

Alchemy 261

Chapter 261: 3 Different Pills

The light green building looked big, at least from the front. Alex walked into the building's registration hall and asked for a room for one of the many people waiting to help the customers.

"Do you have an Alchemist rank?" the man at the registration asked.

"Umm... I can make Common Rank Earth grade pills, so Common Earth Rank I guess," Alex said. He was really confused. Neither the Hong Wu sect nor the Tiger sect ever asked for what grade pills he could make before letting him take a room.

'Is the capital different somehow?' he wondered.

"Please take out your badge then," the man said.

"My... Badge?" Alex asked in confusion.

"You do not have a badge?" the man asked.

"No, sorry. I have no idea what this badge is," Alex said.

"Ah, you must be new to the city. Gaining a badge based on your achievement from the Alchemy guild can gain you certain discounts in the Alchemy Hall. If you haven't ranked yourself yet, we will have to charge you for the full price," the man said.

"Can I know what the cost will be for 5 hours?" Alex asked.

"5 hours... at 12... will be 60 spirit stones. Are you ok with that?" the man asked.

"Ah, yes. Of course," Alex said and handed 60 spirit stones to the man.

The man led Alex to one of the rooms and let him go inside before locking the door from outside. "The door is now impossible to open from the outside, and can only open from the inside."

"You can leave before the 5 hours are up or we will come to escort you out once the 5 hours are over," the man said.

"Thank you," Alex said and turned around to look at the room. The room seemed way better than the muddy-looking rooms back in the Alchemy hall of the Hong Wu sect.

He sat in front of the brilliantly glowing fire and took out his Golden jade cauldron and placed it on top of the fire. He smoothly cleared away any dirt and debris that were remaining behind them since the last time he made pills nearly a week ago.

He let the cauldron heat up while he started thinking of what pills to make.

'I only want to sell these pills for the money, so I should make something that is on-demand or hard to acquire,' he thought.

He went through the list of pill recipes in his head, but only the ones that he learned in the sect. He didn't want to introduce the ones he learned from the corpse to the market just yet.

He needed to be stronger before he could freely do that.

He thought for a bit and ended up thinking of exactly 3 different pills he could make.

The first was a pill called the Fat Converting pill. It rapidly burned the fat of the person who ate the pill and gave them extra power for the duration of the fat conversion.

The second pill was called the Element Negating Pill. This was a pill that increased the natural resistance of your body and Qi to the different elements and protected you from taking too much damage.

The third and last pill was called the Rubber Body pill. This was a pill that made your entire body as flexible as rubber. It didn't make it elastic, but the flexibility alone was something many would want. It was especially good because you could control which parts you wanted to make flexible.

Given the circumstances, people would find a lot of usage for it.

So, Alex prepared the ingredients and started making the pills. This was the first time he was making these pills. The Fat Converting pill was a Fire elemental pill, the Element Negating Pill was a neutral elemental pill, and the Rubber Body pill was a wood elemental pill.

None of the three pills were of Metal elemental variety, so Alex was a little sad that he couldn't guarantee a Heaven grade pill amongst these all. That would've sold for a lot.

Still, he had some chance at making them, so he didn't give up hope.

He started with the Fat Converting pill and put the first ingredients into the cauldron. Alex started doing what the recipe told him to do.

2nd ingredient, move it around, release energy, wait for the two ingredients to react to each other, put in the next ingredient repeat.

That was the formula to making all of the pills. In the middle of making the pill, Alex's mind started thinking of something else.

'What if I put in two ingredients at once? If I put the first and the third ingredients at the start, and somehow be able to keep them from interacting with each other, or better yet, they don't react at all, I can easily put in the second ingredient and make them react at once,' Alex thought.

However, now was not the time to test this theory out. He quickly threw this thought to the back of his mind for when he had the time and brought his attention back to the pill at hand.

He put in another ingredient and continued. By the end of 15 minutes, he was nearly done making the pill. Alex quickly started forming the pill and thankfully, the pill-splitting Qi did not appear at this moment.

The pill was successfully made and he looked at it.

Fat Converting Pill - 47%

He was so close, and yet so far. 'I should be able to make a Heaven-grade pill soon,' he thought. He stored the pill into a pill bottle and moved on to the next pill.

For the next hour and a half, he performed alchemy exactly, 6 more times and managed to make 9 different pills. The double pill rate truly was 50% for those 6 times.

As for the harmony of the pills, the worst one was a 42% pill he made in pair with another pill, and the best one was a 53% Heaven grade pill.

Chapter 262: Leaving the hall

Once he was done with the Fan Converting pill, Alex moved on to the next pill on the list, the Element Negating pill.

The Element Negating pill was perhaps easier than the Fat Converting pill. At least, the ingredients were easier to acquire, but still, the effect of the pill was so good that having more than a few with oneself at all times wasn't a bad idea at all.

He cleaned the cauldron and put in the first ingredient. Soon a second one and a third one. Before he knew it, he had put in all the different ingredients and they were all powder by now.

Finally, when it was time to form the pill, he started moving the powder and turning it into a ball shape. Suddenly, the pill-splitting qi appeared from within him.

The pills were separated into two portions as two vortexes appeared above them and started sucking in the excess energy that was in the air.

Very soon, all the energy was gone and the pills were formed. Alex took out the two pills and looked at them.

One of the pills had 43% harmony and the other one had 44% harmony. Alex nodded to himself in satisfaction.

'I wonder if it was possible to an 87% pill if I somehow collected all the energy there and put it into the pill,' Alex wondered. That would be a genuine achievement if he could ever do any.

The higher the harmony, the harder it was to improve. Going from the beginning of heaven grade to a level of harmony to which he didn't even know the name of was truly a dream he wanted to be true.

Alas, a dream was a dream.

He brought out another set of ingredients and continued to make the pills. He made exactly 7 pills in the next hour and a half.

Every pill after the first one was better and the best one was a 51% harmony Heaven grade pill. He stored the 9 pills into the pill bottles and moved on to the final pill.

The Rubber Body pill. He didn't have a lot of ingredients for this one, so the remaining hour and a half he had in this room didn't seem as necessary.

He swiftly started making the pill.

He focused his mind on the pill for the next hour and a half and managed to make exactly 8 pills out of the 5 sets of ingredients he owned.

The worst pill he made was a 38% harmony pill. He wasn't used to making the pill and was just starting to he ended up making some minor mistakes for the first one which lead to such a bad result.

Of course, that was when compared to what he was capable of. If anyone else heard him call this pill bad, they would start searching for a shovel to dig a big enough hole on the ground that could not only fit his body but also his ego.

The best Rubber Body pill he managed to make was actually the best pill he made today. It was a 55% harmony pill. A Heaven-grade pill with such high harmony would certainly earn him quite a few spirit stones.

Finally, after making all the pills, he rested a bit. He looked at the time and saw that there were only a few more minutes before he had to leave.

He decided to go on his own, instead of someone else's asking. He quickly stored everything away properly and opened the door.

He walked out to the registration desk and let the person know he was leaving. Once he got out of the Alchemy hall, he now had to decide if he wanted to go to the hotel or find some auction house to put up the 27 new pills he made in the last 5 hours.

'I wonder if that is enough to place me in the speed competition that will take place tomorrow,' he wondered. But he was sure his master wouldn't let him take part in those.

'Are the others faster than me? Maybe that is why,' he thought. It would make sense that other people who have been making pills for nearly a decade would be much better than him.

'Sigh, whatever,' he thought and looked at the time. It was 5:23 pm. 'Doesn't look like there is enough time to make it to an auction house and back to the hotel. I guess I will just go back,' he thought and left the place.

He still had quite a little time so he slowly walked amidst the festival-like city and bought a few more things with what little money he had. However, he was relieved by the fact that he now had pills, especially for this reason.

A few minutes before it was 6 pm, he made it back to the hotel and went to his room. Wan Li was still there, studying the new notes he had written.

'I wonder what level I would be at if I put in the same amount of work,' he wondered. No matter how much he wanted to believe that he was hardworking, he could always tell that the game was aiding him in some way.

He could already recognize all the ingredients in the world with a single glance. The recipes, no matter how convoluted, would immediately go into his head the moment he looked at them. And then, there were the double pills he could make once in every two pills.

Those were all skills that boosted his starting points by a lot. While he did put in work after that, it would never be to the same level as others who had to work their way to even reach his starting point.

'Whatever, just because I didn't have to do that, doesn't mean I will have to look down on my hard work. While I might not have put in as much as everyone else, I did put in quite a lot,' he thought.

Thinking so made him feel quite a bit better.

KNOCK KNOCK

Someone was at the door once more.

"Sect Leader had called everyone for another debrief."

Chapter 263: Royal Family

Alex and the rest were gathered in Ma Rong's room.

"Everyone, great job in today's competition. We have managed to get exactly 210 points for the sect today. If we just manage to get 313 more, we will be easily entering the 1st-grade list," Ma Rong said.

"So, tomorrow's competition is based on speed. We can't guarantee that there will be 2 competitions tomorrow as well just like today, so the group for tomorrow will be decided on the spot as well. But, it will definitely include you Fanfan, so be prepared."

"Depending on the situation, I might or might not include Wan Li and Meimei," Ma Rong said. She didn't even say anything about Alex, so he believed that he definitely didn't have any chance at all.

Ma Rong spoke a little longer and dismissed the group. Alex walked back to his room and logged out. He walked to the kitchen and found his cousin hungrily gulping down food.

"You seem like you haven't eaten anything in days," Alex said.

Hannah simply looked at him with a guilty face. Alex was stunned, "You didn't eat anything since the party?" he asked.

"I didn't have to. The capsule stopped all my hunger all day. I'm only eating right now because I know that my body needs it. It is so scary. You might get lost in the game for days on end now, and it won't even be that bad since your body will conserve energy," Hannah said.

Alex couldn't help but shake his head in the thought that he might end up being the same when his capsule arrived.

"Oh, that's right. Sister, can you get up in the morning to accept my capsule at around 8 am? I will be in the coliseum looking at the competition at the time. I will log out around 12 pm and then we can take it to my room," Alex said.

"Sure. That reminds me, how was the competition today? Did you take part in any?" she asked.

"Of course, and your brother got first place," Alex said with a thumbs up. He quickly ate his food and returned back to the game.

It was nearly 8 pm now, so the only thing he could do right now was cultivated. He sneakily took out Pearl and hid him in his robes. Soon, there was slight golden light spilling out from his robes and his body was full of cuts. He was body cultivating.

He didn't immediately go and start cultivating his Qi, however. He instead brought out the Spirit Cleansing Lily. He hadn't used one for a while since he hadn't cultivated his Qi properly in a while.

'Last time I did it I failed for some reason,' he thought as he remembered to when the flower was intact with him even after he was done cultivating.

'Will the same thing happen again? Or will the spiritual sea increase this time?' Alex wondered and finally started cultivating.

It took him a while to get into the groove of ignoring the pain while trying to meditate. After a while, he succeeded, and soon, he fell into a trance and fell unconscious.

Alex woke up early in the morning. His body was still full of cuts so he stopped Pearl from cultivating and checked his hand.

The flower was still there. He was now sure that there was either something wrong with his body, or there was something wrong with the flower.

'Or many neither. Maybe I have just reached the limits of the flower usage and can't use any more raw ones,' he thought. That seemed to be the most logical answer.

'I should go to the library with master and check today or tomorrow,' he thought. He pets Pearl from outside his robes and checked his status.

[White Cat (Child) - Bonded

Name: Pearl

Cultivation Base: Bone Tempering 8th Realm

Evolution Chance: 40%

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

]

'It's taking so long now,' Alex thought. 'I should be fine giving him a monster core, right?' He quickly took out a monster core for a Bone Tempering 9th realm beast. He didn't dare give him one for an organ realm beast as he wasn't sure if Pearl could fight the mental battle that started randomly appearing after the Organ Tempering realm.

He quickly sent Pearl back into the tattoo and looked at the time. '6:30 am huh? It should be right abo—'

KNOCK KNOCK

"It's time to leave." Someone at the door said and left to speak to more people.

Alex stood up and left the room along with Wan Li. Outside, the group of people was all ready to leave. Once everyone was out, they walked down the stairs and left the hotel.

It took them around 20 minutes to reach the Coliseum on the east side of the city.

The second Elder slowly walked next to Ma Rong and asked, "Sect Leader, did you see the royal family yesterday?"

"No, I didn't. Maybe they aren't planning on coming for the first 4 days and will only arrive to watch the final combat section? After all, that is what most of the people are here for," Ma Rong said.

"That sounds about right. Sigh, I guess we won't be showing off to them at all," the second Elder said.

Alex was a little curious. So he got close to Ma Rong and asked, "Master, isn't Fu Zhen part of the royal family too?"

According to Ma Rong previously, the surname Fu belonged to the royal family, and seeing that he was part of the Royal Fu Academy that managed the competition, he was surprised that the second elder still asked for another member of the royal family.

"Although I don't know the relation, Fu Zhen is definitely related to the royal family. But he isn't considered a part of the royal family itself."

"To be considered as part of the royal family you must be born as siblings to the Emperor, or cousin to the prince and princess. Any more and you aren't considered as part of one."

Chapter 264: Can Hide No Longer

"Do you know how many royal family members there are?" Alex asked

"Hmm... The emperor has 3 siblings as far as I know, and 3 children. As for the sibling's children, I am not sure. Although, the youngest one isn't even married despite being very old by now. I heard he is..." Ma Rong stopped.

"He is what?" Alex asked.

"Shh. We can't talk about these things in the open, Disciple Yu," the second elder said. "You never know whose eyes and ears are focused on us. It's better to take caution and not say anything."

Alex was a little surprised. But from the reaction, he could guess that whatever his master was going to say about the little brother of the emperor, it definitely wasn't going to be anything good.

'So the emperor's brother is a bum or something?' Alex wondered.

Soon, they reached the arena in the coliseum and Fu Zhen was there to explain to them about the different competitions that would take place today too.

The Alchemy competition for today was the fastest pill making. There was only a single one, so Ma Rong made Fan Ruogang, Zhou Mei, and Wan Li take part in the competition.

With the top 3 of the sect taking part in the competition, they could be pretty sure that they were going to win at least some points.

Alex and the rest of the group went to their seating area while Ma Rong took the three to get registered.

"Ah, Yu Ming. There you are." Alex heard someone call his name. From the sound, he knew who the person calling him was, but he wasn't sure if he should turn around to say something or not.

'I'll get beat if I don't say anything,' he thought and turned around. "Hello, sister," he said.? The one who called out to him was none other than Luo Mei.

"I saw your competition yesterday. Congratulations on the first place," Luo Mei said.

"Thank you, sister," Alex said.

There were people behind both Luo Mei and Alex, and they were all surprised. The people couldn't understand why they were acting so close.

Du Yuhan was right there too and he was paying attention to the two of them talking.

"Senior Luo, do you know this guy? He was part of our sect but then he defected to Hong Wu sect," the girl named Su spoke from behind. "He was the guy that beat Huo Tu in a fight."

Sounds of gasps and surprise appeared from the Tiger sect side of the group. They all knew about Huo Tu losing to an inner sect disciple, but they never expected him to be part of the Hong Wu sect.

People started murmuring to themselves, wondering if Alex left the sect because he was scared of Huo Tu's retaliation.

Luo Mei frowned a little and said, "He did no such thing. Don't try to bring down my junior brother's name," Luo Mei said.

The girl named Su was a little surprised at Luo Mei's reaction. "Your... junior brother?" she asked.

Just then, the rest of the Tiger group returned from the registration place. Wen Cheng was followed by a few disciples, one of which was Meng Yun.

"Hmm... Yu Ming, what are you doing here? What is this crowd?" Wen Cheng asked.

Alex fell into a dilemma. 'Should I say it or not?' he thought. Wen Cheng seemed to understand his thoughts quite well, so he said, "it's okay. I was going to tell them soon either way."

"Ah, that is good then, Master," Alex said.

"Huh? Master?"

"Did he just say, master?"

"He called the Tiger Sect's sect leader his master."

"Is he defecting to Tiger Sect now?"

People on neither side of the group could understand what was going on. Wen Cheng decided to take the opportunity to explain.

"This is my direct disciple, Yu Ming. He is also the direct disciple of the Hong Wu Sect's sect leader Ma Rong," Wen Cheng announced.

The amount of noise because of the confusion only increased.

Ma Rong returned with the registered disciples and saw the crowd. "What's happening here?" she asked.

"Haha, Sect Leader, it seems Sect Leader Wen doesn't plan on hiding your disciple's relationship any longer. He's openly explained everything," the Second Elder said. He had known about Alex's situation since the start and had been silently looking at the situation unfold.

She quickly understood the situation and decided to explain the situation. She quickly told the group how Alex was trained in part by both of them and was actually a disciple of both of the two sects.

"He will return back to the Tiger sect for 2 weeks after the competition ends," Ma Rong said.

"Junior brother, are you not taking part in any competitions today?" Luo Mei asked. She had seen him not with the group that was registered so she was sure of it.

"No," Alex said.

"Then, why don't you come to sit with us for today? You should see how the sect does at least once in the competition," Luo Mei said.

"I—" Alex didn't know what to say. He was part of Hong Wu Sect right now, so leaving the group was not something he was thinking of.

"You can go with them for today. Just remember to return before we leave," Ma Rong said. Alex didn't have anything to do for the day, so he was free to do what he wanted.

"Alright, you guys have seen the drama for long enough. Go back to your own seats," Ma Rong scolded the group of people as she took them to the seating area.

Alex watched them leave and turned around to go back to the seating area of the Tiger sect. He sat down next to Luo Mei who herself was seated next to Meng Yun. Wen Cheng and the rest of the elders were sitting on the seats behind and above them.

The rest of the disciples were sitting on the seats that were on the same level or one step lower than the rest of them.

Chapter 265: Sister

The girl named Su was staring daggers at Alex. Now that it was revealed that he was the direct disciple of the sect leader, he was another obstacle most people would have to fight against once Luo Mei graduated from her Prime Disciple spot.

Du Yuhan on the other hand didn't seem to care about that for some reason. According to his perspective, he was going to be the next prime disciple regardless.

"Hey, brother, what's your name?" A guy sitting below Alex turned and asked Alex.

Alex didn't know who the disciple was, but he still answered nonetheless. "I am Yu Ming," he said.

"Hmm... I see. My name is Yang Ma. Nice to meet you, brother Yu," he said. The guy had a square face with no facial hair and a head full of slightly red hair. He wasn't as tall as everyone around him and seemed quite short.

Alex didn't know what to say to the guy, but then he remembered the rankings from the Tiger sect. 'Yang Ma... that's the third rank holder in the sect,' he thought.

He quickly checked the man's cultivation base and found that he was in the 2nd Mind Tempering realm. Based on combat alone, he was probably stronger than Wan Li.

"So, Brother Yu, how did you beat that fatty Huo? You made him unconscious for 3 days from what I hear," Yang Ma asked.

"I..."

"Screw off, Yang. My junior brother doesn't need to answer you anything," Luo Mei said from the side. Alex was a little surprised, but he decided to remain quiet.

Yang Ma's face twisted for a split second before becoming full of smiles and said, "Ah, if sister Luo doesn't want her junior brother to have new friends, then I can't do anything." He turned back and focused on the arena in front of him.

'That's one fake person. He can't even hide what he is thinking,' Alex thought. It might have taken him a little more to realize without Luo Mei's help, but given how blatantly hypocritical the man was, Alex would sooner or later know not to trust him or be friends with him.

He turned his attention back to the arena as well and looked at the different competition floors that were getting ready.

There were 3 competitions being held for the 8 am slot. An artifact-making competition, a talisman-making competition, and a formation escaping competition.

Out of those 3, only the formation competition seemed to be the one that had nothing to do with production itself. That would come later on.

"Make sure to pay attention to the competitions. You will a lot more from these than you can from just reading about it in some books," Luo Mei said.

"Ah, I should have paid attention yesterday too then. I was too focused on my upcoming competition, and don't really remember what happened in most of the other ones," Alex said.

"Nah, yesterday was ingredients themed, so there was no reason for you to remember what happened there," Luo Mei said. Alex nodded after listening to that.

"Hmm... she is taking place in today's too?" Luo Mei said softly, but Alex managed to hear it. He looked to where she was looking and saw a bunch of people walking out of the coliseum gate towards the Formation arena.

Alex saw a man from the Hong Wu sect and another lady from the Tiger sect. But the one he looked at curiously, and also seemed to be Luo Mei's target of attention was the girl that Alex found familiar.

"Do you know the girl in the red robes, sister?" Alex curiously asked.

"Yes," Luo Mei said. "She is my sister."

Alex thought he heard wrong for a second. But once enough time passed and his brain comprehended what he had just heard, he asked, "Huh? Your sister? Now that I think about it, she really does look like you."

'No wonder I found her so familiar,' Alex thought.

"But why is she in a different sect and not Tiger sect? Also, I don't remember you mentioning anything about a sister before," Alex said.

"Our father won't let us go to the same sect so that we both can independently grow. And since our father doesn't have a son, whoever ends up being the strongest will take over the family once he retires from the head position," Luo Mei said.

"So you will be the head of the family once your father leaves the position?" Alex asked in surprise. In his eyes, Luo Mei was a million times better and stronger than her sister.

"Although, why not do it by seniority. Whoever amongst you two is old could just become the family head," Alex said.

"Can't do that. We are both of the same age, and were born on the same day," Luo Mei said.

"Woah, are you guys twins?" Alex asked.

"No," Luo Mei said as she shook her head. Alex was a little confused. Luo Mei smiled and continued, "She is my half-sister. We both have different mothers."

"Ah, I see," Alex said. He wanted to ask some more but Luo Mei didn't answer anything. So, he instead just watched the formation exam that was beginning.

There were 10 different formation flags around the stage and the slight fog was gathering on the surface of the stage. The host explained that the purpose of the competition was to leave the stage without lifting the formation or destroying it.

The formation reminded Alex of the Qi gathering formation back in the special alchemy garden place, but it was nothing like that.

According to the host, the stage was going to be massively expanded on their location alone, and the contestants were all going to be randomly allocated inside.

Then the Illusion formation would be started and the contestants would have to find a way to stop getting confused by the illusion formation. They would then have to leave the formation as fast as possible without getting in the way of any other participants or messing with any of the formation flags.

The fastest person to escape won.

Chapter 266: The Different Competitions

From the audience, Alex and the rest could see the different people in the Illusory Formation randomly staring around in different directions.

"Do they perhaps see something different from what we do?" Alex asked. The name Illusory told him that there would be illusions, just not what.

"It's a common rank formation, so I doubt it's anything that impressive. It's probably just a bunch of fog messing with their sense of direction," Luo Mei said.

Alex kept watching the competition, but at some point, it started to get boring seeing the people at the same place, unmoving.

Alex diverted his attention to the other competitions. The artifact-making competition was somehow the most familiar to Alex. It had a large cauldron on top of the fire, and the participants were putting in ingredients one after another.

The aim of the competition was to make an artifact from the given blueprint as fast as possible. Anything above certain criteria would qualify as having been completed.

The cauldrons the participants used to make artifacts were a lot larger than normal pill cauldrons as the number of materials required in making a simple artifact was much more space-consuming than the ones for simple pills.

The artifact they were making was a simple shield. To make the shield, they needed to make a metal shield itself and a leather strap.

Soon, some of the disciples took the molten metals and started pouring them onto a shield-shaped mold. The metal cooled down, and it took the shape of the shield.

"Woah, is that how they normally make artifacts? That looks quite easy," Alex said.

"Nah, normally it's better. They use manual, physical methods to shape the molten metals. But since this is a speed test, they are willing to take the easy route out. After all, they only need to get an Earth Grade shield out of it.

The people quickly finished putting on the strap and the shield was ready. They went to go show it to the host. Alex lost a little interest after learning that that was not the proper method for the artifact-making process.

He changed his attention to the Talisman competition now. The talisman competition was a little different from all the rest.

The disciples were on the ground, continuously mixing various ingredients on a stone slab. The creation was slowly flowing onto a small area where it was getting pooled.

That was what the people were going to use as Ink for the different drawings they made.

Once the inks were ready, they all took out a brush and paper and slowly started drawing onto it.

"So, it's the fastest person to make the talisman who wins right? I wonder who will draw the rune first," someone in front of Alex asked.

"Hey idiot, just cheer for your fellow disciple who is taking part," someone else asked.

"To be fair, they have the Royal Fu Sect, and Little Dawn sect to fight against. I doubt anyone other than those two is going to win the top 3," another person said.

"Oh god, look at him. He hasn't even finished making the ink yet. I doubt we are going to win at all," Someone else said.

Alex looked at the disciple wearing the Tiger Sect's robes and saw how slow he was.

The various other disciples dipped their brush in the newly made ink and started making the runes in the paper they had. They needed to be very slow with it, or they would end up messing the entire paper and would have to start again.

Also, the better the ink, the more volatile it usually was. So one needed to be extra careful when making the talismans.

Disciples were soon starting to finish and one by one, they handed in their work to the host.

The talisman they were made to make was one that create a burst of water when it landed on something. And the only way to show the audience who won was to use up all the different talismans.

They could've just tested it using a talisman formation, but visual showings sit better with the onlookers. So, the host started throwing the talismans one after another towards a wooden target.

As soon as the talisman landed on the wooden target, a column of water would burst out. The larger the burst, the stronger the talisman.

In the end, the winner was as expected, Little Dawn sect and Royal Fu Academy. Alex could also see a few Grand Void sect names quite a bit up in the final rankings.

On the Artifact side, they were on the final testing too. The shields were made to strike with continuously increasing damage and would stop once the shield couldn't block anymore.

The highest damage block that they encountered was a shield that could block normal attacks from the 3rd Organ Tempering realm. For a competition that focused on being fast, that was an excellent result for the shield.

Soon the results came out for them too. As expected, the Royal Fu Academy was victorious on this field as well. The other two sects with good results were the Tranquil Union sect and the Southern Sanctuary sect.

Once the two competitions were done, finally did the participants from the formation test come out as well. One after another, the disciples started walking out.

Surprisingly, Luo Mei's sister was in the top 3 this time. She seemed to be from the sect called Earth path sect. They were a famous formation sect. For her to be part of the examination while being part of a formation sect, she must've been very good.

The other winners for the formation competitions were out as well. As expected, one of them was the Royal Fu Academy. While the other one was called the Sky Soaring sect.

Soon, the host laid out the rankings and the list of the winners was for everyone to see. Alex read his senior sister's half-sister's listing.

'Luo Xing, so that's her name, huh?' Alex thought.

Chapter 267: Music

Alex was watching a bunch of participants makes poison on the stage. The task wasn't a very visual task as everyone tried their best to hide their methods from the audience.

All they did was mix a bunch of ingredients with each other and soon the poison would be completed.

"That guy from your group is quite fast, junior brother," Luo Mei said.

Alex looked at a man currently finishing the preparation of the poison. "Ah, yes. What was his name again? Tang Bao, I think. He is ranked 8th in our sect if I remember correctly. He seems to be quite adept at poison," Alex said.

He hadn't known the person's name before today and had only learned when Ma Rong had chosen him during the registration.

"He should make it into the top ten," Luo Mei said.

Alex silently nodded. As expected, he finished in the 7th position. That was more than what anyone from the Hong Wu sect was expecting from a competition that was not about Alchemy.

As the poison competition was ending, Meng Yun stood up and walked away with an elder. "Is sister Meng taking part in a competition too?" Alex asked.

"Yes. Meng Yun is quite good with the tunes, so she is taking part in the music competition," Luo Mei said.

"I see," Alex said and went back to watching the competition. There was another competition going on, one that he had never seen before, a puppet competition.

The competition holders provided the puppets and the participant's job was to refine the puppet and make it theirs the fastest.

The puppets were just small mechanical rats so the competition holders didn't lose much by handing them out. The winner of the puppet competition was someone from a sect called the Thousand Hands sect.

After the puppet competition and the poison competitions were over, it was time for the music competition.

Meng Yun and a bunch of other disciples got onto the stage and the host started explaining the rules.

As the competition was themed Speed, the participants had to play a certain piece at a fast speed while staying above a certain threshold of errors.

Everyone was made to take out their instruments. Some took out drums, some took out zithers, some took out guitar-like stringed instruments. Meng Yun took out her flute that he had used against Alex's fight.

When they were given the go, everyone instantly started playing the music piece that was floating in front of them. Alex couldn't understand what the bunch of lines floating midair meant, but it seemed the participants fully understood them.

As soon as they started playing, a graph of sorts appeared on top of each of the participant's heads letting the audience know how correct they were.

Everyone aside from a few kept on fluctuating up and down on the accuracy scale, but never dropped below a threshold marked by 25%.

Only a few could consistently keep it at around 40%. Meng Yun was one of them. She was very good at playing the piece as if she had learned it all her life and her average level seemed to be around 42%.

"Oh wow, Mengmeng is so close to becoming a Heaven Grade musician," Luo Mei said from the side.

"Heaven grade is at 50%?" Alex asked.

"Yeah, it's always the same for any profession that can check its quality in percentage. 10% is the mortal threshold, 25 is the Earth, and 50 is the Heaven. Honestly, if Mengmeng spent just a bit more time practicing her craft instead of trying to serve me, she would definitely be Heaven grade by now," Luo Mei said.

"S- Serve you?" Alex was a little confused. 'Isn't Meng Yun a player? Why would she serve senior sister?' he thought.

"Oh yeah, didn't I mention it yet? Mengmeng is my maid. My family sent her to the sect with me to take care of me. Although it turned out that her talent was quite good, so master agreed to make her a disciple of the sect. However, she still tried to take care of me and follows me around," Luo Mei said while shaking her head.

"Oh," Alex said, unable to articulate any more words. His entire view of Meng Yun came crumbling down. 'Wait, so she isn't a player, but is just a talented NPC?' he thought.

Meng Yun was on the stage currently finishing up her piece. She was quite fast, even when compared to participants who came from genuine music sects.

Finally, she finished and ended up being the first to do so. Her highest melody was around 45% and her lowest was at 38%. On average, she stayed at around 42% melody.

She had passed without question. Other participants also started finishing one by one. A few of them actually had a higher melody than her, but they weren't as fast, so they failed to get into the top 3 rankings all the same.

Once the results were out, Meng Yun happily returned back to the seating area.

"Congratulations Mengmeng," Luo Mei said as she stood up and went to hug her.

"Good job. You got us 100 points where we weren't expecting any," Wen Cheng said.

"Congrats, sister Meng," Alex said.

Other people started congratulating her too. Soon, Meng Yun was red as a beet from all the attention and quickly went to hide near Luo Mei.

Alex looked back onto the stage. He had nearly missed the formation setting competition, but even after watching it, he didn't realize what was happening.

He couldn't understand the logic as to why the participants threw their flags at the place they did. Soon, that competition was over too without Alex really knowing what took place.

'It seems watching a formation-making competition without the slightest idea on formation making is not a good idea,' he thought.

Finally, he looked back towards the Hong Wu sect's seating area and saw that Ma Rong was missing. So were the three disciples.

It was time for the pill-making competition.

Chapter 268: Talent

Wan Li, Zhou Mei, and Fan Ruogang all walked out of the barrier and went into the arena. Inside was a section separated entirely for pill-making.

It was a similar place to the artifact-making section, and thus had small openings on the ground from where the fire was constantly burning.

They walked up to their place and were given an empty storage bag. They were made to keep the pill's ingredients in the storage bag and give all their storage bags away except the one they had provided.

Everyone took their one storage bag and walked up to a random seating area. Not a single one of them was provided a pill cauldron as at this level they were all expected to have one of their own.

All 3 of the disciples took out their own pill cauldrons as expected. It was hard to tell a cauldron's grade just from looking at the visual information, but each of them at the very least held a Common Heaven grade cauldron.

The information from this morning had a bit of info to get the participants ready, but the host needed to explain it in detail and to the audience.

The host was the one from Alex's last competition and he started speaking.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Fastest pill-making competition. Without delay, I will explain how this competition will work."

"You each have chosen to make a pill of your own choice and have thus prepared your own ingredients. You will get one shot, one opportunity to make the pill."

"You are considered to have completed the task if you make a pill and quickly run up front and put it inside any one of the pill testers that will be laid out soon."

"If the harmony crosses over 25%, you will have completed the task. If not, you will have failed and will not be in the final ranking," the host said.

"You will be disqualified if your ingredients burn or your cauldron explodes. You will be disqualified if you intentionally create disturbances for the other participants."

"You will be disqualified if we find out that you cheated during the pill making process in any way. That is all," the host said.

"Now prepare," he said.

Everyone started heating their cauldron and got ready. The competition would begin the moment they put in their first ingredients.

Once everyone was ready, The host gave the go. "Start."

Immediately, the entire group of participants poured in their first ingredient and started constantly stirring it. Wan Li, Zhou Mei, and Fan Ruogang did the same.

They now had 5 more ingredients to go.

One of the methods to making a pill fast was choosing a recipe that didn't have a lot of ingredients. The lesser ingredients there were, the faster one could complete making the pills. That was obvious.

As such, all the participants had chosen a pill that required ridiculously few ingredients. The recipe that the Hong Wu sect disciples chose was a simple pill called Gorilla strength pill.

It did what it was named, and gave a person the strength of a gorilla for a short burst of time. It didn't last long and honestly wasn't a very good pill.

Most alchemists wouldn't make this pill if possible, but this was a perfect pill for the competition.

Already, people were on their second ingredients, controlling the energy coming out of it. These alchemists didn't have spiritual sense, so they couldn't really feel the energy, but thanks to their experience they knew it was there.

Wan Li was the first to put in the third ingredient, followed by Fan Ruogang and then Zhou Mei amongst the group from Hong Wu sect.

As for the other ones, the Royal Alchemist's disciple wasn't here, so instead there were other disciples from Royal Fu Academy, and a few disciples from the Spirit Song sect who started putting in the third ingredient.

Alex was in the seating area with the Tiger sect, completely flabbergasted as to how the competition was going.

"Are they good, junior brother?" Luo Mei asked. Ever since learning that Alex made Heaven-grade pills, her respect towards him and his credibility as an alchemist had shot up high in her mind.

"They— they are good. Very good. Much better than me actually," Alex said, still in awe at what he was seeing.

"What? They are better than you," Luo Mei said in surprise. Then she slowly came close and whispered, "but you can make Heaven grade pills are they still better than you?" she asked.

"No. This is a different kind of better," he said. Luo Mei was a bit confused so Alex explained.

"What do you think is easier sister, making a pill with high Harmony, or low harmony?" Alex asked.

"Of course, it's high harmony," Luo Mei said. That was an obvious choice.

"Yes, but that is very hard to do without proper focus and time. You need to be careful of your mistakes every single step of the way," Alex said.

"That makes sense," Luo Mei said.

"However, they are doing something else. They are... deliberately making mistakes," Alex said.

"Huh, Mistakes?" even Wen Cheng was curious now.

"Yes, master. They are doing the best they can while constantly making small mistakes in their pill making that would either let them speed up some steps or skip it entirely."

"Making a lot of mistakes would ruin your pills, that obvious. However, their objective isn't to make the best pill, it is to make the fastest. As long as they can make a pill in Earth grade, they are safe. So they are deliberately making mistakes that will help them get a faster time, while still staying above 25% harmony by the end of the process."

"Just the fact that they know what to do is amazing enough, but the ability to do so is something else. What they are doing requires years and years of practice, something I could not hope to replicate in the near future. As such, each and every single alchemist on that stage right now are much better than me."

Chapter 269: Speed Results

Listening to Alex acknowledge the alchemists on the stage made everyone in the seating area focus back on them. Alex did so too. He checked back on the competition.

Wan Li was still the fastest. He had practiced pill-making so many times that he knew by instinct what he could do to save up on some time. Add onto that fact that he read up on it every single day, he was a beast of an alchemist.

Zhou Mei was quite good as well. Her years of practice weren't in vain either. She was proving her worth as the 2nd best disciple in the Hong Wu sect in front of everyone.

Fan Ruogang was having a hard time keeping up. She was mostly used to making pills slowly while having fun. She didn't like the competition aspect of pill-making. Still, since this was one, she didn't want to lose either.

The 3 disciples from the Spring Song sect seemed to be keeping up quite well as well.

Soon the competition was on the last stretch as well. Everyone started putting in their final ingredients and started making the pill.

The entire audience that was focused on the competition watched with bated breaths. The different sects taking part in the competition prayed that theirs be the first person to stand up.

Alex watched with plenty of anticipation as well.

Suddenly, there was movement. Wan Li stood up from his seat while pulling along a pill with his cauldron and ran to the pill tester.

No sooner had he reached the pill tester, 3 other participants stood up at nearly the same time. They were Zhou Mei, a disciple from Royal Fu Academy and another from the eSpirit Song sect.

They were all a step behind Wan Li, however, as Wan Li's pill crossed the 25% threshold without a problem and only stopped moving once the fog on the pill tester reached 29%.

The other 3 dropped in their pills on the pill tester as well and waited. Everyone had successfully managed to cross 25%, yet they didn't realize who crossed first. They would've to wait for the host to give them the result.

Fan Ruogang was a little late and was the third group of participants to stand up. However, she was sure that she wouldn't get into the top 3 now. She was quite sad.

Still, she hurriedly put her pill onto a pill tester and watched it go up to 26%. She had barely survived.

The other participants stood up one by one and started filling the lineup of pill testers as well. Surprisingly, around 20% of them had failed to produce an Earth-grade pill.

They seemed to have made a bit too many mistakes than they should have. After a while, all of them had submitted the pills and it was time to reveal the results.

The host walked up to a small podium and started speaking.

"Congratulations to all of you who passed. That was an amazing show of skill that I know anyone with the most simple of alchemy knowledge can appreciate."

"Unfortunately, skill alone won't help you win the competition. What will is speed, and here we have the list for the top 3 winners."

" On the 3rd place, we have, from Hong Wu Sect, Zhou Mei." A round of applause appeared as Zhou Mei herself was surprised that she managed to win the competition.

"On the 2nd place, we have, from Spirit Song sect, Han Long." Another applause sounded as Han Long smiled. He seemed pretty confident about the second place even before getting it.

"And in the 1st place, the winner is from Hong Wu Sect, Wan Li," The host shouted. Sounds of shouts and applause surprised Wan Li very much. He wasn't used to having too much attention and was starting to get a little nervous.

Fan Ruogang took the opportunity to jump on both Wan Li and Zhou Mei and hugged them as she congratulated those two.

"Damn it. I wish I could be in the top 3 too, then all three of us would be in the top 3," she said.

Soon they started walking back to the seating area.

"I will go back now too, master," Alex said. The competition was over and their sect members would be leaving soon.

"Alright. We will talk next time. You will take part in tomorrow's competition, right? We will watch that," Wen Cheng said.

"Take care, Junior brother," Luo Mei said. Alex said his goodbyes and left. Even as he left, he could see the stares from the girl named Su, and the guy called Yang Ma.

Alex ignored them and walked to the Hong Wu sect's seating.

"Ah, you are back, disciple Yu. How was your time? You did watch the competition instead of talking all the time, right?" the second Elder said.

The third elder snickered from the side. "Yes, second elder. I managed to see every competition quite well," Alex said.

"Good. This is a very good opportunity to view all forms of production and fighting methods using by cultivators in one place. We shouldn't miss it at all," the second elder said.

Alex could see the truths in those statements.

Soon, Ma Rong returned with the 3 disciples. Everyone congratulated the three of them as soon as they returned. While Wan Li had acquired 100 points, and Zhou Mei had gotten 33 points, Fan Ruogang had also managed to come at 5th place with 20 points.

Together with Tang Bao who earned 14 points, they had earned a total of 167 points from simply 2 different competitions.

They were now at 377 points and were 146 points away from entering the 1st grade. They all celebrated for a while. Afterward, since there was no more competition taking place, the group decided to leave first just like yesterday.

Alex wasn't against this idea at all, as he was looking forward to returning back to the hotel and logging out. His cousin should have already taken the capsule by now and he couldn't wait to try it out himself.

Chapter 270: New Capsule

Not every one of the group decided to return to the hotel. Most of the disciples didn't have anything to do, so they instead decided to split away from the sect and do their own thing for the rest of the day.

The others who took part in the competitions, however, were very tired and just wanted to go back to the hotel and take some rest.

As such, they walked for 15 minutes or so and returned back to the sect.

Alex wasn't tired like the others, but he was very excited, so he went to his room and immediately went to the bed. He didn't even wait for Wan Li to enter before he simply logged out.

As soon as he woke up, however, his excitement disappeared as he realized just how hungry he was. "Ah, that's right. I haven't eaten anything since yesterday night," he thought.

He quickly freshened up and walked out of the room.

There it was, in the living room, a large cuboid cardboard box. "My capsule!" Alex said in awe.

"Look at you. You look like a kid who just walked into a candy shop," Hannah said from the side. She had been staying there waiting for him to log out before they could go set up the capsule.

"I feel like one," Alex said.

"You want to set it up right now?" Hannah asked. Ning was about to nod when his stomach growled.

He made an embarrassed smile and said, "Can I eat something first? I am famished."

"Haha, alright. Come, I will get you something," She said and prepared a meal for him.

Alex ate the food like there was no tomorrow. "I really shouldn't have skipped my meal today. This is a horrible feeling to log out to," he said.

"Well, good for you, you won't feel it anymore," Hannah said.

"Ah right, the capsule," Alex said. He quickly finished his meal and walked out to the living room along with Hannah.

Instead of unpacking in the living room like last time, they decided to take the whole thing to Alex's room. His room was on the lower floor, so it was fine.

They took the capsule in and started unboxing it. The capsule was the same in design with blue streaks in a white body.

Alex put on the suction cups at the bottom of the capsule and set them against the wall on the far side of the room. Once everything was set up, he plugged the cables into the wall and opened the capsule.

"Alright sister. You can go to your own game now. Thanks for taking this for me," Alex said.

"Alright, be careful. The permanent focus mode is quite hard to get used to. Don't panic if you can't get used to it," Hannah said.

Alex nodded and got into the capsule before closing the door. The space was quite spacious inside even though it looked very small from the outside. With his body completely free, he let it all loose and slowly let his mind drift.

Before he knew it, he had logged in.

He slowly stood up from his bed. The same intense senses attacking from all around him. This time, however, he was ready for it and took a deep breath before taking it all in.

He let the different information attack him and simply soaked it in like a sponge. The loud sounds, the bright light, the intense smell, the weird flavor of his own saliva, the robes brushing along his skin, the slow passing of time; he let it all enter him.

He closed his eyes and slowly let go of the breath. He then took in another breath and let it go as well. He started doing it over and over again.

With each breath of air, he was slowly getting used to the feeling and it was starting to feel like it was going away. However, he knew what was happening was that he was getting saturated with the different information and was learning to ignore it.

He learned to ignore the bright lights, he ignored the loud sounds, he ignored the smell and the taste, he ignore the feeling of the heat and the clothes in his body.

The one thing he couldn't ignore immediately was the perception of time. Human beings weren't designed to sense such a sudden change in the speed of time and it was going to take him a while.

He didn't know how long passed in real-time, but from his internal clock, he felt like it took him half an hour before time was back to normal as well.

He had managed to ignore that as well. He looked around and suddenly thought of something. Immediately, the information that he was ignoring came rushing in.

The focus mode was going to be there all the time now. He was just going to have to ignore it.

He listened to the sounds and movements of the staff around him. He had a hard time right now, but he felt like if he mastered it, he could instinctively choose what to ignore and what to allow in the long run. Although, that would take a long while of training.

Wan Li was reading his book as usual and writing stuff to it. Alex could see that the time was normal around him once more. So, he decided to leave for now.

He walked out and thought of something. 'Do I go to the auction house? Or do I go to the library to learn more?' he thought.

He went to Ma Rong's room to see if she would be willing to visit the library with him, but she told him that she was busy and could only visit the library tomorrow.

So, he decided to skip the library for today. He would now go to the auction house to sell his new pills. He walked down the 17 flight of stairs and got out of the hotel.

As soon as he walked out onto the street, he was bombarded with a ton of information and he could keep a handle on the focus mode anymore.