

Alchemy 301

Chapter 301: Spirit Stone Cave

Alex could hear his staff member's voice from the room above. 'So that's where she went. To let them know what was wrong,' he thought.

"Hmm..." the young man said, "oh, my bad." After that, no more sound leaked from the room. But the spiritual sense was still on Alex and it didn't leave him a bit.

The man didn't bid a spirit stone more and most of the others were already too disheartened to continue bidding.

Yu Min saw that there was no more bid and asked, "Does anyone have a bid higher than 2020 spirit stones?"

No one dared bid anymore.

"2020 spirit stones going once."

"2020 spirit stones going twice."

"2020 spirit stones going thrice. Sold," Yu Min said as she hit the surface with her gavel.

"The armor has been sold to the guest on N4 for 2020 spirit stones," she announced and proceeded to start preparing another item to sell.

Alex should have been incredibly happy to get his hands on the armor, but he couldn't right now. In fact, the emotion he was feeling right now could be in a way considered the exact opposite.

Fear

He was terrified out of his mind that he was being monitored by a person with a spiritual sense. The spiritual sense was hard to come by as barely anyone could get their hands on the Spirit Cleansing Lilies due to their difficulty in harvesting them.? That meant that...

'This man most likely has a saint realm cultivation,' Alex thought.

Ma Rong had told him that Saint Realm folks were available in the Crimson Empire and that they liked to hide, but Alex never thought that he would actually meet one.

Not only meet but get targeted by one. Alex had a perfectly calm face, in fact, he even had a small smile on his face, but on the inside, he was freaking out.

'What does he want? Is he after something I own? Did he notice my spiritual sense by some chance? Did he notice my talent and body? Is he after my body? Is he a pervert? Was he there in the coliseum when I made the 60% pill? Does he have good intentions or malicious ones? Why is he keeping his spirituals sense on me for so long?'

Hundreds of thoughts ran across Ning's head, but none he could answer.

The auction went along normally, and the people as well as the Saint Realm man bid on the different items. But Alex could not focus on any of it.

All of his focus was on not making a single wrong move that could tip off the man that he had spiritual sense and that he could sense him too.

The man already seemed interested in him, he didn't want to give any more reason.

After half an hour or so, Alex started to feel less nervous as he got used to the constant supervision. He finally started paying attention to the auction.

"The deed of the land in Cardinal City has been sold to the gentlemen at 19 for 4500 spirit stones," Yu Min announced.

The land sold just now was on the outskirts of the town and away from the market and other business places. Even then the land was sold for 45 True spirit stones.

Alex was surprised how far people would go to get a piece of land in the capital city.

The auction continued and more and more amazing items started getting auctioned off. An armor that could stop any attacks below the True Lord realm, a pair of communication talismans that worked up to a thousand kilometers distance, a poison that could kill anyone under the True King realm if they did not get an antidote in the next 5 minutes.

The things being sold in the auction were amazing and something that Alex had never seen before in his life.

He even saw an Earth grade Thousand Poisons Antidote, a True rank version of Hundred Poison Antidote, with a harmony of 42% be sold for nearly 50 True Spirit stones.

"We are onto the final 2 items of the day. The 2nd most valuable item of today's auction is this," Yu Min said as she revealed a piece of paper.

People started wondering what it was and waited for her to start speaking. "This is a contract that allows you to claim ownership to the newly discovered spirit stone cave in Cochineal city."

"The bid will start at 50 True spirit stones and go up 50 spirit stones at minimum, begin." The gavel hit the table.

This was a very expensive item and not many people could afford it.

'Oh wow, a deed to a spirit stone cave. Anyone who manages to get it would be incredibly rich,' Alex thought.

Spirit stone caves were where the spirit stones were mined. Spirit stones were normal stones in caves that mutated after absorbing all the energy of a spirit vine and running it dry.

If a spirit vine was of Common rank, the spirit stones that formed would be normal spirit stones.

If a spirit vine was of True rank, the spirit stones that formed would be True spirit stones.

The spirit stones always formed in a cuboid structure but were incredibly hard to break off from the walls. Not only that, but they were also very delicate and could easily lose all Qi in it if one were to accidentally damage it too hard.

So anyone that owned spirit stone caves would also have to hire talented and strong workers so that the harvest would be done with minimum damage to the spirit stones.

Still, anyone that owned a spirit stone cave was bound to get rich, given that they didn't mess up really bad at acquiring quality workers.

Alex saw that most of the people really wanted it but not many could bid for its immense price. Thankfully for everyone else, the man at D4 did not get in on the bidding war.

People kept on bidding and the bid soon reached 70 spirit stones. That was more than the cost entire 23 pills he sold 2 days ago. It still didn't stop increasing.

In the end, the spirit stone cave's ownership was sold to the guest in room B10.

Chapter 302: Spirit Disorienting Formation

"The ownership of the spirit stone cave is sold to the guest at B10 for a price of 89 True Spirit stone," Yu Min announced to the crowd.

The rest of the people sighed in disappointment that they did not get to acquire such an amazing item, but looked forward to the next item as it was the best in the auction.

Alex was also curious as to what the best item in the auction was going to be. If the second last item was a spirit stone cave, then what was the final one going to be?

Even though he was constantly being monitored by the man at D4 for some reason, he had given up on trying to worry about it. As long as the man with a possible cultivation base in the saint realm was looking at him, he doubted he was going to get free so easily.

After the auction, he decided to confront the guy. 'There is a high chance I might end up dying, so I should send out my money as soon as I can,' he thought and started cautiously making gestures in the air.

He made sure to not making it obvious that he was doing something as the man above was watching him. He quickly sent 40 True Spirit stones back to his bank account and kept the 26 True spirit stones for himself as he would need them to buy the armor.

The final item of the auction appeared on the stage and Yu Min walked up to it. She stayed there for a few seconds letting the audience's expectations reach sky high and finally revealed the item.

On the tray in front of Yu Min were a bunch of metal poles with cloth attached to the top.

'Formation flags?' Alex was a little surprised. He did not expect the item being auctioned off at the final was actually going to be a formation flag.

"These are the formation flags for the formation called Spirit Disorienting Formation. It's a True Rank formation that can be used to trap anyone inside of it."

"As long as the one being trapped is not in the Saint realm, you can trap anyone in it for a very long time."

"With a Mortal grade formation placement, you can trap someone for up to 2 days."

"With an Earth Grade formation placement, you can trap someone for up to 20 days."

"With a Heaven grade formation placement, you can trap someone for up to 50 days."

"The formation traps the enemies by disorienting them, and not letting them know where the exit is. It also spins the space inside from time to time to keep the enemies trapped for a long time."

"The instruction to the usage and setup is all written on this paper that you can acquire along with the formation flags."

"The price to start the formation is 2 True Spirit stone every time. So, the starting bid for the formation flags is 60 True Spirit stones and will only allow an increment of 1 True spirit stone at a minimum. Begin," Yu Min said.

The people lost their cool as soon as the bids were allowed and before anyone could even comprehend what the other person was speaking, the bid jumped up to 80 True spirit stones.

"81 True Spirit stones," someone bid.

"82 True Spirit stones," another person bid.

The bid continued and soon it had grown to 100 True spirit stones. There were still 10 or more people who kept on bidding on the formation flags.

As things started to die down and the competition wasn't as intense anymore, someone else finally joined in on the fun.

"112 True Spirit stones," the Saint realm man from room D4 bid.

"113 True Spirit stones," another man tried to bid, but he knew he was simply throwing a stone at the ocean, barely making a splash.

"115 True spirit stones," the man bid. People couldn't help but wonder what the person did as a job to earn so much money. He had nearly spent over 1000 True spirit stones today alone.

Even if he was rich, he was incredibly frivolous. Other people tried their hand at bidding once more, but that didn't work.

They would be easily outbid by the man in a single second. In the end, a few tried to screw with him by giving him a higher price for the item, but he didn't back down.

At some point, he simply stayed quiet. People started getting scared that they would have to pay the amount they had bid, but thankfully the man continued.

Once people learned how easy it was to destroy their own lives by overbidding in exchange for a moment of happiness, they stopped.

"140 True spirit stones," the man bid, still confident to take on anyone joining, but no one would bid anymore. They couldn't even bid even if they wanted to.

Yu Min checked the atmosphere and asked, "Does anyone have a bid higher than 140?", but nobody answered.

"140 True Spirit stones? going once."

"140 True Spirit stones going twice."

"140 True spirit stone going thrice. Sold." She hit the gavel.

"The formation flags and instructions have been bought by the guest at room D4 for 140 True spirit stones," Yu Min declared. The staff arrived and took the trolley away.

"This marks the end of the auction. Thank you all for coming and making this auction as successful as it was. For those that have bought or sold something today, please follow the staff to where they take you."

"As for everyone else, you may leave as you like. Thank you." Yu Min bowed to the crowd and the curtains closed in on her, hiding her away.

"Please follow me dear guest," the staff member that was standing with Alex the entire time spoke and brought him along to a room down the hall on the outside of the auction hall.

Even as he left, however, the spiritual sense of the man loomed over him, making him fear every single second of being here.

Chapter 303: Run

Alex was brought to a room where the armor artifact was already on the table with another man sitting on the couch beyond it.

As soon as Alex walked in, he stood up and greeted.

Alex returned the greeting too, but it was a bit awkward. He was still very tense from the constant monitoring of the man in the spiritual realm.

However, all of a sudden, it stopped. Alex could no longer feel any spiritual sense in him. 'He stopped after I entered the room? Did he just want to check where the armor was? Or is he just not interested anymore?' Alex wondered.

'Or was I just paranoid and the man was just sending out his spiritual sense everywhere and not just at me?' Alex thought and almost called himself stupid. He sighed in massive relief.

That was the most possible explanation and he felt dumb that he didn't think of that. However, in his defense, he felt the spiritual sense of a Saint Realm cultivator and couldn't think straight due to his fear.

'Yeah, what would a Saint Realm cultivator even want from a Self Tempering realm brat like me? Sigh, at least that is over,' he thought.

"Dear guest here is your armor," the man said as he presented the armor to Alex. Alex walked up and checked it as he stroked the surface.

He could see a name pop up with not much information to it.

[Onyx Skin Armor

Grade - Mortal]

Alex nodded and took out 20 True spirit stones as well as 20 spirit stones and handed them to the man. The man bowed and gestured for Alex to take it.

"May I wear this right now?" he asked.

"Whatever you wish, dear guest," the man said.

Alex thanked him and took off his upper robe. His incredibly well-built body was on full display. His muscles were really toned and he didn't look much strong. But one could tell that those small muscles carried incredible strength.

Alex already had a good-looking body from when he randomly chose one when starting the game, but after body cultivating for over a month, it was even more incredible.

The staff lady blushed a little when she saw him. Alex did not care about them and wore the T-shirt armor.

"Woah," he was surprised. It felt like the cloth was hugging his body and he could no longer feel any air or temperature from the outside.

"I can't feel it despite my focus mode being perpetually active?" Ning thought in surprise. He hit his chest a bit, but couldn't feel anything.

"Well, it doesn't cover my whole body, but simply having some protection on my vital organs should be good," he thought.

Once he was done checking everything, he nodded farewell to the person and walked out of the room. The staff lady accompanied him to the door where he left her and walked into the busy streets.

The normal guests were leaving the auction house just now as well as the many other auction house guests. So the crowd on the street was quite a lot.

Alex could see the disciples from many other sects too and wondered what items the other auction houses sold.

Having nothing else to do, he decided to leave. He started walking east to reach a crossroad from where he could take north and reach his hotel.

He walked at a normal pace, slightly happy about finally getting armor. Just as he reached the intersection, however, something happened.

A spiritual sense washed over him, nearly stopping him in his tracks.

'No, it's probably not for me. The man must be just randomly sending it out,' he tried to hope for the best. Still, he knew that he had to prepare for the worst, so he went south instead of north.

He kept walking south and suddenly turned east. The spiritual sense did not leave him a single moment. The feeling of fear that had left him started returning.

After walking for a little while, he turned north. The spiritual sense was still on him. He walked further for a bit and turned west and continued walking.

The spiritual sense did not leave him at all. Finally, he reached back to the crossroad he was at before and yet the spiritual sense was still on him.

He was absolutely sure now; He was being followed by the Saint realm man. 'F*ck it,' Alex thought and immediately started sprinting, but the street up north and west was crowded, so he was forced to run towards the west.

He wanted to run as fast as he could and walk out of the range of the spiritual sense. He ran as fast as his body allowed him to and soon, he was out of the range.

But the man was in Saint realm, so Alex knew he wasn't getting away at all.

Alex went into an alley and disappeared. He went invisible and contained all of his aura to make him untraceable. However, just as he was about to teleport to somewhere close, an aura descended upon him, letting him know that the man was here.

The man landed in the middle of the dark alley and used both his cultivation base and spiritual sense to check for Alex nearby.

"Oh, there you are," he said when he saw Alex hidden away near him.

Unfortunately for Alex, he couldn't escape the spiritual sense even when his aura and image had disappeared. "That's an interesting technique you have there. Seems quite useful too. I will think if I want it or not later though," he said.

Alex was trapped in the place due to the cultivation base and couldn't move. The pressure was somehow stopping him from moving his Qi altogether.

The veil disappeared and Alex appeared in normal light. He looked at the man in front of him.

The man looked like he was in his early 40s. He still had his black hairs but looked like they would go gray at any moment. His face was a little square-ish and the beards on them were short and rough.

The man was wearing a red robe and was about the same height as Alex.

Out of all of this, however, there was only one thing that really surprised him.

The man was not in Saint realm.

Chapter 304: Devouring Earth

'How could it be? He is weaker than Master,' Alex thought. He was under the assumption that the man was in the Saint realm, but seeing that he was around True lord or maybe even True Master realm, Alex was really surprised.

Still, the difference in cultivation was so high that Alex couldn't do anything to the suppression.

'Does that mean that he used a Spirit Cleansing lily? I shouldn't be surprised. I might not be the only one capable of picking one in the entire game,' Alex thought. The pressure on him was starting to get bad, but he could only struggle.

However, at that moment, a warm flow of hot energy burst out from deep within him. It relieved a lot of pressure from him, but he still couldn't move or use his Qi.

"Haha, little brother, don't struggle. I'm not going to hurt you," the man said with a smile on his face, but he didn't bother lifting the pressure at all.

Alex had learned his lesson before and didn't trust the man at all. He glared at him with eyes that would harm if they could.

"Haha, don't look at me like that, it's true. I only want to know a little something from you brother. You see, I am still not sure that it is you who I am looking for," the man said.

"What do you want?" Alex asked. "My armor? Did you come here for that?" Alex asked.

"Armor? I don't need that crappy armor. I have many fine armors back at home. I am here for something else," the man said.

"What do you want then? Do you want my money? My life?" Alex started shouting at the man, but it was all a ruse. He was secretly preparing something.

He needed a split second, that was all he needed. For that, he could use his heaven's impact and create an opening. That was when he was going to run away from the man.

The Flickering Shadow technique had a maximum range of 10 meters and the man had a much higher range with his spirit stone alone, so he couldn't just teleport out of here now.

He needed a different strategy. Thankfully, he had one.

"You see kid, a week or two ago, I was in an auction where I managed to buy— " the man suddenly lost consciousness.

Alex had used the opportunity of the man talking to sneakily launch Heaven's impact. As soon as one was launched, he launched another one as well.

The man had barely come back to himself when Heaven's Impact landed on him once more making him unconscious once more.

When he finally opened his eyes in the next moment, Alex was gone.

"Damn, where did he go?" the man frantically searched for Alex with his spiritual sense reaching a distance of nearly 100 meters, he couldn't find his anywhere.

He tried to remember back to the moment just now when he was attacked.

"That was... Spiritual energy, wasn't it?" the man asked himself.

"Ha- Haha— hahaha, So it really is him. I was right, I finally found him," the man started laughing with immense pleasure for some reason.

"I must search him once more and thank him personally. I must thank him for auctioning that Spirit Cleansing Lily and allowing me to acquire this Spiritual Sense," the man said.

"Now I must find him and know how he acquired them."

Now that Alex was no longer in there, the man walked out of the alleyway. His clothing caught the attention of many who immediately bowed towards him once and started walking away.

The man seemed to be used to it and didn't mind any of it. He took simply walked away from that place.

Far away, somewhere unknown, Alex opened his eyes and quickly wiped away the dirt on his face. He used his Qi to quickly get rid of the red of the dirt.

'Where am I?' he wondered as he looked around. It seemed to be an old abandoned warehouse or something.

Alex quickly went out and looked around, only to see that he was in the residential area of the city, and sighed in relief. His third Immortal grade technique worked just as it claimed.

Alex had gotten 7 techniques from Wen Cheng aside from the Elusive Heavenly Sword. Of them 3 were attack techniques, 2 were defense, 1 was movement and the final one was an escape technique.

Of them, all of them were at Heaven grade, except for the escape technique, which was called Devouring Earth Escape.

The Devouring Earth Escape technique was an Immortal grade technique.

The technique devoured the user with the land underneath them and pumped them out of a different place. It wasn't a teleportation ability as the earth delivered him to the destination on its own.

When one used the technique, the earth would open up below them and carry them through the ground to a different location on its own.

Alex had used the technique at the perfect time when the 2nd Heaven's impact had hit the man and he managed to run away at the same time.

"This really is a cool technique," Alex said. Still, the technique had its flaws as well.

First of all, the user could never set the destination. He would have to use the technique and hope for a good direction to go at.

Second of all, the distance was based on the user's Qi density. The higher the density, the further the man would go. The user could choose to go lower than the maximum distance, but never higher. So the low-level cultivators couldn't use it very well.

However, to Alex whose Qi was very dense, this wasn't a very big problem.

Alex looked to the surroundings and hoped that the man in red didn't see him. 'Just who was that?' Alex wondered.

Once the vicinity was a little bit quieter, he took out a pill and ate it. Suddenly, A veil of light appeared from his body that was using Qi to create the veil.

After that, his face changed.

Chapter 305: I Sold It

The Great Illusion pill used the person's Qi to create a face and continued staying there as long as the Qi was supplied. The higher the harmony of the pill, the lower the qi requirement.

Alex walked into the road with a different face. It took him a while to realize that he was in the south west part of the city.

He now had to walk all the way diagonal to the other side of the city to reach his hotel. Thankfully, it was only 3 PM and he wouldn't get scolded like the other day.

It took him a little over half an hour to reach his hotel. Even though he tried to walk very fast, the crowd just didn't let him.

Finally, after reaching the hotel, he walked directly up to his room. He opened the door and walked in.

Wan Li was already inside, looking at some sort of map or something when he noticed Alex. He hurriedly hid everything and brought out a small dagger.

"Wh— Who are you?" he asked while pointing the dagger at Alex. A strong pressure emanated from Wan Li that nearly suffocated Alex.

Alex immediately undid his face change and said, "Brother Wan, it's me. Please stop." The 3rd Mind Tempering realm Wan Li was a little too strong for Alex, even with his body cultivation.

"Oh," Wan Li said when Alex's veil came off and his real face was shown. "It's you, brother Yu. I thought you were a thief or something. You should have changed your face before entering the room," he said.

"Sorry, I needed to make sure nobody could see me coming here," he said.

Wan Li tried asking a few questions but Alex didn't say anything. "I will just go rest for a while, Brother Wan. It's been a long day for me," Alex said and went to his bed.

Wan Li went back to his papers and didn't bother with Alex anymore.

Once on the bed, Alex logged out.

Alex was now out of the game, but he couldn't stop wondering why the man was after him.

'How did he get a lily to begin with? Even the book in the library said its incredibly difficult. Are there others like me who can see the names?' Alex wondered.

It wouldn't be a stretch to say that there were probably others with a skill like Alchemy God's Knowledge. That would mean that there were others who could recognize the ingredients as well.

He tried remembering what the man had tried to say, but his memory wasn't as good outside of the game. 'Sigh, my mind is probably connected to some sort of server for me to be able to remember everything in the game, but not outside of it,' Alex thought.

He took his phone and walked out to the Kitchen. Hannah was there already, eating some food herself.

"Oh, you're here? Aren't you going to spend the whole day in the game?" she asked.

"I could, but I didn't want to today. Anyway, what are you looking at? Shouldn't you be focusing on your meal instead of your phone?" Alex asked.

"Oh, look," Hannah said as she showed him her phone.

-\$238,400 has been transferred to your account XXXXXXXXXXXX87-

"My hubby gave me a few more spirit stones today to cultivate with. Shame I can't really use them since I don't have a technique. Still, I can't believe he loves me so much. For an NPC, he feels so real," Hannah said.

"Oh, that reminds me," Alex thought and immediately checked his phone. As expected 36,000 dollars had been added to his bank account as well.

"Well, it's not as much as yours, but I earned it on my own," Alex said as he showed her the phone.

"Oh wow, that's amazing. I probably couldn't even make half of what you are making if it weren't for my hubby," she said.

Alex couldn't help but smile a little hearing her call a game character 'Hubby'. He looked at the date and time while eating and lamented at the fact that the 1-week break was going to end soon.

'I hope the competition lasts no more than until Sunday. I don't want to waste too much of my classes in case I am stuck there,' he thought.

Once he finished eating he went back into the game. He didn't have anything else to do, so he spent his time understanding the alchemy knowledge he had acquired in the library.

Finally, it was time for the meeting. Last night's meeting had nothing happen in it, so he wasn't expecting much from this day's meeting as well.

Just as he thought, the meeting had nothing happening in it today as well. The production-based events were over, so there wasn't much effort on Ma Rong's side to keep these meetings interesting.

She simply told them that they could do whatever they wanted and spoke a few words of encouragement and the meeting was over.

"Master," Alex walked up front while everyone else left.

"What do you need?" Ma Rong asked.

"Actually..." he explained everything regarding today's event and told her how someone with a spiritual sense followed him.

Ma Rong was immediately concerned and asked more questions, but Alex didn't have answers either. "I thought it was for the armor I won against him, but it was more like he allowed me to win it. I do not know what is going on," he said.

"That is weird. Someone with a spiritual sense— That would mean that he used a lily right?" Ma Rong asked.

"Yes, I wonder if he found a lily or bought— " Alex stopped mid-thought. Now that he was back in the game, his Eidetic memory was back as well.

"Oh no," he said as the color drained from his face.

"What's wrong?" Ma Rong asked.

"He— When I was about to escape, he said he bought something a few weeks ago. If what he bought was the lily then... He is after me because I am the one who sold it."

Chapter 306: Face Change again

"What did you say? You sold a lily?" Ma Rong said in surprise.

Alex's face still had shock written all over it. "Yes, i— I thought it was a good idea at the time to sell a single lily since it would bring me so many spirit stones," Alex said.

"How could you be so stupid to sell a precious item like that?" Ma Rong scolded.

"I— I hadn't realized how terrible this world was at the time and ended up foolishly selling the flower away," Alex said.

"Lord and this man is the one that bought it?" she asked.

"I assume so. I think he was trying to capture me to get some more, but I managed to escape, so I couldn't fully understand his intentions at the time, but that must be it," Alex said as he started thinking more.

Ma Rong asked more questions regarding the sales of the flower and Alex told her everything he knew. She fell into deep thought for a while and Alex waited for her to speak.

"But how could he have gotten your face?" Ma Rong asked.

"How? The auction house probably gave it, right? Everyone there seems to know the guest's face" Alex asked.

"That's not possible. Especially since your face alone isn't enough. The staff doesn't know what you are there for, they only know that you are important. Your actual information would only be circulated amongst the innermost staff, and that too would be nearly impossible in this case since your sale was remote," Ma Rong said.

"That means that there are likely only 3 people in the auction house that could possibly know your information, but even they wouldn't do something shady like that. The reputation of their entire auction house is on the line if they ever see inside information, especially of a guess as expensive as you," Ma Rong said.

"Then how could it have happened?" Alex asked.

"I don't know. Tell me about the man once again?" Ma Rong asked. Alex described his face the best he could.

"That is too generic of a face. What about his cloth?" she asked.

"He was wearing a red robe," Alex said.

"Red... that too is generic. There are dozens of sects in the competition with a red robe. It is likely an elder from one of these sects," Ma Rong asked.

"I figured that too master, so I was thinking of changing my face for the rest of the competition," Alex said.

"Hmm... That might be a good idea," Ma Rong said.

"The committee won't say anything about that right? What if they don't allow me?" Alex asked.

"Don't worry. There are too many disciples in the competition, and no one remembers your face. So as long as your Qi remains the same, you won't be in any trouble," Ma Rong said.

"I see. Thank you, master," Alex said.

"Do you need Face Changing pills?" Ma Rong asked.

"I've got these, they might work," Alex said and showed his pills. He hadn't made any new Face Changing pill recently, so the highest one lasted for 42 hours.

"That won't do. Take this," Ma Rong said and handed him a Face Changing pill with 58% harmony. The pill would last 58 hours too.

"Thank you, master." With nothing else to say, he bid Ma Rong a good night and left the room.

He returned back to the room and go onto his bed. Wan Li was still reading his paper, so Alex didn't bother him and directly started cultivating.

He called out Pearl and kept him in his robes. Once Pearl started cultivating, he too started body cultivating. After that, he started cultivating normally, and soon, he fell into a trance and lost consciousness.

Alex opened his eyes at 6:00 in the morning. He stopped Pearl and sent him back to the left arm.

'Today is going to be a long day,' he thought. Unlike the other 4 days, today was supposed to last for a really long time. He was told that today would last until the competition ended, but that would take a long time, so he wasn't sure how long 'today' was going to last.

Since he didn't have much time in the day to eat, he decided to log out now and eat.

Alex opened the lid to the capsule and walked out. He went to the bathroom to freshen up and then went to the kitchen to eat some light meal.

He made a light milkshake with some fruits and drank it before returning back to his room to disappear back into the game world.

He opened his eyes back in the game and looked at the time on the right-hand corner of his screen. It was about time to leave. However, before that, he needed to do something.

He reached into his storage bag and pulled out a Face Changing pill. Unlike yesterday's pill, this was irreversible and he would get access to his face back only after the duration was over.

The one he had in his hand was a 58% harmony pill. That was enough for him to have a different face the entirety of today, tomorrow, and partially into Sunday as well; and finally, get his face back around the nighttime.

So, without thinking, he popped the pill in his mouth and swallowed it. Energy started releasing from the pill as it coursed into his bones, his muscles, and his skin.

Although the pill was called a Face-changing pill, it changed everything about a person's body, making them practically a new person.

'Imagine having this pill, but a permanently working one, I wonder how much that would sell for,' Alex wondered.

He knew what to do here, so he simply thought of a face, one that he saw in the mirror all the time. The bones and muscle remained the same as he wished for them to be so, but the face slowly started morphing and changing until he was no longer recognizable.

Chapter 307: Combat Competitions

The hair receded back into his head as his eyes changed colors and went back to being brown. His facial structure also moved a little and he was back to looking like his real-life self.

"Brother Wan, I've changed face once more, please don't freak out," he told Wan Li. Wan Li seemed pretty trigger happy last time so as to caution he let him know beforehand.

Wan Li looked up from his papers and said, "Oh, you look... different. Why did you change? Aren't you going to take part in the competition?"

"I needed to change my face a little, and master said I can take part despite having a different face, so I did," he said.

"Okay. As long as it is allowed," Wan Li said and no longer bothered him with questions regarding his face.

A knock landed on their door and both of them left the room. Once he walked outside, the various people looked at him weirdly for a second, until he explained to them what was going on.

Ma Rong left her room and asked, "Is everyone here?"

"Yes, we are ready to leave," an elder said.

"Hm, where is— Oh, you changed face already. I didn't recognize you. Let's leave," she said and started walking downstairs.

Down at the ground floor, they met Fatty Xu once more, but this time, he didn't have any remarks for them. Instead, he said, "Congratulations. You guys beat us fair and square," and left with his group.

Han Long was in the group and turned to the few and waved to them. He looked for Alex for a few seconds and left after not finding him.

Ma Rong also took her group and left.

Along the way, Ma Rong called Alex forward and silently asked, "I don't remember seeing anyone in the sect or the Scarlet city with a face like that. Is that a face belonging to someone from the Tiger sect?"

"Uhh... no. You have never seen this person before," Alex said.

"Oh, where is this person from?" Ma Rong asked.

"Uhh, it's my brother's face," Alex said.

"Your brother?" Ma Rong looked at him with a confused face. "I thought you had no siblings," Ma Rong said.

"Um... I have, but he was a mortal, and before I left my village, uh... he died," Alex lied.

Ma Rong looked at him with shock on her face. He controlled herself and said, "I see. It's a good-looking face." Ma Rong no longer asked any question and left him be.

Fan Ruogang then started pestering Alex for more information on why he changed his face and even Zhou Mei started asking some questions.

But these were questions that Alex could not answer so he just gave a random explanation and satiated their curiosity.

Around 7 pm, they finally reached the Coliseum and went straight to the arena where the majority of the sect was gathered.

"Woah," Alex said as he looked at the various sects. "There seem to be a lot more people here today. What's going on?" Alex asked.

"Yeah, there's nearly double. Did new sects get added at the last moment?" Wan Li asked.

"Pfft. You guys are letting your newbie-ness spill out right now," Fan Ruogang said while holding back her laughter.

Alex and Wan Li looked at each other in confusion. "Haha, you do know what today is right?" the Second Elder asked.

"Of course, the combat section of the competition," Alex said.

"And who takes part in the combat section?" the Second Elder asked.

"Who? Isn't it everyone?" Alex asked, but then immediately realized. "Ohhh, I see. So people skipped out on the initial part of the competition because they weren't here for the Production segment of the competition," Alex said.

"Yes, but now that it's combat, everyone including those that took part in combat is here to take part now," the Second Elder said.

"I see. No wonder there are so many people here right now," Alex said.

Fu Zhen walked into a small podium and started speaking.

"Fellow Daoists, welcome back to the competition. Today starts the combat portion of the competition. There is no theme to this competition, but we have set various different competitions, so you can take part in any of it," he said.

"However, the majority of the competition is going to be our main attraction, the single battles. Please send the best of the best from your sect to take part in those. As for the rest, please choose as you want," Fu Zhen said.

Suddenly, a massive blue screen appeared behind him. One that was larger than any of the ones that opened up before in any of the other days.

Alex looked at the competition page and was surprised by the list.

"What? Why is the setup of the competitions like that?" Alex asked.

As Fu Zhen had said, the main attraction of the competition was the single battles. So, the Single battles were what took the majority of the competition.

Surprisingly aside from the very first competition, none of the rest had any time assigned to them. All they had was an order, and the competition would last as long as it possibly could.

Alex started reading some of the competition through the top. The first competition was called the Damage test. It was part of the Single battle apparently and those who took part in that competition had to go through this.

Then came a race between the cultivators using only movement technique, race between the different beasts, race of the cultivators using only artifacts, race with both beasts and cultivators together.

Then the first main event of the day started the Singles battles. After that was over, there were other various competitions.

Then there would be another Singles battle than another competition, then other singles, then another set of battles, and finally another Singles battle would end the competition.

"That is a really weird way to set up a competition," Wan Li made the same comment Alex was about to.

Chapter 308: Final Registration

"This actually makes very good sense. They had it the same way back a year ago too and this worked perfectly," Zhou Mei said.

"Why though?" Alex asked. "If the singles battles are the main attraction then, why not have it all be done at the last, instead of spreading it thought like this?"

"It's mostly to keep the competition interesting. If the audience knew that the Singles battle was at the end of the day, they would just leave for the day and come back when the singles battle starts," the Second Elder said.

"Yes, if they do it like this, they can retain a lot more audience. Also, this helps the participants something other than just fighting continuously," Ma Rong said.

Alex nodded when he heard those. "By the way, are those 4 races going to take place at the same time? Isn't that a little disadvantageous for the Beast taming sects?" Alex asked.

"No, all the competitions you see in the list will take place one after another," Ma Rong said.

"Alright, quickly look at what you want to take part in. I will call out the competitions and you raise your hands. Aside from the Singles which will take 4, every other competition is still going to only take 3," Ma Rong said.

"Singles take 4?" Alex said with surprise. There was nothing about that in the announcement or the list.

"Yeah, its an information the competition holders don't reveal, but you can have 4 competitors in the singles competition. That usually gets thinned by the first competition," Ma Rong said.

"Isn't that unfair? How are the new sects supposed to know that?" Alex asked.

"The world is not fair. If they are worth the 4 spots, they will find out on their own," Ma Rong said.

"Alright choose now, Singles," Ma Rong asked.

Wan Li and two others raised their hands. One was a girl with a 6th Meridian Tempering realm cultivation base and a man with an 8th Meridian Tempering realm cultivation base.

Anywhere else, these two would be a core disciple for sure. But in the Hong Wu sect where they measured achievement in terms of Alchemy, these two could only remain inner sect disciples.

"We can do 4. Anyone else?" Ma Rong said and looked around the group, but soon realized that they didn't have a very high cultivation base.

"Never mind, you guys won't even pass through the damage test," she said and moved on to the next competition.

"The normal race one?" she asked.

2 disciples raised their hands. One of them was the man from just now. He hadn't taken part a single time the last 4 days, so he had all of his 3 chances still.

He also raised his hand in another competition.

"The Maze run?" Ma Rong asked.

Alex immediately raised his hand, so did the other girl. This was the competition Alex was looking forward to joining after seeing its name on the list. Mazes were intriguing, to say the least, and Alex was more interested in it since it was a race as well.

To him, this was much better than the normal races.

Ma Rong asked for a few more competitions, but no one really wanted to take part in them. "Alright, Second Elder, go take them to their seats, I will get them registered," Ma Rong said and walked towards the registration place with the few of them including Alex and Wan Li.

Once in the registration place, they waited around for the others to free up spaces before it was their turn.

Alex looked around while waiting and tried to find a sect that had red robes like the man from yesterday. He found a few red robes, but none of them matched the shade of red the man was wearing.

'Is his sect not here?' Alex wondered. He looked to another sect, that wore red robes too. It was the sect belonging to Luo Xing, Luo Mei's half-sister.

Ma Rong noticed him looking at them and softly asked, "Is it them?"

"No, the shade of red doesn't match," Alex said.

"Yu Ming?" suddenly someone called from the side. He hadn't been using his spiritual sense, so he didn't sense anyone coming.

He looked to the right and saw that it was Wen Cheng.

"Master, Good morning," Alex said.

"You changed your face? Is something wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing's....uh, well something's wrong, but I can't explain here," Alex said.

"How did you recognize him?" Ma Rong asked curiously.

"Oh, he's used this same face before when I took him to... uh somewhere," Wen Cheng stopped himself at the last moment.

"To that alchemy place? You take my disciple into your sect and hope to still keep secrets?" Ma Rong said with a smirk. She seemed to be thinking of something but didn't let it show on her face.

"Tsk. I should've known with how loose his mouth is," Wen cheng said.

"Anyway, are you taking a part in the Singles battle? You can win against anyone below Mind Tempering realm, but you can't go past the first competition to even get to the actual battles," Wen Cheng said.

"Oh, no. I am taking part in the Maze run," Alex said.

"Ah, that's... that's going to suit you. You might actually be too good for that," Wen Cheng said as he fell into thought.

Luo Mei arrived and greeted Ma Rong before turning to Wen Cheng and said, "Master, We are done."

"Oh, ok. Before that, this is your Junior brother, remember his face," Wen Cheng said.

"Huh? Yu Ming? Why is your face changed?" she asked. Alex gave the same question.

"Alright, we will leave. Looks like it's time for you to register as well," Wen Cheng said.

Alex nodded and walked forward with the other disciples to get registered. The others registered for their own one and Alex registered for the Maze run.

Once that was completed, the group returned back to their seat and waited for the competition to start.

Chapter 309: Royal Family

Alex walked back to the seating area with his master and the other disciples and sat along with the rest of the group.

"Master, why didn't we left the 3 back there, their competition should start anytime now, right?" Alex asked. He wasn't sure why Ma Rong brought Wan Li and the rest back to the seating area.

"Oh, it won't start right away. Since this is the fun part of the competition, we will have more audience now, as well as special guests soon," Ma Rong said.

Alex found it a little disappointing that what he loved doing, and what many loved doing wasn't fun to watch for many other people. More than half the audience only liked watching the fights.

To be fair, that was where the cultivators shined the most, but it still stung a little knowing that production competition was a little more niche.

"Oh" "ah" "Woah" "oh lord" "they're here

Multiple small murmurs appeared from the crowd. Alex wasn't sure what was happening when suddenly Ma Rong poked him.

"What's wrong Master?" he asked.

"You— You said that the guy who tried to capture you wore red right?" Ma Rong asked.

Alex felt that this was a weird time to ask the question, but he still answered, "Yes, Master. Red robes, why are you asking me this?"

"Are you absolutely sure it was just a simple red robe?" she asked.

"Yes Master, I'm sure. I saw it with my own eyes," Alex said.

Then, Ma Rong slowly pointed her fingers to somewhere in the sky before turning towards Alex and asked, "Are you sure the robe was not Crimson?"

Alex could see a little bit of fear in his Master's eyes. He slowly turned his head to look to the sky where her finger was pointed and saw a bunch of people flying in the sky.

Despite the city being a no-fly zone, there were people flying there. However, more importantly than that, the people were all wearing red robes— Crimson, to be exact.

"Th— That's the man Master. The one at the second last," Alex said seeing the man with the spiritual sense. His face seemed like he was bored but still needed to come here.

Seeing the people's reaction, their color of robes, and their freedom of flight, even Alex could guess who these people were.

"They are— " Alex turned to Ma Rong in shock who simply just nodded and said, "The Royal Family."

Alex felt shocked and looked back at the flying group of people. There were around 6 people in the group of flying people.

Surprisingly, he knew more than just one person flying right now. That was the girl behind the couple at the front.

'It's her,' Alex thought, remembering back to the time he helped the few female girls.

"Master, who are they exactly?" He asked.

"You see the person at the front? That is the emperor of the Crimson Empire, Fu Zexian," Ma Rong said. Alex looked at the man, and he looked like he was in his 30s.

"So, the one behind him is Gao Xia, the empress?" he asked. He remembered reading about the royal family. But reading about someone and knowing it from seeing was completely different.

"Yes, and the one behind them is the princess, Fu Wuying. Followed by the second prince, Fu Yuhan. The last two are the High Princes, the Emperor's little brothers. The one on the front is Fu Zemin, and the one behind him, the one that wanted to capture you is the notorious third brother of the Emperor, Fu Zexi," Ma Rong said.

Alex looked at the man with cold eyes. If Alex hadn't been quick on his head, he would've probably been dead right now and was reincarnated to a random location.

'Sigh, whatever. Let's just forget about it. Once I return back, I won't have to worry about him anymore,' Alex thought.

The Royal family landed on a platform at the highest spot on the south end of the coliseum, where the sun would be behind them most of the time.

Alex looked towards them and saw a bunch of people below them as well, with almost the same height, but not quite.

"Who are those people, Master?" he asked curiously.

Ma Rong looked to the side and said, " Oh, those are the nobles. The Dukes, Marquess, Earl, Viscount, and Barons of the empire. There might also be the ministers, but I don't really know them."

" I see," Alex said.

Fu Zhen walked up to the stage and bowed towards the royal family before speaking.

"Good Morning ladies and gentlemen, fellow Daoist. Let me welcome all of you to this wonderful day where we will have the battle competitions of this year's Annual sect Competitions."

"Besides just the battles, we also have many short and long competitions set up for today and the following days. All of which is very much fun."

"So without any further speech, let me bring on the competitors for today's competition. Everyone, please come on to the stage," Fu Zhe shouted.

"I will take the disciples, sect Master," the Second Elder said and stood up before taking the three disciples to the arena.

The audience waited for a bit before the participants finally walked out. Alex and the rest looked at the ground before the hoard of disciples finally arrived at the stage.

Just the sheer number of participants for the single battles was staggering. Alex wanted to count the number of participants, but it was so many that he just didn't bother.

"Finally, here we have all the participants for the Single battles," Fu Zhen spoke. "However, as you all can see, there are just too many to have a single's battle."

"There are exactly 317 people taking part in the singles battle, which as you can see is not an even number. So, to fix that issue and bring the number of participants down to a manageable number, we will now start the prelude to the Singles battles, The Damage test."

Chapter 310: Damage Test

Alex looked at the different people on the stage and saw that he recognized a few. He obviously recognized his senior sister as well as Wan Li and the other 2 participants of his own sect.

But he also saw Du Yuhan, as well as the guy his senior sister seemed to hate for some reason, Yang Ma. He tried searching for other people, but he couldn't recognize any of the other participants aside from their robes, which wasn't very helpful.

Just as he was looking at them, 3 Metal puppets appeared on the stage out of nowhere and stood there just waiting to get hit.

Fu Zhen walked to the puppets and said, "I will now explain the rules of this competition."

"The Damage test, as its name suggests, will be looking at your ability to deal damage to these puppets. The puppets have zero defense and no resistance, so you can attack without any worries," Fu Zhen said.

3 screens appeared in the air above the puppets, as well as 3 others high in the air for the audience to see what was happening.

Each of the small screens was blank for now, while the screen in the air showed everything that was happening around the wooden puppets, including the smaller screen.

"Alright, this screen up here will show your damage on the wooden puppet," Fu Zhen said as he flicked the head of the puppet.

<True Disciple - 5th realm>

The word appeared on the black screen. "As you can see, this is my physical damage."

Fu Zhen then moved to another puppet and flicked it, "As you can see, the screen doesn't pop on this one. That's because this one only accepts elemental damage," Fu Zhen said as he threw a small Qi attack towards it.

Suddenly, the screen lit up and it showed the words <True Master - 3rd Realm>

"Lastly, this is a special puppet as it only takes damage from mental attacks. Close your ears," Fu Zhen said as he called for someone. A young female walked up and suddenly screamed.

The nearby people thankfully had their ears plugged, so didn't take any damage.

<Mind Tempering- 3rd Realm>

"As you can see, if you have a strong mental attack, you can use that here as well," Fu Zhen said.

"I will call out your names one by one, please come forward and attack the puppet of your choice. You will get 3 attacks and may use any weapons. The top 256 people with the highest damage will move on to the next round."

"First of all, From the Undying sect, Tian Hao. Please come forward," Fu Zhen spoke.

A strong-looking young man walked out of the group and walked to the puppet that took physical damage.

"Alright, attack," Fu Zhen said.

The man nodded and took out a blade from his storage bag. He took a deep breath and the blade started glowing red. He immediately dashed forward and swung the sword right at the chest of the puppet.

CLANG

There was not a single scratch on the puppet, but words did appear on the screen.

<Meridian Tempering - 6th Realm>

"Good, you have 2 more chances. Do you want to use it?" Fu Zhen asked. Tian Hao thought for a few seconds and nodded. He attacked the puppet twice more, but the result was the same.

"Okay. Tian Hao from the Undying sect. The highest attack is at Meridian Tempering - 6th Realm," Fu Zhen announced.

"Next up is Hua Mexin from Hanging Fruit sect," Fu Zhen announced.

Alex watched from the seating area and was a little confused, "Is... is it going to be just this for the next 300 or so turns?" he asked.

"Yes. This will work as an introduction for the audience to the various people fighting in the competition. Besides, it won't take just as long as the first one. Since the others know what to do, they won't take much time," Ma Rong said.

"Alright," Alex said and looked back at the stage.

The elemental damage-taking puppet had a <Meridian Tempering 9th realm> hovering on the screen above it. The lady who just attacked, however, decided to not attack twice, and it was time for the next contestant.

"Oh, she must be confident in her skill huh. Is the peak of Meridian tempering really that strong?" Alex asked.

"It should get you to the Top 50 in terms of strength with just that," Ma Rong said.

"Oh, then the overall strength must no— " Suddenly, gasps rang out from the people. Alex turned around to see that the physical puppet had 4 words hovering over it.

Seeing those words made him stop speaking and rethink what he was going to say.

<Mind Tempering -4th Realm>

"Who is that guy?" Alex asked as he looked down below. The guy was wearing a white robe and had a smug smile on his face.

"Tsk. I want to punch that face."

Alex looked to the side with surprise when he heard Ma Rong speak that sentence. "What?" He asked in confusion.

"Sigh, never mind. I just hate that robe," Ma Rong said.

Alex looked back and focused on that robe and realized where he had seen it before. "Ah, it's that guy's sect," Alex said as he remembered Sect Leader Li of the Golden Eagle sect who tried to flirt with Ma Rong.

No wonder she was getting annoyed.

"Did they never take part in the production competitions?" Alex asked.

"Probably not. Their sect is a normal one like the Tiger sect, so a few might have taken part in different competitions. But none were good enough to stand out.

"I see," Alex said.

The Damage test actually went far faster than Alex would've thought it would. Every minute new people were being tested, sometimes 2 or even 3.

In half an hour, nearly 50 people were already tested.

Amongst those people, only 3 people managed to go beyond the Mind Tempering realm. Alex soon realized how hard it was to find a Mind Tempering expert in the Crimson Empire that was also below 25 years of age.