

Alchemy 271

Chapter 271: A Group of Girls

Large amounts of slow information started bombarding his brain. Thankfully, he had the spiritual sea, so he could handle this amount of information.

The quantity of information alone broke through the focus mode he thought was under control. Out in the streets, he had to practice it again.

It took him only a few minutes now, but he managed to tone down his sense. The first thing he got a handle on was Time. Once that was under his control, the others would slowly come down as well.

The next two were the visual sense and the auditory sense. Being able to see and hear less was a blessing for him right now.

He then took care of the feelings, taste, and smell. After that, he was back to being a regular human once again.

Well, that was a lie. Even after ignoring all the senses, there was still information that would skip to him from time to time. Like the time suddenly slowing down, or sense of his skin suddenly feeling very hot under the sun.

His cousin had told him it would take a while, and it looked like it was certainly going to take that long.

Finally, once the focus mode was under control, Alex walked onto the street. The first thing he did was get a map of the city. It only cost him a few silver coins, and it told him the list of all the major buildings in the city.

He scoured through the map and saw exactly where the auction house was. The auction house he was looking for was on the southern side of the town, a few hundred meters outside of the royal palace's gate.

'That's a little far away,' he thought but still decided to go. It took him around the same time to go to as it did the coliseum. Due to the Royal palace being at the center of the city, he had to take a roundabout path.

Along the way, he practiced controlling his focus mode a bit more. He was still suffering from lapses of control but was getting good overall.

As he was walking through the city, he had another one of such lapses. Time suddenly slowed down, and he saw everything way too clearly down to a minute level.

A group of girls, clearly gathered around the most pretty one were walking down the road. The most pretty girl was wearing a light blue robe that was thin around her snow-white arm.

She had a skinny yet tall body and her short face made her look very cute. The girls around her were quite pretty too, but none could compare to her beauty.

However, that was not what Alex noticed the most. The thing he noticed was actually way behind the group of girls. There was a dark shadow that would flash by from time to time, constantly following the girls.

'A stalker?' Alex thought in surprise. The person was very fast, to the point that Alex couldn't even see them properly, yet they were clearly stalking the group of girls.

Alex felt that he needed to let the girls know. However, the person stalking was clearly very strong, so he couldn't directly let them know, or the stalker might decide to take revenge on him.

So, Alex took out the map from before and walked up to the group of girls.

"Excuse me, can you help me find a place," he said.

The girls seemed to want to immediately want to send him away, but the main girl spoke up first. "What is it, little brother? Where do you want to go?" she said.

"Can you tell me where this place is?" he asked while randomly pointing to a place on the map.

"Oh that is..." the girl properly explained the direction to the location Alex had pointed to.

"Ah thank you," Alex said and in the same sentence, but with a lower voice he whispered, "I just wanted to let you know that you have someone in black following you guys from behind, be careful," he said and immediately walked away.

The other girls looked around in confusion trying to see who would dare follow them, but the girl in blue simply stared at Alex's leaving figure with a hint of surprise in her eyes.

A black figure suddenly dashed up next to the girl. The one who had just arrived was actually an older lady in her late 20s, who was wearing the signature black robe of the Royal Fu academy.

"Your highness, are you alright? I saw that boy say something to you," the new arriver said.

"Yeah, Fumi, I am alright. It's... just that boy just now actually told me that you were following me. How did he manage to see you?" the girl asked.

"A boy... saw me? That is impossible your highness. I am one of the fastest guards among your guards. The young boy could not have seen me," the woman named Fumi said.

"I don't think he saw you exactly, but just your silhouette, but that too was quite surprising. Do you know who that boy is?" the girl asked.

"Hmm... he must be quite good if he managed to do that. As for who he is, I do not know your highness. The competition has a lot of different people come to the city. He is probably one of them. Do you want me to check on him?" the woman named Fumi said.

"It's alright. Forget about it. You can go back now," the girl said. The guard immediately disappeared and the girl went back to mingling with the other girls and going around the city.

Alex had no idea what had just happened as he had finally reached the place he wanted to come to. He looked around the place and was surprised just how many auction houses there were, but for various reasons, this was the one he had chosen.

He looked up at the giant nameplate on the front of the auction house that said, "Pink Cloud Auction House."

Chapter 272: Han Jing

The Pink Cloud Auction House was the main headquarters of the auction house of the same name back in Scarlet city. He was used to doing business with them, so he naturally came here as well.

He walked up to the auction house and was stopped at the gate.

"I'm sorry customer, the auction is already ongoing, we can not let you enter right now," a lady in front of the gate said.

"An auction is going on already? But it's only Monday. Don't you have auctions only on Saturday?" Alex asked.

"Normally yes. But due to the annual competition and the high number of people in the capital, the auction house performs an auction every single day for this week," the lady said.

"I see. Well, I am not here for some auctions though. I am here to sell some items of my own. Am I not allowed to do that?" Alex asked.

"Ah, of course, you are. Please come with me," the lady immediately took Alex with her inside the auction house. The interior of the auction house was painted pink as per its name and was uncannily the same as the one in Scarlet city.

'Did they purposefully made the auction house to be the same everywhere around?' Alex wondered.

"Please sit here, I will call someone," the lady left him in a familiar yet completely new room and went to get someone.

A middle-aged man with a short, gray stubble on his face walked in. He was a little surprised to see Alex's young face but refrained from making any hasty judgment.

"This one is called Han Jing, may I know what I can call fellow Daoist?" Han Jing asked.

Alex was about to give his name but refrained from it. Instead, he said, "You may refer to me as the White wolf."

"May I ask what fellow Daoist is here to sell?" the person asked.

Alex reached into his bag and brought out a few pill bottles that in total contained 27 pills. These were the same 3 types of pills he had made yesterday.

The group consisted of a Fan Converting pill, an Energy Negating Pill, and a Rubber Body pill. Alex explained what pills he had and what they did in brief just in case the man didn't know about it.

Han Jing however was used to such pills and was made to remember them all. Still, he didn't interrupt Alex during his explanation and simply nodded.

"I hope you don't mind if I check the pills, fellow Daoist," Han Jing said.

"Sure, go ahead," Alex said.

Han Jing brought out a pill tester and started testing the pills.

42%, 48%, 51%, 49%, 45%, 43%, 50%, ...47%, 44%, 46%, 55%

After each pill he tested, Han Jing's eyes went wider and wider, showing no signs of returning back to normal. He couldn't believe that he was handling so many pills with above 40% harmony.

There were even 5 pills with over 50% harmony, meaning they were all in the Heaven grade. This was a really high-profile customer and had he known this, he would've simply let Yu Fan take care of it like she always did.

"F-Fellow Daoist, did you make all of these pills?" Han Jing asked.

Normally, Alex would simply say yes. However, he now knew better than to trust just about anyone with such information, so he instead said, "Of course not. These pills were made by my master. She asked me to come to sell them to the auction house."

"I-I see. Do you have any request or demand as to how we should sell these pills?" Han Jing asked.

"Hmm... Master didn't say anything so I will leave it to Mr. Han to do with it what he likes," Alex said.

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity. Let me prepare the contract," Han Jing said and immediately prepared a contract that said that the auction house was in possession of 27 pills with their individual name and harmony listed out. The contract said that the auction house would sell the pills by tomorrow and return 90% of the earnings back to 'White Wolf'.

Both Alex and Han jing signed on it, and Alex walked out with the contract.

Han Jing was very polite even until he reached the door and saw Alex out. As soon as Alex walked out, however, he immediately started jumping up and down.

"Woohoo, I did it," he screamed.

The ladies near the gate were curious and asked, "What happened brother Han? Why are you so excited?"

Han Jing immediately told them about the items he had acquired which brought a round of gasps from the surrounding females.

"How come someone is selling so many pills at once, of such high quality too? Was that person someone the Royal Alchemist sent?" A girl asked.

"Stop talking nonsense. Those pills are trash for the Royal Alchemist. Must be some elder from one of the sects in the capital right now," Another girl said.

"Still, I wonder how they made so many pills. It can't be they made it for the simple purpose of auctioning it right?"

"No way, that would be stupid. You could get much more money from taking commissions on a daily basis," another girl said.

"Alright guys, enough talking. I am going to register these pills for tomorrow's auction, and also I want to see Yu Fan's face when she sees that I got such a good item today," Han Jing said.

"Ah, brother Han, you better not. Sister Yu is used to getting way better items. You will only end up embarrassing yourself," the girls said.

Han Jing got a little depressed when he heard that but quickly shook his head and walked in. He needed to quickly register the pills for the auction taking place tomorrow.

Alex didn't know what to do anymore for the day. So, he decided to just not do anything else for the day today and go back to the hotel to better adjust to the new focus mode and hopefully, master it.

Chapter 273: Not Hungry

Alex used the rest of the day to try and get a better grasp of the new enhanced Focus Mode. In a place with not as much information being sent to his mind, he could easily get used to it.

But he knew that was wrong, so he walked up to the window and looked at the streets down below and took in the information.

Slowly, over the course of the, he managed to finally get used to it. Now if he went down to the streets, he would still be bombarded with the same amount of information, but his mind was capable of ignoring all other information except for the relevant ones.

He was still getting the same amounts of information, he was only processing it differently.

As such, he could now have the Focus mode turned on 24/7 and not worry about it. As a result, his overall senses had gotten a lot more acute.

Alex went back into the hotel and kept on practicing it more until he and Wan Li were called for the meeting in Ma Rong's room once more.

"Good job guys. You really did great in today's competition as well. If we can keep this up for a few more matches, we will definitely enter the 1st grade," Ma Rong said, leading to a bunch of people clapping.

"You three did a great job today, so for tomorrow's competition, you guys can rest if you want to. You can take part in Wednesday's competition for the Learning theme," Ma Rong said.

"Sect Leader, I am not really that good at learning immediately so I think I will take part in tomorrow's match. I can make a really strong pill for sure," Wan Li said from the side.

"Hmm, sure. So, Meimei and Fanfan will skip tomorrow to take part in Wednesday's competition," Ma Rong said.

Both the girls nodded in agreement.

"Alright, that settles it then. For tomorrow's competition, we will have Wan Li, Yu Ming and one of you guys take place. Anyone of you wants to?" Ma Rong asked. A few raised their hands, and Ma Rong chose a girl who was 9th in the Alchemy Achievement ranking in the sect.

"We are 146 points away, so I need the rest of you to join random competitions tomorrow. Even if you don't get in the top 10, getting a few points here and there will be a lot of help," Ma Rong said.

Everyone nodded, and then they were dismissed.

Alex had seen Tiger sect's point gathering system today. They had a lot of disciples that took part in every competition and got points here and there.

Hong Wu Sect's disciples weren't that broadly gifted, so they couldn't take part in every competition they came across. Still, Ma Rong seemed to be going for that approach just in case.

'If the disciples can take part in a few non-alchemy competitions and take the load off our back, that would be a lot of help,' Alex thought.

Everyone returned back to their own room and started cultivating.

Alex too went back to his room and decided to log out. He opened his eyes and instinctively reached for the helmet, but stopped when he realized his arms couldn't come to his head.

'Oh yeah, capsule,' he thought and instead pushed open the lid on top. The door opened and Alex finally walked out.

He looked at the time and realized that it was 7 pm. It had been about 7 hours since he had eaten anything, and yet he was nowhere near hungry.

'Damn, this is really good. I can't feel like I lost energy while in the game at all,' he thought. Normally, when he got out of the game, he would either feel hungry or would need to go to the bathroom. But now, he could feel neither.

This was a truly advanced technology that he didn't dare try to understand.

Alex went to the bathroom to freshen up a bit and then went to the kitchen. Hannah was already there with little food on her plate.

"Get yourself some food," she said and continued eating.

Alex went ahead and got himself a load of food but realized that he wasn't feeling hungry at all. 'Is this the aftereffect of the capsule usage?' he wondered and served himself very little.

It took him no time to finish eating the food, but not before Hannah was done with hers. They washed the dishes together and Alex finally returned back to the game.

He went back to the capsule and opened the lid before getting back into it. He laid inside and closed his eyes and before he knew it, he was logged back in.

Logging in this time was very smooth compared to the last two. While he was bombarded with the different enhanced senses, he was already used to them and could thus handle himself better.

He looked around and saw that Wan Li was already focused back on his books. Alex thought about asking for something to read but decided against it. Using other people's research to learn didn't seem like a good idea on a topic as experimental as this.

Who knew, maybe he could come up with different answers, and reading Wan Li's notes would only stop him from taking a different approach with his experiments.

Instead, he decided to simply cultivate and prepare for tomorrow's competition. Tomorrow was the Perfect themed competition. Perhaps the most important one of all.

So, he decided to waste no time. He called out Pearl and kept him in his robes. With a single word, Pearl started cultivating and numerous cuts appeared along Alex's body.

It hurt a lot more than yesterday. 'Is it because the cuts are more severe or because of my new senses?' Alex wondered, but couldn't come up with an answer.

He then took out the Spirit Cleansing Lily. It hadn't worked the last few times, but he wasn't going to give up now. As such, he held the flower and slowly started cultivating.

And before he knew it, he was deep asleep.

Chapter 274: Third Day

Alex woke up early in the morning. As soon as he was even a little awake, the several painful cuts along his body woke him up immediately. He was jolted awake and he asked Pearl to stop cultivating.

Pearl let out a small 'meow' and got up from his cultivation. By now, pearl must've been very strong as well. He checked Pearl's status and saw that as expected, he was now in Bone Tempering 9th realm in cultivation.

Pearl was one step away from reaching the Organ Tempering realm as well.

'Does that mean my body cultivation is at Bone Tempering 9th realm as well?' Alex wondered. He seriously thought of going to check it at someplace in the capital today, but then remembered that he had to go to the library with his master today.

That was much more important as there were a lot of things he needed to check in the library.

He put Pearl back into the tattoo and looked at the time. It was 6:15 am. He then looked at his hands again and saw that the Spirit Cleansing Lily was still in his hands.

'Why can I not use it anymore?' he wondered. This was the third time that he had cultivated with a Spirit Cleansing lily and it hadn't worked at all.

He didn't know what was happening, so he just sighed and put the lily back into his storage bag, and logged out.

He got out from the capsule and realized once more that he was neither hungry nor was he in need of the bathroom.

'Ah, this capsule is seriously going to mess with my physiology,' he thought. He still went to the bathroom to freshen up and forced himself to eat a few pieces of bread for breakfast.

After that, he returned back to his game 15 minutes later. He woke up back on his bed and got up. He walked over to Wan Li who was focused on his book and told him it was time to leave.

As expected, someone came to knock on the door to let them know just that.

Alex smiled towards Wan Li and they both walked out of the room. After a few minutes, everyone was ready and they went down the staircase.

Along the way, they met the group of Spirit Song sect, who were also going down the stair.

"You guys in a hurry to go somewhere? To lose maybe?" the fatty Xu said as he showed an annoying smile towards Ma Rong.

Ma Rong didn't have any funny or clever comeback to the fatty's words and so she simply said, "Just watch us." The fatty didn't seem to like the serious answer and scoffed towards her but said nothing else.

There was rivalry between the two groups, not animosity, and he wanted to keep it that way.

The two sects were together on their way to the coliseum, and along the way, one of the Spring Song disciples came up to Wan Li and tried to strike up a conversation.

Alex saw the disciple and saw that he was the second place holder for yesterday's speed pill-making competition. 'If I remember correctly, his name was Han Long I believe,' Alex thought.

Han Long tried to talk with Wan Li, trying to ask him if he was going to participate today and if so what pill he was going to make today.

Wan Li was naturally very shy and thus didn't answer any questions at all, which the boy thought was rude. He didn't realize that Wan Li was simply like this and he wasn't trying to intentionally be rude towards him.

He then moved on to Zhou Mei and tried to strike up a conversation, but she was naturally coded to everyone aside from the elders, Wan Li, and Fan Ruogang.

Seeing that they weren't responding, Han Long returned back to his group.

"Hey, why didn't he try to talk with me? Rude. Does he not know that I am the third-best in the sect?" Fan Ruogang said acting as if she was insulted.

Everyone in the group laughed a little, including Ma Rong. "You can show them how good you are tomorrow, Fanfan," Ma Rong said.

"Yes, Sect Leader," Fan Ruogang said and was back to her cheery self.

Soon, they reached the coliseum and entered it. As a sect, they could directly skip the queue to enter and could go to the arena to look at today's competitions.

The host, Fu Zhen was there once more to tell them about today's theme, Perfection. He let them know the criteria based on what the results would be set and what being perfect meant in general.

In simple terms, the higher the grade of the produced product was, the better. He then showed a list of competitions for today.

As expected, Alchemy's competition was the Highest Harmony pill making. Ma Rong made a few more people take up different other competitions. While she didn't expect much from them, she still hoped to get a few stray points here and there.

However, her hope for today's competition was still with Alex and Wan Li.

"Alright, let's go register you lot," she said and took the disciples that had taken part in some of the competition, while the rest of them went to their predetermined seating area.

Along the way, he was the Tiger sect too, but the only one he knew from that group was Meng Yun, and she was too far away to strike up a conversation.

Once Wan Li's turn was done, he walked forward to the metal ball and picked it up before infusing some Qi into it.

They made the participants do it every day to keep track of their turns, as well as to see if there were some random jumps in cultivation which would mean that someone was probably doing something illegal.

Alex told her his name and that he was going to take part in the alchemy competition at 10 o'clock. Once everyone was registered, the group returned back to the seating area.

Chapter 275: Artifacts Grading

The first set of competitions was for Artifact making, poison making, and dancing.

Alex watched from the seating area as the group of participants put in metals and different materials inside the giant cauldron and started melting them.

However, unlike last time, they didn't put all the ingredients in and instead just the bare minimum of them. Instead, once the cauldron had melted what they had put in, the participants took out the molten object and started beating them with giant hammers as they were cooling.

From time to time, they would put in other ingredients and hammer it away. Once the new object was cooled, they would put it back in the cauldron and melt it once more.

Then, they would take it out and start beating it with a hammer once more. As such, through a back and forth method, they used up all the materials they owned and made the perfect artifact they could.

Everyone started giving their resulting product to the host, and Alex realized it would take them some time to test out the effectiveness.

So, he diverted his attention to the poison-making.

Poison making was very simple to grade. All the host had to do was check the effectiveness of the poisons by mixing them with a predetermined solution and the winner would be easily determined.

Within a few minutes, the result was up. The winner was a disciple from a sect called the Heaven Poisoning sect, beating another participant from the Dark Forest sect by a small margin.

Royal Fu academy wasn't even in the top 5 this time around, which was surprising. Alex then looked towards the Dancing competition, however, that was over already.

It was the first one to have been completed and he had missed it. So, he went back to looking at the artifact competition.

The way to determine whether an artifact was good or not was a little different from grading a pill or formation or poison.

Pill grades were based on the harmony of said pill, poison on the effectiveness of the poison, and formation on the efficiency of the formation.

They all could have had different ranks, but that was what the grades were based on.

For artifacts, however, the things were rather arbitrary. An artifact didn't have a specific grading system and instead lied at the whims of its maker.

Still, they had to follow some sort of sense because the rest of the world had the ability to set its grade as well.

The creators mostly set the grade based on what the artifacts could do and how well they could do it.

For example, a simple sword made using the True rank recipe. No matter how well it could be made, would still only remain a normal sword.

As such, it had anything more than a mortal grade was hard to justify. Unless it could somehow suddenly cut through metals like paper, it would always have a mortal grade.

In comparison, a pill cauldron made using the finest of golden jade, one that could transfer heat very well could be an Earth-grade artifact without a problem. If it was very well made, it could also be a heaven-grade artifact.

As such, the grade was there to just show the value of the artifact based on its purpose.

The rankings for the artifacts currently were being checked as exactly that. The artifacts were being based on their usefulness.

A weapon would be graded based on how strong it was, an armor was based on how much damage it could stop, a necklace was based on what effects it had, a storage bag was based on how much storage it had, and so on.

Alex simply watched the host of the artifact competition do a bunch of testing with the different artifacts, and in the end come up with the rankings.

The third place was someone from the Royal Fu Academy, the second place was from the Southern Sanctuary sect, and the first place was from the Tranquil Union sect.

The next set of competitions were Formation and Music.

The formations were simple. Whoever could set up the highest efficiency formation would win. As for music, whoever could keep up the overall melody would win.

Alex watched the different disciples take part in the competitions. The formations required quite a lot of space so the competition holders only held a single other competition concurrently.

Alex watched Luo Mei's sister, Luo Xing take part in the formation competition and watched it as he wondered how she would do.

At the same time, he also saw Meng Yun taking part in the music competition.

While the formation competition participants started laying down the formation flags carefully, the music group started playing their instruments.

Meng Yun didn't have to rush through her piece like last time, so she played it very slowly. The green line on top of her head never dropped below 40%, while it went to over 50% quite a lot.

The other participants were playing their piece quite well as well. A lot of them were around Meng Yun's level, some even higher.

Alex switched his attention to Luo Xing and saw that she had finished preparing her flags. After that, she placed a few spirit stones around the area and suddenly closed her eyes to do something.

At once, the formation came to life and a purple barrier appeared around Luo Xing. The other disciples finished theirs as well, and the host decided the rankings.

Surprisingly, Luo Xing got second place in the formation competition.

On Meng Yun's side, they were finished as well. Everyone's information on the piece they performed was clearly floating on top of them.

Meng Yun was good, but she only managed to get 3rd place with an average melody of 46%. The second place got an average melody of 47%, and the winner got an average melody of 49%.

None of them managed to reach Heaven grade, but reaching what they did was already was amazing. After that, the group left the arena to make room for the next set of competitions.

Chapter 276: Beginning of the third Competition

It was time for the next set of competitions.

Alex leaned next to Ma Rong and asked, "Master, how well should I do in the next competition?"

Ma Rong made a weird face and said, "What do you mean how well? You should do your best."

"But that would mean using Spiritual sense. You told me not to," he whispered.

"Hmm... I did say that. But... you will be so far away from the audience, and there is no one in the competition staff that can use Spiritual sense, so you will be fine," Ma Rong said.

"How do you know that master?" he asked.

"You still don't understand how lucrative and rare spiritual sense really is. If any one of those people had spiritual sense, they wouldn't be working as a staff. So, just feel free to use it in the arena. As long as you keep it to a moderate amount, you should be fine," Ma Rong said.

Then, Alex, Wan Li, and the girl in the 9th ranking stood up and walked to the gate below.

"You guys have your ingredients ready?" Ma Rong asked.

""Yes"" they all replied.

"Good. What pills are you making?" she asked.

"I am thinking of making the Face Changing Pill. I am used to making those and I think I will be good at it," the girl said.

"I have had the most success with a Hundred Poison Antidote, so I think I will make that pill, Sect leader," Wan Li said.

"As for me, I will make a Bronze Tiger Rage. That is the one I had the most success with yet," Alex said as he named a pill with Metal energy as the resulting energy.

"Very well. Since you guys are confident, I won't say anything else. Good Luck," she said. They reached the place with the barrier and one by one, the participants started to leave for the competition.

Alex walked in as well and felt the barrier touch into his Qi and tried to check him. After knowing that he was a participant, it let him be.

Along with Wan Li and the girl, Alex reached the location of the competition. The arena was quite big, even bigger than the one from yesterday.

'Are there more disciples taking part today?' Alex wondered and looked around. Surprisingly, there were a lot of familiar faces.

There was Han Long and his two fellow sect disciples that Alex had seen during the last 2 competitions. There were a few other disciples that were either with him during the last ingredient finding test, or one that he saw in yesterday's Fastest pill-making competition.

Aside from them, there was also the 4th place winner of yesterday's competition, the guy from the Royal Fu sect.

And finally, with an air of Elegance, sitting in front of one of the fire pits was perhaps the best alchemist amongst the competitors here today. He was Huang Fu, the Royal Alchemist's disciple.

Alex hadn't seen him properly the first time as he had only heard the person's name and caught a glimpse of him while he was leaving the arena.

Today, he got to see him very well. Huang Fu was a moderately tall man that seemed to be not even 20 years old. He had a slim face with a pointed nose and sharp eyes.

Huang Fu seemed to notice Alex's eyes and turned towards him before giving a small nod in greeting. Alex reciprocated with a nod as well.

Everyone else was randomly seated around the place. No two sect disciples were allowed to sit with each other.

A new female host walked up this time and stood on top of a small podium and started talking.

"Welcome everyone, to the Best Pill-making competition. I hope you guys are doing well and are well prepared. You guys probably went through this already but please take these storage bags and keep your required ingredients in there. Everything else, please put it in the box," the female host said.

A group of staff members walked forward handing everyone a box and storage bag. Alex took them both and stored everything aside from the required ingredients into the box.

He locked the box with his Qi and handed it to the staff. He looked at the ingredients in the storage bag. He had kept two sets of ingredients just in case.

'Ah, hopefully, the double pills won't happen this time,' he hoped. Even if the pill splitting Qi did appear, he was sure that he could reach at least 42% harmony level.

However, that wasn't enough to win the competition. The best of the best were gathered here. Even if they couldn't reach Heaven grade, which he wasn't sure about, they would definitely make better pills than 42% harmony.

So, he was prepared just a bit. Now, all he could do was wish he didn't need to.

The host saw that the storage bag situation was taken care of, so she started to speak again.

"As every one of you knows, this is the competition where you rank based on the best pill you can make. So you will be given an hour exactly to make the pill."

"The competition will rank you based on the best pill you make, so you are allowed to make multiple ones. In fact, we urge you to make multiple pills," the host said.

All the participants seem to have expected that and were ready with the extra ingredients just like Alex.

"There are also rules that you will have to follow. If you are unable to follow them, you will be disqualified."

"If you don't have a pill by the end of the hour, you will be disqualified. If your cauldron explodes, you will be disqualified. If you disrupt others intentionally, you will be disqualified."

"If you are found guilty of having cheated during any of the parts in the competition, you are disqualified. Those are the rules, everything else, you are free to do what you like. Good luck."

Chapter 277: First batch of Pills

The host got off the podium and waited for everyone to prepare. Alex and the other few participants all brought out their cauldron at the same time and placed it on top of the fire.

As they waited for the cauldron to heat up, the host started the competition. A massive timer floating in a blue panel in the sky started counting down.

No one rushed, however. This was a competition that selected winners based on the best. So, everyone would be the most patient self of themselves they could ever be.

Alex took in long, deep breaths while waiting for the competition to start. He had a lot better sense than before and he looked at the timer in the sky to see if his timing was accurate.

After getting the capsule and gaining the permanent Focus Mode, he had managed to control everything, including the slowed downtime.

However, unlike the other senses, Time was never something that bombarded him with the information. So, it was impossible to say if he was back to normal or if it was just a little off still.

So, he decided to check it before he started making the pills as time was a really important factor in making pills.

For the first 10 or so minutes, everyone waited for their cauldron to fully heat up normally. After that, they started to put in ingredients one by one.

Wan Li put in his, so did Han Long and so did Huang Fu. Alex was among the last of the people to finally start making the pills.

Alex's ingredients had a total of 13 components to them and he needed to make sure every single one of them was in the perfect condition it could be.

So, he took the first ingredient and placed it inside the cauldron. However, unlike everyone else, he immediately closed the cauldron.

The staff members and the host were a little surprised at a participant doing something so bizarre but said nothing.

Alex followed the recipe and waited for the first ingredient to turn into powder. Once it was powder and the energy had escaped into the cauldron, he quickly took off the lid and put in the 2nd ingredient.

He wasn't faster than the other participants, nor was he slower. He was about the same speed as everyone else, and that was a little comforting for him.

He had always wondered if he was slower than the other people at making pills, and it seemed he was not.

Once the sect ingredient's energy mixed with the first one and created a new energy, he put in the third ingredient.

Seeing him close the lid once again, the staff members got a little confused once again.

"Senior, do you think he is cheating?" one of the staff members asked.

"I don't think so. There doesn't seem to be a reason as to why he is doing that. Maybe it's a technique?" the host said.

The other staff member got quiet after that as there didn't seem to be a problem anymore. So, they just waited for the different participants to finish.

Few more minutes passed and the participants got to the end of their pill-making process. The staff hurried up and placed a load of pill testers in front of the group.

Alex was on the last leg of the pill-making as well. He put in the final ingredient and the energy of the final ingredient escapes from the burning ingredient and mixed with the already dense ingredient inside the cauldron.

Once those two energies reacted with each other, the final resulting energy of the pill became metal energy, just what Alex wanted.

Alex then proceeded to move the powder around a little more before it was time to form the pills. He used Elemental Guidance to move the energy around and force it towards the power to make it stick in there.

However, even though it was Metal energy, he couldn't control the energy perfectly, and more than half of the energy escaped back into the open air in the cauldron.

However, that alone was very good. Alex then started to form the powder into a pill.

However, just then the thing he didn't want the most to happen, happened. Suddenly, a stream of Qi moved around his whole body and escaped out of his palms before moving into the cauldron.

He wanted to curse right now, but disturbing the other disciples would get him disqualified, so he simply endured it.

However, on the inside, he had pretty much given up on the pill becoming any good now. Still, he wasn't going to not perform his best now.

The stream of Qi slowly go into his forming pill and separated it into two. After that, the two vortexes he was waiting for appeared and started sucking in the energy from the environment.

Slowly the two pills started forming.

Suddenly, out of the corner of his eyes, he saw two people simultaneously get up and walk to the lined-up pill testers at the front.

Alex was a little surprised and he kept his eyes on them while his two pills were forming. The two contestants put their pills into the pill testers.

He watched the two pill testers slowly grow fog outside of it that reached above 30% in harmony. Soon, one of the pill testers stopped at 34%, while the other one stopped at 38%.

The one with the 34% got a little sad, while the other guy was happy. However, they were both going to try it once again, so they returned back to their place and started preparing.

Soon, more and more people started standing up from their seats to test their pills. Some were good, some were bad. However, both the sad and happy people went back to their places to make the pills once more.

Alex looked away from the people and looked down on his own pills. His two pills were finally prepared. So, he took off the lid and put his hands in to take out the pills.

Chapter 278: Next Batch

"Woah, the participants are quite good this time around, aren't they?" one of the staff members said.

"Yeah, look at that fellow, his pills just showed 42% harmony. Wow, is that the highest yet?" the other staff members asked.

"No, the highest one belongs to that one guy in green. His pill had a 43% harmony," another one of the staff said.

"Let's wait for our Huang to do his best. He will probably win this competition," they said.

"Oh look, here he comes."

Huang Fu stood up from his spot and walked up. Alex too stood up, only 1 step behind. His pills hadn't shown the harmony level he had desired, so he had taken the best of the two and left the other one inside. He would take care of it later.

Huang Fu walked up and put his pill inside the tester. By the time Alex reached his, the pill tester slowly fogged up and started going up.

Alex put his pill inside the tester too to show his harmony level. He, just as everyone around right now, looked at Huang Fu's pill tester rise up.

Soon it crossed 30% and kept ongoing. Alex's own pill tester was above 20%, but he didn't care about it as he already knew the result.

Huang Fu's harmony level kept on increasing and increasing until it stopped right before it reached Heaven grade. His pill's harmony was 49%.

Sounds of gasps appeared from everywhere as people realized how great his pill was. Alex turned around and looked at his own 43% pill and shook his head.

'If the pill splitting Qi appears once more, I'm as good as having lost the competition,' he thought. He took his pill and went back to his area.

The other pill inside the cauldron was at 42% harmony. So in total, he had lost about 15% of the energy either due to the ingredients being bad, him making a mistake, or the energy just escaping from the cauldron.

He couldn't do anything else, so he simply just crushed the extra pill inside the cauldron and removed all the powders outside.

And then, he was ready for another batch of ingredients. He looked at the time and realized that he still had a little over half an hour to make his pill.

So, he could take his time. He looked around and saw that a few of the participants had beads of sweat on their faces.

'Huh? I remember master saying that normal people can't make pills for too long, but is it really this bad? They are only done with a single pill though,' Alex thought.

He looked around and saw that it was only a few of the participants. The good ones weren't really tired and could probably go on for a few more rounds.

However, unlike Alex, they couldn't last for a whole day of pill-making. 'That's because of how robust my qi is right?' he thought.

Finally, he stopped distracting himself and put in the first ingredient once again. He slowly moved it around the cauldron. He wasn't in a hurry, so he followed the recipe as well as he could.

Once the ingredient was down to powder and all the energy had escaped from it, Alex put in the second ingredient.

The lid was still on the cauldron, but by now the staff members had pretty much ignored it. They were still talking in low voice about how the Royal Alchemist's direct disciple had nearly made a heaven rank pill.

Alex continued making his pill but was definitely taking his time. He looked up at the clock from time to time and by the time he put in the 5th ingredient, only 15 minutes were remaining.

He continued making the pill and put in ingredients every minute or so as per the recipe's instruction. After 10 or so minutes, he finally finished putting in all the ingredients.

The metal energy was now fully covering the inside of the cauldron. Just at this time, a contestant stood up and went to get her pills tested.

Alex continued his task while keeping an eye on the contestant's harmony. Unfortunately, the contestant got 41%. She had lost.

A few more contestants started standing, while Alex decided to focus back on his pill-making. He used Elemental guidance to force the energy to flow into the powder to make the energy in it more concentrated. He needed as high a harmony level as possible.

Thanks to the resulting energy being Metal in nature, controlling it wasn't as hard as with the other energies.

Finally, it was time to form the pill. He slowly got the powder together and started forming the pill. He kept on using Elemental guidance to help the energy go into the powder, but it didn't do as well as he could have hoped for it.

Suddenly, he heard gasps throughout the surrounding, most of it coming from the staff members. He wondered if Huang Fu did something good again, but he wasn't there this time.

Instead, he saw a familiar green-robed figure standing in front of the pill tester. Alex saw that Han Long was there too with his dropped jaw.

Alex noticed that he had a 47% harmony pill, yet he was flabbergasted by Wan Li's performance.

Alex turned his attention back to Wan Li and saw that the fog in the pill tester had reached unusually high. He slowly looked at the number and was surprised himself too at how great the harmony was.

The pill he made had 49% harmony. That was the same as the harmony level of Huang Fu.

Most of the contestants stood up and went to check their pill's harmony level, and only 2 were remaining. One was Alex and the other was Huang Fu.

With 1 minute left on the clock, Huang Fu stood up from his seat and took the pill out of the cauldron before walking up front to the pill tester.

It was time for him to check.

Chapter 279: Huang Fu's Pill Harmony

Alex finally finished making the pill.

Fortunately, He didn't involuntarily release the Pill Splitting Qi and managed to make a single pill. With 30 seconds left on the clock, he took the finally prepared pill out of the cauldron and walked to the front.

He stood up and walked behind Huang Fu to register his new pill.

Many other participants were just done checking their pills yet none of them had done better than Huang Fu or Wan Li with their 49%. That was still the best harmony in this competition.

However, Huang Fu had another pill, and people were expecting more from him the second time around.

The various participants silently waited for him to put in his pill. Huang Fu didn't care about the onlookers and walked up to the pill testers before putting in his pill.

As soon as the pill touched the base of the pill tester, fog started rising up the side of the tester. It slowly rose and crossed 10%, however, it wasn't stopping right now.

It showed no signs of slowing down even as it reached 20%. Alex came over to watch just at that time and watched the pill tester work instead of putting in his own.

The fog slowly rose past 25% and reached 30%. However, there was still some distance for the fog to move up. 31, 32, 33%. The speed of the fog slowed down a little, but not a lot.

It was still going up at an acceptable rate. Soon it crossed 40%, and people got more attentive. They doubted that the pill would stop in the early 40s, but you never knew.

41, 42... 45%. The fog still rose and was now reaching the high ranking harmony level. Up until now, the third place was held by Han Long, who had made a pill with 48% harmony.

While the second and first place was shared by Wan Li and Huang Fu with 49%. However, that would soon change.

46%, 47%, 48%... 49%. The pill's harmony level reached the same level as the one with the highest rank right now.

However, there was something else about the number 49%. This was the highest harmony one's pill could have while it was in the Earth grade. A single percentage higher, and the pill would be in Heaven grade.

50%

Everyone gasped when they saw Huang Fu's pill cross the threshold and jump into the Heaven grade category. Han Long sighed when he saw that. He was already sad about making a pill that was 1% away from the winning rank, but now it was 2% away.

Wan Li felt sad too. He was the winner of the competition along with Huang Fu, but now, he jumped one step ahead, leaving him behind in 2nd place.

However, Huang Fu's pill wasn't done yet. Just as everyone was surprised about seeing the pill in the Heaven grade, the pill tester had the fog rise a single percentage more.

51%

The different viewers whether they be the other participants, staff or the audience realized, the pill wasn't done yet. There was more harmony that the pill had to show still.

52%

This brought out more reactions from the crowd. Huang Fu had 3% higher harmony than the person in the 2nd rank. While the number seemed small, it was a very hard number to achieve.

However, that wasn't the end.

53%

Finally, the fog stopped moving and stayed still. The final harmony of Huang Fu's pill was 53%. He was a clear-cut winner of the competition now.

Huang Fu smiled after seeing the result and went ahead to grab his pill. At the same time, Alex moved forward as well, but he was going to put in his pill.

He put in the Bronze Tiger's Rage and watched the fog slowly build up around the pill tester. His first pill was 43% in harmony level due to it being one of the double pills, so, most people had ended up ignoring him.

The only person who was watching Alex's pill tester were the staffs who were obligated to do so, Wan Li who wanted to see how his fellow disciple was doing, the girl from his sect and Alex himself.

Everyone else already believed that the winner of the competition was revealed and had gone to congratulate Huang Fu.

Slowly the fog build-up reached 10% and climbed up at a high speed. In front of the onlookers' eyes, it climbed up to 20%.

In the audience, all the Hong Wu sect members and some of the Tiger sect members were looking at Alex's pill tester's numbers go up.

Ma Rong especially, who knew just how good Alex was, was looking at his pills with great attention. The others had praised her for raising a good disciple when he showed a pill with 43% harmony when he hadn't been in the sect for long, however, he had been disappointed.

Now that it was his second pill, she expected greater results.

The pill tester soon reached 30% mark but showed no sign of slowing down. It caught the attention of a few more people, but wasn't enough to cause a commotion yet.

32%, 34%, 36%.

Alex watched as the harmony level soon reached 40% right in front of everyone. However, it still wasn't showing any sign of slowing down.

41%, 42%, 43%.

The harmony level gradually got higher and crossed his previous pill's 43% to reach 44%. The people from his sect commended him for doing better than last time, however, Ma Rong expected more and wanted more.

So, as she watched, the harmony level reached 45%.

It started to catch the attention of more people as it went up one more level and reached 46%.? People were now starting to curiously watch his pill.

47%

The fog around the pill tester went up once more and people started looking with wide eyes. Han Long's eyes were especially wide as he wished for the pill tester to stop raising.

But things rarely happened as one wanted. And so, the Harmony level increased one more step and reached 48%.

Chapter 280: Alex's Pill Harmony

Han Long felt a load of shock when he saw that the person he wasn't expecting suddenly reached the same harmony level as him.

He looked at Alex, who also looked back at him and smiled.

It was then Han Long realized something was wrong.

49%

The fog increased by one more level. Gasps of shock sounded from around the place. Wan Li looked at Alex with shock in his eyes, let alone Han Long who had just been beaten. The amount of shock he was feeling right now was unreal.

Even Huang Fu seemed to be interested right now and looked at the pill tester which was the center of attention amongst everyone on stage and a lot of audience in the coliseum.

"Woah, Mingming just got 2nd place? Was he always that good sect leader?" Fan Ruogang asked. The rest of the disciples were also in shock, dumbfounded at the harmony his pill had reached.

Recognizing ingredients was one thing, but making a good pill required a different set of skills.

However, Ma Rong didn't recognize this current result and simply said, "Just watch."

50%

Another Heaven Grade pill appeared on the stage. Han Long, Wan Li, Huang Fu, the staff, the host, and the audience, all of them were shocked.

"A-Another Heaven-grade pill?" someone said in shock.

"T-That's the second place holder now," another person said.

"This participant didn't have such a result on the first pill right?" One of the staff asked.

"Nope, he only had a 43% harmony pill," another staff member said.

"Am I... really out of the third-place?" Han Long muttered to himself.

However, that wasn't the end.

51%

The pill tester hadn't stopped and the fog was still rising. Now, even Huang Fu started getting anxious. His pill was just 2% lower than Alex's. While that was a massive hurdle to pass, it didn't seem like Alex's pill tester was going to stop right now.

Unfortunately for Huang Fu, however, he was right.

52%

Now Alex's pill was 1 step away from having the same amount of harmony as Huang Fu's. He was starting to sweat. He walked a little closer to check the pill tester more clearly and in doing so he caught Alex's eyes who had just looked to the side.

From his perspective, Alex had no sort of tension in his eyes, almost like he didn't care what harmony his pills would get.

No. He realized that wasn't the case. It wasn't that he didn't care what the harmony his pill was going to be, it was more like He knew what it was going to be.

A strange premonition sprung up inside Huang Fu's mind and at the same time, it happened.

53%

The harmony level in the pill tester increased once more. Now, Alex was the first place holder of the competition along with Huang Fu. There were going to be two winners.

"Wow, a random disciple nearly beat the Royal Alchemist's direct disciple?" a staff member said in shock.

"What sect is he from? Can you guys check?" the host said.

"He seems to be from the Hong Wu sect. Ah, no wonder. They are well known for being great in alchemy," one of the staff members said.

"What happens to the rewards? Do we give out 100 points to both of them?" another staff member asked.

"If both of them get the same harmony then they both get the same points," the host said.

"Oh. But what do you mean... if?"

54%

Everyone talking suddenly stopped doing so. A pin-drop silence spread throughout the stage as the people's jaws dropped in shock.

A new champion was here.

Huang Fu was genuinely surprised that he lost to a participant that wasn't even that well known. He didn't want to believe that he had lost.

But he couldn't deny it at all after seeing the fog reach 55% in the pill tester.

"Huh? 55?" he looked in shock.

Everyone else did the same and was then dumbfounded. The harmony level of the pill had grown by another point.

"Wait, it is up to 55% now. That's like a professional Alchemist right there," someone said.

"Forget about that. How many Heaven Grade alchemists have you seen that are still a disciple?" another person asked.

"He would have to make a few more Heaven grade pills to be considered one, but if he can make 55% pills consistently, it wouldn't be wrong to consider him one," someone else answered.

"Umm... why are we talking about 55% as if that is the final harmony?" a timid voice among the bunch asked, prompting everyone to stop and look back at the pill tester.

Within 3 seconds of them watching, the harmony increased once more.

56%

Gasps rang out this time around, but nobody said anything. The staffs were already shocked beyond belief. The participants were equally shocked at someone making such a high-grade pill.

Han Long had long since accepted his fate. Wan Li was surprised at how talented Alex was, and Huang Fu could do nothing but look at the pill tester in shock.

56% was a lot of things. But what it was not, was the end.

57%

The harmony increased once more. The audience thought that they were jaded to it by now, but that wasn't true. They were still shocked. Whispers ran about the coliseum but none of it reached the stage.

Everyone expected it to stop now, but the pill tester seemed to have its own mind.

58%.

This was an unprecedented event for everyone in this competition. This was something that had never happened before and was likely never going to happen again.

While everyone was in shock, Alex was smiling, for he knew, this was not the end either.

59%

Alex's pill had now beat Huang Fu's pill by 6% of harmony difference. While everyone thought Huang Fu's pill beating Wan Li's pill by 4% was already amazing, having a 6% higher than his was something they couldn't comprehend.

Everyone turned to look at Alex and see the face of the winner. But Alex wasn't happy or excited. He was simply smiling looking at the pill tester in front of him.

At the same instant, the harmony level increased by 1 more.

60%.