorm had still not made any sort of announcement as to what they would do regarding the new capsules coming out.

"We will wait until next week and see what the dorm says. Even finding a room in the city is hard and not to mention it costs a lot. I am surprised that your cousin and her friends can afford so much. Aren't you guys supposed to be from the countryside?" Eric asked.

"Oh, haha, Yes I am from the countryside, but my cousin is not. In fact, she is quite rich. Her parents pay for her apartment rent," Alex said.

"Ah, I see." They talked for a while and Alex went back to the game once more.

Chapter 159: First Elder

Alex opened his eyes back in house number 86 and looked at the time. It was close to 4 pm so he checked his badge to see if anyone else had registered a fight with him.

Thankfully, after the last match, nobody dared to register a fight against him. They had learned what he did to a core disciple and had thus left him alone. "I wonder if the poor guy at the 18th rank right now is fighting a core disciple right now," he wondered and chuckled to himself.

Suddenly, he heard a knock on the door. "Who?" he wondered and sent out his spiritual sense. Outside of the door were two people. One male and one female.

The female was a young woman wearing a yellow robe with orange linings, and the man was wearing yellow robes with silver linings. "A Core disciple and an Elder?" he was surprised.

He walked to the front door and opened it. He acted surprised when he saw the two as if he didn't know who was outside. "Greetings Elder, senior sister. Can I help you with something?"

"Hello," the girl said with a jumpiness in her voice.

"You must be Yu Ming, am I correct?" the Elder asked.

"Yes, Elder," Alex replied.

"Do you know who I am?" the Elder asked.

Alex looked at the elder closely. He couldn't remember seeing any bald Elder before this, especially not one that had no facial hair either. "This is my first time meeting Elder, so please forgive this disciple for not recognizing who you are."

"I see. So, you must really be new here." The Elder spoke as he kept on nodding to himself. The girl beside him was also nodding continuously.

"Yes Elder, I only joined 2 weeks ago," Alex replied.

"Just 2 weeks ago? And already so much progress. You must be really talented. Do you have a master?" the Elder asked.

Alex was about to answer when he realized that his master had told him to not reveal their relationship yet. 'He did that to make sure I don't get targeted by the other elders. Should I keep lying?' he thought.

"No, I don't, Elder," Alex replied.

"Oh, good, good," the Elder said with a smile. "Then, do you want to be my disciple?" he asked.

Alex was shocked. 'He came here to make me his disciple?' he thought in surprise. The Elder continued, "I saw your match with Huo Tu today. You have a lot of potential. Come under my wing and I will teach you how to soar to the heavens."

The Elder had a face of pride as he said that. Alex couldn't think of any answer for his invite. So, he decided to just refuse directly.

"I'm sorry Elder. But, I am not looking for any Masters at the moment." Alex tried to reject as politely as he could.

"Hehehe," the girl behind the Elder giggled. "You don't even know who master is, and you are already rejecting him. You got quite the confidence."

Alex was surprised at her words. 'Who is this Elder?' he thought.

"Now now. Little Su, don't say that. Disciple Yu, I am the First Elder of the sect, directly below the Sect Elder. Are you sure you don't want to become my disciple?" the First Elder asked.

"The First Elder?" Alex was even more surprised. 'Why is the First Elder here to take me as a disciple? Does he know about my talent, or is it really just the match with Huo Tu?' he wondered. Still, he had to reject him, so he said,

"I am sorry, Elder, but my answer remains the same. I am not looking for any masters at the moment."

"Is that so..." the First Elder's smile dropped a little. "Very well then, I shall leave you alone. However, my offer still stands. Come find me if you ever change your mind," the First elder turned to leave after saying that.

"You are kind of dumb, aren't you? Not even accepting master's offer. What? You think you will get to the top without a master?" the girl named Su left after her master.

Alex stood stunned for a moment and immediately locked the door. He then walked back into the house. He looked at the board in front of him and thought, "So that was Du Yuhan's master huh. I should notify the master about this tonight.

He sat down to read the book that he had borrowed from the library today.

* * * * *

"That kid is kind of stupid master. Not even accepting after learning who you are. He will surely regret someday." The more she thought about what had just happened, the more irritated she got.

"That's enough, little Su. You don't have to get angry at every little thing," the First Elder replied.

"Master, are we just leaving like that? We could persuade him in other ways though," The girl immediately changed her tone of speech.

"That won't work. We have to be genuine in our approach to recruiting new disciples. What would you do if I threatened you to become my disciple," the First Elder said.

"I didn't mean threatening him. I meant like persuading him with spirit stones or some techniques and such," the girl pouted at her master misunderstanding her intent.

"Is that so? I'm sorry then," the master said with a smile.

"What do we do now then, master? I don't think you will let him grow as he is, will you?" she asked.

The master's smile immediately dropped, changing with a serious look. "I can't allow him to get higher rank and be noticed by the other elders. He is so young and talented that if the other elders find out about him, they might try to rope him in with whatever tricks they have. At that point, I will have no choice but make sure he doesn't get in my way of becoming the next sect leader, even if it means seriously injuring him through a fight."

"I see, master. Let's hope it doesn't come to that." The master-disciple duo then walked up the mountain and returned to their residence.

Chapter 160: Clones

Alex sat down on his bed and looked at the book in front of him. "The hell did I pick up?" he wondered with a strange face as he looked at the title on the page.

How to create a clone.

"A clone? Like another one of yourself? Master didn't say anything about these other than that it existed," he thought as he started reading. The book in fact told what methods one could use to make different clones. It didn't teach the 'recipe' on how to create a clone but taught more of the methods to create one.

The first method mentioned in the book was using dead bodies. If you took a recently dead body, you could have it resurrected with a part of your soul inside of it.

The upside of this method was that there was no other requirement aside from a few materials to fix the corpse before resurrecting it with your own soul.

The downside was that it took forever to properly integrate your soul into the body since it used to host another one. Also, it needed the real body to control it at all times, otherwise, it would be like a mindless puppet.

The second way mentioned was to grow another body using a sample of the real body to create an entirely new body. This new body would grow a soul and mind of its own with memories from the real body.

The upside of this method was, the clone had its own mind and had free thought. The growing process could be accelerated if needed, and the clone would be ready in just a few weeks. The real body also didn't need to provide part of its soul to cultivate a new body.

The downside of this method was that the clone could not be controlled by the real body at all. Also, the clone did not have any unique bodily constitutions or spiritual roots. Meaning, the body was born a mortal.

There were possibly other ways out there, but the book only mentioned the two. "So, I could make a body of my own? I wonder how that would work." He wondered.

After he finished learning the book, he kept it inside and decided to immerse himself into the other knowledge he had gathered the last few days. Some regarding cultivation, some regarding talismans, some regarding formations, some regarding artifact creation, and most of all regarding alchemy.

He had managed to find alchemy books that recorded stuff he hadn't read even in Hong Wu Sect. "So the explosive pills that Huo Tu used most likely came from Spring Song sect, huh. And the talismans from Little Dawn sect?" he wondered.

"Oh yes, this is interesting. Making specific pills catering to specific requirements. Finding out new recipes on your own? Can I even do that his early?"

At this point, he knew about a couple of hundreds of recipes and needed to understand the reason behind why they did what they did. "I should start focusing on the elemental aspects of the pills more," he thought.

He kept remembering more and more of what he read. "Hmm... so Meridian Tempering helps make the meridians stronger and carry more Qi around. Is it different from the tempering I have to sit through during body cultivation? Now that I think about it, I've never seen what cultivation really looks like. I keep falling asleep as soon as I use it."

He started wondering how different normal cultivation was from his body cultivation.

"Since it says Mind Tempering helps increase your mental strength, I wonder if it will have any impact on my spiritual sea." After thinking about it for a bit more, he decided to eat some more cores.

He found himself in the familiar landscape of his spiritual sea, fighting against a snake monster. "Urghh... I hate not having my sword with me." He started throwing punches and palms of golden and yellow color.

Within a few minutes, the snake was dead. From a small shadow at the surface of the lake, a yellow aura was released that devoured both the snake monster and Alex.

'Hmm... should I breakthrough right now?' he wondered. "I should wait until after today's lesson at least," He thought.

He decided to go check his progress in the training hall. After about half an hour, he had gotten all the results he needed to know. His physical attacks were doing damage as much as 3 realms higher than his normal attack. Introducing Qi to those physical attacks increased the damage by a small amount depending on the grade of the technique.

At the moment he had only 2 physical attacking techniques. First was the Smiting blade which dealt the same damage as normal attacks, but had a more penetrating force behind it. While the second attack, the 1st strike of the Elusive Heavenly sword dealt 4 realms higher than his current realm.

The Palm of the Sun and Iron Fist punch did the same amount of damage even though they weren't reliant on the physical body. He could make sense of why the Palm of the sun was so strong. But Iron Fist punch was still a mystery to him.

The Palm of the Sun used Yang energy, which his body and Qi provided plenty. However, he didn't have anything that increased the power of the Iron fist punch other than the mystery blood essence that entered his body.

The other attacks increased a little in damage compared to normal cultivators due to his thick Yang Qi and a body that went through Mortal Cleansing. Still, they weren't as substantial as the other techniques.

"I got strong so quick that I don't even know exactly how strong I am. Now that I think about it, have I even tried flying in while? I should go do some tests in the forest before I log out for dinner."

"You might want to go on a small walk as well, won't you Pearl," he said as he looked at his left arm. Thinking that he got out of the Training hall after paying the fee and walked towards the southern forest on the other side of the sect crater.