

Alchemy 451

Chapter 451 - Elder's Meeting

Ma Rong's demeanor quickly changed. "You know about Wan Li?"

"Yes, master." Alex went on to explain everything regarding what happened in the forest, aside from the last part about nearly dying to Black Venom herself.

"Sigh, he's going around killing bandits huh? That damn Black Venom bandits. We tried to find them previously, but we couldn't find them at all. They always work away from the capital, and never in the same place."

"Wan Li knows that, so he might try to move again. You said he was wearing the face of an old man, right?" Ma Rong asked.

"Yes, master," Alex said.

"Sigh, then it will be more so impossible to find him," Ma Rong thought. "How many elders are still out looking for him?"

"All but the 3rd Elder returned. 3rd elder said that she won't return until she finds him."

Ma Rong nodded when she heard that. "Alright, go and tell the Second Elder to send a message to 3rd Elder to— No, wait. I will do it myself," Ma Rong said.

"No, sister. You can't go out right now," Lang Shun said.

"Huh why?" Ma Rong asked.

"What do you mean why? You stayed cooped up in your house for nearly 2 weeks for closed cultivation and didn't respond to the sect's problem once."

"Did you realize that since you were ill, it has been over a month and a half in which you haven't done your job as the sect leader?"

"Since the sect upgraded to the 1st grade, our student intake has increased. We are transitioning to a better phase, but our sect leader is missing to make the transition easy."

"Of course the elders will start to hate you after that happened. They think you are dodging responsibilities."

"The only reason they aren't taking any actions is that they think you are truly in closed cultivation and not ignoring them. If they find out that not to be the case, then there will surely be some mutiny," Lang Shun said.

"Are they actively talking about this?" Ma Rong asked.

"Yes. It's a daily conversation about how you've been missing for so long and don't care about the sect for so long," Lang Shun said.

Ma Rong's face turned slightly cold as she fell into thought. "Very well, I will do something about it," she said and pulled out a medallion.

Without a single hesitation, she sent a message to all the numbered elders in the sect.

Lang Shun got a message in his sect medallion as well and pulled it out before checking it.

"What? Did you call a meeting right now? You are just doing what they think they are doing," Lang Shun said. "Are you thinking straight, sister?"

"I know you worry about me, but you don't have to. Just go to the Elder's hall, I'll be there soon," Ma Rong said.

"Uhh... if you say so, Sister," Lang Shun said and left.

"Did you break through?" Ma Rong asked.

"Huh? Oh yeah," Alex answered.

"You should have let me know before you were leaving," she said.

"Uhh... sister's father was ill so we had to leave in a hurry. I couldn't send a message," Alex said.

"Sigh, I guess that's a valid excuse. Also, I heard there was a beast invasion around the same time, were you safe?" Ma Rong asked.

"Uhh... not really, but it wasn't due to me traveling at all," Alex said as he wondered how he should explain what happened to Ma Rong.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Um, did you hear about the black Jaguar that fought the emperor in the capital?" Alex asked.

"The new saint beast? Yeah, that beast was something I heard about after returning," Ma Rong said.

"Yeah... so I think that beast is after me. Even a week ago, during the invasion, I could feel it coming towards me. I could feel the aura of a saint realm cultivation base," Alex said.

Ma Rong's eyes went wide with shock and fear. "A-A Saint Beast is following you? That's... " Ma Rong couldn't understand what she was to do in this situation.

What was she to do as a master? What could she do against a Saint beast? Not even the ancestors inside the mountain could help her in this situation.

"I... I don't know what to do," Ma Rong said almost apologetically. For the first time, she felt like she couldn't help her disciple even when she knew he was in trouble.

"It's okay, Master. I ran from it once, I will do so again," Alex said. "On a positive note, I can now make True Qi."

Ma Rong got confused for a second. "Wait, you said True Qi? What's your cultivation base right now? Are you hiding it?" she asked.

"No, it's what I'm showing right now, but thanks to my Qi already being dense from the very start, I think it's starting to happen sooner than other people," Alex said. "I can only make a single strand of True Qi for now, but I'm sure I will soon make more after I cultivate a lot."

"Hmm," Ma Rong mulled over the info for a second. "Theoretically, it does make sense that you can make True Qi already. Hmm..."

Ma Rong thought for a second and spoke, "Are we looking at your cultivation base in the wrong way? Are you actually a Mind Tempering 5th realm cultivator, with a really weak aura instead?"

Alex felt like that could be true, but then he thought, 'No, the game's system says I'm at Mind Tempering 1st realm. Also the number of times I have broken through doesn't match up, and there was no way I started with the strength of a Skin Tempering 5th realm cultivator, so I should still count as a Mind Tempering 1st realm cultivator,' Alex thought.

"I guess it doesn't really matter in the end. It actually helps you better since most people underestimate you," Ma Rong said.

"Haha, they sure do," Alex said. "There had been many fighters in Tiger sect that couldn't fathom how strong he was after seeing his cultivation base."

"Alright, go back to your home and rest. I need to go to this meeting now," Ma Rong said.

"Okay, master. I will go and try improving some pills of mine," he said. "Oh right, that reminds me. What happened to the sweating pill? Did you improve it?"

Ma Rong sighed and shooked her head. "The way I am currently, I don't think there is any chance of me showing any improvement in anything Alchemy for a while now," Ma Rong said with a downtrodden face.

"Thankfully, Senior Lai also got the recipe and is improving upon it now. He will either send the improved recipe to me, or the princess will take her aunt back to the capital to have her healed," Ma Rong said.

"I see," Alex said.

"Okay, go now. I will be late otherwise," Ma Rong said.

"Yes, master. Good luck on today's meeting," Alex said and left the room.

Ma Rong stayed in the room for a little longer and finally sighed as she thought forward to what she would have to face in the meeting.

However, she had been away from the elders for quite a while now and at least owed the elders this much.

So, she walked out of her house and flew down.

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"Is sect leader finally leaving her closed cultivation?" an elder asked in the meeting hall.

"That seems to be the case. I don't think she would call a meeting for some other reason," another elder said.

"Was the sect leader really is closed cultivation though? She came out quite immediately after her disciple came back. Seems kinda fishy to me," another elder said.

"Sigh, if sect leader doesn't want to deal with the sect's problems anymore, she should just choose to resign from the position. I'm sure she would still garner the same amount of respect as an alchemist either way," another elder said.

"Honestly, I think we should go forth and request a new sect leader," another elder said what they were all thinking on the inside.

"Settle down, guys," the 5th elder said. "Stop making decisions in a rush. Let's hear what the sect leader has to say. Maybe she does have legitimate reasons to ignore the sect's status for 2 weeks."

"Yeah, 5th elder is correct. Let's just have some patience," another elder said.

Lang Shun stayed at the side, a little angry at the elders, but he couldn't do anything as he knew his sister was at fault here.

'Sigh, why did that idiot sis have to leave now?' he thought angrily.

A pair of footsteps rang out as a person walked in. "Oh, thank god I'm not late," the second Elder said as he walked in.

"Haha, Second Elder. Did you lose track of time after spending hours talking with your wife or what?" someone teased.

"You sound pretty jealous, 9th elder. Maybe it's about time you found someone for yourself too," the Second Elder said.

"Sigh, no matter who I find, I doubt I will ever be as lovey-dovey as you and the Third elder," the 9th Elder said.

The Second elder laughed and walked up to his spot before sitting down.

More footsteps sounded from the door and Ma Rong walked in along with the First Elder and the Great Elder.

They walked up to their seats at the front and sat down. Ma Rong had a rather cold demeanor to her now and looked like an ice queen.

She looked at the lot of them and waited for them to quiet down.

"So, I hear you guys have some complaints."

Chapter 452 - My Problems

The elders looked around at each other, not expecting a direct confrontation from the sect leader.

They didn't know how to respond and waited for someone to speak.

"Sect leader," the Fifth elder spoke. "You were ill for a while before you were healed. Are you alright now?"

"Yes, I'm mostly fine, Fifth Elder. There have been some... complications, but it has nothing to do with my health thankfully," Ma Rong said.

"Oh, complications? Is that why you went into closed cultivation? To deal with it?" the Fifth Elder asked again.

"Yes, that was the reason," Ma Rong said.

"So, was it such a bad complication that you had to ignore the sect handling?" the elder asked.

"Can we learn what sort of complication it was, and if you've solved it," another elder asked.

"Oh right! I heard the Sect Leader awaken her constitution. Is that what the complications were about?" another elder asked.

"Yes," Ma Rong said. "Do to my awakened constitutions, I had some problems. It still persists however and I will need a lot more training to solve it."

"Huh? What sort of constitutions require so long to fix? What sort of constitutions create problems in the first place?" an elder asked.

"That right. Aren't constitutions supposed to be just something a body automatically has? It's not like a poison that tries to kill a body, right?" another elder asked.

"How much longer would you say you need to control it all?" an elder asked.

The First elder looked at Ma Rong and sighed. The sect leader was showing too much indifference to the questions and he was worried she would start to give answers without much thought.

The Great elder was also worried but for a different reason. He had decided to keep the awakened constitution a secret, but it seemed it was leaked around somehow. He had also later learned about Ma Rong's inability to make pills anymore and was worried the elders would find out.

If they did, he had no doubts that they would try to throw her away from the sect leader's spot. After all, most of them were around when Ma Rong was named the next sect leader by the previous sect leader and the elders were mostly against it.

They were all looking for a reason to throw Ma Rong away from that spot, and they were just about to get that opportunity.

Ma Rong looked at the lot of them and said, "I will still need many months if I want to properly deal with my new constitution."

"What?"

"A few months?"

"A sect leader can't disappear for that long. We need guidance."

"The sect needs guidance from its leader. We can't have someone who won't deal with the sect for so long keep on becoming the sect leader," the elders shouted.

The Great Elder was shocked at Ma Rong's answer. "Little Ma, what are you doing?" he asked softly.

"It's fine, Master," Ma Rong said from the side.

"Sect leader, we... we can't go on with our sect leader missing for so long. Is there no other way?" the seventh elder asked.

"When did I say I was going to disappear for so long?" Ma Rong asked. "I just said that I need many months to deal with my condition, that's all."

The few elders that were genuinely concerned about the sect breathed a sigh of relief, while the ones that were looking forward to her removal frowned.

"Can you guarantee that you will be available from now on, sect leader?" one of the elders asked.

"No," Ma Rong said. "But that was always the case, wasn't it? There have been times before I've gone on closed cultivation. I understand the sect is growing now, but it's not that different yet, is it?"

"Right, you should take care of yourself, sect leader. We will take care of the sect if you are absent sometimes," the seventh elder said.

The few elders were getting desperate after seeing how well the meeting was going in Ma Rong's favor.

"I heard disciple Yu Ming returned to the sect today, is that true?" one of the elders asked.

"Yes, he did," Ma Rong said.

"Did you meet him, sect leader?" the elders asked.

"Yes, just before this," Ma Rong said.

"Oh, okay. Wait, weren't you in closed cultivation? How did he contact you?" an elder asked.

"Oh, sect leader must've just finished her cultivation when her disciple returned. Although... that's quite a coincidence," another elder asked.

"Sect leader, I hope you're not only caring for your people and not caring about the sect. That would be horrible for us," an elder directly said.

Ma Rong sighed and stood up. The elders were surprised at the sect leader suddenly standing up from the seat. They wondered if she was going to cancel the meeting right here so that she wouldn't have to answer anymore.

"So," she started speaking. "About my constitution. After returning ill from the Forbidden Fields, I was healed and somehow my constitution awoke."

"Now, some of you think I may be lying when I say it's hard to deal with.? You think what constitution could there ever be that would create problems for the person."

"And you would be right," Ma Rong said as he kept on walking forward, surprising the elders. "My constitution creates no problems for myself."

"So... you were lying?" an elder asked in confusion.

"Obviously not," Ma Rong said. "I only said it was problematic and hard to deal with. I never said the problem was for myself."

Suddenly, the air around Ma Rong chilled. Mists started forming around her body as they slowly dropped down to the ground.

The elder closest to her could feel the temperature of the air rapidly going down. When she looked down at Ma Rong's feet, she could see Ice forming on the ground.

Ma Rong took a single step forward, and suddenly the ground where she stepped was frosted as it slowly spread further out the longer it went on for.

The elders around her immediately started using their cultivation base to stop the frost from getting to them, but even then it was cold. They couldn't understand, how something could be so cold as to make them shiver with their whole cultivation base running.

Ma Rong took another step forward and more elders started feeling the chill. With another step, the elders further at the back felt the chill.

Soon, the entire room was like a freezer with the ground fully frosted and signs of frost appearing on the chairs.

"S-Sect leader! What is the meaning of this?" someone finally asked.

"This? This is the problem I was dealing with. Without me forcefully controlling my body, you will all freeze solid with just me standing around. Do you still want me to be there for every single minor thing the sect has to do?"

"Because if you really need me, just let me know. I will come right over to where you are and will help you," Ma Rong said with a smile and drew in her naturally flowing Yin Qi.

The elders finally felt some warmth return back to them after Ma Rong returned to her seat. They were scared for a while, but then an elder gathered up his courage and spoke.

"If- if you have a hard time being around the elders, then shouldn't you not be a sect leader? A sect leader is needed in every situation," the elder said.

Ma Rong stopped right before her seat and turned around.

"Are you all so incompetent that you will need a sect leader for everything?" Ma Rong asked. "Of course I will be there when I need to make decisions for things, but I doubt you will need me every single day instead of letting me solve my own problem right?" Ma Rong asked.

"However, if you think I am wrong, then go ahead and vote me out. If you don't want me as a sect leader then I won't stay as one," Ma Rong said.

The elders looked around at the chance and one of the elders raised his hands.

"If the sect leader won't be around to care about the sect, then I say that she doesn't need to remain a sect leader at all," he said.

The other elders looked around. The few who wanted her to go away immediately raised their hands. Of the 18 elders in the room, 7 had raised their hands.

The elders who were concerned about the sect started mulling over the problem too. It was true that the sect leader should get some time of her own to deal with the problems, but not many months.

If there was going to be a problem, then it would be better she didn't remain there and someone more appropriate took her place.

Two of the elders raised their hands as they were concerned about it all.

Ma Rong looked at the 9 people who raised their hands and said nothing. Since it was half of the elders, just a single more hand and Ma Rong would have to leave her spot.

"Sigh, who do you guys want as your new sect leader after I leave anyway?" Ma Rong asked.

"Uh... The first elder would be a good choice," someone said.

"I'm getting old and I am planning on retiring soon, so I won't be a sect leader," the First elder said.

"Oh... uh, then what about Second Elder? He's should be great. He's been handling the sect for a while himself anyway" another person said.

The Second Elder looked towards the person who just spoke and smiled before turning over to Ma Rong as he opened his mouth to speak.

Chapter 453 - Plans

The Second elder looked at Ma Rong and spoke, "Sect Leader, I know you are angry that people didn't let you take some much-needed break, but please don't leave your position just because of that."

"No one in this room right now is more capable than you in handling the sect. I'm doing fine, but I'm nowhere close to you in maintaining all the stuff. If you really leave the sect leader position, it will certainly be the sect's loss without question."

"And when that happens, I will be the first to leave the sect and never look back," the Second Elder said.

"That's... a little too extreme, don't you think?" Ma Rong asked a little surprised that the Second Elder wasn't using this opportunity to elevate his position in the sect.

"No, I truly believe that the sect has improved the most under you. If you leave then there will be nobody in the sect to do the job at the same level," the Second Elder said.

"Now that I think about it, I think the Second Elder is right," one of the elders with the hands up slowly lowered their hand. "If Sect Leader truly doesn't want to leave, then it's a pleasure to keep having her."

"You're right. I was blinded in my hope to do better for the sect. I don't want the sect leader to leave either," another elder said and lowered her hand as well.

"Anyone else wants to raise your hands?" the Grand Elder spoke. The remaining elders looked at each other and started shaking their heads. They were fine with Ma Rong staying at the Sect Leader.

"That settles it then. Sect leader will not be leaving her post," the Grand Elder said.

"Alright, listen up. I may not be around most of the time, but I will still be handling the sect business. I will work around for a few hours a day for now. If you have anything that needs urgent attention, you may find Grand Elder, the Second Elder, or my disciple to send me a message."

"I will only consider those as urgent," Ma Rong said.

"Eh? What about the Eighteenth Elder?" the First Elder looked at Ma Rong weirdly when she left out his son, her junior disciple brother from the list.

"Elder Shun will soon be returning back to his search for Wan Li. Oh right, Second Elder, tell the Third Elder to look for recent information on the Black Venom group. Wan Li seems to be hanging around in caravans looking for a chance to meet those groups," Ma Rong said.

"I will get on it, Sect leader," Second Elder said as he bowed.

Ma Rong made a few more commands for the other elders. Finally, once she was done, she dismissed the room.

The elders left one by one and finally, only 5 people remained.

"That was quite dangerous, Sect Leader. A single wrong word out of my mouth and you would've lost the seat," the Second Elder said.

"Heh, I knew First elder didn't want the hassle at the old age, and I was counting on you not wanting the seat as well," Ma Rong said.

"What made you guess that?" the Second Elder asked.

"If you were a Sect Leader, you would be separated from your wife for most of the time. Given how lovey-dovey you are, I doubt you would want that," Ma Rong said.

"Isn't it obvious for me to love my wife? She's the best thing that has happened to me, sect leader. She's talented and beautiful, all a man can ask for.? Hehehe, I'm really lucky in that matter," the Second Elder said with a sheepish smile.

Ma Rong chuckled as well.

"So, do I leave now?" Lang Shun asked.

"No, in a few days. Rest for now. The second Elder should call the Third Elder to rest as well. She's been out for way too long," Ma Rong said.

"She loves doing that. I did ask her to return this time, but she's probably gone to some other city by now in search of Wan Li. Well, I will just send this information to her and hopefully, she'll bring back Wan Li soon," the Second Elder said and left.

Lang Shun and his father bowed and walked away as well.

"Little Ma, please stop doing such a stunt next time okay? You nearly gave your master a heart attack," the Great Elder said.

"It's fine master. I was ready to lose my position, so it wasn't really a stunt. I'm still trying to fit into my position with this new disability I have right now," Ma Rong said.

"I was secretly hoping they would let me go so I wouldn't have to feel guilty about it all."

The Great Elder sighed when he heard this. "It's fine, little Ma. You will be able to make pills once again. You only need a little bit of getting used to," he said.

"I hope so, master. I really do."

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Alex walked out of the pond with Pearl after cleaning up. He wore his clothes and started planning out his next 2 weeks in the sect.

The first thing he needed to do was make some more pills for himself since he had spent most of it in the Rubyroad city and the fight with the bandits.

One of those pills was the mind pill that would give him a much better Spiritual sea.

Since he decided on it, he went into his Alchemy room and started making pills.

Over the course of the day and halfway into the night, he made a lot of pills. He would have to make some more before he could actually have a few stocks with him.

"Hmm, should I make more?" he wondered for a second. "Although, I do desperately want to see how much True Qi I can make with my cultivation base."

Ning quickly decided to cultivate, so he called out Pearl and started cultivating inside the Alchemy room.

Soon, he had fallen asleep.

Alex woke up in the morning to feel a buzz on his storage bag. He instinctively took out his talisman and checked it.

His sleepiness ran away and he looked at the time on the top right. "Master is calling me this early?" he thought and stood up.

"Ow!" he screamed when the soles of his feet hurt a lot from the cuts being crushed.

"Pearl, you can stop now," he said, and Pearl finally stopped with a 'Meow'. "Come here," Alex called and soon sent him into his beast space.

"Woah!" Alex was surprised when he noticed 3 distinct strands of Qi floating in his meridians. He started smiling when he realized that he had more True Qi now.

"Oh wait, so is cultivating the only way to make True Qi?" he wondered. If that were true, then it would take him an incredibly long time for his cultivation base to improve.

At 3-5 strands a day, it would take him forever to convert all the Qi into True Qi.

"Oh wait," he facepalmed himself when he realized where he was wrong. "I can just break through to make my Qi thicker and I won't need to worry about speed."

"Alright, let's go to master's," he thought and walked out. He soon flew over to his master's house and sent in his spiritual sense. The whole house looked empty from his perspective aside from a single spot in there that he couldn't see at all.

He quickly went to that place and greeted Ma Rong.

"Sit down," Ma Rong said.

Alex went ahead and sat down. Ma Rong got into her bag and took out a lot of True Spirit stones, at least 50 of them.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Your payment, from the sect's shop," Ma Rong said. "They said you asked for it to be sent to me."

"Oh right, I forgot about those," Alex said. "Thank you, master."

"Don't thank me, it's your hard work's result after all. There are still a few pills that have yet to be sold. You will get that money once you sell them," Ma Rong said.

"I understand," Alex said. 50 True spirit stones were 5000 spirit stones which were equivalent to 50 thousand dollars in real life. That was a lot of money for anyone.

He had other True spirit stones on him too that he could send back to himself soon.

"Another thing, since you've already understood the fundamentals about making pills by yourself, I will soon start your True pill-making classes. Although, it should take no longer than a single class for you to learn everything."

"The others will just be me looking at you try to make pills. Hmm... given your cultivation base, that might be a problem too. Whatever, I will teach you first, the rest we will do something about it," Ma Rong said.

"Go and practice for now."

"Ok master," Alex said and was about to leave when he remembered something.

"Oh right, I had a few plans for the upcoming few days... I was hoping to get your approval on them," Alex said.

Ma Rong made a weird face. "What bizarre thing are you going to do that requires your master's approval?" Ma Rong asked.

"I don't need my master's approval; I need to sect leader's approval. Having master's approval would be quite nice too," Alex said.

"Alright say what you want," Ma Rong said.

Alex listed out the 3 things he wanted to do and Ma Rong's eyes went wide with each thing he said.

Her eyes started darting around as she forced herself to ask. "Do you really want to go back there again?"

Chapter 454 - Storm

Alex walked through a tunnel.

For the last 4 days, he had spent his entire time either making pills or learning to craft formations on formation rods.

He started off slow and only carved formations with a lower amount of strokes. He was slowly learning how to make the formations on the rod.

During the nighttime, he also went to the Southern Forest for a few hours of fighting. He had his boat with him, which would help him reach the Mind Tempering realm beasts a lot faster.

Thanks to that, he had managed to gather quite a lot of Mind Tempering realm cores. He also killed as many Meridian Tempering beasts as he could to get cores for Pearl as well.

Finally, the last thing he did was send close to 700,000 dollars to his account once more, which he immediately distributed amongst his retirement fund, different shares, and his current account.

Once that was all done and it was the morning of the Friday, he came here, the tunnel to the Forbidden Fields.

It took Alex a bit of explaining to make Ma Rong let him go to this place. However, he finally managed to when he said that he was close to something and only needed a few more Yang Jades.

He wasn't lying when he said that. He was indeed more than 70% done with his Yang Purity and would technically need about 3 Yang jades to reach 100%.

He finally walked out of the cave and looked at the vast grassland as well as the desert further away. There was something far away over there that he wanted, and he was going to get it.

The place was completely abandoned now as this was no longer a punishment place. Thus the elders guarding this place were removed as well.

Alex brought out a single thing before walking down the slope. The thing he got out was a common sword. He didn't bring out his Steel Sword but kept it at an accessible distance in his storage bags as he could take it out later.

He also made sure some foods and pills were at an accessible distance over the other storage bags too. Once he felt like he was ready, he ran.

He took massive steps as he quickly ran down the mountain slope. As he got lower and lower, he could start feeling the force of the outside pushing in his cultivation base and spiritual sense.

Alex tried his best to push it all back using his cultivation base and spiritual sense, but he couldn't.

His spiritual sense could barely push it away a little bit, but his cultivation base was completely useless. Not even True Realm cultivators could use their cultivation base here, so he had no chance.

Alex ran through the grassland and within 10 minutes, he reached the riverside. However, he didn't stop. After all, his destination lied beyond.

Alex jumped when he reached the bank of the river and flew through the air, guaranteed to reach the other side.

However, just as he was landing, he saw a scorpion shake itself out of the sand on the shore. The scorpion immediately targetted Alex who was midair with its tail ready to attack him.

However, Alex wasn't worried in the slightest. There were two things different about him from the last time he had come here.

The first thing was that he knew now that toxins, or at least, all poisons and venoms he had come across to at this point, including the scorpion's venom were useless against him.

The second thing was that he now had a body cultivation base at Meridian Tempering 1st realm, which was a lot different than what he had last time.

So, the scorpion was no threat to him.

He brought up his sword as he reached the other shore and slashed it down before him. The scorpion's tail was cut in a single slice.

With the next strike, he cut the scorpion's head off. Once the scorpion was head, he slashed his sword in midair to throw away any blood that was on it and started walking.

He had about 3 days to go somewhere and return, so he started searching for yang jades along the shore.

He decided to go around in a zigzag way so he could cover the most area while not missing a single yang jade along the way.

He walked for a few hours while constantly fighting the beasts. The beasts around here were mainly around Muscle Tempering, so he didn't have to worry at all.

Alex grabbed the giant snake's lower jaw and pierced his sword from the bottom before cutting open the snake's skull.

He didn't even get out of breath when he killed the snake. It was all too easy for him. At least, for now.

"Damn, why are there no yang jades around at all?" he wondered. He took out a piece of food from his storage bag and ate it.

He was still not getting any sense from his body at all about the yang jades, which was very weird. He walked on for a few more hours and there was still no sign.

Soon, night fell and chilly air started running through the desert, or at least he expected it too, but there wasn't any chill in the air.

"Why does it not get cold in here? Why does it not rain? Why do clouds never stay in the sky long enough?" Alex asked, but there was no answer.

So, he shook his head and walked further along. "Damn this is slow. I wonder if the boat works here," Alex thought and forcefully brought out the massive boat.

Alex could barely cover the entire boat with his spiritual sense, so it was to pull it out under the suppression. Even then, he did it and it fell with a thud.

It didn't float up in the air like it should have so Alex went to the front compartment and checked the True Spirit stones there.

"I see," Alex said when he realized all the spirit stones had grown dull. They had lost their slight glow and were simply a normal stone now.

"Wait, I'm sure I changed these a little while before I came back to the Scarlet city. So, it must be the environment. Well, it at least proves my hypothesis of artifacts not working here, I guess," Alex thought and put the boat back into the storage bag.

He then looked back and realized that he could barely see the silhouette of the cliffs now. They were so far away.

"How far have I come? 2 kilometers? 3 kilometers?" Alex wondered. The distance from the river shouldn't have been that far away when he really thought about it.

"If logic were to work in this place, given the way the Crimson Empire is set up, there should be an ocean at the top of the map, which is where I'm headed. But..." Alex thought as he looked further ahead.

"It should take me days to fully traverse the whole place. Given the average width of the crimson empire based on the maps, it's about a little longer than the distance between Scarlet city and the Cardinal city."

"So, if I wanted to see the ocean... I would have to walk straight for days. But who knows how dangerous the beasts get as I go forward," Alex thought.

"Whatever, let's just find whatever it is I am attracted to and retu—"

Suddenly, Alex felt a very low level of vibrations from the sand below him. He looked around and saw that the sands slowly slide down from the small dunes around him.

"An earthquake?" Alex thought but it wasn't. The low-level vibration persisted for a while and instead of going away, it got bigger and bigger.

Alex didn't dare move as he was unsure of what was happening and just looked around carefully. Finally, he saw what was causing the vibration.

'A storm?' he thought at first when he saw the clouds, but soon he realized that the storm was made up of yellowish-brown particles.

"A storm of sand," Alex cried out in surprise. He looked around for places to shelter himself, but couldn't see anything aside from the dunes of sand.

He then once more looked at the storm and decided to handle it himself. He braced for the impact and took the full brunt of the storm's attack.

Surprisingly, it was very easy. It looked like the storm wall would be quite dangerous, but there wasn't any damage.

"Oh, it's quite f— COUGH COUGH-COUGH COUGH COUGH COUGH" unknowingly, he breathed in a lot of sands in the air and started coughing very loudly.

Without hesitation, he took off his upper robes and hid his face with them. He started breathing through the cloth as he coughed out the sands he had just taken in.

He got onto his knees and hid his face in his laps while breathing through the cloth. He was currently a mortal. A very strong body cultivator, but a mortal nonetheless.

If he couldn't breathe for a few minutes, he would easily succumb to death.

Alex did nothing but keep his face hidden from the storm as the storm raged on for another 10 or so minutes. But these 10 minutes seemed to last an eternity for him.

He waited and waited and waited, and finally, the storm was over. He could finally let go of his cloth.

Alex tried to lift his head up to see if it was alright but soon realized that there was a lot of sand on top of him.

He quickly jumped out of the sand and dusted himself. He started spitting out sand and even took out some water to cleanse his mouth before drinking some.

"God! What was that? I don't want to experience that ever again," Alex thought. He looked around and realized that the general location he was in just now was totally changed.

Nothing around him looked like what it used to just a few minutes earlier. 'That storm changed everything here?' he thought in surprise. He really didn't know a lot about deserts so he was surprised to see this happen.

"Huh? That's weird," Alex thought and spit on his finger before lifting his finger up high. "There was just a storm, why is there no wind anymore?"

This confused him quite a bit, but no matter what he did, he couldn't feel any wind. ' That's not how storms work, right?' he thought trying to remember if the calm after the storm was ever a thing.

Just as he was thinking that he heard something move in the sand. Alex immediately turned back and saw a worm wriggle its way out of the sand.

Alex looked at it and suddenly noticed another one wriggle out, then another and another. Soon, there were nearly 15 worms that came out of the sand at the same spot.

"That's quite unusual. Why didn't your guys come out before the storm? I'm sure I was making more noise before that. Or was it the storm that woke you up," Alex asked and gripped his sword?

Without a single hesitation, he ran towards the closest worm there was. The worm saw Alex approach it and opened its mouth to attack, but a single slash from Alex killed it immediately.

Then, the other worms started making their way towards him too. One after another, Alex killed every single one of the worms.

He chopped in half the final worm and finally sighed. "Damn, that was hard. These were either very high Bone Tempering realm, or low Organ tempering real beasts."

"How are they even here? Aren't there only supposed to be weaker bone tempering beasts here? Or am I mistaken?" Alex wondered.

He looked at the corpses around him but had no way of finding an answer.. So, he just cleaned his sword and started walking in his original direction once more.

Chapter 455 - The Bigger Storm

It was the evening of the 2nd day now, and Alex had gone through 5 more of the same sandstorms as the previous night, each one stronger than the last one.

By now, he had learned his lesson and would immediately cover his face with his robe and wait out the storm. Each time he did that, he would be covered in sand, followed by storm beasts coming out of the sand.

Alex fought those beasts quite easily, but he was still wondering how they were even here at all.

Going in a zigzag pattern, he was barely 20 kilometers off the shore of the river and needed to go on for a lot longer. He was barely starting to feel whatever was on the other side after all.

He took out a yang jade from his storage bag and tried to feel it. His body barely responded enough for him to even tell he was holding the stone in his hands.

He kept it back in and started walking ahead to find some more. "I hope it won't be so hard to find them or going any further would be a waste of time," Alex thought.

It had already been a day and a half since he was searching for the jades, and it didn't seem like he could make it whatever was on the other side that was calling him.

Suddenly, Alex started feeling another set of vibrations. 'Another storm of sands?' he wondered and looked in the direction. But no matter where he looked, there was no storm.

'Where is the vibration coming from then?' Alex wondered.

He walked some more and finally felt another yang jade close by, although it was very faint. Alex ran towards the location, but the stone moved as well.

Alex got apprehensive. "A beast?" he wondered and got his guards up. The faint vibrations still kept up, so he couldn't tell where the beast would pop out of.

Suddenly, a giant, wide snake popped its head from underneath the sand and angrily opened its mouth to hiss at him. Alex held his sword with a strong grip and got ready.

The snake suddenly lunged towards him and Alex stepped aside. He suddenly got up to realize the snake had already followed up its attack using its tail.

Alex was about to put up his hands to block but stopped mid-action. Instead, he took the attack with his chest.

BAM

Alex was hurled back and hit a dune of sand a few dozen meters behind him. He quickly walked out of the sand just in time to dodge another lunge from the beast.

Alex was perfectly fine thanks to the armor he was wearing and took almost no damage.

He slashed his blade at the snake's body and barely managed to make a small cut in it.

'That's a strong snake. Is it close to the Meridian Tempering realm? This is going to be tough,' Alex thought and kept fighting.

Fighting the snake was hard. Despite being so big, its head and tail were very agile and kept jumping at Alex to hit him.

Alex on the other hand constantly tried to cut the snake, but mostly he was doing was simple cuts. "Should I take out the steel sword?" he thought for a second.

"No, I should try that first," he thought and jumped back. He looked for an opening and took a deep breath.

'KILL'

He suddenly jumped towards the snake's body and slashed at it. White light appeared around his blade as he targetted the snake and Alex cleanly cut through half the snake's body.

The snake hissed as loud as it could and sent its tail directly at Alex. Alex brought back his sword in time and directly slashed at the incoming tail.

His Sword Intent was getting way better now and he could deal a lot of damage. So, in a single slash, he cut the tail in half.

The snake cried out even more while Alex felt the force of the tail on his hands. The rebounded energy made his palms sting a little.

The snake started twisting on the sand in pain as blood spilled out of its two major wounds. Alex took the opportunity to jump at its head and pierce through its head.

The snake twisted around a few more times before stopping. It was dead.

Alex took a deep breath and got a little happy when he realized that his sword intent worked in this place.

'So sword intent isn't actual Qi related, huh?' he thought. He knew this already, but he was still surprised to finally have it be proven to him.

Alex was about to go up to the snake's corpse when he felt even more vibrations than before. 'Wait, so it really was not the snake's doing?' he thought.

Still, he needed to get the Yang jade first so he focused on that. He looked through the snake's corpse and finally reached a place where the yang jade could be vaguely felt.

He started cutting through the snake's body and before long, he got the yang jade.

"I got 2," he thought with happiness. He just needed one more and he could happily go back.

Just then, he lost his footing and nearly slipped in the sand. The vibration was very strong this time, on the level of an earthquake.

"Just what is going—"

Finally, he saw it. He had looked for it before, but it wasn't there. However, it seemed to have arrived during his fight with the snake.

The storm.

However, something was different this time. For once, the storm was really, really fast. Secondly, he could see something yellow and black all over the storm.

"What's that?" he thought and looked closely at the storm still far away.

Slowly, a feeling appeared inside him and his eyes went wide. "Those...are yang jades?" he thought as he looked at the thousands of yellow sparks in the sand.

"Then the black—"

He recognized those wriggling and movements in the air too. Those were all the beasts of the desert.

Alex got terrified. The incoming storm was strong enough to send yang jades and beasts flying. If that was anything to go by... he needed to run.

Without hesitation, he put the yang jade in his storage and ran.

Chapter 456 - The Storm That Shook The Empire

Alex ran as he had never run before. Seeing such massive beasts being carried around like toys in the storm scared him. What was worse than it was scary fast, and he would definitely not outrun it.

Soon, he realized that he had to stop. Running was not the way.

'What do I do? Where do I hide?' he thought and looked around, only to see nothing but the dunes of sand.

'Underneath?' he thought for a moment. "I have no choice," he thought and quickly took off his robes to use it as a mask. He then dug a hole as fast as he could and jumped in before covering himself with sand.

He hoped that this would keep him safe from the storm. It didn't.

Massive winds ripped the very sand from underneath Alex as they sent him tumbling away with them.

He barely opened his eyes to see the beasts and yang jades floating around. However, he didn't focus on either of them.

The thing he was most fascinated by was actually the yellow energy inside the storm that he hadn't noticed before. It was bright and strong, and it slowly dying down.

He closed his eyes as the sand started hitting his eyes. Thankfully, the storm wasn't strong enough to harm him at all. It was only fast and not strong at all.

Alex decided to wait out the storm which was already slowing down.

Sometime later, Alex realized that he was just flying through the air by the initial force of the push, the winds were no longer carrying him and he was falling down back to the ground.

He looked around and saw that the beasts and the yang jades were also falling down around the same place as him.

He then looked at the yellow energy and realized, the energy had barely slowed down at all. Even though the wind was gone, the energy stayed.

Alex and the rest of the objects in the air fell on the other side of the river, but the yellow energy kept on going forward.

* * * * *

Ma Rong was in her room trying to practice her control over her Yin Qi. She let go of all control and white mist started appearing around her body that slowly drifted downwards.

Ma Rong could feel the Yin Qi leaving her body as the ground slowly started frosting over.

Immediately, she breathed in and all the Yin Qi that was floating around her was sucked into her body through the various pores and organs.

Not a single Yin Qi remained outside.

Ma Rong, however, struggled to keep them in for very long. She soon had to slowly let it escape out, although at a very low amount.

She sighed and smiled. She had improved a little at least.

"Finally, I can go about 10 minutes without leaking any Qi. Although, I should find other ways to do this. This one method isn't working," she thought.

She tried coming up with ideas to somehow keep leaking her Qi without it interfering with anything else.

She even thought of using artifacts that could store Yin Qi, which she could later either throw away or maybe even sell for quite a profit.

She thought of expelling every single yin Qi in her house before leaving for anything,

She even thought about practicing some yang-based cultivation method to counteract the yin in her body.

However, none of those ideas was something she could use right now, so she had to wait and think a little longer before she did that.

"Alright, let's continue," she thought and started once more.

She started spilling out her yin Qi into the air and soon her whole room was filled with it. The amount of frost had increased by a lot and the overall temperature of the house was starting to get colder than the Northern Continent.

"Now, to take in," she thought and took a deep breath.

Suddenly, she felt something go past her. Something... warm but at the same time burning.

The Yin Qi in the room disappeared like water on a piping hot metal. The room immediately defrosted, and it was just a puddle of water now.

Ma Rong herself felt that she had completely run out of Yin Qi.

"What... just happened?"

* * * * *

"Alright, the meeting is adjourned," Wen Cheng said as he sent the elders away. It was past evening, so it was time for him to return to his house too.

However, he soon realized that one of the elders had stayed behind. Wen Cheng was quite surprised.

"What's going on, elder Jung?" he asked.

Elder Jung was one of the main elders that were in charge of the disciples. He was the de-facto leader amongst the group of elders responsible for working in the Disciple hall.

"Um, sect leader, I had a little something to speak to you in private," Elder Jung said.

"Please say it. We are as alone as we can get," Wen Cheng said, very curious as to what this elder who rarely wanted to talk with him had to say.

"Uhh, this is about disciple Mei. Do you happen to know where she is?" the elder asked.

"Of course. She's currently back home. Her father is a little ill, and he's looking after him," Wen Cheng said.

"Oh, I see," elder Jung said, fidgeting a little.

"Elder Jung, if you have something to say, please freely say it," Wen Cheng said.

Elder Jung sighed. "Sect leader, did you know that disciple Mei took a 2-week break before leaving?" he asked.

"Yes, I was the one that took the leave for her," Wen Cheng said.

"Oh, that makes it a little easier to explain then. You see, sect elder, Disciple Mei's official leave ended yesterday. I thought that was an error and decided to wait today for her to return, but she didn't."

"Still, I left her as absent on leave for today as well. However, if she truly isn't back by tomorrow, I can't keep her absent on leave on Monday," Elder Jung said.

"Sigh, so that's what you wanted to talk about," Wen Cheng said. "You can put her on Absent without notice, elder Jung. You can also make her rank available for grab. If any disciple chooses to take it, they may. You do not need to feel guilty about this."

"Ah, I see. You've already thought of the consequences. I shall do that tomorrow then. That is all, sect leader—"

"Sect Leader!" someone came running into the room. The elder who had just walked in was a younger one, and Wen Cheng frowned when he saw that.

He was about to scold the elder for barging in without notice, but then he saw the horror and confusion on the elder's face.

"What happened?" Wen Cheng asked inquisitively.

"The... The Treasury room, sect leader," the elder spoke. "Something is happening in the treasury room."

* * * * *

"Do you really think we can't kill the Jaguar at all? The 3 of us together?" Fu Zexian asked.

He was currently in a large, white room with crimson furniture, drapes, and carpets. He was sitting on a large chair with two other chairs in front of him, facing towards himself.

On one of the chairs was an ordinary-looking man wearing simple attire. But this was heavily contrasted by his clean-shaven face and stark red hair. He also had a very haughty attitude that made him stand out more than the Emperor he was before.

On the other chair was a thin man with long jet black hair. He was quite good-looking, but he had a rather fat mustache that didn't seem to match with his face.

These were the two Saint realm cultivator named Yang and Feng.

"You didn't feel what we felt, brother Zexian. That beast... that monster, it was on a different league of its own," the long black-haired Feng said with fear in his mind at just the thought of the jaguar again.

"Tell him, brother Yang."

"It's true, brother Zexian. We keep telling you, but you don't believe us. That beast is truly very strong," the red-haired Yang said.

"I understood that it's strong. But this time you will have me too. Last time, I was alone in the fight, and you two joined very late, which was why the Jaguar ran away at that time," Zexian said.

"And then two weeks ago, you two went chasing it and lost."

"But this time, if we meet it, we can all fight together from the very start. There is no way the beast could survive us at that time, right?" Zexian asked. He truly didn't like thinking that there was a beast out there that could destroy half of his empire before he even realized it was attacking.

"Brother Zexian, brother Feng and I barely entered the Saint Foundation realm a few decades ago. You have been in the Saint Foundation realm for almost a century now, so there is no way I doubt your strength, brother."

"However, please believe me when I tell you this, that beast... its cultivation base should be beyond the Saint Foundation realm. It's definitely in the Saint Core realm," Yang said.

"What? No way," Zexian said in surprise. "If it truly is in the Saint Core realm then why hasn't it attacked us already? I see no reason for it to return every time it attacks."

"In fact," Feng spoke from the side. "I wouldn't be surprised if it were in the Saint Soul realm either. We are just assuming at this point because it showed us a level of power we had never seen before. Not from you, not from the old man."

"Yes," Yang said. "As for why it doesn't attack us... I do have an idea. I think the beast isn't really intent on harming us at all. You said it spoke about it wanting something right?"

"Yes, it said something about duty to acquire something. I didn't listen pay much attention at the time," Zexian said.

"Yes. It said the same thing when fighting us too. It seems to not want to resort to violence unless necessary, so when we fought, it didn't harm us. Instead, it asked to let way to get something," Feng said.

"You think if we give what it wants to it, it will leave us alone?" the Emperor asked. He was willing to let go of something if it was for his empire.

"Unfortunately, we have to clue," Yang said.

"No, we do," Feng suddenly said. "You remember the flying boat?"

"What flying bo— Oh, the one you talked about. You should know my eyes aren't as good as yours, brother Feng. I couldn't see anything at that time," Yang said.

"What's this about a flying boat?" Zexian asked.

"You see there was this weird little boat flying away in the direction the jaguar was going towards, just moments before we arrived. I barely managed to see its shape from far away," Feng said.

"You think that boat had what the beast wanted?" Zexian asked.

"Yeah. Although we don't know what it was, so searching would be troublesome," Feng said.

"That is tru—"

Suddenly, the 3 of them stood up and looked towards the west. They were all frowning and slowly starting to sweat.

"What was that?" Yang asked.

"I don't know, but it felt... strong," Feng said.

"That's... not a person. Neither is that a beast. Just what was that energy," Zexian asked.

"That felt... dangerous too," Yang said.

Zexian suddenly took out a talisman that was slowly glowing and spoke into it. "Yes father, I felt it too. I will look into it," he said.

Zexian felt defeated.

"First the beasts attack, then Zexi disappears and now this. Just what is happening in this empire," he frowned.

"Finding a way to deal with the beasts should be our number one priority, brother Zexian," Feng reminded.

"Yes, I know. But the other two can't be ignored either," Zexian said. "You two don't need to worry, I will find an answer to it all.. For now, I will send a small unit to find out any information they can in the west."

Chapter 457 - The Storm That Keeps On Shaking

"What do we do now, father?" a person asked.

"Don't worry, child. My time will come. Be like me, look how many years I've waited for my chance."

"It was taken away from me, yes, but I still have a chance. Especially now that I've realized where the sect treasure is," an old man said.

The two father-child were inside a cave in the Southern Forest. All around them were dead bodies of what seemed like bandits.

The younger person was wearing a hooded figure while the father was out in the open seemingly unworried about people recognizing him.

"Sigh, if only you have figured it out earlier, I could have helped you. Then, you wouldn't have to have your clone die to that bitch's disciple's hand. How did he even do that? Weren't you guys' cultivation base suppressed there?" the hooded figure asked.

"Yes, it was. But that kid was also a body cultivator. If I had a few more Yang Jade, then I would have won against him. Unfortunately, most of the yang jade on this side of the river was gone," the old man said.

"So, what will we do now? How will you sneak there this time?" the hooded figure asked.

"I'm... still thinking. I'm thinking of finding the boy while he is alone and taking his body to use as a clone. But I can't harm him that much. It's such a strong body, it will definitely help me in my ambition," the old man said.

"Just kill him. We can find another," the hooded figure said.

"No!" the old man shouted. "I told you. You need to learn patience. As I said, I will do something. You don't need to worry about anything."

"Sigh, I understand, father," the hooded figure said.

"We might need some help. You got information about those ban—"

Suddenly, the old man stopped speaking. His body convulsed a little and his eyes went wide. The hooded figure showed no response and was instead confused by their father's unusual behavior.

"Father?" the hooded figure asked.

"It's matured," the old man said.

"What? What are you talking about father?" the figure asked.

"It's... it's matured."

Horror filled the old man's face as he spoke softly. "I wasn't expecting that. This is... sooner than I thought. My calculations were wrong?" the old man contemplated for a second.

"Father? What matured?" the hooded figure asked.

"No, no. It hasn't matured... yet. There's still time, but just a few months of it. Maybe 2, maybe 4. Definitely not more than a year though," the old man said.

"Father, please explain what is happening," the hooded figure asked.

"Didn't you listen to me?" the old man said as he whipped his face towards the hooded figure, with his eyes shining brightly.

"It matured."

"What did?" the hooded figure asked.

"The Sect Treasure."

* * * * *

"Is he dead yet?" a voice asked.

"No, he's holding by a thread. But I don't think he can stay for much longer," another voice said.

"Sigh, another failure," the voice said.

"We might have found him already if you came with me, instead of going out searching on your own," the second voice said loudly. Its voice shook the very white marble they were standing around.

"Stop shouting," the first voice said.

"Oh? And what will you do?" the second voice said again. The both of them started snarling at each other.

Suddenly, something else ran into the hall the two of them were in. The two of them stopped bickering and turned to look at the newcomer.

"What?" the angry voice asked.

"Senior, the child is dead," the newcomer said.

Both of the two of them suddenly grew quiet. "You made sure?" the first voice asked.

"Yes, senior," the newcomer said.

"Sigh, another dead," the second voice said.

"How many is that now? 9?" the first voice asked.

"Yes, just over the course of 4 different instances too," the second voice said.

"Sigh, I should have not doubted the feeling at that time and immediately ran. We were searching for so long, and the first hope we see, I screwed it all up," the first voice said.

"Just forget about that backwater empire, and come follow me next time. The Luminance empire has weaker blood there, but it's a lot of it. We will surely find some for sure," the second voice said.

"No, this one is the one we need. I can promise you. I've never felt someone feel the bloodline this clearly before," the first voice said.

"Urghhh! Fine, do what you want. Hey, you," the second voice shouted.

"Yes, senior," the newcomer spoke.

"How many more drops of blood can the fountain make, go find out," the second voice shouted.

"Yes, senior," the newcomer left.

"You're worried?" the first voice asked.

"Yes, I don't think we have that many left. Maybe 4 at best," the second voice said.

"I'm sure this one from the Crimson Empire will be successful," the first voice spoke.

"As I said, do what yo—"

Suddenly, both of their faces changed.

"What was that?" the first voice asked.

"It came from the north," the second voice said.

"That... that aura reminded me of master's majesty, it's... what is that?" the first voice said.

"Whatever it is. It doesn't belong here," the second voice said.

Both of them showed slight fearful expressions as they kept staring towards the north to feel more.

"Senior, I've come with bad news," the newcomer had come once again. Only this time, he was huffing like he had sprinted at the top of his lungs to reach here.

The two of them finally got out of their stupor and looked at the newcomer.

"Bad news?" the first voice was surprised.

"What's wrong?" the second voice asked.

"It's... its the fountain. Lady... Lady Ren checked the fountain again, and she doesn't know if its because of the excessive use lately or not, but... but it- it seems to be not working as well," the newcomer said.

"Boy speak more clearly. What's wrong?" the first voice said.

"Get to the point," the second voice ordered.

"Yes," the newcomer gulped and said. "The fountain can only produce a single more drop of blood. Any more, and the fountain will turn useless."

"What?" the both of them were surprised this time.

"A single more use?" the first voice said in shock.

"Brother, I see that we may not have as many chances as I had first thought of.? Are you really sure the one you found is the one?" the second voice asked.

"Yes, absolutely," the first voice said.

"Very well," the second voice said with determination in its voice. "I will help you out this time. We'll go together."

* * * * *

An old man was in closed cultivation, fully focused on improving his cultivation. Suddenly, his eyes opened and he turned around to look at the wall behind him.

However, he was seeing much further than that. He took out a talisman and called someone. Soon, he got an answer back and started contemplating.

"Is it opening up again?" the old man thought. He still remembered the last time the secret realm opened up, nearly 1200 years ago.

He had lost his elder brother that day, along with all the talented kids that had entered the secret realm that time.

Ever since then, all the seven families of the Luminance Empire had stopped sending their kids to the secret realm.

"However, is it time again? Has enough time passed such that it's desperately calling us back again?" the old man thought. "It must be the secret realm too that is sending these monster hoards at us. We must answer back."

He then took out the talisman and contacted someone. Soon, he would contact every one and would get the youngsters to go back to the secret realm once more.

* * * * *

Alex skidded along the shore of the river and was thrown into the grasses. However, he didn't spend a single moment in the grass and immediately stood up.

Without a single hesitation, he threw away the sword in his hand and picked up his storage bag to bring out the Steel sword.

Just as the Steel Sword left his bag, he dashed backward and rolled under a giant scorpion. His sword suddenly glowed white and he slashed its belly from underneath.

Both and guts fell from the scorpion which he quickly dodged. He jumped out of the way of a snake's tail and landed on top of the scorpion's tail.

He immediately cut the tail of the scorpion corpse and jammed it onto the snake just as it attacked him. The snake fell to the ground in pain and Alex cut its head off to relieve it.

He caught the snake's giant head and opened its lower jaw. He then stabbed his sword through its mouth right where the venom sack would be.

Purple venom flew down the sword until it was completely coated in it. Alex finally pulled out the sword and looked all around him.

Alex could clearly feel all of the many Yang Jades that were on the ground near him. His body was getting overwhelmed with happiness, but he calmed himself down. He had one more problem to deal with.

Dozens of snakes, scorpions, centipedes, worms, and lizards were starting to surround him. However, Alex showed no fear. He held his sword tight and carefully scouted out the strong beasts.

His eyes skitted around looking for any sudden movements from the many beasts. These were all beasts thrown away by storm from way far away.

So, there was no way any of these were weak by any extent of the imagination.. Still, Alex took one final breath and went into battle.

Chapter 458 - Something Shiny

Alex cut the head of the final snake and emerged victoriously. There were cuts all over his body, his left arm was fully broken and there was a large hole on his shoulder plate from a scorpion managing to sneak attack him.

Blood had stopped flowing by now thanks to the intense healing capabilities of his body, but still, the pain was all over him.

He huffed as he barely stood over the corpse of the snake he had just cut. Alex's legs slipped on the snake in the water, and he fell in the river too.

Thankfully, he was on the shore, so he didn't drown.

The clean water slowly took away all the blood and grime on top of him, as well as the venom and poison on his body and the blade.

Alex was thirsty, but he was too tired to take out his water from the storage bag, so he simply opened his mouth and drank the clear water that was flowing above him.

A few minutes passed as he let his body heal as much as it could and finally stood up. He looked at the many beasts that he had cut up.

Most of them were at the Organ Tempering realm with some being in the Meridian tempering realm. If it wasn't for his Sword Intent, he would have likely had to run away from this battle.

"Arghh!" he cried out from the pain and accidentally saw something yellow glowing on the ground.

"Oh, right. The yang jades," Alex thought and started limping along the shore to start gathering yang jades.

There were hundreds of them around him, and all of them were giving him the feeling of attraction he always felt towards them.

He went around the field, navigating through the blood and filth, trying to find all the jades left and right.

It took him more than 10 minutes to get through all the Yang jades in the field. When he was done, he had nearly 300 yang jades. The number alone made his mind go crazy.

He wanted to immediately grab a handful of them and eat them, but he controlled himself and stored them in his storage bags.

Finally, he looked back at the massacre he had committed and was surprised at just how cruel and vicious it all looked. Yet, he felt nothing towards it all since most of them were trying to kill him too.

That was after all how life was in this world that may or may not be a game.

'Sigh, I just need to learn to be more decisive when it comes to fighting other humans,' Alex thought.

He was about to turn around to return when he saw something glint in the night light. The moonlight reflected off of something shiny and immediately caught his attention.

"Huh? Did I miss a yang jade?" Alex wondered and went towards the object that glittered. Even when he reached there he couldn't clearly see what it was.

The shiny object was crushed under a broken statue of some sort. Alex pushed away from the half statue of what looked like a lion's back, though it was nearly impossible to tell what it really was with the amount of destruction it had suffered.

Once the statue was off, Alex finally saw what the shiny object was.

"A ring?" he looked at the shiny object with a hint of surprise and confusion. The ring looked to be of the perfect size to fit his finger.

It was mostly made out of gold except for an extremely shiny large ruby on top of it. The ruby was of an oval shape with a 2-centimeter length and 1 centimeter of width.

'This isn't bad looking,' Alex thought and looked at it a bit more. There was nothing on the ring except that made it look anything extraordinary aside from the ruby, however.

"Yu Ming!" someone cried out loud.

Alex suddenly turned around and saw people not very far away. He could clearly see them all, but they couldn't see him at all in the night with their cultivation suppressed.

"Disciple Yu!"

"Yu Ming!"

Multiple people had come looking for him.

'Why are they here?' Alex wondered.

"I'm here!" he still shouted and called the elders that had come looking for him.

"He's here, everyone," someone cried out and everyone started to converge towards Alex.

Alex decided to hide the ring for now and stored it in his storage bag. Except... the ring didn't go in at all.

'Huh?' Alex was surprised. He tried once again to send it back in, but no matter what he did, he couldn't send it back in at all.

"What's going on?" he was surprised. He tried some more but to no avail.

In the end, the elders were right about to see him, so he quickly hid the ring on the inside of the pants and walked forward to meet the elder.

"I'm here, elder," he said as he limped forward.

"What? Disciple Yu, what is up with all of these wounds?" the elders started asking.

The elders were focused on him, and Alex could see that they couldn't see the many bodies behind him.

'That's for the good maybe,' he thought. He told them that he fought some beasts and was injured as a result.

The elders helped him walk properly, but they were slower than he would be if he skipped on a single leg all the way. Still, he decided to just take the help and didn't complain.

They walked up the cliff and soon Alex could see Ma Rong's figure at the top. She seemed to be there with the Grandmaster, the First Elders, and many other prominent figures of the sect.

Ma Rong could not only see her disciple wounded and limping, but she could also see the many beast corpses far away near the river as well as the desert that seemed to have now extended well beyond the river.

"Did he do that?" Grandmaster asked from the side.

"You saw those beasts die yourself didn't you?" Ma Rong asked.

"Yeah, but it was so small that I couldn't even tell them apart," Grandmaster said.

"I guess that's true. But yeah, as a body cultivator, he should be able to kill the weaker beasts close to the grassland," Ma Rong said.

Finally, Alex and the elders arrived up at the clifftop. Ma Rong immediately took out a pill and handed it to him.

"Thank you, master," Alex said and quickly ate that pill. All the wounds in his body, the broken left arm, and the gaping hole in his shoulder plate were all healed subsequently.

"Are you okay? I saw you fight with quite a few beasts," Ma Rong said.

"Oh yeah, I'm fine," Alex said. "Why are you guys here though?"

"Sect master said there were some disturbances in the Forbidden Fields and called us. We were worried about you, so we sent out elders," the First Elder said.

"Oh right, there were the desert storms. But I thought the storm ended at the riverside. I didn't know it moved forward too," Alex said.

"There were storms in the desert?" his Grandmaster asked.

"Yeah, I was deep into the desert, but then the storm threw me back," Alex said.

"We will talk about this later. You should rest for now. You've been in the desert for 2 days," Ma Rong said.

"I'm fine. Although, I will take some rest," Alex said.

"Thank you, elders, you can all return now," Ma Rong said. Alex bowed towards them as well. Then, all of them left.

Ma Rong took Alex to her house and walked inside. The Grand Elder and the First Elder walked in as well.

"What actually happened? Tell me," Ma Rong said.

"Umm... I already did, master," Alex said. "There was a storm and I was sent flying away by the storm."

"What about the beasts? I don't see why there should be so many beasts on the shore of the desert. That was an ungodly amount," Ma Rong said.

"Oh, those were also sent flying by the storm," Alex said.

"Ah, I see," Ma Rong said, but her eyes showed a certain amount of shock.

"I see, tell me more about this storm then. Go into as much detail as you can," Ma Rong asked.

Alex told her what he could. He told her it was a storm that only carried sand, that it was really strong, and that it came from somewhere in the north.

"Nothing else?" Ma Rong asked.

"Umm... no master," Alex said.

"I see," Ma Rong said. "Thank you for your time, First Elder, master."

"It's alright. I'm just glad to see my grand disciple doing fine," the Grand Elder said.

"I will take my leave then, sect leader," the First Elder said and left along with the Grand Elder.

"So, were you successful on your venture?" Ma Rong asked.

"Ah, right," Alex thought as he brought out a few Yang Jades and showed them. "See? I found so—"

Just as he brought it out, the bright yellow color of the jade faded to light yellow, before fully fading. All that was remaining now was a simple white jade.

"Huh? What's going on?" Alex was surprised for a second. "Wait, is this?"

"Oh no!" Ma Rong gasped. "I'm so sorry, I didn't know they would fade away like that," Ma Rong said. She seemed very sorry about what had just happened.

'I see,' Alex thought. 'No wonder master's Yang Jades faded so fast before too. She has a yin constitution so it's obvious.'

"It's fine, master," Alex said.. "I've got hundreds."

Chapter 459 - 100%

"Hundreds? So many?" Ma Rong asked in surprise.

"Yes, the storm flew many of the yang jades in the desert over to the riverside. Thankfully, the storm was mostly concentrated in one area, so they all dropped at the same time. But that meant that I had to fight will all of those strong beasts too," Alex said.

"Right, I meant to ask you this before," Ma Rong said. "Those beasts... they weren't weak, were they?"

"No. I would say they were around Organ Tempering realm to Meridian Tempering realm in strength," Alex said.

"I see... so you are that strong now, huh?" Ma Rong said. "Alright, go back home and rest for now. I will see you tomorrow to teach you Alchemy as I promised."

"Oh, about the procedure to make True pills? Nice. I was waiting for that all week. Alright then, see you, tomorrow master," Alex said and left.

Ma Rong watched Alex walk away and sighed as a sad face took over her. "Just when will he catch a break?" she thought.

Alex went into his house and jumped into the pond to wash once more. When he was done, he looked at the time and saw that it was only 10 pm right now.

It was still too early for him to just start cultivating, so he wondered if he should eat those Yang Jades right now.

He took one out and his body hungered for him to eat it. Suddenly, Alex remembered something.

"Oh no," he thought and immediately logged out of the game. When he was out, he felt an intense need to use the bathroom as soon as possible.

He hadn't been out of the game in over 2 days. Just under 2 days was the recommended number of hours the doctors said was good for your body, and Alex crossed it by quite a few hours easily.

Once he was out of the room, he felt hunger like he hadn't felt in a while now. He made his way to the kitchen and ate all of the leftovers that Emily cooked for him every day.

Not only that, but he also prepared some food for himself and ate those as well. Only then was his hunger finally satiated.

Once he was done, he returned back to his room and entered the game again.

Alex opened his eyes back on the courtyard where he had logged out. He once again took out a Yang Jade and looked at it.

Since his body hungered for one still, he put the yang jade in his mouth and swallowed it.

Suddenly, he felt the hot Yang Jade melt in his tongue and flow down his throat. Then, he could start seeing the notifications once more.

The numbers surprisingly started from a random point in the middle and counted upwards. Soon, his yang Purity reached 80% and stopped.

He could feel the remaining Yang in his body whittling away for some reason after it reached 80%. The Qi in his meridian got a little denser and the reduction of quantity was filled by the remaining yang Qi in the Yang Jade that he didn't get to consume.

"Just 2 more and I can reach 100%. I wonder what sort of improvement I will see when I reach 100%," Alex thought.

So, he took out another yang jade and ate it. Soon, he was once again seeing the different notifications that said that his body was purifying the Yang Qi.

After a few more minutes of pain, his Yang purity reached 90%. No extra Qi was remaining, so he could tell that he was missing some Qi that he could probably cultivate back.

Alex couldn't wait, so he took the final piece of the yang jade he needed and ate it. Immediately, he could feel the pain once again, but he was used to it now.

1%, 2%, 3%...

He patiently waited and watched as the number went up steadily.

51%, 52%, 53%...

Alex was really excited to reach 100%. He waited and waited and waited for a long time. Finally, it was coming to a close.

97%, 98%, 99%...

"Just one more," Alex thought.

100%

<Congratulations, your Yang purity had reached a 100%>

Alex felt his meridians suddenly have less Qi in them, but way more compared to previous times, but not a lot.

From what he could tell, his Qi was compressed to the amount that he could probably compete to a Mind Tempering 7th realm, or maybe even 8th realm cultivator in terms of pure Qi density.

Those cultivators still had a lot more Qi, but Alex certainly had about the same density for sure. If he was to fight the others only on Qi-based attacks, he was sure to survive easily for quite a while.

This game is quite a strong advantage in his fights against others in the Tiger sect, or even in real fights. Although, real battles had more variables than just Qi.

He waited for more notifications to pop up, but none did. He waited some more but nothing happened?

"Wait, that's it?" he thought. "But I reached 100%. Isn't something supposed to happen now?" Alex wondered. But no matter what he thought, he didn't get any answer.

"Whatever, let me try another one," he thought and pulled out another Yang Jade from his storage bag. Without hesitation, he put it in his mouth and swallowed.

Then, he just waited for the notifications. As expected, they appeared.

<Sun God's Divine Yang body disintegrates everything>

<' Yang Jade' has been consumed>

<You've gained 21,254,666 Qi>

"What?" Alex was surprised. The Yang Jade only gave him Qi, instead of giving him more Yang purity. Also, the number of Qi wasn't even that high. In the Mind Tempering realm, the number of Qi required to breakthrough was in the hundred million.

He tried eating one once more and realized that it gave a similar amount of Qi once more.

"What's going on? Am I really done with Yang purity?" Alex wondered. He was extremely disappointed by the current way things were going.

"Even as a Qi resource, this is too low of a Qi number. I can get way better results by just eating a single Mind Tempering 1st realm monster core," Alex thought.

He was utterly disappointed by the yang jades. "And here I had nearly 300 of them. What the hell did I fight such a hard battle for?" Alex started wondering.

He sighed and just sat down. "What do I do now? I was so excited even," he thought. He felt like his head would start hurting at any moment now.

Suddenly, he remembered something.

"Wait for a second... didn't..." he tried remembering as well as he could, and he could clearly remember it.

"Song Zun did use the Yang Jades to improve just his skins. Maybe I can do that too. Didn't he use a formation or something?" Alex wondered and thought back as well as he could.

"Huh?" he suddenly thought. "Wait... didn't Song Zun make a formation on the ground? He didn't use a metal plate or metal rods. He just simply made a formation on the ground."

"How did he know that?? Didn't sister Xing tell me that it was a big secret that formations without metals were possible?" Alex thought.

He was getting more and more suspicious about who the person was that the Clone Song Zun belonged to. Not only did he have some strong techniques like the illusion technique, or the Concealment technique. He also had the knowledge to make formations without Qi or metal.

That was really something Alex found curious. He tried to remember what the formation looked like. From what he could remember, the formation had a certain design.

He quickly took out a random metal plate and started making strokes on it to form the formation he remembered. When he was finally done with the formation, he looked at it.

What he was looking at was definitely a True formation, but whether it was a realm formation or if he made a mistake, Alex sent out his Qi on the formation to check.

Surprisingly, despite seeing it a single time, he was able to properly recreate the formation on the metal plate, and a working one at that.

'Well, I don't know what it does, or what I should draw it on,' Alex thought. He took his chance and drew the formation on the ground as Song Zun did. He even dropped Yang jades in the middle, in almost the same way as he had found it.

Still, nothing happened. In the end, he was left with nothing but a desire to find out more. He quickly took back all the Yang jades.

"Sigh, I should just cultivate for the night now," he thought and sat on the grass. He called out Pearl and talked with him for a bit before starting cultivation.

Soon, Alex was once again feeling pain all over his body. He then closed his eyes and soon he fell asleep once more.

When he woke up, it was early in the morning, and the sun had just come up from the east.

Alex felt his storage bag vibrate a little. He stopped Pearl from cultivating any further and sent him back into his beast space.

Suddenly, Alex could feel something that he couldn't before at all. His eyes widened as he experienced this feeling in his body for the first time.

"Holy Shit!" he called out in absolute shock. After all, he hadn't been expecting this at all.

"Nearly 5% of my total Qi has fully turned to True Qi."

Chapter 460 - True Pill Training

Alex checked his Qi once more but there was no doubt that about 5% of it was True Qi. He was only in the 1st Mind Tempering realm and was already 5% of the way into getting ready for the True realms.

He stood up and checked his aura, but he realized that there wasn't any difference in it.

"Hmm... so it's only because I have such a thick Qi that I got to make so many Qi into True Qi huh?" he thought. "I wonder if I will get more True Qi when I log out."

He couldn't know that until he tried, so he forgot about it for the moment. He took out the talisman from the storage bag and looked at it.

"Oh, she's teaching me in her house? I thought she'd come here," Alex thought with a surprise. Since it was time for his alchemy lessons, he left.

He went to his master and sent out his spiritual sense to find her. Surprisingly, she was already in the Alchemy room practicing her own Alchemy.

Alex walked up to the alchemy room and stayed outside, waiting for her to finish. He could see her struggling to control the fire.

'Why did this happen to her?' Alex couldn't help but feel bad every time he thought about his master losing her alchemy skills.

He kept watching until she was barely able to make a pill. She pulled the pill out of the cauldron and put it in the pill tester.

34%.

That was the harmony the pill tester showed the pill had. An alchemy master that could make Heaven grade True pills was now struggling to make a decent Earth grade one. In Alex's eyes, that was one of the cruelest tragedies life had played on anyone.

'Still, 34% is quite a progress,' Alex thought.

"Oh, you are here? Come sit down," Ma Rong said.

Alex walked forward and sat in front of her with the cauldron in between the two of them. Ma Rong took back her cauldron. She caught Alex's gaze at her pill tester.

"Sigh, yes. Your master has indeed fallen into such a dire state. I can barely make such pills," she said, half-mocking herself.

"It's fine, master. 34% is still 34%. I'm sure you will be able to increase that up to 50% and make Heaven grade True pills once more," Alex said.

Ma Rong flinched a little when she heard that and her face twisted to show a hint of agony and sadness she was hiding inside.

"Is something wrong, master?" he asked.

Ma Rong took out the pill she had just made and threw it to Alex. Alex caught the pill and looked at the pill trying to understand what was wrong with it.

He checked the color and smell of the pill as well as he could, and that was when he realized.

"This is a common pill!" he said in surprise.

"Yes. Your master has become so incompetent that she can't even make a Heaven-grade common pill now," she said.

"But... But just because your Qi turned into Yin Qi shouldn't mean suddenly losing so much ability, right? As far as I can understand it should only affect the temperature," Alex said.

"No, it's different. My Qi affects the temperature, yes, but it also affects the energy. Do you remember about the attacks that my body stopped so easily?" Ma Rong asked. "Similarly, it also stops all energy that comes close to my body. So, if I stay close by, the ingredient's energy in the cauldron starts suffering too."

"That's why it's so hard. If even the energy of the cauldron starts being hampered with due to my body, it's impossible for me to do anything," Ma Rong said.

"That's... there must be some way to control it, or maybe even suppress the constitution altogether right?" Alex asked.

"I... don't know, but it's not your problem to think about. For now, focus on yourself. It's not like your own body doesn't have mysteries that need some explanation either," Ma Rong said. "You are just as unique of a person as me, perhaps even more so."

"Okay," Alex said after seeing Ma Rong not wanting to talk about it at all.

He took out his cauldron and kept it on top of the fire. While the cauldron started heating up, Ma Rong started explaining.

"Do you know the theory behind making True pills?" Ma Rong asked.

"Yes, just the theory," Alex said.

"Tell me," Ma Rong asked.

"Uh, making True pills is the same as making common pills. The only difference is that True pills have a few ingredients in them that are of True rank, which requires one to be in the True realm to use," Alex said.

"Hmm... the fundamentals are at least there," Ma Rong said. "Do you know any more?"

"Umm, I know a lot of miscellaneous information, but nothing concrete regarding just the True pills," Alex said.

"That's understandable. Alchemy is not something someone just randomly writes about for someone else to learn for free. Most of the people out there want to use it to earn money."

"Given how expensive ingredients can get if they want to improve upon their Alchemy knowledge, they have to use their information to finance themselves. Even then most won't give out everything they know since that could bring up potential alchemists that could surpass them," Ma Rong said.

"So, it's better not to fully rely on those books as everything there is to about alchemy. Most of the important information is always kept close to the chest."

"For example, you don't need to be in the True realms to make True Pills, you just have to have True Qi. I believe I've told you this before," Ma Rong said.

Alex thought for a second and said, "Yeah, you did say something to that effect. It was so long ago that I completely forgot."

"That happens. Anyway let's start the lesson," Ma Rong said. "Do you know the recipe for the Chromatic Disillusionment pill?"

"Yeah, I believe so. It's the pill that makes people see the colors perfectly such that they can separate even the most similar shades of the same color, right?" he asked.

"That's the one. Do you have the ingredients for it?" Ma Rong asked.

Alex looked into his storage bag for a minute, and then finally answered, "Yes, I've got about 8 sets in total."

"Alright, it's not the most important pill so we can waste it for training," Ma Rong said.

Alex nodded and took out all 8 of the ingredients set.

"Thankfully you have some True Qi, or It would all just be us talking for today," Ma Rong said.

"Oh, you can see my Qi? It's about 5\$ of the way to True realm now," Alex said.

"Yes, I wouldn't have let you make any pills today otherwise," Ma Rong said. "Okay now, do you know which one of the ingredients is the main ingredient in the pill?"

Alex looked through the list of ingredients as well as what they did and finally answered. "The Rainbow Peacock's feathers?"

"Yes. Those are the main ingredients. There are other 2 ingredients that are semi-important, but those come at the final end of the pill-making portion, but we won't reach there today," she said.

"We won't?" Alex asked in confusion.

"Start!" Ma Rong commanded without explaining anything.

Alex put his first ingredient inside of the hot cauldron and started moving it almost instinctively.

'Oh, should I switch to True Qi for this?' he wondered. He thought for a second, but since he was making True Pill, he needed to switch for sure. So, he started moving his True Qi around his body and started bringing it—

"Don't use True Qi. Keep using your normal Qi," Ma Rong said as he kept track of everything that was going around her.

Alex nodded and stopped using True Qi. If his master said he didn't need it, then he truly didn't need it. He continued moving the ingredient around until it was all powder and all of its energy had escaped.

Without asking his master for further instruction, he immediately put in the 2nd ingredient too. The energy from the ingredient escaped out faster due to his taking it slow and the heat getting to move onto the ingredient at a fast rate.

The energy from the second ingredient mixed with the energy from the first ingredient, and soon resulted in another energy.

Alex looked at it all with a very confused look. 'This just feels like a normal pill-making process to me,' he thought.

"Focus," Ma Rong said as she noticed his change of expression. Alex nodded and put in the third ingredient too.

Ma Rong felt the third ingredient disappear into powder soon and felt the energy settle in the cauldron.

"Use your True Qi for the next ingredient," Ma Rong said.

"Okay," he said and nodded. He took out the fourth ingredient and put it in. Alex could see that the fourth ingredient was the Rainbow Peacock's feather.

He moved his Qi around and brought out his True Qi. The True Qi felt weird, almost not belonging to him. But he could perfectly control it, so he knew it was his.

He used the True Qi and followed the recipe. He moved the ingredient around inside the cauldron and could feel quite a strong energy being released from it.

This energy was of a level that he had never before felt. His eyes went wide as he sensed the strength of the energy compared to the other energy that was released before.

"So that's what a True rank ingredient feels like, huh?"