

Alchemy 171

Chapter 171: Back to Hong Wu Sect

Alex set up his new, expensive laptop. He was really fascinated by how good the laptop was. He quickly set up everything required for his school and used it for a bit.

At around 3 PM, Hannah asked him to go eat something.

"Oh, this is quite tasty," Alex said as he ate the stir-fried noodles.

"Right, Vinny taught me this recipe. I try to eat this whenever I can," Hannah said.

"Oh yeah, sister, when is dinner? By what time should I log out?" he asked.

"Dinner? Don't worry about it. I will set quite a lot of it now and put it in the fridge. You can heat it up in the microwave whenever you want and eat it," Hannah said.

"Oh, That is quite convenient," he said.

"Yeah, we've been doing that ever since the game arrived more than 2 months ago."

After finishing his food, Alex went back to his room, while Hannah remained for a little longer to prepare the dinner. Alex took out his new helmet and quickly found a socket to plug it into. With everything set, he laid down in his comfy bed, put on his helmet, and logged in.

<Old player detected>

<Establishing connection with Oakleaf server>

<Connection Successful>

Alex opened his eyes inside the house. He looked around, and then looked at the time. "I guess it's time for me to leave," he thought out loud.

"Master, I'm leaving soon." He sent out a message on a communication talisman meant for his master. He expected his master to come and give him a farewell, but instead, he just got a message telling him to meet his senior brother before leaving.

"Guess, I'll just go say my farewells to Senior Sister, or who knows how much she will beat me when she meets me next." He laughed to himself and made his way to Luo Mei's house.

There was barely anyone on the mountain, and those that were didn't bother with him. Only after walked higher up the mountain did he have to change his aura to not be noticed by others.

He found Luo Mei still inside her house, learning some sort of book.

"Oh, Junior Brother, you're here," she said. He looked around and didn't find Meng Yun, who usually was with Luo Mei. 'Is she logged out?' he wondered. Based on her speed of cultivation, she could only be a player who had joined the Tiger sect from very early on.

As to give her her privacy, he hadn't asked or even talked about it with Meng Yun. After, she was just playing a game like him.

"Are you ready to leave, Junior Brother?" she asked.

"Yes, that is what I came to say, Senior Sister," he said.

After a couple of exchanges, he bade farewell walked down the large, main road straight to the gate. There, he asked an Elder and was taken to his Senior Brother.

"Oh, you're leaving already?" Liu Xun asked when he saw Alex ready to leave.

"Yes," Alex replied.

"Alright. Master wanted me to tell you a few different things. He wanted to tell you himself, but he understood how hard it was for you with so many Elders in front of your door." Liu Xun shook his head.

'Elders in front of my house? Hope they don't get mad just because I ignored them,' he thought.

"Anyway, the no-reply tactic must've worked since all the Elders left you so soon. Oh yeah, I completely forgot about the master's message," Liu Xun said.

"What is it, Senior Brother?" he asked.

"Since it is unlikely you will be representing Tiger Sect in the Annual sect competition, Master wants you to focus solely on improving the Hong Wu Sect's points in the competition.

"We are pretty much guaranteed to upgrade to a First Grade sect even if we fail a majority of the events, but Hong Wu Sect requires quite a lot still, so you should do it. "

"Also, don't worry about hiding your face or anything in front of the Tiger Sect. Master plans to reveal your relationship the next time you come back to the sect." Liu Xun finished speaking.

"I see. I will do as master says," Alex replied. "Also, can you return it to the library for me brother? I completely forgot." Alex handed the book about clones to Liu Xun.

"Alright. Goodbye little brother, see you in 2 weeks." Liu Xun saw him off.

Alex walked out of the gate and went past the busy market.

"Hey, isn't that the new disciple?" somebody spoke.

"What new disciple?" somebody asked.

"You know, the one from the battle yesterday," the first person spoke.

"Hey, that's him right?" another person spoke.

"I was there during the fight, it's definitely him," another person spoke.

'It seems more people know of me than I had hoped,' Alex thought. He quietly walked past the market and when nobody was looking at him, he entered a quiet alleyway. He took off his yellow robes and swiftly changed into green ones.

After walking out of the alleyway now, he was a Hong Wu Sect disciple. He slowly walked back to the sect, while looking through the entire city.

'I have never been to this part of the town, have I?' he thought. He kept looking around and finally saw something that surprised him a little.

"Oh, so this is where it is," he thought. In front of him was a store with many people walking in and out of it. The store was quite big compared to its surroundings and was ran by young men and women wearing green robes.

This was the Hong Wu Sect's Pill store. This was where most of the higher grade pills ended up after they were sold by the disciples. Most of the people working here were Inner Sect disciples, with a few elders behind looking over the entire thing.

'No wonder I never saw it. It was in such a place. I never had even bothered walking this way,' Alex thought. He had heard about it from his master but had never actually seen it before. Having finally seen it, He walked towards the sect's direction and reached it very soon.

Chapter 172: Low Ranking

Alex was stopped at the gate of the Hong Wu sect by the elders to check if he had permission to leave the sect, or not. But after looking at his nameplate, they immediately let him go.

Alex simply smiled and walked along the outer sect mountain.

'It's only been 2 weeks and I'm already getting nostalgic,' he thought. He walked down the mountain and reached the sect valley.

'This place is as rowdy as ever,' he thought as he laughed to himself. The disciples, both outer and inner were walking around the sect valley, minding their own business.

"Hmm... Let's go see if the ranking has changed in any way," he thought and walked to the disciple hall. In front of the Disciple Hall was the black rock with constantly moving figures that spelled out the names of the students in the rankings.

He looked over the contribution ranking and saw virtually no difference from the time he left the sect. His name had in fact went lower by quite a bit due to not contributing enough.

'I guess that's alright,' he thought. He saw no point in the contribution points for now aside from eating in the restaurant. If he really wanted to, he would do so in a restaurant outside.

He then walked to the back of the black stone and looked at the list of Alchemy Achievements. The names were once again the same. Only this time, it was a problem.

'Where am I then?' he thought. He started looking lower and saw his name around rank number 33. 'Huh? I've made a Heaven rank pill, and that puts me to rank 33? That's impossible.'

He remembered his master saying that even core disciples had a hard time making Earth Grade pills with high harmony, and yet his Heaven Grade pill didn't give him much Alchemy achievements. He also had a lot of other pills that should have increased his ranking by a lot.

'Just what is going on? I should ask master,' he thought and took out a communication talisman. He then started sending a message to his master.

"Master, I'm back. Also, I need to talk with you about something." He sent the message. He waited for a bit and got a reply.

"Come to my residence."

He skipped the rest of the places and walked straight to the sect master's mountain. In a couple of minutes, he reached his home, but he skipped that as well and walked straight to the sect master's home.

He spread out his spiritual sense to see where she was and found her in her alchemy room, so he decided to wait outside. After a few minutes, Ma Rong walked out.

She looked at Alex and said, "You are back quite early. Isn't there still 2 more days to go before you had to return?" she asked.

"Yes, master. However, something happened in the sect that forced me to leave early," he said.

Ma Rong got curious and asked, "What happened?"

Alex proceeded to explain everything that happened between him and Huo Tu and how he beat him using Heaven's Impact. After listening to it all, Ma Rong said, " You made a good choice. I don't know how Wen Cheng could've handled it all without revealing your relationship. That would've only added fuel to the fire at that point."

"So, was that what you wanted to talk about?" Ma Rong asked.

"Actually no, Master. I saw the ranking stone and found out that my name was in the 33rd position for Alchemy Achievements. Does making a Heaven Grade pill not put me in even the top 30?" he asked.

"Oh, that? Of course, it does. It's only that I never registered your pill in the first place, so you weren't high in the list." Ma Rong seemed to be quite casual about it as if it wasn't a big deal.

"You didn't register my pill? Why master?" he was confused and was starting to get a little annoyed as well.

"I didn't have time to absorb what you had really done at that point and had agreed without thinking. But later on, when I was about to register the pill, I finally remembered something very important that was not very much remembered because of how rare it was."

Alex was both confused and curious at this point. "What is this important thing, Master?" he asked.

"There is this rule amongst the core disciples where they have to make 50 pills with over 35% of harmony and register it to the sect. If they manage to do that, they are eligible to take a test to become an elder."

"However, if any disciple can produce a Heaven grade pill, they are automatically promoted to the rank of an Elder. Because at that point, the sect deems it useless for a disciple to remain a disciple."

"As such, had I registered your pill and someone realized that there was a heaven grade pill made from a disciple, the Sect would be in an uproar, and you would be forced to work as an elder from then on. Meaning, you wouldn't be able to enjoy the freedom you have right now."

Ma Rong explained the situation to the best she could. So, Alex finally understood what was going on.

'I see. So I was this close to suddenly becoming an Elder huh. But, is that really bad?' he wondered.

"What are the downsides of becoming an elder, master?" he asked.

"There necessarily isn't one aside from not having free time. However, if you, who became a cultivator just over a month ago, were to become one, it would seriously slow down your learning and training time. You would be forced to do work for the sect at a higher rate than the normal contribution."

"Alchemy is a slow and gradual process, so most of the elders don't actually mind not having much time since they wouldn't be able to do anything if they even had one. However, you are different," Ma Rong said.

"You are more talented than anyone I have seen in my life. So if there were even a single thing that hampered your training and cultivation, that would be disastrous."

Chapter 173: Shocked Ma Rong

"So... what do I do now, Master? Do I not take part in the upcoming Core Disciple exam? I thought that was what you had told me," Alex said.

Ma Rong made a judging face and said, "Of course not. You're still taking place in the Core Disciple exam. You will just have to give me a pill that is not as good as the Heaven grade pill and I can immediately register you for the core disciple exam."

"Oh, okay," Alex said.

"So, do you have one or did you spend the entire time in the Tiger sect just fighting?" Ma Rong asked with a chuckle.

"Most of my days were just fighting and training, so I was only able to make pills for a single day last Sunday. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to make a Heaven-grade pill at that time. I think my last one was just a fluke and I will have to still train quite a bit to produce a Heaven grade pill again," Alex said.

He then reached into his bag and took out a pill bottle with a single pill. He then handed it to Ma Rong. Almost instinctively, Ma Rong took out a pill tester and put the pill inside it.

She slowly watched the fog rise up along the side of the glass until it reached 39% and stopped. She nodded affirmatively and took the pill out to look at it. She looked for a bit, and the more she looked at it, the more her eyebrows furrowed.

She looked at it for a bit more and without any information, decided to ask Alex. "What is this pill? I have never seen such a pill," she said in curiosity and amazement.

"Oh, that pill is called the Great Illusion pill. It's like a Face Changing pill, but instead of changing one's face, it puts an illusion on top of it for a limited amount of time. It can be maintained for a long time. Much longer than the Face Changing pill. However, the illusion disappears if you stop feeding it your Qi."

Hearing Alex's explanation, Ma Rong was stumped. She had never heard of a pill like this so she was confused as to whether her disciple was lying or not.

"How did you make this pill?" she asked.

"Oh, it's quite simple, as long as you have the ingredients. I have the recipe right here," he said and took out the recipe from his storage. Ma Rong looked over the recipe and was surprised that it was actually a new recipe.

"Where did you find this? Was this in the tiger sect? Can't be. I know their entire catalog of pill recipes and this is absolutely not one of them. Did you get it from somewhere else then? Where? I have never seen such a pill before in the entire Crimson Empire."

Ma Rong went off with her questions and speculations leaving Alex not a single room to answer her questions. Only after she finally stopped did he answer her questions.

He told her how he was taken to an amazing place in the southern forest with a high amount of Qi and how he found tons of alchemy material there. He also told her about the skeleton where he found the recipes from.

"So, you found recipes from the dead person? How many did you get?" Ma Rong asked in anticipation.

Alex simply took out the storage bag and handed it to Ma Rong. "Take it, Master. These are the recipes. Also, there are quite a few formation blueprints that might or might not be useful to the sect."

Ma Rong took the bag and used her spiritual sense to look at it. At first, she only showed amazement at the number of different recipes. But as she looked through more and more of the recipes, she was shocked. Absolutely shocked.

"Th—Th— This..." she wasn't able to form any sentence. Her eyes stayed wide while her jaws fell to the ground.

"This is a Saint rank pill recipe," she said.

Alex nodded while understanding her feeling. He was also quite shocked when he first saw them. Ma Rong went ahead and checked the rest of the pill recipes as well.

Every time she saw a Saint rank recipe she would cry out in shock. This lasted for quite a while. At the end of this, she was breathless from all the shock. She tried very hard to calm herself and asked, "You really found all of this at the place?"

"Yes, master. I think that man might have not been from the Crimson Empire and had instead come from outside," Alex said.

"That could be the possibility. After all, there have been other such cases as well," she said.

"Oh yeah, that reminds me, master," Alex said garnering Ma Rong's attention. "Come out Pearl," he said.

In bright white light, a 20-25 cm long white cat appeared in front of Ma Rong shocking her once more. She looked at the small white cat and could tell that it was a child. However, she could also see that it was giving off an aura of Bone tempering realm.

"Is this..." she asked without finishing the question.

"This is my beast companion, Pearl. Pearl, this is my master okay. She is a good person," he taught Pearl.

"Meow," the cat meowed in affirmation.

"He is quite good, isn't he?" Alex asked.

"You got a beast companion in the Tiger sect? Did Wen Cheng not deny this?" she asked.

"Oh no. I didn't get pearl in the Tiger sect. I actually had him all the time since my near-death experience back in that crater in the southern forest," Alex said.

"The crater?" Ma Rong tried to recall back to what had happened there and suddenly remembered something. "The mother and child cat?" she asked in shock.

Alex nodded. "Yes, master. Pearl is the little cat I told you guys about in the crater. He had made a bond with me when I was nearly dead, so I never knew about him. But after being released back in Tiger sect, I have been training with him," he said.

Ma Rong's eyes remained wide open. "You bonded with the child of a monster that was in the Saint realm," she said in shock.

Chapter 174: More Shocks

Ma Rong's eyes were wide open as the shock came on coming one after another. Her disciple was just a fountain of surprises and shocks that never dried up. She looked down at the cat and took notice of its small size.

"It really is a different monster. I've never seen anything like this," she said.

"Elder Xian of Tiger sect said the same thing as well," Alex replied.

"Elder Xian? Ah, the previous head of Cloud Valley. If he said so, then it must really not be from the Crimson Empire. Maybe it too came from past the southern forest," Ma Rong said.

"Since your beast is still so small, I assume it doesn't have very high cultivation. You should slowly build up its cultivation while constantly training it. Although, beasts usually have Inherent memory, getting their body used to fighting is always a good idea."

Alex nodded and said, "I thought so as well, master. So, I've been training him for the last week and having him constantly cultivate to increase his cultivation. He's already reached Bone Tempering 7th realm by now."

Ma Rong was about to affirm when she realized what she had just heard. "Did you say this child is already at Bone Tempering 7th Realm?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes, Master. Although Pearl has a child's body, his cultivation has been really fast. I am actually afraid if his foundations would be shaky, but He's also been training quite a bit, so maybe not," Alex said.

Ma Rong breathed in and out slowly to bring herself back from the state of shock. "You are giving me quite a lot of shock today. If there is anything else that can shock me, lay it out right now," She said.

"Anything that might shock you? Let's see... umm... oh yeah. Master, have you heard of Mortal Cleansing?"

"Of course. Anyone worth their money in Crimson Empire has heard of it. Although, I'm surprised you know the word as well. Did Wen Cheng teach you ab—" she suddenly stopped as a thought came across her mind.

"Actually Master, I went through Mortal Cleansing," Alex dropped the bomb.

Ma Rong's eyes went wide once more. " Wait wait wait... Mortal Cleansing? YOU went through Mortal Cleansing. Where did you even find the Divine Devil's fruit?" she asked.

"The Divine Devil's Fruit? Is that what is needed ?" He asked. He had never before heard of such fruit, but Wen Cheng had indeed mentioned some fruit being required for the Mortal Cleansing.

Ma Rong's eyes squinted as she got a questioning look. "Didn't you say you went through Mortal Cleansing? You must've eaten some fruit, right?" she asked.

"Oh no, master. My mortal Cleansing was different from others. Or at least that's what the master had said at the time. He said that normally one would have to eat fruit to go through Mortal Cleansing. He must've been talking about this Divine Devil's fruit. However, the way I went through mortal cleansing is by having Pearl Cultivate."

"Every time he cultivates, I somehow get put under a body tempering state and have to suffer through it. The first time it happened, I also went through Mortal Cleansing," He explained.

"Wait, so you didn't eat any fruit and went through Mortal Cleansing just like that?" she asked.

"Yes, Master. It happened while I wasn't conscious due to my body tempering being very painful, so in the end, I only found out after master told me what had happened," he said.

Ma Rong's eyes once again squinted as she asked, "You keep saying you went through body tempering, don't you mean just normal cultivation?"

"No Master, I went through actual body tempering. I'm now a Body Cultivator as well," Alex said.

Another Shock. This was the Fifth shock of the day she had received, and it hadn't even been 5 minutes since her disciple had returned.

The first shock was the new pill her disciple took out. The second shock was the rest of the pill recipes and formation blueprints her disciple had brought back. The third shock was the Saint realm monster's child, the little Cat that her disciple had bonded to. The fourth shock was the fact that her disciple had gone through mortal cleansing.

And now, learning that her disciple was a body cultivator, she was shocked once more. "You really are a Body cultivator? How exactly?" she asked.

Alex went on to explain every single thing that had happened with him and Pearl cultivating. When she heard that he had to suffer through so much pain every single day, she winced a little.

Finally, after hearing everything, she said, "So, how strong are you right now?"

"My body is about the same strength as a Body Tempering 3rd realm cultivator," he said.

Ma Rong nodded and sighed, "That is quite strong. I didn't expect you to leave to Tiger Sect for 2 weeks and come back so strong."

"Speaking of which, what is your cultivation base? I can't see it right now," she asked.

"Oh, let me remove the concealment for a moment," Alex said and showed off his cultivation aura once more. A cultivation base of Organ Tempering 4th realm slowly spread out its aura and Ma Rong felt it.

"You've truly become quite strong," she said with a sigh. She had expected him to get stronger, but not by this much.

'Am I stifling this child's potential as a cultivator by not letting him cultivate and only having him make pills?' she started to wonder. While he was good at making pills, in her eyes, he was better at cultivating.

She started to have second thoughts about making him fully focused on Alchemy.

"Master?" Alex asked seeing her lost in her thought.

Ma Rong shook her head, ignoring the thoughts for now. "You've done well. You've increased your cultivation by quite a substantial amount. Although you stopped practicing Alchemy for a while, it isn't as bad since you can continue it now. Alright, if you have nothing else to tell me, go register this pill and prepare for the upcoming core disciple test," she said.

"Wait Master, I still have a few things more to tell you."

Chapter 175: Asking for Permission

"Hmm... you've got something more to tell me?" Ma Rong asked.

"Actually, I have this to give to you," Alex said as he took out 2 Spirit Cleansing lilies.

Ma Rong had enough shock for the day, but she was shocked once more. Her eyes turned wide as she involuntarily screamed, "Spirit Cleansing Lily? 2 at that. Where did you find them?" she asked.

"The same place I told found the corpse and the recipes. Not only that, I have quite a few alchemy resources as well." Alex brought out a storage bag to show them.

"You can keep some if you want it," he said.

Ma Rong sent her spiritual sense into the bag and saw a load of alchemy ingredients stacked on top of one another. She immediately screamed, "What are you doing keeping them like that? Put them in an individual wooden box or something." She was horrified seeing such precious materials being kept like that.

"I know that I should master," he said as he brought out more storage bags and said, "There are just too many."

Ma Rong felt like she was being tortured. Showing such a horrifying sight of keeping alchemy materials without any protection to keep their energies from leaking out or mixing with each other.

She immediately brought out one of her storage bags with a ton of jade and wooden boxes and handed it to Alex. Alex complied and put the ingredients in, but there were just too many. He was able to only fit one bag's worth of ingredients in there, while the rest of them were still the same.

Ma Rong wanted to cry rivers of tears seeing those ingredients in such a state.

"Don't worry master, I will make a lot of pills very soon and use up most of these ingredients, and I will keep the True rank pills ingredients in the wooden boxes." He reassured her again and again.

Finally, she was fine with how the pills were kept.

"Alright, go register the pill and I will make your core disciple exam as soon as possible," Ma Rong said.

"Okay, Master," Alex said and called Pearl back into his arm. He was about to leave when he remembered something. He turned around and asked, "Master, Do you know much about bodies?"

"Bodies? What do you mean?" she asked.

"You know. Cultivator's body type," he said unable to explain properly.

"Oh, those. I know about them, why?" she asked.

"Then, do you know anything about Sun God's Divine Yang Body?" he asked.

Ma Rong thought for a moment and answered, "No. I don't think I have ever heard of that body. I don't think there are any records about them either. Why do you ask?"

'So, she doesn't know it either huh?' he thought.

"Nothing important really," he sidestepped the questions. "Oh right, master. There are these small rectangular yellow jade-like stones that are found in the Forbidden Fields, do you know about them?" he asked.

"Yellow rectangular jades?" Ma Rong quickly reached into her storage bag and took out a slightly yellow yang jade and asked, "Are you talking about this?" she asked.

Alex's eyes turned bright. "Yes, Master. That's exactly it. Do you have more of these?" he asked.

"Why do you ask?" Ma Rong squinted her eyes questioningly.

"Uhh... I'll tell you later master. For now, do you have some more?" he continued asking.

Ma Rong sighed and said, "No. This is the only one I have right now, and even this is almost done."

"Almost... done?" he asked questioningly.

Ma Rong reached into her storage bag and took out 2 more of the same stones. Except, this time they were both white with not a single hint of yellow. She then said, "See how these are white? These stones lose their energies after being out of the Forbidden fields for a week or two. What's more, they are incredibly rare and are only ever found once in a while."

Alex walked ahead and reached out to the slightly yellow yang jade and looked at its name.

[Jade Stone]

There was no hint of Yang in these jade and thus the name had been changed to the game system as well. Alex sighed, "I expected too much." He then thought about what his master just said and asked, "Master, then can I go to the forbidden fields to try my luck? These stones are very important to me and I need quite a lot of it."

"Absolutely not. The Forbidden Fields is a place we send to punish the students. There is not a single Qi in there and you will starve to death if you are not careful. We will ask the students who leave their punishment and see if they have any more of these stones, that should be enough," Ma Rong said.

Alex thought for a moment and said, "That's fine. When is the next disciple coming out?" he asked.

Ma Rong looked into her medallion and saw that the next one was coming out in a week and relayed that information to Alex.

"A week? But master, it will be too late by then. I will need to be stronger by the competition right?"

Ma Rong thought for a bit and realized that he would in fact be in the competition within a week. "Tell me, honestly, why do you need them? How do they help you?" she asked.

Alex wanted to avoid the question once again, but decided against it and answered. "I can use the Yang inside the jade to make my Qi thicker. I've used it twice now and it's made my Qi at least twice as thick, maybe a little more, and even given it a yang quality," he said.

Ma Rong was confused at first as to how it could possibly be true. But the more she thought about how vigorous her disciple's Qi was or how he could do things beyond his cultivation base, she fully accepted it.

"If what you say is true... then I will allow for you to go to the Forbidden Fields."

Chapter 176: Back to Pill Making

"I shall allow you to enter the Forbidden Fields, but only for 3 days. We don't have much time otherwise. We will have to leave for Cardinal City on Friday if we want to reach it," Ma Rong said.

"When exactly is the competition starting, Master?" he asked.

"It should start around Sunday, but it will take us time to reach there. So, you will only have 3 days of searching inside the forbidden fields. I don't know how useful that would be, but you will get the time."

"Thank you master!" he said from the bottom of his heart.

Seeing that there was nothing more to talk about, Alex walked out of Ma Rong's house and walked all the way down to the Disciple hall in the sect valley.

'Let's see. I had 12 when I started, I used up 2, 4 were used by the folks at tiger sect, 1 was given to auction, and I just gave 2 to master. Meaning, I only have 3 left.' Alex sighed as he counted the amount of Spirit cleansing Lily he still had.

The sect valley was bright and full of light as the lanterns in the road gave it the feel of a festival. "Ah, I've missed this," he thought. He reached the Disciple Hall and went directly to the third floor under the stares of different people.

He walked up the stairs to the third floor, and just as he was nearing the 2nd floor, he bumped into someone walking outside. Both he and the other person stumbled backward.

"Hey, watch where you're going," a voice came from in front of him. He saw a person being caught by another person they were with. They were both female disciples.

"I'm sorry. It was my fault," he said as he looked more closely and realized that he knew one of the two females. The female disciple he had bumped into was a tall woman with black hair and an emotionless face. Although she looked a little angry right now.

On the other hand, the girl who caught the tall girl was a little shorter than her and looked the same. Only, her face wasn't as emotionless.

"Oh, it's you, sister Zhou Mi. I'm sorry about that, I was in a bit of a hurry," Alex said as he looked at the smaller girl. This was the girl he had met when he had attended Kong Yuhuan's ascension.

"Junior Brother... Yu Ming, right? What are you doing here? The upper floors are not for outer sect disciples," Zhou Mi said.

"You know this guy?" the taller girl asked.

"I've met him once before when I was with my other friends," Zhou Mi replied.

As the two sisters were talking, Alex noticed something finally. 'A core disciple,' he thought. He had only seen core disciples before, and only now he was interacting with one, finally.

"I'm letting you go just because my sister knows. Be wary of your surroundings next time," said the taller girl, and started walking past Alex to go down the stairs. Zhou Mi nodded a bit and walked after her sister as well.

'But you bumped into me,' Alex wanted to say, but he decided not to prolong the drama and simply went to the 3rd floor. He registered his new pill with the Elder in there and walked back out.

Seeing that he had nothing to do, he went back up the mountain to his house.

"Let's make a few pills before logging out to have my dinner," he thought. He walked into his familiar alchemy room and sat down in front of the fire pit. He took out his cauldron and put it on the fire to heat it up.

In the meantime, he looked through the different recipes in his mind that he could make right now. After choosing one, he gathered up the materials separated among multiple storage bags into a single one.

He started making the pills and in less than 20 minutes he made one easily. The pill ended up having a harmony of 36%, which he found quite disappointing, however, since it was only the first pill of the day, it wasn't as bad.

He prepared another set of ingredients and started making his next pill. This one took a little less time, and by 15 minutes, he was done with it. He managed to make this one with a harmony of 43%.

"That's more like it," he thought as he smiled a little.

He rested a little more and prepared another set of ingredients for a different pill. After the cauldron had heated plenty, he put in the first ingredient and started making the last pill before dinner.

He started moving the ingredients inside and the energy started to get slowly released. He added another ingredient inside and slowly started moving that energy as well. Those two energies mixed and formed a new form of energy where one energy had the other energy suppressed for a new type of energy.

He put another ingredient and the energy from this pill mixed with the energy in the cauldron as well, forming a different type of energy that was a mixture of all of these energies.

Of these energies, there would mostly be a single type of energy that would be at the forefront in it due to the other energies suppressing each other. As Alex put more and more ingredients inside, it was soon revealed that the final energy that was at the forefront was Metal energy.

Although the Metal energy wasn't abundant, it was still abundant enough to make the pill's energy alignment be Metal. Once everything was done, it was time to form that pill.

He started forming the pill and used Elemental Guidance at the same time to move the energy towards the newly forming pill in hopes of adding more energy into it.

Suddenly, he noticed something very weird. Usually, Elemental guidance was only there to help him guide the energy, he would have no way of forcing them to move in any way he wanted them to.

But, for some reason now, a lot more energy was being guided around with elemental guidance. In fact, they weren't even being guided anymore, but just moved around.

Chapter 177: Metal

'What's going on?' Alex was surprised. This was an unprecedented event for him during all of his time, making pills. However, as an expert alchemist, he didn't let the unusualness of the situation, derail his concentration.

He made use of the situation and moved the energy directly into the forming pill. The pill absorbed as much as it could before the energy left it. While he couldn't instill a lot of energy, he could tell that it was still better.

He waited for the pill to be formed and when it did, he directly brought it out. He caught the pill in his hand and looked at its name.

[Bronze Tiger's Rage: 58%]

"What??!" he was beyond surprised at this point. He had a hard time crossing 45% on normal pills and had barely reached 49% occasionally, yet today, he had somehow reached 58%.

'That... has to be incorrect right? No way that's correct,' he couldn't believe his own eyes and so he checked again. It was in fact 58%.

"But... But how?' he couldn't make head or tails of the situation. It was almost the exact scenario as when his Iron Fist Punch was all of a sudden much stronger.

'Wait a second...' Alex fell into deep thought. He thought of the similarity between the two situations and realized that the only thing similar between them was...

"Metal!" he shouted out. "That's it. Metal Energy. Iron Fist Punch uses Metal spiritual root, while the pill just now was had a majority of Metal energy. So, did I get a benefit regarding Metal Energy? But how?" he started thinking.

It didn't take him long to come up with the answer. "That blood essence. Did it somehow increase my affinity to metal energy?" he wondered. That was the only explanation he could come up with.

This certainly didn't feel like the advantage of Mortal Cleansing or Body cultivation. Besides, those came after he was already strong at using Iron Fist Punch, so the essence was the only answer.

"But why?" he thought for a while, but couldn't come up with an answer. Sighing to himself, he left the game.

He logged out and woke up in his new room, in his new bed. The temperature of the room was perfect thanks to the AC and the bed was softer than any bed he had been in.

'Such a shame I won't be able to sleep on it for long due to the new capsules.' He walked out of his room to the brightly lit corridor that leads to the living room. Past that he walked to the kitchen, only to find that Hannah was also there about to eat.

"Oh, you logged out?" she said as she looked at the time. "But it's only 7 pm, don't you want to play some more?" she asked.

"I do, but it's ingrained into me at this point that I should log out at 7 for dinner. Will take some time to adjust to the new changes," he said.

"Alright, sit down. I'll put some food for you in the microwave as well." Hannah set the timer on the microwave and sat back down on the chair.

"So, how do you like your new crib? Isn't it fancy?" she asked.

"Very, sister. I didn't even imagine that such a place was available in the world. I had thought that such places were only for the rich people with fancy business and titles," he said.

"Well, we can be considered rich now," Hannah said with a giggle. She then looked down at his hand and asked, "Does the cut hurt anymore?" she asked.

Alex looked down and finally remembered he even had one. "Oh yeah, it's fine. It's barely noticeable," he said.

DING

The microwave sounded after a few moments. Hannah went to bring out the food and laid it down in two portions. Without saying anything, they started eating.

"Mmm... This is quite good," Alex said.

"I learned the recipe from the Internet. It's quite easy, you can make it too I bet," she said.

"I doubt it, sister. Not after I have already lost my muscle memory. It will take me a long while to be able to do that," he said.

"Alright, let's stop talking about that. There is something that I've been wanting to talk to you about but haven't had the chance to," she said.

"What is it, sister?" he asked curiously.

"Do you have free time tomorrow?" she asked.

Alex thought for a bit and said, "Yes I do. It's Sunday tomorrow and I don't have school," he said.

"No, not just school. What about the game? It's your source of earning now, you have to treat it like work. You cannot miss a single day if it hampers your pay," Hannah said.

'Think of the game like work?' he was surprised that people had even thought of that. 'Why would I want to turn something I enjoy into work? Isn't that the easiest way to lose interest in something?' he thought.

However, he didn't voice it out loud. Instead, he replied to her earlier question, "I have some work during the day, but I am mostly free at night. I don't know how much that would help you," he said.

"Oh, that's perfect actually. I want you to accompany me somewhere tomorrow night," Hannah said quite excited about something.

"Where to, sister? Some sort of party or something?" he asked.

"Uh... no, more like... you'll see tomorrow. Let it be a surprise," Hannah said. She just couldn't hide the excitement in her eyes.

'What's going on with her tomorrow?' he wondered. The two of them talked about a few different things for a while and after taking care of the dishes, went back to their individual room.

Alex went up on the soft bed again and laid down on his back. 'Sigh, I just want to sleep in this bed for today,' he thought. But, he had, as Hannah had put it, work to do. So he put on his helmet and once again, logged back into the game.

Chapter 178: Experiment

Alex went out of to courtyard after logging in. He felt like taking a bath before doing anything. So, he took off his clothes and jumped into the pond. He didn't care about the little fishes in there and only enjoyed the cool water.

"Pearl will probably like this as well," He thought and called out Pearl. With a bright white light, Pearl appeared on top of the water.

SPLASH

As soon as he appeared he fell into the pond, desperately struggling to walk out of it. However, having never been in the water before, he didn't know what to do. He swung his little waves around, causing waves after waves to appear on the surface of the pond.

"It's okay Pearl, it's okay," Alex immediately swam forward to hold the little cat and pet him. Only after being held out of the water did he finally stop struggling and let out a weak meow.

"You don't like water, do you? I should have known that would be the case. You are a cat after all. Still, you need to take a bath," Alex said and proceeded to dunk Pearl in the water and washed him off. He then put Pearl back into his arm and proceeded to wash.

After he himself was fully washed he decided to get out. He started swimming forward but soon realized that even though he was so strong, he was still feeling a bit of resistance in the water.

'Wait a second,' he thought. 'What if I...' without deliberating any further, he immediately used his technique, Fluctuating Friction Dance.

Soon, his body was covered in Qi, which his legs were exceptionally strengthened. He then pushed his Qi outside to remove the friction, but it barely worked. He pushed more Qi and it was starting to do some work, he was feeling a lot less resistance, but there was still some.

Finally, he pushed the Qi to its limit and suddenly, there was no resistance. Suddenly, with no resistance, he started falling to the bottom of the pond, which wasn't very deep.

After reaching the floor of the pond, he simply started walking forward. He felt absolutely no resistance. It was as easy, no, easier than walking on land. The water was pushed around by the Qi faster than he could move forward.

'Wow,' he was surprised. This was not a sight he thought he would be able to see when he became a cultivator. 'This is so good,' he thought. 'Sigh, but it also costs a tremendous amount of Qi. If I were to keep it up, my Qi which lasts for hours on end will be used up in less than an hour,' he thought.

Thinking so, he walked out of the water, and put on his robes, and walked back into the house. It was time for him to make some more pills.

However, he didn't just make pills. He needed to test his theory too.

"I need to see if it is only Metal energy or if there are other energies that I am unaware of that I can use just as well. He racked his brain thinking of the different pills he could make, and the different energy each pill had.

Finally, preparing 6 types of pills for the 6 different types of energy, he started making these pills once more. "Shame there aren't any pills that have Yin or Yang energy as their main result," he thought.

He walked into the Alchemy room and put the cauldron into the fire to heat it up. He used Qi manipulation to get rid of any remnants from the previous alchemy process and started preparing his ingredients for the first pill.

The energy produced for the first pill was none. It was a neutral pill where the resulting energy was a combination of all and thus neither of them. The resulting energy didn't align with any of the other 5 elements so he decided to start with that.

He took as much care as he could during the making of this pill, and finally, when it came time to form the pill, he used Elemental Guidance once more. He didn't expect anything to happen, and just as to fulfill his expectations, nothing did happen.

The energies were guided as expected and only some of them fused with the forming pill, while the rest of them moved away. Suddenly, the powder that was still in the process of forming the pill split into two, making two separate pills. Suddenly, two vortexes formed above the newly formed pills, sucking in all the energy from the surrounding, which was the inside of the cauldron.

Finally, the two pills were formed at 36% and 42% harmony each. "So, Neutral energy pills aren't it" he thought.

He then proceeded to gather ingredients for the Fire energy pill. He started making the pill and after they were done being powder and the energies were up in the air, he started using the Elemental Guidance to guide the resulting fire energy. As expected it worked normally. It just guided the energy and did nothing whatsoever to move the energy.

Finally, the pill formed with a harmony of 48%. "As I thought, Fire energy pills don't work either," he thought.

Next up was the Earth energy pill. Similarly, he turned the ingredients into powder form and once the resulting energy in the cauldron was earth aligned, he used Elemental Guidance. This one was a failure as well. The pill only had a harmony of 45% and it was a single pill at that too.

"Sigh, not Earth either. Is my theory really correct?" he thought.

The next one on the list was a pill whose resulting energy was water-aligned. As usual, he formed the powder and once the resulting energy was formed, he used Elemental Guidance to move the energy to the forming pill once more.

The result was as expected, a failure. However, he did manage to push himself to the limit and formed a pill in heaven grade with 50% harmony.

"Good pill, but the theory still stands. I couldn't move the energy at all" he thought.

Finally, it was time for him to make a Metal energy pill.

Chapter 179: Successful Hypothesis

He cleaned the cauldron of any remaining by-products and prepared his ingredients. The pill he was going to make was different from the one he had made before dinner.

He wanted to make sure that it was the energy that was the cause of the advancement, and not the ingredients. Finally, when the time arrived, he put in his first ingredient.

Slowly, one by one, he put in ingredients and turned them into power. Finally, when the time came, he used Elemental Guidance. The energies started being moved. They weren't being guided but moved once more.

"It's happening, I was right," Alex thought but concentrated on the pill once more. He moved the energies towards the forming pill which were absorbed in a higher amount by the powders.

Once again, a simple stream of Qi ran out of his body involuntarily and moved into the cauldron through the path established by his previous Qi. The pills were splitting into two once more.

The powders were separated into two parts and formed into pills.? As soon as they were pills, they started to vigorously suck in the remaining energy in the cauldron.? Finally, after a while, the pill was ready.

Alex expectantly brought out the pills from the cauldron. He was somehow both amazed and disappointed by what he saw. The harmony levels on the two pills were 43% and 45%. They had a combined harmony of 88%, which would have been amazing if it had been a single pill, but he knew that the pills rarely accepted that much energy. Which was why being split into two was good.

However, neither of them had ended up being a heaven-grade pill which was disappointing.

"Sigh, at least my theory is correct. Metal energy is in fact being controlled much easier than the rest of the energies." He didn't still have complete control over the metal energy. However, compared to the other energies, it was as good as being fully controlled.

"I will have to ask master what this means." He proceeded to make two more Metal energy pills. Neither of them split, so one of them ended up having 57% harmony, and the other one ended up with 59% harmony.

The rest of the energies were still being let go of into the air. 'Sigh, if only I had complete control. I wonder if I would if the energies inside were fully Metal instead of Metal just being the highest amount,' he wondered.

Finally, he stopped making pills and decided to cultivate for the rest of the night. He put his cauldron into his storage and walked over to the next room.

Before starting to cultivate, however, he took out one of the 3 remaining Spirit Cleansing Lily. He was going to increase his Spiritual Sea once more. Although they only increased in size, it was still worth it to him. The spiritual sense lasted longer now.

"Ah, I should let master know that a Spirit Cleansing lily can be used twice. She will probably want to know about it," he thought and contacted Ma Rong using the communication Talisman.

He let her know what he learned about it in the Tiger sect and returned back to cultivating.

He took the flower in his hand and started meditating. Qi inside his body started moving on their own as he let go of all control and as usual, he fell into a trance, unaware of his surrounding.

Alex slowly opened his eyes. He slowly sent out his spiritual sense and looked at his Spiritual Sea.

"Huh?" he was surprised. The size of the sea hadn't increased at all. He looked at the water in his spiritual sea and realized that that wasn't the case either. It was then he saw it.

The Spirit Cleaning lily in his hand hadn't disappeared at all. It was perfectly intact, just the way it was last night.

"What's going on? Why didn't I use up the flower?" he started wondering. He tried to think of any records he read that spoke of these things, but couldn't find any.

"Did I make a mistake somehow?" he started to worry. He looked to see if there was any change to the flower, but just like the first time he looked at it, it was intact.

"I must've done something wrong then," he put the blame and forgot about the flower for now. He looked at his surroundings and noticed something out of the corner of his eyes.

"Huh? No way."

He immediately ran out of the dark room and into the courtyard. It was bright, unusually bright. Almost as if it were.... He looked out at the corner of his eyes once more.

"So I'm not seeing things. I did over-cultivate. It's already 10 am."

He didn't know how or why, but for the first time since playing the game, he had ended up cultivating till it was 10 am. The only other times he had woken up this late was when he had genuinely fainted.

But that was different from the current situation where he was fine and it was just normal cultivation.

"Thank god I don't have college today or I would've missed it. If I were in the dorm, I would've already missed breakfast. Whatever, let's go eat some food. Sister must be waiting for me."

He went back into his room and logged out of the game.

He had been in the game for over 14 hours, so he decided to take a bath. After bathing, he walked out into the kitchen and saw Hannah eating her food alone.

"You took quite some time. Why did you log out so late?" she asked.

"Sorry, Sister. I was cultivating and woke up only just now," he replied.

"Woke up?" Hannah looked at him weirdly. "Aren't you in the Organ Tempering realm?" she asked.

Alex wondered why she could ask this, but he still answered, "Yes, sister."

Hannah then asked, "Then why are you still falling asleep while cultivating? That should have stopped after the first few times."

Chapter 180: Exam Date

"What do you mean by it should have stopped, sister? Is this phenomenon supposed to stop after the first few times?" he asked.

Hannah said, "Yes. At first, you fall asleep a few times, but after a while, you get used to it and can start staying awake during cultivation."

"But, I have never been able to do that sister. I have always fallen asleep. Am I doing something wrong then?" he asked.

"Uhh... I don't think so. I don't think it has anything to do with you since it's supposed to stop of its own. Maybe it's your cultivation technique? Or maybe you are just an outlier. In any case, make sure you're in a safe place when you cultivate then."

"Okay sister," he replied.

"Alright, eat some food. It's in the fridge. Put it in the microwave for 2 minutes, and it should be okay. Also, don't forget, tonight you have to go with me, ok? I hope you won't end up cultivating and forgetting to wake up." Hannah put her dish on the dishwasher and left.

Alex ate the food alone and put the dish in the dishwasher after finishing as well. He waited for the dishes to be cleaned and reorganized them into their original places in the kitchen. Only after then did he leave.

He didn't immediately go to the game and instead used his new phone and laptop for some time. He needed to get used to them if he wanted to use them. After an hour or so of using them, he logged back into the game around 12 pm.

Just as he logged in, he felt a sort of vibration from one of his storage. He looked inside to find that it was his communication talisman from his master. He picked it up and looked at the message.

"Come to my place as soon as you can."

Without hesitation, he left for his master's building. As he arrived, his master was also about to leave.

"Oh, you're here. I was about to go find you since you didn't respond at all," she said.

"Oh, sorry master. I was kind of busy and didn't see your message in time. But I have some questions so I came rushing."

"Come in, I also have something to talk to you about," Ma Rong said as she walked back inside. Alex followed her and walked into one of the rooms as well.

"What do you want to talk about, master?" he asked.

"Alright, your exam date for Core disciple has been set. It will be tomorrow morning around 8 am. Make sure you are at the Elder's hall in time tomorrow," she said.

"Oh, alright. Thank you, master," he said.

"Alright, tell me. What do you want to talk about?," she asked.

"It's regarding these," he said as he pulled out 3 pill bottles. Ma Rong wasn't sure what was happening, but she took the pill bottles and popped the stopper for one of them.

Immediately, a strong medicinal scent escaped out from the bottle. With just a single smell, Ma Rong could tell, this was not a simple pill. She immediately took out a pill tester and tested the pill.

57%

Her eyes turned wide seeing the absurdly high harmony percentage. "Wha— how?" she asked, shocked that her disciple was able to make this so fast.

"This is what I wanted to talk to you about, Master. Check the other two pills as well," he said. Ma Rong followed his suggestion and took the stopper out of the remaining two bottles. Similarly strong medicinal scent escaped from both of those bottles.

Her hands started to shake a little as she put the pill into the Pill tester. Both of them resulted in 58% and 59%. This just caused her to have more shock.

"What is going on? Did you make these?" she asked. As the harmony levels got higher and higher, the more difficult it was to make the pill. An alchemist could only have so much energy in the cauldron after the intense process.

Due to the multitudes of minor mistakes, the energies released would always end up in some ways not mixing together. That would make the total energy in the cauldron have less than ideal amount of the resulting energy.

This energy would then have to be absorbed by the powder before forming the pill, which was another place where the energy would be less. All in all, an Alchemist would have a very hard time making a pill with high harmony. Especially, once it got above 40%.

And yet, her disciple in front of her had 3 pills all with harmony above 55%. This was something unprecedented to her.

"Yes, master. I made these yesterday night," he replied

"How did you do this?" she asked. Suddenly increasing your ability as an alchemist, at this level was not an easy task.

"That is what I wanted to talk to you about master. In the tiger sect, I accidentally took in an unknown blood essence, and ever since then my ability towards anything Metal aligned has improved significantly. "

"I can use metal aligned skills with damage behind them, and make pills where the final energy is Metal at Heaven grade quite easily. Do you have any idea why a blood essence would do this?" he asked.

"What do you mean unknown blood essence? explain thoroughly," she asked.

Alex explained all the circumstances surrounding the blood essence and the resulting effect as much as he could.

Ma Rong fell into deep thought after hearing that the essence had targeted her disciple on her own.

"I do not know the answer to this. I have never heard of someone directly taking in blood essence without putting it through a pill or something. Go and check if there are some other things that have

changed in you. Since we don't have any records about this, the only thing we can do is wait to get to the Cardinal City and look through the library ourselves," Ma Rong said.

"I see, Master. Let's do that," Alex said.