

## Alchemy 361

### Chapter 361: Training

"Arghh! Finally done," Alex thought as he put away the cauldron and the formation plate. The spirit stone behind the formation plate had gone dull after losing all of its Qi.

He picked it up and threw it away after realizing it was worthless to him now.

Suddenly, the space shifted around once more. This time, the hole he had been standing on top of was gone. "What the?" Alex thought. "Why is the hole gone? It was there with me the whole night through multiple space shifts."

He wondered if he missed anything and took out the instruction to the formation he had inside his storage. After reading more than what he had last time, he noticed something that he had overlooked that time.

"Oh, no wonder. It targets Qi signature rather than actual people caught inside. So anything with my Qi signature and a little more around them all gets teleported around randomly."

"So that's why the hole went around with us. The formation holds my Qi signature even after releasing it huh?" Alex thought.

He looked at his bag with a bit of happiness when he realized that he had successfully managed to make nearly 40 pills, all of which hovered around high Earth Grade and some of which even crossed the Heaven Grade threshold.

"Now that I know alchemy works, I should start learning how pills actually work. I need to learn about alchemy on a fundamental level," he thought.

He decided to try and understand formations and pills for a while longer before logging out to get his food.

Afterward, he went to his university and learned whatever the teacher taught them with barely any students. There were more than yesterday, but still half of them were missing.

Even the teacher was flabbergasted when he saw this. "What are your friends doing? Are they still at home playing the game? Do they think they can make a living by just playing that game?" he said angrily.

"Not to mention, there is a field trip coming up very soon for your first years. Tell your friends to come back to classes so that they don't miss it," the teacher said.

"Professor, Where are we going?" a student asked.

"I don't know. There are still a few more days before the faculty will decide on the location. Just look out for it," the professor replied.

'A field trip huh? I should be able to make it,' Alex thought.

After the classes ended, he and Hannah went to the driving range. Along the way, he told her about the field trip he had coming up soon.

"Oh, yeah, we had those too. I hated that we had to wait until halfway through the second semester to even go through," Hannah said.

"Oh, why?" he asked.

"I don't know? Maybe they don't like setting field trips every 6 months, so they do it every year," Hannah said.

"Where did you guys go?" Alex asked.

"Umm... I think it was... Ember wood city? Wait no, that was the second year. First-year we went to a crappy museum out in Evergreen city in the east," Hannah said.

"You guys should be different. Maybe they will take you someplace quite fun," Hannah said.

Alex was hopeful. Although it would be a lie to say he hadn't experience going to another city with other similar-aged people, that was only in the game.

It would be the first time for him.

"Urghh... why is the university still open right now? Nobody is coming," Hannah complained.

"You got missing students too, sister? My class has more than half missing too," Alex said.

"More than half? That's nothing. We have over 90 students absent in a class with 110 students. It's practically a ghost town in there," Hannah said.

"Woah, is the game causing that much problem for your guys?" Alex asked.

"Yes, and no. Did you know my university class will end in 3 weeks?" Hannah asked.

"In 3 weeks? I knew it was getting close, but not so close," Alex said.

"Yeah. And since there are only 3 weeks left and all of our assignments are complete, we just want the classes to end already," Hannah said.

They talked the rest of the way through and got to learn how to drive a car for the next 2 hours. After that, they had dinner nearby and caught a cab home.

After returning back, they both went to their respective room and logged back into the game.

After Alex appeared back in the game at around 7 pm, he didn't immediately start to make pills or learn about formations. There was another thing he had been neglecting for a while now.

That was cultivation.

"Come out, Pearl."

Pearl came out in a flash of white light. "Meow!"

Alex took in a deep breath and sucked in all of his cultivation base to only have his body cultivation left.

"Let's fight," he said.

Pearl was confused for a second, but followed his order immediately and started attacking. Alex didn't do anything else and just fought for the next 3 to 4 hours.

Pearl hadn't fought for over 2 weeks, so he was very happy to get to fight right now. Without his cultivation, Alex's strength was pretty much the same as Pearl's.

After cultivating for a while, Alex's body strength would always match the same as Pearl's. So, if he ever wanted to know how strong his physical body was, he could just check Pearl's status page for the most part.

Alex felt like he could break through once more since he had enough days for his cultivation base to be stable again. So, he brought out a monster core and ate it.

Surprisingly, there was nothing for him to fight and he easily got all of the Qi.

"That was convenient. If only that happened every time, I could have Pearl start eating the monster cores too," Alex thought.

"Here, eat this for now," Alex said and tossed a bone tempering realm monster core to Pearl.

Pearl jumped and caught the core in his mouth, and at that exact moment, space shifted again.

## Chapter 362: Alchemy Elemental Interaction

"No!" Alex screamed. "Pearl! Pearl!," he shouted out loud. The space shifted on him too soon and he couldn't grab onto Pearl on time.

"Meow!" a sound came from somewhere. Alex couldn't tell what direction it was from or what distance away it was either. However, hearing the sound, he got relieved.

"Hah! I overreacted," he said out loud. Once he calmed down, he decided to search for Pearl. He wondered which direction he should start with when he realized that he could feel a certain connection with Pearl that transcended the disorientation of the formation.

'I can feel him through our bond,' he thought.

He closed his eyes, hearing and other senses as well as took back his spiritual sense. After that, he started walking in the direction of Pearl.

Before he knew it, he could hear a rather loud 'Meow' coming from right next to him.

"Hey, buddy. I thought you would be lost for a while. It seems we can find each other with our bond," Alex said.

"Meow," Pearl replied.

"Did you get the core?" he asked.

"Meow," Pearl nodded.

"Good," Alex said. "Alright, time to break through."

He opened up his status page and clicked on breakthrough. He felt his cultivation base elevate as he entered the 7th realm of Organ Tempering.

'Just a little more. If I train rigorously for the next week or two, I should be able to enter the Meridian tempering realm,' he thought.

He then dug a hole and put his formation plage and spirit stones inside it. After providing some Qi to activate it, a fire started burning on top of the formation.

Alex took out a cauldron, but it was not his Golden Jade cauldron. Instead, he took out one of the black, disposable cauldrons. He wasn't going to make pills today.

Instead, he was going to learn interactions between the ingredients and based on that, make a new pill of his own. He didn't know how long that was going to take for him to learn, but he was going to try it for as long as it was required.

He didn't immediately start adding in random ingredients. He started with some pills whose recipe he was very familiar with.

The first thing he did was recall every single thing he could about those ingredients. It wasn't very long before he learned that he actually didn't know much about the ingredients themselves, but knew quite a lot about the pills they made.

So, he decided to start with making the pills. He put in the first ingredient and waited for its energy to release. Once the energy was released, Alex used his spiritual sense to try to sense the energy. He learned that the first ingredient produced Fire energy.

He then put in the second ingredient and tried to sense what energy was being released. "Hmm... this is... earth right? Yeah, this is earth," Alex thought as he felt a new energy.

He could tell that the Earth energy wasn't as strong as the fire energy, but... he had a feeling he knew what was going to happen.

"Earth is going to get stronger, isn't it?" he thought. It was like he half knew the answer and the other half guessed it. The earth energy should have been not as strong considering how strong the fire energy was.

However, instead of the fire energy messing with the earth energy, it helped it grow, and soon all that was left was very strong earth energy.

Alex's eyes shined when he realized what had happened. "The fire energy empowered the earth energy. So I CAN use the elemental theory from the fights while making pills as well," he thought.

The next ingredient he put in produced wood energy. He sensed the energy it output and guessed what would happen. "Hmm, the earth energy is so strong, so it should destroy the wood energy right?" he thought.

He was correct. The Earth energy did in fact soon destroy all of the wood energy. However, in doing so, it was also reduced by a fair bit in amount.

"Hmm... I can understand the wood energy is gone, but where exactly did it go? How is the energy disappearing? It's not like they should cancel each other, right? Even if they did, there shouldn't be a net loss in energy" he thought.

He was a bit confused but decided to follow the pill recipe. Everything went exactly how he planned it to, but the energies would randomly increase in amount or decrease in an amount from time to time, which confused him a lot.

Finally, he finished making the pill and the harmony came out to be around 25%.

"Eh, that's not bad since I'm making on a disposable cauldron," Alex thought. For the rest of the night, he decided to continue making pills in a similar way.

He wanted to learn exactly how the energy interacted, and most of all, why the energy was randomly disappearing and reappearing.

He tried to find answers throughout the night, and it wasn't until 3 am when he finally realized something.

"I see... so the energy isn't disappearing when they get weakened or ruined, but instead they go into a state of balance with the other energies, and the elements are no longer given off their aura."

"But when I put in another ingredient that can control or overwhelm the weaker element of the two, or empower the stronger one, the initial energy comes back and it gives off the impression of energies randomly appearing," he thought.

That felt like the right explanation to him. "So, I not only have to keep track of what energy is currently in the cauldron but also every single other energy that I put in before it," he thought.

"Well, I at least have to keep track of the ones that vanished." He continued making the pills and learning more and more as he went along.

He tried multiple recipes and understood the things that took place inside the cauldron. Finally, he stopped only when daybreak arrived.

#### Chapter 363: Routine

Alex tried to learn whatever was being taught in the class, but couldn't keep much focus at all. He was way too excited at the prospect of learning alchemy tonight.

After learning how alchemy ingredients interacted, at least to a basic level, he was going to start making his own pill tonight. Or, at least try to.

He wasn't really confident that he could make a pill today or within the next week. He was pretty much sure he would fail a lot. But what mattered was not that he failed, but that he learned from his failure.

After the classes ended, he went to the driving range with Hannah. Today was the third day of driving, and he felt like he was getting good at it.



Still, he was a little sad he wasn't going to learn it as fast as he did with his bicycle back at home. "Sigh, I guess a car really is different," he thought.

Once the driving lessons ended, he and Hannah directly came back home. They ate something from the fridge and both went back to their room. After which, Alex excitedly logged back into the game.

Opening his eyes, Alex didn't even have to look around. He immediately got to the daily routine he had set to learn starting today.

From the moment he logged back into the game, he would train for about 3 hours. He had the perfect training ground, so he was free to temper himself however he wanted to.

Then, he would train physically with Pearl for the next 3 or so hours. After that was done, he would practice alchemy until an hour before it was time for him to log out. At which point, he would try to revise everything he learned that night.

He took out a cheap sword, one of the many he had bought in the Cardinal City, and started practicing. He sent out attacks without restraint as there was nothing there for him to hurt at all.

Sword slashes, palm attacks, fist attacks, kicks, punches— he did whatever he wanted to and trained in it. Space shifted around, but he didn't care. He simply kept on training.

After 3 hours were over, he finally stopped. He was breathless, but he wasn't Qi-less. Even with all the training, he managed to end with a little less than half of his Qi left. Which should go back to being relatively full by the time he was done training with Pearl.

Pearl came out with a hearty 'Meow'. It seemed his instinct to fight as a monster made him really excited about the training.

The both of them didn't hold back when fighting. That was because when Alex suppressed his Qi, his body had the same cultivation base as Pearl. However, Pearl had both Qi and Body cultivation with him.

So, in a sense, he was stronger than Alex at the time. Despite that, the reason they didn't hold back was because of the armor that Alex was wearing.

It could block attacks from an early True realm expert, attacks from a little cat in the Organ Tempering realm were nothing to him.

Still, it would hurt him if Pearl attacked his head, so he had spiritual sense running on full throughout the training session. In between the training, they would sometimes be separated by the space shifting around inside the formation, but within a few seconds, they were able to find each other again.

The training ended 3 hours later with both of them rather tired. However, Alex didn't really care much about it. He took a 5-minute rest and got to setting his furnace with the metal formation plate.

Once everything was set, he put down a disposable cauldron and started making his pills. He had already planned a set of ingredients that didn't adhere to any recipe he knew, but based on the elemental theory should technically work. That was of course assuming he perfectly knew the elemental theory of alchemy.

Once the cauldron was hot enough, he put in his first ingredient. The moment he put in that ingredient, he realized something and immediately pulled the ingredient back out.

"Sh\*t," he thought. "I have to worry about this too now?" he thought. He realized that he was so excited about the elemental aspect of the pill making, that he forgot the most fundamental ones— The fire, the motion, and the timings.

A regular recipe of a pill consisted of a few things.

First of all, was the list of the ingredients required. The second was the order of those ingredients. The third was the temperature in which the ingredients were to be burned, the fourth was the motion in which you had to move the ingredients around the cauldron, and finally, the timing at which it was appropriate for the next ingredient to be added.

Alex realized that he knew only 2 of the 5 requirements of a recipe. He thought about what was the correct thing to do and finally realized his mistake. It wasn't that he had to be more prepared, but rather...

"I shouldn't have prepared at all," he thought. Making a list of ingredients basically forced him down a path of pill-making that wasn't flexible at all. While some would argue that it made the discovery of new pills easier, some would also argue that the alchemist should change what is required, when it is required based on the alchemist's wishes.

So, Alex dumped the list and randomly took out an ingredient, and dropped it into the cauldron with no hesitation. He tried to move it around to release energy. While what he randomly tried did produce energy, it was only in a small amount.

He needed to change the approach and be fast about it, or he would end up burning the ingredient. He tried a few different variations and in the end found one that he thought fit him, but by then the ingredient had started charring and it was unusable.

He had somehow managed to fail before he had even started with making the pills.

#### Chapter 364: First Success

Alex's forehead was full of sweat. He was on his 4th start of the night and he had already burned 3 of the same ingredient. Although they were easily acquirable ingredients, his heart still bled a little when he thought of them getting ruined.

But that was the life of an Alchemist. He was lucky enough to get the Alchemy God's Knowledge, however, the other Alchemists didn't get such an opportunity. So, they had to work hard to get these ingredients and then burn them while trying to learn something from them.

An alchemist that was successful had more burnt ingredients and more exploded cauldrons than one that failed.

So, Alex suck it up and started the process a fourth time. Fortunately, the last 3 tries weren't wasted at all. Thanks to them, he had come to learn of the correct temperature and the correct movement required to extract the most energy from the ingredients without burning it.

So, once the cauldron had heated enough, he put in the first ingredient. He knew what to do this time, so he followed what he learned and moved the ingredient around to extract the most energy possible.

Once the ingredient had released almost all of its energy, it started burning and turning to powder. Once that happened, Alex knew it was time to put in the next ingredient.

He chose the next ingredient based on what ingredient was on the cauldron right now. Since the energy released right now was a low amount of Water energy, he decided to use a wood energy ingredient that would absorb the water energy and grow.

He knew that he was very much likely going to burn this ingredient, but he still bit his tongue and put it in. The ingredient was something he had just used last night, so he was quite used to it and knew exactly what it released.

Suddenly, a thought came to him. "Do I need to create an entirely new temperature and movement for the ingredients, or can I just follow the recipes?" he wondered.

He tried following the instruction for that exact ingredient from other recipes. The same movement at the same temperature, and it worked. He was quite happy when he learned that. So, he chose the next ingredient after that one.

He decided to go for an earth energy ingredient that he could control with the wood energy in the cauldron and thus lower the overall wood energy a bit

Following the previous recipes had worked for the wood energy ingredient, so he decided to do the same for this one as well. However, when he did the same thing for this ingredient, he didn't get his desired result at all.

When he put in the ingredient, everything was fine. But then, he started moving the ingredient around and it violently released its energy. The amount of earth energy that was released was very large in a very short amount of time.

The same thing happened in the other pill recipe as well, and it was helpful there as it was required to rein in the high fire energy, but in the current one where the existing energy was wood, the violent release of energy sought to ruin all of the wood energy in the cauldron.

As soon as that happened, Alex was sure what was going to happen next. He quickly used his Qi to grasp the entire cauldron and threw it as far away as he possibly could.

BOOM

A massive explosion rang out from everywhere around him. Due to the formation disorienting him, he couldn't even tell that the explosion was coming from one direction.

He quickly wiped his sweat and sat back down. 'I will need to think more regarding the ingredients,' he thought. He decided to see if there were other variations of movement and temperature for that exact ingredient in his list of recipes he knew.

He couldn't find another recipe where this one was used in a different way, so he decided to change the ingredient for a different ingredient that produced earth energy and restarted the whole process once more.

He took out another disposable cauldron and started practicing once more. He redid the first two ingredients and when he got to the third one, he put in a different one that didn't violently release its energy.

This time, what he had expected happened. The earth energy from the third ingredient was released slow enough that the existing wood energy could overwhelm it and thus decrease itself overall.

Alex sighed in relief when he realized that he had succeeded this far. He just had to do this a few more times and he would probably have enough energy and powder to make a pill.

He tried a fourth ingredient, and it ended in failure. He had to toss away that batch as the ingredient caused another violent reaction and nearly exploded on his face again.

He changed that ingredient and tried once more. This ingredient didn't work either and this too exploded. He decided to use an ingredient that produced entirely different energy.

This one he successfully mixed in with the energy. He chose his 5th ingredient carefully and also managed to mix it with the rest of the ingredients.

On the 7th one, however, it was getting harder and harder to expect what would happen when one put in the ingredient. There were multiple hidden energies that he couldn't sense at all and they could all immediately show themselves when he put in this ingredient.

And that was exactly what happened, so he had to throw that cauldron away as well.

On the 5th try did he find the right ingredient for the 7th one, and it took him 8 times to find the right ingredient for the 8th one.

Once he realized that the energies had come to a good enough state, he decided to turn them into a pill. He used elemental guidance to have the powder absorb the energy and then formed the powder into a ball.

Once it was ready, he finally brought it out onto his palm. He had succeeded in making a pill of his own.

Chapter 365: Unimaginably Rich

"That was hard," Alex said as he laid down on his back. He didn't know how many hours he had spent just making this one pill, but this one pill was his absolute masterpiece as of yet.

He looked at the time and was surprised that it was already 5 am. "Damn, it took me 5 hours of non-stop pill making to make just a single pill?" he exclaimed.

If any experienced alchemist were here, they would cough up so much blood that they could probably make a blade with the amount of iron in it and cut Alex's head off.

"Let's see what I made," he thought and checked the pill.

[???????????? - 14%]

"Huh? So I made a pill that doesn't exist? Did I make something that is not in the game, or just one they had no records of?" Alex thought. His 'real world' senses were tingling once again.

"Sigh, whatever. I need to know what this pill does," he thought. There were two things he could do. First, feed a person. Since the only person here was himself, he couldn't do that.

Second, feed a pill swine. Since there wasn't any around. He couldn't do that either. Reluctantly, he took out a pill bottle and stored it in. He felt sad that he managed to make his first pill and couldn't even tell what the pill was about.

Alex rested for a while and at the same time recalled exactly what he did. He tried to think of things that he thought he did right, things he thought could be omitted, things he thought could be improved, etc.

Once he gathered all those information, he got to making the pills once again.

This time, there was no problem at all during the process. In fact, it was much better than the other times. He made the pill once more, and it came out as 18% this time.

He tried to understand what he could improve once again and went on to redo it once again. However, this time, he used his own cauldron instead. Since he knew that the recipe was getting closer and closer to being perfect, he took out his actual cauldron.

He redid his pill 3 more times until he couldn't improve it any more. Once that happened, he took out an empty talisman and started writing the recipe.

He wrote everything he could think of in this talisman and stored it away. Light started shining through the fog and he realized that morning had arrived.

He took away everything and closed his eyes. He started absorbing all the knowledge he had acquired today. He spent the next half an hour doing so, and once that was done, he decided to learn about formations a little more.

Only after that did he log out.

He freshened up and walked out of his room to meet Hannah in the kitchen.

"What are you doing here?" Hannah asked curiously.

"Umm... breakfast?" Alex answered.

"Yeah, but why this early?" Hannah asked.

"For university of co— Oh!" Alex said after he finally remembered that it was Friday today and he didn't have any classes today.

"Urghh... the days are all jumbled up right now," Alex said. "I can't tell what is when at all."

"Fair enough. Come sit down. You can go back and play once you finish eating," Hannah said and served him breakfast.

Alex ate gratefully and helped Hannah with the dishes before going back to his room. He wanted to log right back into the game, but somehow also felt a little burnt out. It was like his creative juice had all gone out of the window.

He sat on the bed and saw himself in the mirror. "Urghh... how long has it been since I exercised again?" he wondered. Without much thinking, he got down on the floor and started doing some push-ups.

It didn't take him long to realize just how out of shape he was. A farmer's son being this weak, despite doing physical works his whole life was a little unacceptable.



He did various exercises for the next hour or so and finally logged back into the game.

He sat down and thought of what he could do next. He wanted to make formations, but that was nearly impossible as he didn't have the right metals or blueprints for Common rank formations.

The only one he did know was the fire and communication one, and even then, he didn't know how the communication one really worked. So, he really did only know the formation for lantern fire.

"I already made the one for fire. I guess all I can learn is really just theory at this point. Whatever, I will learn the blueprints once I get out of there," he thought.

"Speaking of which, I probably don't need all of these spirit stones right? I should convert some to money and send it to my account," he thought.

He checked his storage bags to see how many spirit stones he had and was once again surprised despite knowing the number.

"Damn, 2067 True spirit stones really is a lot. And that Zexi carried this around AFTER buying all of those things," Alex thought. He was shocked at the absolute fortune that Zexi walked around every day with.

Alex opened his setting panel and got ready to transfer his money.

<Do you want to send '180,000 Spirit stones (\$1,800,000) to XXXXXXXXXXX343?>

Alex hadn't calculated how much money that amount was and when he saw it, he was shocked. despite taking away 200 true spirit stones from 2000 he was sending, the number was still ridiculous.

"W— Wait a second. Ones, tens, hundreds.... A hundred thousand..." his eyes went wide as he saw the final position of 1. "Millions," he exclaimed. "Am I? Wait... am I really a millionaire now?" he couldn't believe it.

Even as he was in disbelief, he clicked yes. The spirit stones disappeared from his inventory, and he too hastily logged out.

He excitedly waited for a moment and nearly jumped to his phone when he heard the notification.

He quickly opened his phone to see a message on it.

<\$1,800,000 has been successfully credited to your account>

Chapter 366: Snarl

Alex felt like he was on cloud nine right now with the notification in front of him. He quickly opened his bank account and was more than surprised when he realized he had a total of 2.3 Million dollars in the bank now.

Alex's mind stopped functioning as he didn't know what he could do with that money. That was just too much money for him.

He quickly went online and started looking up what to do with a lot of money. He quickly found a trustworthy blog post that told him exactly what he could do with the amount of money he was getting.

The first thing he did was create a retirement account with a high interest rate in a well-respected bank. He had to do it online, so he got his documents and started uploading them to the website. Once that was done, he had to speak with someone and answer a few questions before the bank account was opened.

Once it was, he transferred a total of 2 million dollars to that account and kept the 300 thousand dollars for use. That too was way too much for him, but he had different things in mind for this one.

Once the retirement part was done, he started looking for different stocks to invest in. Thanks to his business classes he knew what to look out for and what to absolutely ignore.

The most obvious one was Deva corp. They were the biggest names right now, so he bought 3 shares of theirs for nearly 100 thousand dollars. The rest he invested into lesser-known, but promising brands.

Once that was done, he was left with only 80,000 dollars. He needed to keep some for himself, but he also wanted to help his parents, so he sent them 20 thousand dollars without them knowing.

The remaining 60 thousand dollars was what he planned on actually using for daily use.

Once all that was done, he finally returned back to the game. He was surprised when he realized it was already 10 am. "I spent nearly 3 hours doing all of that huh?" he thought.

He didn't have a plan for the days when he didn't have classes, so he decided to just fight against Pearl. He called Pearl out and got to fighting.

Pearl was very happy to fight with him every time. Alex was happy too since that was a training Pearl as well. After fighting for a while, he realized that he wasn't really helping Pearl train for the different techniques that he could have had.

"Beasts are supposed to inherit abilities from their parents right? I wonder if you have some as well or I should get some techniques for you from a store," Alex thought.

All of a sudden, he released his cultivation base and started to seriously fight Pearl. He brought out a common sword he had and started attacking.

"Come on, fight back. Hit harder, use some techniques," Alex cried out as he swung towards Pearl. Pearl was barely dodging these attacks and was getting a little confused as to why Alex was so aggressive.

However, it was getting harder and harder to dodge, so suddenly his whole body glowed yellow and he let the sword land on him. Alex felt a jolt of fear when he saw his attack actually connect.

"Oh no! Pearl are? y—"

Suddenly, Pearl jumped at him. Alex was both happy and surprised. His paws glowed goldenly and it directly hit Alex's chest.

Despite wearing the armor, he could feel the impact of the attack and was quite surprised. At the same time, Pearl jumped back at him and tried to bite him.

Alex didn't want that, so he kicked the flying Pearl and sent him away. Pearl was lost in the fog, but he could sense where Alex was and came running back towards him.

When he appeared, he could see a small change in Pearl. On his forehead that was usually white, there was a small golden line that was starting to form.

'Did I hurt him?' Alex's heart sank when he thought that. Pearl seemed to have lost all sense of self and was still trying to attack him.

"Pearl Stop!" he ordered, but Pearl was still coming at him. "Stop! Stop!" he had to say it multiple times before Pearl stopped running and snarled at him.

Alex walked forward and grabbed him in a hug. "It's okay, It's okay. I'm sorry, buddy. I didn't mean to push you so far," Alex apologized.

The snarls stopped coming from Pearl and what came out next was a cute "Meow!". Alex looked at him and he was back to being normal. No splits on his forehead, no angry snarls on his face.

"Are you okay, buddy?" he asked.

"Meow!" Pearl replied to confirm that he was okay now.

"Alright. No more fighting. I am happy that you knew those techniques. Do you know some more?" he asked.

"Meow! Meow! Meow! Meow!" Pearl meowed to confirm, but he also said that he didn't know how to use it.

"I'm surprised I understood that at all," Alex thought. While he didn't understand what Pearl said, he understood the intent behind his words and could grasp the meaning that way.

"Alright. Do you want to go back? Stay? Keep fighting?" Alex asked.

"Meow!" Pearl said that he wanted to stay.

"Very well. Do what you want. Here, have some food even," Alex said and tossed him a corpse of a monster he had killed a few days ago. It was still pretty fresh.

Pearl started chomping on it, and Alex went on to practice his techniques. He didn't recklessly attack everywhere as he might hit Pearl, so he only trained with swords and attacked where he knew Pearl wasn't at.

After a few more hours of training, he sent Pearl away and told him not to come towards where he was at. After that, he prepared his makeshift furnace once more and got ready to make some pills of his own.

#### Chapter 367: Direction of Motion

"Hm... how do I start this?" Alex wondered. He had made too many mistakes the day before to simply just go back to trying to make a new pill. He wanted to take a different approach this time.

"Let's see... since the motion, temperature, and the rate at which the energy is released matters, I should start by learning how that works," Alex thought.

He went through his storage bags and brought out a bunch of common ingredients that he had an excess of. He was planning on first understanding how Motion affected the rate of energy released.

"So... since I am planning on testing just the motion, I need to set the temperature constant," he thought. He set the temperature at around 300 degrees and waited for his Golden Jade Cauldron to be hot enough.

Since he was only using single ingredients, he didn't have to worry about them blowing at all. Once the cauldron was hot, he put in his first ingredient.

The first ingredient was a normal Silver Grass that could be found just about anywhere. He put a single strand of the grass and started moving it clockwise such that it took him exactly 2 seconds to make a complete rotation.

When he finished one rotation, a bit of metal energy was released. He made the clockwise rotation again, and a bit more of the energy was released.

He had to do 4 complete rotations for all the energy in the grass to be released and the grass to finally crumble down to powdered form.

Once that was done, Alex brought everything out and threw it away. For the second turn, he kept the temperature the same and the speed of rotation the same as well, but he changed the direction in which the ingredient moved.

Surprisingly, there was no change in the rate of energy release at all. That confused Alex a little. "If it doesn't change the rate or messes up an ingredient, why do the recipes bother explaining the direction of the motion?" he wondered.

He brought out a set of ingredients for a normal pill and decided to try his theory on it. He first made a normal pill following the recipe that he knew and ended up making a pill with a Harmony of 52%.

It was a very good result, considering the pill's final energy wasn't Metal aligned.

He then took out another set of the same ingredients, only this time he was going to follow the recipe all the same except for the directions in which the ingredients were moved in.

He started with the first ingredient and moved it clockwise, despite the recipe stating that he had to move it counterclockwise. Once that was done, he proceeded with the next ingredient and moved it clockwise as well.

As he had expected, the energy released was the same as last time and they interacted the same way as well. Then the third, the fourth, the fifth... every subsequent ingredient he put into the cauldron, he moved it in a clockwise motion.

What kept on surprising him was that the energy mixed together exactly how they were supposed to. The motion didn't at all affect the rate of release or the quality of the energy released.

"What's going on? Does the motion have no effect on the pill?" he wondered. It felt wrong given how all the recipes continuously focused on the motion of the ingredient so much.

It couldn't be that no one before him tried to do what he was doing, and yet the recipe still remained the same. "I must be missing some information," Alex thought.

He continued putting in more and more ingredients and continued on moving it clockwise regardless of what the recipe spoke. Finally, he had put in all the required ingredients and turned it into powder.

"The resulting energy is still wood. It really made no difference that I changed all the direction of the motion for the ingredients," he said. Then, he moved on to form the pill.

He first tried to pass the energy in the air, into the powder. He used elemental guidance to move the energy and passed it through where the powder was.

"What?" Alex was shocked when he saw what happened next. When the energy passed through the powder, as if the powder rejected the energy or the energy rejected the powder, the energy passed through the powder and came out on the other side with almost 90% of it still remaining.

"That's weird," Alex thought and used Elemental Guidance once more, but it didn't really affect much. "What's wrong? Was it because of what I changed?" Alex wondered.

He tried Elemental Guidance once more for the third and last time, and it didn't have any effect at all. He couldn't keep using it any longer, or his powder would end up burning.

So he started forming a pill. Suddenly, his pill-splitting Qi was released from his body which moved onto the cauldron and turned the powder into two separate spheres.

Two strong vortexes appeared from inside both of those spheres and started sucking in the energy from the surrounding. The energy that the Elemental Guidance couldn't push into the powder, was now being sucked by the vortex.

Alex waited for the vortex to be over. Finally, all the elements in the surroundings were gone, all devoured by the two newly formed pills.

He decided to take them out, but just then, as soon as the vortex was gone, the two pills suddenly spewed out a lot of energy that had just been sucked back into the cauldron.

They couldn't handle it all. Alex opened the cauldron and checked the two-pill inside. One of those pills was at 14% harmony, and the other one was at 12% harmony.

Even if they were together, the pill would barely be an Earth-grade pill. Compared to the Heaven Grade pill he made before this, the current pills were complete garbage.

"And that was all just because I changed the direction of the motion, wasn't it?" Alex thought. "I still don't know how it affects anything at all."

#### Chapter 368: Speed and Temperature

Alex thought for minutes on end through the different things he had read regarding the alchemy books, but all he found was the books saying that the direction of the motion was important.

Every single one of the books failed to mention why. He wondered what he should do, and decided to log out.

He went onto his computers and started searching about alchemy on the internet. Unfortunately, there wasn't much information regarding alchemy on there. He knew more than what was available on there.



"Is no one that far ahead on alchemy? Or are the talented ones just reluctant to share information?" Alex wondered. It would make sense that just like him, there were others that didn't like sharing any information they gain onto the internet.

"Sigh, I guess I will just have to ask the master. Hopefully, she knows the answer," Alex said and went back into the game.

He set everything back up and decided to continue his experiment. Now that he was done testing the direction of the motion, he was now going to check the speed of the motion.

He decided to use the Silver Grass again. Once the cauldron was at the same temperature as last time, he put it in the grass and started moving it in a clockwise direction.

At first, he moved it at a speed of half a rotation every second, which took him 4 whole rotations to fully turn it into powder. Then he went a little faster.

This time, he moved it at 1 rotation every second speed. He thought that it would still take it 8 seconds in total, but surprisingly, it far exceeded his expectations and actually took 16 seconds.

"Hmm, what if I went slower?" he thought and decided to go so slow that it would take him 4 seconds per full rotation. He tried it and as he expected, the ingredient turned into powder in just 1 rotation, or 4 seconds.

"Hmm... if I go even slower, will it turn to powder faster?" he wondered. That would surely help him cut down on the time a lot.

He decided to take 8 seconds per rotation this time and dropped in the Silver Grass. He started to slowly move the ingredient around, but not 2 seconds in Alex stopped.

He couldn't help but facepalm himself when he realize what had just happened.

"Of course, If I take too long to move it, it will obviously burn," Alex thought and laughed to himself. He cleared the cauldron of the burnt Silver grass and tried a few different variations.

After a while, he had a grasp of how much the speed slowed down or sped up the energy release process as well as the powder forming process.

'The temperature probably plays a big role as well, but I will have to wait until then,' he thought. Now that he was a little more knowledgeable in this, he decided to make the same pill as before, only this time he would change the speed entirely to have it release energy at the fastest rate possible.

He made the pills and ended up finishing making the pill in under 7 minutes. However, he could see that most of the energy had been rejected by the powder.

So, he ended up really just making pills with 9% harmony. It was a total failure.

"Hmm... so it had something to do with the powder and not the energy, huh?" he thought. "I always thought that energy was where it was all at, but it seems that even the powder is an important part of the process."

He tried one more time, but this time, he simply used the fastest rotation speed for every ingredient possible. The energy in turn was produced at a very slow rate.

This time he made a pill with 13% harmony. While it was a usable pill, to Alex, it was also a failure.

"Okay, so I can't really make a pill if the motion of the ingredients isn't correct. Let's move onto the temperature," he thought and took out Silver Grass once more.

This time, he was going to try using the ingredients at different temperatures. After testing for a while, he realized that the temperature was pretty simple.

The hotter the cauldron was, the less time it required for the ingredient to turn to powder.

'That's quite easy to remember. However, now I will have to check how they interact with one another and find out what the correct combination of 3 is for each ingredient in each pill,' Ning thought.

He was starting to get overwhelmed a little. If he had to remember it all, it would take him years upon years, and then he would finally be able to learn just the ingredients for common rank pills.

"Oh god, what did I get myself into?" he started to worry. Only now did he truly start to see the true vastness of Alchemy.

"Wait wait wait, don't panic. Surely the Alchemy God's Knowledge skill will help me when it grows. I will probably get more benefit from it, surely," Alex thought. He didn't know when a growth-type skill would actually grow.

He was hoping for it to be when he reached True realms, but it could have a different set of requirements as well.

"No, I can't put my hopes on an 'if'. I need to learn what I can right now," he thought. "It doesn't matter how long it will take, as long as I learn it, surely I can learn it all one day," he thought.

"Besides, it will help me in the long run, so it can't be a waste of time," Alex thought and continued.

He started testing the rate at which the energy was released and the powder was formed for each combination of temperature, the direction of motion, and speed of motion, for the Silver Grass.

It took him the entire day to try every single feasible combination he would try on a normal pill-making process. Only when he felt that he had done everything did he stop.

#### Chapter 369: Training

Once he finished testing the different combinations, he decided to stop for the day. He was exhausted and needed to go for the driving training.

He left and only returned after it was 7 pm. Once he was back, he trained his skills for a little bit and exhausted his remaining Qi as well.

After that, he decided to just cultivate for the night.

He called Pearl back who was wandering the fog the whole time Alex was training. As soon as he came back, Alex asked him to start cultivating.

"Meow," Pearl said and started cultivating. Numerous cuts started appearing all over Alex's body.

"Hmm... it hurts a bit more than the previous days," he thought. "Did you by any chance... breakthrough?" Ning thought and opened Pearl's status page.

[White Cat (Child) - Bonded

Name: Pearl

Cultivation Base: Organ Tempering 1st realm

Evolution Chance: 40%

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

]

"Oh wow! You are already at Organ Tempering 1st realm. That means.... Sigh, I will need to start feeding you Organ Tempering realm beasts," Alex said.

"Hmm... maybe as a monster you can eat the cores without fighting whatever that mental projection is that I have to fight each time, but I still feel a little scared to feed them to you," Alex said.

Pearl was still a child, so he wasn't very strong mentally to fight against the monsters. Or at least that's what Alex believed. "Whatever, let's just cultivate quietly."

Very soon, Alex fell into a trance and fell unconscious.

Early in the morning, he woke up. His body wasn't feeling as much pain and he felt like he had advanced in body cultivation as well.

"My body probably matches Pearl's cultivation base. If only it was like Pearl's and my body and Qi cultivation was the same," Alex hoped.

He told Pearl to stop and let him go roam around. As for himself, he logged out.

He walked out of the capsule a little tired, but fine overall. He wasn't really hungry but could eat a little if need be. So, he freshened up and went to get breakfast.

Hannah was there as well, ready to eat breakfast. The two cousins were starting to have a timetable for eating in the morning.

They both got themselves some food and ate.

Alex returned back to his room and logged into the game. The routine still stood. He trained with Pearl for a little while where he used his hands, legs, and swords to fight.

Once that was done, he got back to practicing alchemy.

"Hmm... what ingredient should I go for next?" Ning thought. There were way too many choices and he didn't know where to start with first.

"Ah, I should start with my pill's ingredients. Who knows, maybe the reason I have such little harmony in my pill is that I am using the wrong set of motion and temperature," he thought. Even after he had done his best, his highest was barely above Earth grade. So, it was pretty apparent that he hadn't made a good recipe.

So, he took out the first ingredient of his pill and started testing. He did numerous tests for the next 3 or 4 hours and finally tested every possible scenario.

Now that he didn't have to make a pill every time he came up with a new discovery, he was much faster. After he was done with the first ingredient, he moved on to the second one.

He had fortunately decided to use ingredients that he had a lot of, so he could do this testing for all the ingredients for his pill.

"Damn, I wonder how they perfected recipes for pills that require very rare ingredients. They probably didn't test the ingredients just like I am, right?" Alex wondered.

"I should ask master how they do that once I get out," he thought.

"Speaking of which, why is nobody here yet? Did they stop searching for me? ... or did they just never start?" Alex wondered. "A massive fog in the middle of the southern forest shouldn't be that hard to find right?"

He remembered how uniquely visible the 5 elemental fog was back when Wen Cheng took him to the alchemy garden. "I hope they didn't stop, but... why can't they find me?" Alex started feeling a little sad.

SLAP

"Stop thinking about that. Both masters are good people. There are also others that care for me. They won't stop searching for me," Alex thought. He stopped thinking negatively and started practicing once more.

He tried the next pill ingredient and practiced with it for the next 3-4 hours. Once he was done with that, he trained in his techniques a bit more.

Afterward, he ate an Organ Tempering 9th realm monster's core.

Suddenly, he was transported to his spiritual sea. He felt a little scared when he realized that he had been fighting these monsters using his spiritual sense and that if he had ever mistakenly eaten one where his spiritual sea was nearly gone, he would have probably died.

"Did the spiritual sea get bigger?" he thought. He could swear that the size of the spiritual sea much about half a Spirit Cleansing Lily's worth bigger, but he didn't know why. He decided to ignore that for now.

He looked at the beast in front of him, an owl-like bird monster, and got ready to fight. As soon as the bird moved, he started sending dozens of palms and fist attacks towards the monster.

Within 5 minutes, it died.

"Hm... were my attacks stronger as well? Or am I just thinking that because they didn't do much against Zexi?" he thought.

Now that the bird was dead, he knew what was going to happen next. He looked down at the sea surface and waited for the yellow fog to rise up.

As he expected, the yellow fog did rise up from around a small shadow on the surface of the sea. Alex kept staring at the shadow not knowing what it was. Soon, the fog devoured the bird as well as him, and he disappeared.

#### Chapter 370: The Move In

Now that he was out of the spiritual sea, he decided to cultivate. He called back Pearl and asked him to cultivate as well. Once the cuts started appearing all over his body, he cultivated himself as well.

Soon, he fell into a trance and fell asleep.

He woke up in the morning and logged out. He freshened up and went to the kitchen to get some food. Hannah was up as well and was about to get her breakfast as well.

"Any information on when they get here?" Alex asked.

"10 am. They will leave after sorting some stuff out with their landlord," Hannah said.

Today was Sunday. Today was the day Sarah and Emily were planning to move in with them. Alex had been a little nervous over the weekend while at the same time looking forward to them moving in.

"Alright, are you planning on any welcome party or something?" Alex asked.

Hannah stopped eating and suddenly hit her forehead. "Ah, Sh\*t! I was planning to do that, but then I kept on playing the game and completely forgot."

She ran to her room and came back with a phone in her hand. "What are you doing?" Alex asked.

"Ordering some groceries. Ever since the capsules arrived, all the raw food in the house has gone bad. We need more," Hannah said.

"Oh, so we are going to cook now? I can help you. I have free time," Alex said.

"Yes, thank you. That will be very helpful."

Within half an hour, a delivery guy was at their door with the groceries. Alex brought the groceries to the kitchen and Hannah started prepping the ingredients.

Alex helped her cut some vegetables. He worked at it slowly, trying not to cut himself and make an entire joke out of him again. He still felt a little bad about it when he cut himself last time.

For someone like him who was brought up on the farm and was used to cooking on days when his parents were out on the field, that was unacceptable.

This time, he managed to do it perfectly. He passed along the ingredients to Hannah and watched it closely as she cooked it.



By the time they were done with cooking the food, Emily and Sarah also arrived with their stuff. They had brought a moving crew to help with the move.

Alex showed the crew to Sarah and Emily's room. Sarah was going to take the room upstairs, while Emily was going to take the room opposite to the hall from Alex's.

Alex helped set up their furniture and capsules once they were put into the room.

"Ahh! This is so nice. The view is so good from the balcony as well," Sarah said as she lay on the couch. "I must say, although it's expensive, it's really worth it."

"I really like it too," Emily said. " Just the view from my new room is so much better than my old room."

"Urgh, I feel like only I missed out on windows. My room doesn't have any," Alex said.

"Yeah... well, that's my bad honestly. But it's not like you can appreciate a good view anyway. You spend all your time playing," Hannah said and chuckled a little.

"Umm... isn't it true for all 3 of you though?" Alex asked.

"Ahem, let's not talk about that. Come, the food will get cold soon," Hannah quickly changed the topic making the other 3 laughs out loud.

They ate the delicious lunch until their stomach was about to burst open.

"Ugh, with this much food, I doubt I will have to eat anything for the next 3 days," Sarah said. "I might go on a 2 day-long gaming session. I should be able to earn a few thousand dollars easily by then."

'2 days of the gaming session and only a few thousand dollars? That's... too little for someone in the upper true realms right?' Alex thought.

"Do you have any profession in-game, Sarah?" Alex asked. "Or are you just a normal cultivator?"

"Well, I don't have any profession, but I wouldn't call myself a normal cultivator at all. I am a well-known elder of a well-known sect in the Eastern Continent. My only problem right now is that I cultivated too fast, damn it."

"Now I have to do what not to fix my cultivation base. I've spent so much spirit stones on just ingredients and pills that can help me make my cultivation base stable again," Sarah said and turned to Hannah.

"What about you Hannah? Are you fixing your cultivation base?" Sarah asked

"Kind of. I've just stopped advancing further, and that's worked for now. I think my body might be good enough that it doesn't require additional help to fix my cultivation base," Hannah said.

"What? That's so broken. God, I'm jealous," Sarah said.

"Well, many people would be jealous of you too," Hannah said. "Look at where you are."

"I know... but I still can't help but be jealous, you know?" Sarah said. "By the way, do you have good talent and body to Alex?"

Alex thought for a second about what to answer. 'Since sister's body in the game is so good, mine can't be better than her at all. So...'

"Yes, I do," Alex said.

Sarah and Emily were a little surprised. Sarah hadn't expected him to say yes. "Oh, what grade?" she asked.

"My body is at Divine grade, and my talent is at God grade," Alex said.

"Woah! God-grade talent? That's like super rare," Sarah said.

"Wait, you got so lucky too? I thought you were just earning money because of Alchemy," Hannah said. She was surprised as well as this was her first time hearing about any of this.

"I mean, it hasn't really played any part in making money yet I guess, so I never spoke of it. Besides, I thought you knew because you never asked me about it," Alex said.

Sarah asked a few more questions and Alex answered as truthfully as he could. He had never talked about this stuff in-game or out of it, and it felt really good talking about it so freely for once.