

Alchemy 501

Chapter 501: More Questions

Alex stood around quietly, trying to understand the information he was just given. "So she was indeed from the eastern continent then. How did she get here? With no way to travel in between continents—"

"Lady Ren, could it be that the Azure dragon helped her? After all, he does have the ability to teleport," the jaguar asked.

"No, that would not make any sense," Lady Ren said. She was already back to her beast form and looked incredibly annoyed because of the information she had just learned.

"Yeah, why would the imperium attack her if the Azure Dragon wishes for her to be well. Besides, the Azure dragon should still be in closed cultivation right?" the puma asked.

"Hmm, that's true. I didn't think of that. God, this makes no sense," the jaguar said.

"That's enough. Leave that sword here, young man. We will keep it. You can't use it for now anyway. Also, we can't let something this important go around with a weakling like you," Lady Ren said.

"Huh? But that's my sword. Why should I give it to you guys?" Alex asked.

"It's not your sword. This sword belongs to the Azure Imperium. Do you know how many people would kill you to have that sword? If a single person ever learns that you have that sword, your life would be the least of your worries," Lady Ren said.

Alex feared a little when he heard that. It was true that the sword wasn't the best weapon for him since he couldn't even use it. And if people did really learn about the sword's origin, he didn't know how much trouble he would be in.

So, he reluctantly agreed to have the sword being taken away.

"Don't be sad. If you ever become strong enough to handle it, we will give it back to you. We have no use for this sword," Lady Ren said.

"I see. Thank you," Alex said, but his mood was clearly soured by now. He couldn't help but sigh at what the situation had come to be.

"So, do you have any more questions? I thought you had a lot," Lady Ren said.

"Oh, yes," Alex said as he hurriedly brought out a talisman. "Can you tell me what this talisman is? I tried checking, but I just can't figure it out at all."

"Hmm, a talisman?"

The talisman in Alex's hands started floating and they went up to Lady Ren's face. She looked at it for a bit and her eyes went wide.

"Young man, how do you always have such good stuff on you? Your luck is out of this world," Lady Ren said.

"Umm, so I can assume the talisman is good?" he asked.

"Yes, it's great," Lady Ren said as she gave back the talisman. "It's a teleportation talisman. Although it's dormant right now, you will have to wait for a bit before you can use it."

"Oh, a teleportation talisman?" Alex's eyes went wide. "I can teleport around with it?"

"Not so fast. I said you will have to wait, right?" Lady Ren said. "It will take a while before you can use this talisman I suppose. From what I can see, it requires a lot of Water Qi fed to it before it can be used. If you know of someplace like that, you can make it active right now."

"Or, you can just wait... I don't know, 10 more years? You can do it then as well," Lady Ren said.

"10 years? Is there no other way?" Alex asked.

"Nope. You either find the Water Qi, or you wait. And you will need a lot of Water Qi. I genuinely have no idea if there even is such a place in the Western Continent," she said.

"Sigh, alright. I guess I will have to wait then," Alex said. "Thank you for explaining what it is. I wouldn't have known about it at all if it weren't for you."

"It's fine. But, can you tell me how you came to acquire it?" Lady Ren asked.

"I got it from a corpse in the Southern— the forest outside. It was with a man that was hidden below a massive garden full of alchemy ingredients. I still wonder what he was doing there," Alex said.

"I see, then we have no information. You were just lucky," Lady Ren said. "If he wasn't from your empire, then he must've teleported there. You sure you don't have any other information?"

"No," Alex said.

"Alright, let's end the topic here then. Do you have anything else to ask?" Lady Ren said.

"No, but I have 2 requests," Alex said.

"Requests? Right, you did say that. Let's hear it then," Lady Ren said.

"Okay, my first request is that I get a room built with a furnace in it. I would like to practice my alchemy a bit. It will also help the beasts since I can help them get some pills that might come to be of use," Alex said.

"Pills huh? We don't have any that make those, so those would be quite useful. But are you sure you can make some for all of us?" Lady Ren asked.

"I am slowly improving, and soon I will be able to perfectly create True rank pills. When I do, the importance of my alchemy in this place will go up by a lot," Alex said.

"Hmm, I hope you are successful then," Lady Ren said. "Little Yao, see to it, okay?"

"Yes, lady Ren," the jaguar replied.

"As for my second request, I heard that there is a senior who makes the formations around here? I would like to ask him to help me with understanding a few things," Alex said.

"Uhh... that will be a little hard. Little Chen is the type of person who does what he can. I will get you a meeting with him. Whether he will teach you or not will lie on your hand. Is that okay?" lady Ren asked.

"Yes, thank you, Lady Ren," Alex said.

"Alright, if there is nothing more, you can go back now. Take care of the child for a while before he is ready," Lady Ren said. "I will see you around."

"Thank you, seniors," Alex said and bowed before leaving the hall.

Chapter 502: Dropping Out for good.

Alex walked out of the palace hall and walked along the white corridor with the new information running through his mind.

The sword that he was unable to use for the longest time belonged to the royal family of the Eastern Continent, the royal family being antagonistic towards Pearl and his mother for some reason, and the fact that he had a teleportation talisman that could help him leave so long as it was active again.

These were all information that he wasn't sure how he felt about it. At least, they were information about stuff that was way out of his reach for him right now.

"Sigh, I should just go back and wait for the alchemy room to be made. There really is nothing to do around here, isn't it? I can't even visit the library," Alex thought.

"Well, since it's still afternoon, I should just go and— Huh?" Alex was surprised when he noticed something.

"It happened again?" he said with a face full of shock. He looked at the time on the right and had noticed that it was now 4 in the afternoon.

"But it was barely noon when I entered that room. How did the time— oh right, the Palace Hall did have time dilation formation in it," Alex thought as he remembered. "Damn, is it always like this? I should be careful where I go then."

Alex was still in shock at the time changing, so he quickly went back to the room that was assigned to him, and logged out.

He went out of the capsule and checked the time. As expected, it was indeed 4 pm. "Wow, how did the change in time in the game affect me in the real world as well?" he wondered.

He wasn't hungry or needed to use the bathroom, so he quickly went back into the capsule and logged in.

While the change in time had surprised him once more, he decided to do something else to take his mind off of them.

He brought out a monster core, one belonging to that of a Mind Tempering 4th realm beast, and consumed it.

After reaching Mind Tempering, the beasts seemed to always have a soul in the cores regardless of which ones he had.

Still, Alex's own spiritual sea was far stronger than what the Mind Tempering beasts could really be, so he had no difficulty in killing it.

The spiritual sea beneath him was so vast and dense, that he could keep on using techniques after techniques and it wouldn't deplete in the slightest.

After killing the beast in his spiritual sea, the yellow fog once more consumed both him and the beast, and he got the Qi from the beast.

"I finally have enough to break through to the next realm huh?" he thought. "Although, it wasn't very long ago that I did breakthrough, so I probably should wait a little longer."

Alex decided to keep the breakthrough aside for now, and checked his storage bags. There was 1 more 4th Mind Tempering realm beast's core, and another one belonging to a 5th Mind Tempering realm beast.

Since he had gone to the forest for hunting when he only had Mind Tempering 1st realm cultivation base, he couldn't kill anything stronger than those at the time. Thus, these were the highest cores he had for now.

"Sigh, these should help me get to the 5th Mind Tempering realm, but after that, I will be in trouble," Alex thought. "Collecting Qi through normal cultivation will take me months. Even with using pills to assist in it. Sigh, no wonder the everyday cultivators cultivate so slow."

The normal cultivators could do the exact same thing the players did. That was to sell what they can gather through trade or hunting, and buy themselves pills that increased their Qi.

Alex couldn't help but wonder why they didn't do that. There must be a reason why only players could increase their cultivation base so fast, despite the normal cultivators having a headstart.

"Is using pills to get stronger considered wrong? It couldn't be that they just never thought about it, right?" Alex thought. "I should have asked the master what would happen if people only consumed pills to breakthrough."

"Now that I think about it, I might have to do the same thing, won't I?" he thought. However, he immediately thought otherwise. "No, as a Mind Tempering realm cultivator, pills won't help me as monster cores will. I will still have to stick to the cores, I guess."

With nothing else to do, Alex called out Pearl and got onto his bed. He let Pearl start cultivating, and slowly, he too started doing it.

Before he knew it, he had fallen into a trance and fell unconscious.

Slowly, his consciousness returned back to him as he woke up from sleep. He looked up at the time and realized that it was 6 am in morning.

His True Qi had returned to him at 50% once more and he could feel himself getting just a little bit stronger.

"I should go train a bit so that I can breakthrough again," he thought.

"Ah right, if someone comes, open the door and tell them I am cultivating, okay? If the person who came is any of the 4 from yesterday, then you can leave with them," Alex said to Pearl.

He didn't take Pearl back into the beast space since no one was possibly going to harm him in this place. Then, sat in his cultivating position and logged out.

He got out of the capsule and freshened up before going out to the kitchen. Emily was already up, preparing breakfast for them all.

"You know you don't have to wake up this early to make us breakfast right? We can just have cereals," Alex said.

"Nonsense! Cereals are bad for you. It's better to have bread and eggs," she said.

"Yeah, but you could play the game for a little longer. No need to leave, what is it, 6 in the morning. You need more sleep," Alex said.

Emily stopped after putting the bread in the toaster and sighed. "I have nothing to do in the game, unfortunately," she said.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

She turned around and said, "well, since I have a really bad body and talent and almost unusable spiritual root, I can't really cultivate at all. Despite it being months, I'm still in the Bone Tempering realm."

"Wow, that is really slow. Is your cultivation method not very good?" he asked. As far as he knew, even with bad talents, one could cultivate fast if they landed a very good cultivation method.

"Uh, it's not bad I guess," Emily said. "It's heaven grade, so I really can't call it anything but good. However, due to me not having any talent, most of the Qi I collect gets wasted during my breakthroughs."

"Like the last time I went from Bone Tempering 3rd realm to Bone Tempering 4th realm, it took me 3 different tries. I only had a 65% success rate. From 4th to 5th, I have around 62% success rate, so it will take me another long while."

"Sigh, don't do what I did, and never die in-game. It just ruins everything. I might actually end up not playing the game anymore," she said. "But... the holidays are coming and I have nothing else to do for now. I think I will stop playing the game when the classes come back a month later."

"If they do come, right?" Alex asked. "Wasn't there that rumor of the university going to close for 2 to 3 months due to the game? I wonder if that is true."

"I hope not. Otherwise, I would have nothing else to do for the entirety of the winter vacation," she said.

"Oh, you won't have to worry about that. Given where I am, I might actually end up not playing the game a whole lot in the future either," Alex said.

"Oh, what happened?" she asked.

"Well, I'm in this jungle with beasts that say they will keep me there for 10 years, so I think this is it for me too. Unless I manage to find a way back or convince them to let me go back," Alex said.

"That's awful. You were doing so well in the game too," Emily said. "Well, I guess you will now have time to focus on your studies, instead of the game."

"Uhh... about that," Alex said. "I am going to drop out of University."

"Drop out? Why?" Emily asked.

Alex shrugged. "You know why. I don't really need the classes," he said.

"Huh? What did I just hear?" Sarah said as she walked into the kitchen. "You're going to drop out? You must be earning a lot of money then."

Alex got a little embarrassed to talk about his money, but still said, "something like that."

"Woah," Sarah said. "I was kind of joking. Are you really earning a lot? How much do you earn?"

"Sarah, that's not something you should be asking so openly," Emily said from the side.

"What? You're siding with him now? Does our years-long friendship mean nothing to you now?" Sarah exaggerated.

"Haha, it's not bad. Let's just say that," Alex asked.

"Oh, must be in the high hundred thousand then. How much do you end up returning though?" Sarah asked.

"Returning?" Alex questioned.

"You know, putting back into the game. Returning the money," she said.

"Umm, why would I give money back to the game?" Alex asked.

"Uh, you know. To buy stuff, get spirit stones for cultivation. Wait, have you not put the money back into the game yet?" she asked.

"Of course not. I'm self-sufficient in-game," Alex said.

"Tsk, no wonder you make so much. I always end up giving back half of what I make because I always need it," Sarah said.

"You should be like me, Sarah. Get yourself a husband in-game who can give you stuff for free," Hannah entered and jokingly said.

"Damn, why is your timing so right? Also, your brother is dropping out of college. Say something to him," Sarah said.

"Oh, you're dropping out? You lasted quite a while longer than I imagined," Hannah said.

"Huh? You expected me to drop out earlier?" Alex asked.

"Yeah. I only stayed cause it was my final semester. You had barely just started, so I thought you would simply leave. Especially given that you have no money involved in it," Hannah said.

"Hm, I guess that's fair," Sarah said from the side.

"Alright, let's stop the discussion here. I might have something to do in the game soon, so I should return quickly for now," Alex said and started eating faster.

The rest of them did the same thing and left the kitchen to go back to their room.

Chapter 503: Training Partners

Alex logged back into the game and found that Pearl was still with him. It seemed that he wasn't required anywhere else for today.

Seeing that he didn't seem to have anything else to do, Alex started getting a little bored. "Should I just make some formations?" he thought.

He took out the few spare metal plates and the inscription pen from his storage bag and started making strokes on the metal plate.

Unfortunately, he had no way of knowing the efficiency of the formations he was making without the tool that was available in the Tiger sect. So, all he could do was make the formations, try to run it, and see how it worked.

'Urgh, I wish I had more formation rods. I could practice those too,' he thought. After a few hours, he was done making the formations. Once he was done, he started feeling incredibly bored.

"Wanna go out and train?" Alex asked.

"Meow!" Pearl cried out and happily jumped onto his shoulders before pointing at the door. It seemed that Pearl too was incredibly bored with nothing to do.

It was still a few hours till noon, but the sun was shining brightly and the garden meadow already had a lot of beasts in it.

The ones that hadn't seen him looked at him with a weird gaze since a human's presence wasn't common at all.

Some growled and roared at him, while others just kept watch of what he was doing. Some even threatened to come to attack him from the way they were staring at him.

Alex felt incredibly uncomfortable amongst these stranger beasts. "I wish I had gotten Yao Jia to come with me. She would've helped me not feel so afraid at least," he said to Pearl.

"You called me?" a beast jumped towards him from the side.

Alex reflexively jumped backward and got in an attacking stance. When he finally saw who it was, he let down his guard.

"Geez, you scared me," Alex said. "What are you doing here?"

"Basking in the sun. Also, I told you I am in charge of this garden right? I look after this place," she said. "Did you come to stay in the sun too?"

"Sun? No. I came here to train. I need to become stronger," Alex said.

"Ooh, can I watch? I'm really interested in how humans train," Yao Jia said with a curious face.

"Uh, sure. I doubt it's different from beasts though," Alex said.

"Oh, you guys get the memory of your parents where you learn how to fight and use techniques too?" Yao Jia asked.

"Uh... no. I see, I guess we are different," Alex said. "My training style is different. I learn the techniques on my own, then practice them while fighting with someone else."

"Ooh, we do the second part too. Practice sure is important," Yao Jia said. "However, you don't have any partner to fight against right? Do you want me to find someone?"

"No, I'm good. I'll train with Pearl," Alex said.

Yao Jia's curious face slowly turned into a confused face as she asked, "you're going to fight the little child?"

"Uh, yes. It's just practice after all," Alex said.

"But, he's more than a realm weaker than you," Yao Jia said, still sort of confused.

"Oh it's fine, I will lower my cultivation base to become equal to him in strength," Alex said.

"Still, isn't he only 6 months old? You're going to fight an infant?" Yao Jia asked.

"Uhh... when you put it like that, I don't know what to say," Alex said.

"Also, will lowering your ability to that of someone weaker than you, will it help you become stronger at all? Isn't that just wasting your time mostly?" Yao Jia asked. "If you want to become strong, then you need to push yourself to the limit. Fight someone on equal footing as you. Only then will you become stronger."

Alex stopped to contemplate. "What you said is true... but who will I even fight against here? I only have Pearl."

"Oh don't worry about that. If you really are interested in fighting, I can find many beasts who will be more than happy to beat a human, hehe," Yao Jia said while giggling.

"It sounds like you want me to suffer more than anything," Alex said.

"What? Of course not. I will let them know not to be too heavy-handed when they fight you. Don't worry, I will stay watch too. As I said, I am interested in watching a human train," Yao Jia said.

Alex thought for a moment and nodded. "Thank you. I will be happy to take this offer then. Also, if you can, can you find someone for Pearl to train with? I don't want him to be idle too."

"No Problem," Yao Jia said and made a loud growling noise. Suddenly, 2 beasts ran up to her. One of them was a jackal, and the other one was a hyena. They bowed in front of her, and he spoke to them in some sort of beast language.

Alex couldn't understand what she said, but he could tell that she was ordering them to go find fighters for him.

"Oh right, make sure the beasts I fight are 8th Mind Tempering realm or above. Otherwise, it won't be a fight at all," Alex said.

"Huh? Aren't you 3rd Mind Tempering realm?" Yao Jia asked as she checked through his cultivation base.

"Yes, but I can fight people stronger than me. Also, the same thing for Pearl. Find someone 2 to 3 realms higher than him," Alex said.

"Are you sure?" Yao Jia asked as she looked concernedly at Pearl.

"MEOW!" Pearl meowed, letting her know that it was okay.

'I will need to ask her to teach him how to speak as well,' Alex thought when he heard Pearl meow. Pearl already knew a few words and could speak to him through his mind. But his mouth wasn't able to articulate the words at all, and he always ended up meowing his sentences.

"Okay, I will find a strong one for you, but the child is too important to throw into a strong match-up. He will have to start with someone in his own realm," Yao Jia said.

"That's fair, I guess. Please do what you think is right," Alex said.

Yao Jia nodded and let the 2 beasts know, who ran away to find fighters for him and Pearl.

When they returned, they came back with 3 beasts, all of whom looked quite excited to fight.

From what Alex could see, only 1 of these beasts was for Alex to fight. The other two were for Pearl. One of those beasts, a snake, was at the same cultivation realm as Pearl, and the other one a deer was 2 realms higher than him.

As for Alex's opponent, a Rhino, was in the 8th Mind Tempering realm, just as he requested. Given that it was a beast, the rhino's strength would be similar to that of a normal 9th Mind Tempering realm human, which for Alex would be quite an ordeal.

However, that was just what he needed to become stronger and he was all the happier for it.

"Will they work?" Yao Jia asked as she turned towards Alex.

"Yes, very much," Alex said.

"Alright," Yao Jia said as she turned around to speak to the 3 beasts. The 3 beasts kept glancing at Alex sneakily while nodding to whatever Yao Jia was telling them.

"Alright, come. Let's not disturb the peace here with your training. I also don't want to deal with the destruction of my garden," Yao Jia said.

"Where will we go?" Alex asked.

"Hmm, I can't take you outside since you are not allowed to. And the underground is off limit for training, so I guess there is only one place remaining. We'll go to the palace," Yao Jia said.

"The palace?" Alex asked as he turned to look at the castle that had remained unused for a lot of years.
"What about the backyard? Is there no space there?"

"There is a giant hole in the backyard and inside is where the cemetery lies, so it's considered rude to go there for anything other than praying for the dead. Don't worry, there are giant empty rooms in there that will be perfect for you guys," Yao Jia said.

"I see, let's go then," Alex said.

The palace was a giant white mansion with at least 3 stories to it. From the outside, Alex couldn't tell how big it was, but it was more than 100 meters in width alone.

If the palace was really built on top of the entire spirit vine, then it would be the largest building Alex had seen to date. Even larger than buildings he had seen in his city in real life.

The way to the underground was on the right side of the palace while the gate outside was in front of it. So, Alex and the others had to go towards the front of the palace before climbing up the stairs to enter the palace.

As soon as he entered, Alex could feel the emptiness. He could hear the sounds of beasts working inside, could see the palace being well-kept through the years, but he could still sense that the warmth that was once in this building was lost.

With the queen and the other wives and concubines, as well as the descendants, leaving the place to go back to the family ground, the palace no longer had any residents in it, and it showed in the emptiness Alex felt.

"This way, the rooms are right here," Yao Jia said as she walked through the corridor in the palace.

Chapter 504: Training with the Rhino

Yao Jia walked through the halls with a sprint on her steps. Along the way, Alex saw many beasts that seemed to be working there, and Yao Jia found 2 very strong ones among them to come along with her.

From Alex's senses, they were all in the upper True realms, all stronger than him and the 3 others that came with him by a lot. He wondered why they were called but didn't question it.

She growled something in her beastly language that Alex couldn't understand and the other two beasts nodded.

"What's going on?" Alex asked.

"Oh, I'm just getting these two to watch over the child as he trains. We don't want him to get injured, right?" Yao Jia said.

Alex nodded and agreed. She growled towards the beasts once more and pointed towards one of the rooms. The 4 of the beasts that were with them nodded and walked to the room. Ning assumed that was the training room and walked towards it as well.

"That's not the room you'll be going to," Yao Jia said. "That's where the child will train. You will have to train in another separate room."

"Oh, okay. Pearl, go and train with these guys okay? I will go to another room to train," he said.

"Meow?" Pearl said, not wanting to be left with the strangers.

"Don't worry, I will be close by. If you need me, just call me," Alex said. Pearl reluctantly agreed and went into the room.

"Alright, they will train there for at least an hour. You will be training in that room," Yao Jia said as she pointed at one of the rooms down the hallway.

"These are just normal rooms, right? Not rooms made specifically for training?" Alex asked.

"Yes, they're just rooms where the family lived. But even so, it all has formation in it that makes it damn near impossible for even me to do anything," Yao Jia said.

The door opened, and the three of them entered. The door was big enough for even the bulky Rhino to enter, and the room was just as equally large.

The room was totally empty aside from a set of curtains on the window. The room had been empty for so long that Alex couldn't even tell where everything was kept since the start.

Alex walked to the center of the room and recognized how wide it was. Although it wasn't the same size as the training hall back at his master's manor, it was still more than half of its size.

That was big enough for him to train freely.

"Whose room did this use to be? This is quite big," Alex said.

"Hmm, I don't know. No one has lived here for the last 5000 years, so I can't know. But it's more than likely it was either one of the King's partners or his children. Definitely one of those two. Although, it could also be a guest room. I don't know," Yao Jia said.

"So, are you ready? I want to see you train," she said with a jovial tone in her voice.

"Yes, I'm ready," Alex said. He walked away from the center and to one side of the room. He took out his sword and waited for the Rhino to get to the other side.

"Hey, Hey, Hey! What are you doing? Why are you bringing out a weapon?" Yao Jia asked.

"This is how I fight though," Alex said.

"But this isn't a fight. It's a training session. What if he gets hurt," Yao Jia said as he pointed towards the Rhino.

"Uh, I'm sure he had a tough hide. Also, I will try not to hit too hard," Alex said.

"No, if he gets injured from this fight, that will be on me. Can't you train with just normal techniques?" she asked.

"Um," Alex thought about it for a bit. He wanted to learn the sword to improve his Sword Intent, but it would be a bit too hard to train the intent itself under the current situation since his training partner wasn't that much stronger.

"Alright, I will fight without any weapons," Alex said in the end as he kept back his sword.

"Good, start when you want. I'm just here for the show," Yao Jia said.

Alex nodded and looked towards the Rhino before nodding towards him as well. "Alright, I'll begin then.

He said and lightly jumped towards the Rhino with his hands in a fist. The Rhino was plenty intelligent being in the Mind Tempering realm and immediately knew what to do.

It twisted its neck a little to the left with a smug look on its face, dodging the punch and bringing it back like a snapping rubber band, hitting Alex's upper body with the side of its head.

Alex lost balance as he was sent aside by the simple attack. "Alright," he said and stood up before going back to punch once more.

The Rhino made a scoffing noise as it thought that Alex was doing the same thing again and dodge once more. However, this time Alex didn't move a step further and immediately came to a halt after the Rhino moved its head.

His other fist came from the side and punched the Rhino directly on the nose below its horn. Once the Rhino was hit, Alex returned back to his spot, preparing to attack once more.

The Rhino shook its head as a slight stinging pain emanated from its nose. Despite the difference in cultivation, it had taken damage from Alex. It got a little irritated and decided to attack seriously now.

Alex dashed forward once more, but the Rhino didn't bother dodging at all. Instead, it also dashed forward at an incredible speed as its horn started glowing green in color.

Alex could see a barrier appear around the front of the Rhino, like a shield protecting the front side. However, the Rhino was using that shield to attack.

With the rhino already being massive, and the shield being even bigger than it, Alex didn't have much space to maneuver in. He wanted to teleport out, but the amount of light in the room wasn't enough to make any distinct shadows for him to teleport to.

So, with no other choice, he quickly started both of his defensive techniques. His skin started showing a marbled pattern, and a barrier made up of multicolored light appeared in front of him.

As the Rhino's barrier passed his own, the Rhino's barrier lost the majority of its green light and what slammed at Ning was only part of it.

A rather loud sound emerged from the two of them colliding, but neither of them was at an advantage during the clash.

The Rhino came to a full stop and Alex himself didn't move a bit.

"Ooh! That was nice. You use so many techniques all at once. I saw like 3. Those aren't memories of your parents right?" Yao Jia asked from the side.

"No, this is what we learn after training," Alex said. "We never get anything from the start."

Yao Jia thought for a bit and asked, "Can you teach me?"

"Um... I don't think so. I know there are techniques that you can learn, but I don't have any. I had looked through a few to teach Pearl, but all of them looked terrible. Maybe there are good ones in the sects that primarily focus on beast taming," Alex said.

"Sigh, that's unfortunate. Continue your training," Yao Jia said.

Alex nodded and got back to his training. Throughout the next half an hour, he showed many of the abilities he had that didn't require the use of a sword.

This also helped him realize that he was way too reliant on the sword itself. In the case, if he ever had to fight without a sword, his survival rate would go down by a lot.

'I need to become stronger even when I'm not using the sword,' he thought.

The training was hard, but Alex was also not using all of his abilities, so that could be improved upon.

The Rhino sent a gale of air flying towards him, which he dodged by moving around it with seemingly no resistance in the air.

He then very quickly went behind the Rhino and kicked at it. The Rhino bulked up until its body and got extra sturdy such that Alex's attack didn't do much damage to it at all.

Alex was about to go for another attack when Yao Jia suddenly spoke up. "Alright, that's enough," she said.

Alex stopped and turned around with a confused face. "But it's only been half an hour," he said. "Can't we do this for a little longer?"

"Oh, I'm not stopping the training session," Yao Jia said. "I'm just changing your partner."

"Changing my partner?" Alex asked.

"Yeah, I didn't expect his lack of maneuverability to be a factor in this training, but it seems you are getting a lot of hits off just because he isn't as flexible as you," Yao Jia said as she gestured towards the Rhino.

The Rhino said something in return while bowing his head, and Yao Jia replied in the same language that Alex couldn't understand.

She said something, to which the Rhino bowed once more and left out of the room.

"What did you say to him?" Alex asked.

"Oh, I just told him he was no longer needed here," Yao Jia said.

"I see," Alex said. "Should we go check on Pearl while we wait for my next partner then?" Alex asked.

"Oh, you don't need to worry about that. Your training partner is already here," Yao Jia said with a big smile.

Alex slowly turned his head towards her as a thought came to his mind. "Uhh... by my training partner, you don't mean... you, right?" he asked.

"Of course I mean myself. Who else could I be referring to?" she asked with a laugh.

"But you're so strong. Will this even be a training?" Alex asked.

"Oh, don't worry. I won't fight back at all," she said. "I'm way too eager to see how you fare against someone clearly out of your range."

Alex thought for a moment and said, "That's not a bad idea, honestly. I would love to fight someone strong so that I know where I'm failing. Also, I should be able to use my abilities without holding back at all"

"Right? You can also use your sword if you want. I can take those hits without a problem," Yao Jia said smugly.

"I would rather not use my sword right now. I would like to fight the best I can without any weapons," he said.

Yao Jia smiled and said, "Suit yourself. now come, let's train."

Chapter 505: White Tiger's Golden Claw

For the entirety of the next 3 hours, Alex and Yao Jia trained for as long as they could. It was an intense training session for Alex, but to Yao Jia, it was just a simple bout, as if she was playing with a child.

No matter how much speed, strength, or surprise he put into his attacks, there was nothing that she could do that wasn't better in all aspects.

Alex was sure that the only thing that could bring the slightest bit of result in this training was Heaven's Impact. However, that wasn't a skill suitable for training practices.

He kept to with his normal skills, but even his teleportation skills were being bested by her with her speed. He couldn't even sneak attack.

His fist and palm attacks were doing nothing, so he decided to use the one technique he had come upon his own.

Yellow light floated in the air as it slowly came together on his arms and coated it golden. Yao Jia's eyes shined when she saw this.

Alex dashed through the air and punched towards her. She casually brought forth her paw and stopped it. Even as she thought it did, the yellow light exploded, attacking her paw once more.

"Woah, Woah, Woah, stop!" she said. "What was that?"

"What? My skill?" Alex asked.

"Yes! That was like... where did you learn it?" she asked.

"Nowhere. I came up with it on my own," Alex said.

"On your own. Wow! That technique is so close to one that the White Tigers have too. It's called the White Tiger's Golden Claw. The King had it, and it was one of his strongest attacks I was told," Yao Jia said.

"White Tiger's Golden Claw huh?" Alex asked.

"Yes, it was one of his strongest skills. Honestly, your skill is very lacking compared to his, but that's understandable. However, since you said you came up with this on your own, maybe you can improve on it," Yao Jia said.

"Improve my skill? How do you suggest I do that?" Alex asked. Golden light flickered around him once more as they slowly coalesced on his right arm to form a golden fist.

He kept it there for a bit and listened to what Yao Jia had to say.

"There's an obvious answer, honestly," she said. "Instead of a fist, make it a claw. Make it sharp so that it can cut through things. That will deal a lot more damage than just regular punch, don't you think?"

"Hm... claws. I can't have nails coming from out between my fingers, so I guess this is my only choice," Alex said. Slowly, he opened his golden fist and loosened his hand.

Then, more golden light appeared around his that started converging on his hand once more. Only this time, they were sticking to his fingers, making each one of them sharp like claws.

He turned his hand around and looked at it. He was genuinely impressed with what he had come up with.

'I can't use it the same way I use the punch though, right?' he thought. 'The punch is meant to be a one-hit attack, but this one will have to last me several bouts. So, they must be quite durable.'

"Hey, that's pretty good," Yao Jia said from the front. "But you know what's better than one claw?"

Alex chuckled. "Two claws, huh?" he said and formed a golden fist on his left hand that also soon changed to claws.

"That looks much better," Yao Jia said. "But you know what's better than two claws?"

"I'm not making claws out of my feet," Alex said as he laughed.

"Whatever, that's your loss," Yao Jia said. "Okay, come attack me. Let's see how well they perform."

Alex didn't really have any claw technique to fall back on, so he had to go in on the attack blindly. He dashed forward the same way he would during normal punches and started slashing when he got close.

The attack procedure felt incredibly inefficient as his claws didn't really hit the targets properly. Yao Jia was also quick and dodged most of his attack.

The only time he genuinely got to test the claws was when she would use barrier skills and he would get to freely attack them

For now, he had realized that his claws weren't durable at all, but he had some idea on how to fix that. If he could give them a base to form upon, for example, long nails, then they would surely be more durable.

'Although I won't be able to rely on pill always. I will need to make them stronger just as is. Maybe I should use True Qi. Those would certainly be stronger,' he thought.

He let go of his golden claw and reformed it while using True Qi this time. It looked far more brilliant in color than it did with common Qi and felt a lot stronger as well.

He checked the claws for a few seconds and remembered something from a few months ago that had given him the idea for his golden fist in the first place.

He seemed to recall a skill to the same effect as what he had now being used by Pearl back when they were stuck in that formation.

"Now that I think about it, part of the reason I came up with the golden fist technique was that I saw Pearl use it actually. He used it against me during one of our training. After seeing that, I came up with the idea to use it for myself as well," Alex said.

Yao Jia who was getting ready for the next round of fights stopped as her eyes went wide.

"What?" she asked. "The child can use that already? Dear lord, I must let the elders know about this."

"Wait, what's wrong with him using it? It's a White Tiger's skill right?" Alex asked.

"Yes, but the child hasn't been through the ritual yet. His being able to use skills before the ritual is not something I know is possible. I must let the elders know to see if this means anything. Come, we can end the training here."

Alex nodded. "Yes, let's end it here. I'm quite tired too," he said.

Yao Jia briskly walked out of the room with Alex following behind her quietly. He wondered if he had made a mistake by telling her that Pearl knew the technique.

The older folks already knew that Pearl knew the White Tiger's Dominating Body. If they now knew that he also knew White Tiger's Golden Claw skill, they would put more importance on Pearl, which would always mean a good thing for him.

However, it was also possible that they would force Pearl to go through the ritual before he was even ready to make him the King of this place as soon as possible.

That was the reason he did not feel like revealing that Pearl had also used another skill back during their training, one that he used to block Alex's sword completely with no damage.

Pearl was done with his training in the other room and jumped onto Alex's embrace as soon as he saw him.

"You okay, buddy? How was your training?" Alex asked.

"MEOW!" Pearl once more complained about being left with strangers, made to fight.

Alex chuckled a little and said, "I'm sorry that keeps happening, buddy. But you will have to do that if you want to get stronger. Also, I will stay with you, for now, so cheer up."

Alex bowed a little towards the snake and the deer that were training with Pearl. From what Alex could see, the snake didn't even seem to have fought that long. As for the deer, it was in an absolutely disheveled state.

Pearl surely made some work out of him.

"Let's go back," Alex said. While Yao Jia went to report on her findings today, Alex took Pearl back to his room to rest.

Once again, there was nothing for him to do so he went back to his room to wait around.

"Well, the training session itself was quite intense, wasn't it?" he asked. "I think I should ask her to help me train tomorrow as well. What do you say, buddy?"

"MEOW!" Pearl refused.

"You will come around to it, surely," he said. "Right then, I think it's time."

Alex then opened up his status and clicked breakthrough.

Chapter 506: A Month Later

"AAAAAAAAA-AHAHAHHA~"

Emily screamed from the top of her lungs as the rollercoaster went downhill. Alex could also feel the rush of the moment, but it wasn't scary at all to him for some reason.

Even until the end, he never once screamed like the other people on the roller coaster.

"Gosh, you're no fun. You've become too used to heights in-game, haven't you?" Emily asked.

"I can't help it if I know how to fly, can I?" Alex asked.

"Sigh, at least one of us is having fun in the game," Emily said. "Come on, let's go. I want to have some crepe."

"Oh, don't you want to go on that ride before that?" Alex asked as he pointed to a fun-looking amusement park ride.

"Arghh, I do. But I'm also feeling a little hungry. Are you not hungry right now? We both haven't eaten anything since breakfast," she said.

"I guess I am. Alright, let's go eat something, and we can continue having fun afterward," Alex said and went to a food stall in the amusement park.

They ordered some crepes for themselves and found a place to sit down to eat.

"I haven't had this much fun in a long while," Emily said. "Also, it's nice having someone to talk to. Being alone all the time wasn't very fun, I must say."

"I'm sorry. If I knew you had completely stopped playing already, I would've made more time to spend with you. God knows I have a lot of free time right now," Alex said.

"No, no, don't be sorry. It has nothing to do with you anyway," Emily said. "It's my fault that started all of that problem. Now I can't even go past being an outer sect disciple. The game is not worth it for me at all."

"Besides, it helped me find time for my parent's store when I went back home. They were surprised to see that I wasn't addicted to the game like everyone else.

"What will you do with your capsule then?" Alex asked.

"I don't know. Maybe I will sell it, but maybe I will want to go back and play. I will keep it for now at least," Emily said.

"That's not a bad idea," Alex said. "I wonder how many people end up selling their gears after they die and the game isn't fun anymore. Should be a lot of people right?"

"I would assume so. As far as I know, there is not a single person that managed to get a good roll on their body, and talent after reincarnating," Emily said.

"Hmm, maybe I should pull out my shares from the Deva corp's stocks. It feels really flimsy right now," Alex thought.

"By the way, you never talk about your game. Is there a reason why you are so free right now? Don't you have to work hard to earn money?" Emily asked.

"Uh, I only have 2 things to do all day in-game. Train, and make pills. Training takes 2-4 hours at most and making pills takes at most 2 hours too, so I have a lot of time free on my hand," Alex said.

"Hmm... and you make money from these pills right?" Emily asked.

"Yeeee.... Actually, not right now. I can't sell my pills, but when I can, yes. Pills are what make me money the most," Alex said.

"I probably should have taken some sort of profession when I started too. Then I probably wouldn't have died on that mission in the snow," Emily said.

"Alright, enough of this depressing talk. Let's finish and go ride some more of those rides," Alex said as he started chomping on his crepe.

Emily giggled and rushed to finish her crepe as well. After 2 more hours of having fun in the amusement park, they finally returned back home.

Both Hannah and Sarah were in the game, so they never even realized that the two had gone out at all.

"Do you want me to keep you company out there?" Alex asked.

"No, no. Go back to the game. You don't have to stop doing something you enjoy just because I don't," Emily said.

"Thank you," Alex said and left the living room. He went to his room and freshened up before going back into the capsule and logging in.

He woke up in his room and looked at the bed he was sitting on. Pearl wasn't anywhere to be seen.

"He must be training," Alex thought and walked out. He walked along the white underground hallways and made his way to a special place designated for him and him alone.

It was the alchemy room that was created for him. The beasts had worked extra hard to make sure the room was ready the day after he had asked for it.

Since then, he had been making pills daily, and his experience with making True pills had increased a lot.

By now, he was successfully creating Earth-grade True pills without any issue. The pills he made were on the easier side amongst the recipes he knew, but that was still an achievement for him who wasn't in the True realms yet.

That was all because of his Qi. Thanks to his Qi becoming increasingly denser and more profound as he broke through, by the time he was in the 5th Mind Tempering realm, all of his Common Qi would turn into True Qi after a night of cultivation.

When that had happened the first time, he had wondered if he had reached the True realm by some chance and skipped a couple of realms. However, the status on him still said that he was in the Mind Tempering realm, so he knew what realm he was in.

As for after that realm, every subsequent realm, his Qi had gotten more and more dense. Now, even his common Qi was so dense that he could almost handle True rank ingredient while making pills.

He himself was surprised at how well he had done at making the pills with just his normal Qi. With True Qi, he could easily form most True pills that weren't complex in recipes.

Alex entered his alchemy room and sat in front of the furnace. He brought out his cauldron and put it on the fire before taking a deep breath to regulate his 8th Mind Tempering realm cultivation base.

That was the realm he had reached after a month of being in this place, and he was very close to the 9th as well. Just a few more days of training, and he could surely be there.

After that, it was just a matter of time before he reached the True realm.

Alex was giddy with happiness every time he remembered this. Still, he calmed down his excitement and started making pills once more.

He put in the ingredients one by one and started moving them as the recipe asked for. If Alex had made this pill a month ago, he would have to be cautious enough to change his common Qi to True Qi 3 different times so as to not get attacked by the energy of the ingredient.

However, now he didn't need to worry about that at all since all of his Qi was True Qi, to begin with. In just 10 more minutes, Alex managed to form the pill.

The pill-splitting Qi still didn't release when making True Pills for some reason, so Alex was at least happy about that.

When he finally finished the pill, he looked at the harmony and realized that it was at 32%. For a True pill made by someone that hadn't even entered the True realms yet, this was not a bad harmony at all.

Alex nodded to himself when he saw this and put it in a bottle. He then brought out more ingredients and started making more pills.

Unfortunately, despite being True Qi, his True Qi wasn't dense enough to last very long. So just after 2 hours, he had to stop making pills.

Still, Alex was satisfied with the 6 pills he managed to make, with breaks in between them.

Once done, he stood up and left the room to go outside. He walked through the bright hallway and came up to the stairs that led to the garden on the right side of the palace.

Alex was allowed to freely go around this place, so he walked up to the aboveground with no hesitation.

When he finally walked out of the door, he could see quite a few beasts standing around. When they saw him, however, they started jumping and screaming before making their way to in front of him.

"Please, stay behind. I have 6 pills for today," Alex said. "I can sell them to you based on what you have."

The beasts didn't understand what Alex had said at all, but that was when Yao Jia came in handy. She had been waiting for this to start in her garden outside, and as soon as Alex spoke, she translated what he said to the beasts.

It had taken him a bit, but Alex had managed to show that his pills were effective to the beasts. Especially the ones that healed and helped in cultivation. In these peaceful times, the ones that made them temporarily powerful didn't receive as much attention, but they were also loved by the beasts quite a bit.

Alex's intentions at the start had only been to exchange the pills with monster cores, and he still wanted them, but after seeing what else the beasts could give in exchange, he was more than happy to accept them.

That was how Alex had set up this small auction of his own, and it was going to start right now.

Chapter 507: 9th Mind Tempering realm

The 'auction' went just as it always did. The beasts had brought Spirit stones, monster cores, and plants that they considered rare.

Alex would look through them as always, and if he ever found something interesting, he would exchange them for a pill he had.

Today, he managed to get 2 rare Saint-rank alchemy ingredients, 2 9th Mind Tempering realm monster core, and finally quite a lot of spirit stones.

They were common spirit stones, so they weren't worth as much as True spirit stones, but there wasn't anything else he found useful amongst the bunch of things the beasts had brought for him, so he took those instead.

Still, this made up to a few ten thousand dollars a day, so he couldn't get mad about it. Once he was done for the day, he told Yao Jia to tell them to go away and come back tomorrow at the same time.

Yao Jia did as Alex said and sent the beasts away.

"It's amazing to see how quickly they changed their stance on getting your pills once they saw how well it did," She said.

"Well, it's only right that you don't accept things from strangers. Especially things that you eat. Human children are taught this from a very young age," Alex said.

He looked at the 2 cores in his hands and smiled. He could now finally break through to the 9th Mind Tempering realm. After that... it was just one more step to the True Realm.

"Oh right, what's happening with my requests? I haven't heard about anything," Alex said

"Well... it's under consideration. We don't really know about alchemy, so the elders are a little hesitant to let you go out to pick ingredients. Who knows what you can make with your pills," Yao Jia said.

"As for the other one... senior Chen himself keeps saying later, so there is nothing we can do. You will just have to wait for him to get tired enough to accept your request," Yao Jia said.

"Can't lady Ren order him or something? It's just for a really small thing that I wanted clarifications on," Alex said.

"No," Yao Jia said. "He is really stubborn and also very old. Most of the time, he just wants to sit in his home and sleep all the time. He can get real grumpy if we force him to work more than he wants."

Alex couldn't help but sigh when he heard that. It had been a month since he wanted to use the yang jades in his storage bag that were just lying there doing nothing. But it seemed that they would have to stay there for much longer once again.

"Sigh, I guess I will wait then," Alex said and brought out a pill. "Here, this one is for you. Thank you for helping me with everything."

"Oh, a pill?" Yao Jia's eyes shined. "What pill is this? Can I eat it?"

"Uhh, don't eat it. It's a healing pill. If you ever get hurt, you can eat it then to get better. It works for True rank cultivators, so don't bother giving it to your father if he ever needs one," Alex said.

"So, it's for only me huh? I like it," she said.

Alex smiled and waved her goodbye to return back to his room. He had missed today's training, but that was only because he had already planned to go to the amusement park beforehand.

He walked into his room and saw Pearl sitting on top of the bed.

"Oh, hey Pearl. You returned?" Alex asked. "How was training?"

"MEOW!" Pearl said, implying that it was the same as always, which was fun.

"Oh, nice. Can you say that in the human tongue?" Alex asked. " Yao Jia is teaching you to speak right?"

Pearl stared at him for a few seconds and said, "Meow Meow Meow."

Alex snickered when he heard that. Despite his intelligence and cultivation, Pearl was still a child. And it seemed that his vocal cords just weren't developed enough at such an early age.

He would have to wait for a bit longer before he could speak in the human tongue. "Alright, don't force it," Alex said.

Alex then brought out an 8th Mind Tempering realm beast's monster core and ate it. He slowly closed his eyes and drifted into his spiritual sea where he was attacked by the spirit of the beast in the core and had to defeat it before gaining the Qi from it.

He opened up the status page and saw that it was enough to break through, so without thinking much, he broke through once more.

The Qi in his body got considerably thicker to the point that he was having a hard time differentiating it from True Qi. He didn't doubt that his current common Qi was way denser than most True Realm cultivators starting Qi.

"Just a few more days now," he thought. He had the 2 cores he got from today, so he had no reason to worry about anything anymore.

It was evening time, so he decided to start cultivating once more.

He called Pearl to sit down in front of him and opened up Pearl's status page as well.

"Hm, 2nd realm of Mind Tempering huh. You're doing not bad as well. If you keep this up, you should be able to enter True Realm in about a month as well," Alex said.

"Meow!" Pearl said that he could make it faster if he got monster cores too.

"I told you, didn't I? Cultivation is always better than any other form of Qi acquisition. I have to do it because normally gathering Qi just isn't worth it for me anymore. But for you with your cultivation method, it's super-fast, so you should keep with it," Alex said.

"Come on, let's cultivate now."

Pearl sat down on his lap and started closing his eyes to cultivate. He slowly started glowing, and random cuts started appearing all around Alex.

"Let me start as well," Alex said and slowly breathed in and out. He got into a routine of inhaling and exhaling, and before he even realized it, he had fallen asleep.

Alex woke up early in the morning and noticed that his True Qi had also gotten much, much denser.

"With this much True Qi, can I perhaps fight against someone in 3rd True Disciple realm?" he wondered. His training partner as of yet had only been Yao Jia, but her cultivation base was in the True King realm. It was likely that she was just as, if not stronger, than both of his masters.

"I really wonder how strong I've gotten," he thought. He stopped Pearl who was still cultivating and logged out to go get some food.

Once he returned, he went out of the underground with Pearl to train once more. He made his way to the palace aboveground and fought with Yao Jia for nearly 3 hours this time.

He tried to keep himself from using True Qi as much as he could, but from time to time, he would end up using it in his training.

'I probably won't need to worry about keeping True Qi as much now,' he thought. 'After all, my normal Qi is capable of making True rank pills too.'

Once the training ended, he left the palace and went out to the garden to rest in the sun.

After resting for a few hours, he went to the alchemy room. He took a few minutes to decide on what pills to make and in the end, decided upon the pills that he could cure beasts once again.

Alex didn't really know what the beasts needed, after all, he couldn't go outside to check on their daily life. However, he was sure that no matter if it was peaceful or not, healing pills were always asked for.

So, he mostly made healing pills, with a few pills that helped in faster cultivation speed for a set amount of time.

It took him nearly 3 hours to finish 10 pills. Thankfully, his common Qi could also help him in making True Pills now, although he had to use more of them to compensate.

Once he was done, he went outside to auction them off once more. This time, he took no monster cores, and only spirit stones and herbs.

"That was a good sale for you," Yao Jia said.

"Thanks, you helped a lot too," Alex replied.

"Don't thank me yet. I have good news for you," she said.

Alex got curious and listened attentively.

"Your request to go outside has been accepted."

Chapter 508: Going Outside

Alex got into stance as golden light turned both of his hands into sharp animal-like claws. The tips of his fingers were now so sharp that he could dig them into stones and crush them from the inside.

Once both of the claws were set, he attacked Yao Jia. He dashed forward and got close to her. However, just before he reached her, he stopped and simply swiped high claws diagonally at her.

Yao Jia jumped backward to dodge the attack and then jumped forward to attack with her own claw. Alex brought his other hand from the side and attacked her claw with his own.

Yao Jia wasn't serious about the fight, so he could stop her attack without much effort. He then attacked with his other claw.

Yellow light flickered in front of him as a barrier appeared and blocked his attack. Alex didn't let that stop him, however. He retaliated with a barrage of claws that hit the barrier one after another, threatening to destroy it.

Yao Jia got rid of the barrier to emulate Alex breaking through it and continued the training.

Alex was starting to learn more and more about fighting with claws after training with someone who could use nothing but claws to attack most of the time.

He had come to learn of a few things that helped him understand more about using claws.

First of all, claws were different from punches. A normal punch, if strong, would usually send a person flying backward, in which case the attacker couldn't attack more than once. So most of the time the attacker would put their all into the punch.

However, claws couldn't do that. No matter how strong the claw attack was, it couldn't create a gap between the attacker and the target. So, with claws, it usually became a battle of attrition.

You had to stand your ground and attack multiple times before the opponent was so wounded that they couldn't fight back. At the same time, you also had to be strong enough to take a couple of hits or be fast enough to dodge the attacks using the least movement possible.

Alex was starting to get used to fighting with claws by now. To him, it wasn't just a fighting style, but an entirely new weapon in and of itself. It was a weapon he could use in case he ever couldn't use his sword.

He trained his claws for an hour before he decided to switch to the sword. While using claws and training was fun and engaging, he didn't forget about Sword Intent. He needed to improve upon it as well, so he trained with it on a daily basis.

He was now very proficient at using Sword Intent, and thanks to using his True sword every single day, he didn't have to worry about his Sword Intent having problems.

"How do your attacks keep getting stronger every day?" Yao Jia asked. "Did you breakthrough again?"

Alex stopped and the glow in his sword disappeared. "Ah, yes. Just yesterday I broke through to the final realm of Mind Tempering actually," he said.

"Woah! That is so fast. Does that mean you will enter True realm in a month?" she asked.

"Probably just a week actually. We humans can use pills and stuff to improve our cultivation bases, you know," he said.

"Dang it, and here I spend over 3 years just to go up a realm," Yao Jia said. "I wish I could have the same speed as humans."

"Um, I'm not sure if human speed is really a good idea. Besides, humans too have people that take forever to breakthrough. It's only a few that have learned how to breakthrough fast," Alex said.

"All they do is eat a bunch of pills and grow stronger. They don't know how to fight, how to use skills, and their cultivation base is really bad too. So in the end, it's you who comes out on top with your diligent cultivation," Alex said.

"Really? Oh, I guess I shouldn't get jealous then," Yao Jia said.

"Okay, can we end the training here? I'm way too excited to train anymore," Alex said as he was unable to hide his smile from deep within him.

"Sure. We can leave in a few minutes. Do you want to bring the child too?" Yao Jia asked.

"Oh yes. Let me go get him," Alex said. He left the palace room and went to the other room where Pearl was.

Pearl was currently fighting against a wolf who was nearly 5 times as big as him. Still, they were on equal ground as Pearl's strength was the same as the Wolf's.

Alex watched the back and forth for a few minutes before deciding to end the match.

"You can stop now, Pearl. We are going outside now," Alex said from the doorway.

Pearl who was fighting stopped and looked towards him. "Meow?" he asked.

"No, we're not fighting anyone. We are just going to go get some ingredients from the forest. And some Spirit stones if we can find them, but mostly just ingredients," Alex said.

"Meow!" Pearl was a little disappointed. He didn't really care about alchemy or spirit stones, and just wanted to keep training.

"Are you saying you don't want to see what it's like outside, and just want to stay here fighting?" Alex asked.

"Meow!" Pearl cried out loud saying that he did want to go outside. He was getting annoyed staying in this one place all the time.

"Alright, let's go then."

Alex and Pearl went out to the garden and waited for a few minutes. Yao Jia arrived not soon after with a few beasts to look after them.

"Do you really need this many beasts just for me? I won't run away, you know?" Alex said.

"They are not for you. They are here to look after the child. If anything were to happen to him, we would be in trouble," Yao Jia said.

"Oh, so you don't care if I run away?" He asked.

"We do. But I am more than enough to keep you in check," Yao Jia said.

"Sigh, I see. Can we leave now?" he asked.

"Okay, let's go."

The group then started walking out. A beast led the way as it walked in front of Pearl and the remaining walked behind him. Yao Jia was next to Alex who was holding Pearl in his embrace.

As soon as he walked out of the gate, Alex could see a massive forest that was so dense that the ground was nothing but shadows.

The shade made the surrounding considerably cooler and with it being the winter right now, Alex could feel the chill in the air.

Thankfully, as a cultivator, and even more so a body cultivator, the cold didn't bother him as much as it would a normal person.

He hadn't even walked past a few trees when his Alchemy senses started tingling, giving him the feeling that there were ingredients nearby.

Alex turned around and looked at the spots where he felt the ingredients from. "Oh, a Vengeful Elderberry. Those are so rare," Alex said as he walked up to pick it up. But suddenly, Yao Jia put her paw in front of him and stopped him.

Alex was surprised and confused. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"You were going to pick up something?" she asked.

"Yes, that fruit over there," he said as he pointed at the single reddish-purple berry hanging from a small bush.

"I see," she said and growled in a low voice. The beast at the very front walked away from the group and went up to the berry and smelled it.

Alex was still confused as to what was happening until the beast growled back.

"Alright, you can pick it up," she said.

"You lied, didn't you?" he asked as he looked at Yao Jia in shock. "You said they were here for Pearl, but they are actually here to keep me in check."

Yao Jia made a sad face and said, "Sorry. It wasn't my idea. Father forced me to bring them. That was one of the criteria for letting you go outside."

"But why? Are they afraid that I will poison everyone?" he asked.

"Hey! We don't have anyone who knows about alchemy, okay? All we can do is make sure you don't get anything poisonous. They are here just to make sure that happens. Other than that, you are free to get what you want," she said.

Alex didn't say anything for a few moments and shook his head. "Fine, do what you want," he said and went on to find more ingredients.

"That fruit, those green leaves, that one fruit that is different from the rest, that flower over there that has white petals, roots of those plants, the bark of that tree..."

Alex started naming one thing after another and the beasts had to run around trying to check everything he said.

That was his way of revenge. Every single ingredient he saw, he would let them know and the beasts would have to run around trying to figure out if it was poisonous or not.

Only once or twice did the beasts say the ingredient was poisonous, but most of the time, it was just a normal plant that didn't have any poison on its own.

After the third round of going around, smelling every single leaf, flower, and fruit, the beasts started to get annoyed.

"Alright, stop. You don't have to name anything. Just go pick them up," Yao Jia said with no other choice.

Alex's felt proud of himself for getting rid of his problems in his own way. After that, he freely went around gathering ingredients as much as his heart desired.

Chapter 509: Spirit Stone Cave

Alex could see many beasts roaming the jungle that was the land of this kingless kingdom.

Very few beasts bothered making any sort of shelter at all, and almost all of them lived out in the open.

Alex tried not to take ingredients from places where the beasts considered their home. The beasts however didn't seem to care about it as much as he did.

Some of those beasts bowed when they saw him. They recognized the healer that had started living in the palace a month ago.

After nearly 2 hours of picking up ingredients, Alex felt that he had enough of the ingredients for now. Most of the ingredients he had found couldn't even be used right now since they could only make Saint rank pills.

Once he felt he was done, he turned to look at Yao Jia and asked, "is there any way we can go to a spirit stone cave?"

"Spirit stone cave? Hmm, let's see. There should be one close by as far as I know. I can take you there," she said.

"Thank you," Alex said and followed her. Along the way, Alex saw more beasts that were all in the True Realm. The only beasts not in the True realm were either young beasts or beasts that were incredibly close to being in the True Realm.

Since beasts started cultivating from a very young age, it was a hard task to find a beast that was both an adult and not in the True realms.

Finally, after a few minutes of walk, Yao Jia stopped in front of a cave at the foot of a mountain. Alex was even surprised to see a mountain in this place. His image of this place had been nothing but forests.

"How many mountains are there in this kingdom?" he asked.

"I don't know, hundreds maybe," Yao Jia asked.

"And are there anything else here? Like a desert, a sea, and what not?" he asked.

"No," Yao Jia said. "Although there are a few large lakes, but not sea. As for a desert, you won't find that in the Western Continent. You will have to go to the southern continent."

"Huh?" Alex stopped and put on a confused face. "What do you mean there aren't any deserts in the Western Continent?" he asked with a chuckle. "There's one right behind where I stay."

"Eh?" Yao Jia stopped too. "There is a desert in this continent? Can't be. I've read every record, and there is nothing about a desert in this continent."

"No, there is one to the north," Alex said. "It's a rather large desert too. Furthermore, you can't use cultivation base there at all."

"Huh?" Yao Jia was fully confused now. "No way. Wait for a second," she said and thought about something. She started drawing a map on the ground right in front of the cave opening.

The map depicted a land that was wide at the top and thin at the bottom. It was also pretty long vertically as well.

"What is this?" Alex asked as he had never seen such a land structure before.

"This is the Western Continent," she said.

"Oh," Alex's eyes widened as he looked at the drawing of the continent. "Which way is north?" he asked.

"This wider section," she said.

Alex tried to think about the map of the empire and superimposed the image in his mind with the image in front of him.

"So, this is the Crimson empire," he said as he drew on top of the map. "And this is where I live. The desert is right above me, here."

"No way. The books say that it's just a bunch of mountains," Yao Jia said.

"No, your books are wrong. It's nothing but desert up there," Alex said.

"Really?" Yao Jia asked in a troubled manner. "Oh god, I wonder what other information is wrong in that book then."

"How old is that book anyway?" Alex asked. "You must not have updated the information in that book for hundreds of years right?"

"Thousands," Yao Jia said. "Wow, I shouldn't accept all information there as facts."

"Can we go in now?" he asked.

"Ah yes, let's go," Yao Jia took him through the opening.

As soon as Alex entered, he could feel a different level of Qi in the air. The amount of Qi in the surrounding had doubled, if not tripled in just the first five meters of the cave.

Light started to disappear the further they went in. Darkness was taking over. But, at some point, light returned once again, but it had a slightly blue hue to it.

Alex started seeing crystals along the sides of the wall deep in the cave. The further in he went, the more such crystals he could see.

The crystals were naturally formed into perfect cuboid shapes that with just a little effort could be broken into many pieces.

"Woah, so this is how people get spirit stones huh?" he asked. He walked up to a clump of it and hit it slightly with his fist.

The clump of spirit stones broke down into about 20-30 different spirit stones, which Alex pocketed. He stood up and looked at the cave. Just in his vicinity, he could see hundreds of such clumps.

"So many," he thought. He felt like he had hit a jackpot.

Without any other thought, he started picking the spirit stones up. He would take clumps and easily crush them to turn them into spirit stones.

"Such a shame that these are just common Spirit stones. It would be amazing if these were True spirit stones," Alex said.

"If they weren't common spirit stones, they likely wouldn't be spirit stones, would they?" Yao Jia said.

"Sorry? What do you mean?" Alex asked.

Yao Jia stopped from breaking apart the clumps and looked at him. "Do you know how this cave is formed?" she asked.

"Sort of, yes," he said. "When a common spirit vein remains stagnant for long, it turns to a spirit stone cave."

"You are a little wrong there," Yao Jia said.

"Which part?" Alex asked.

"Hmm, alright let me ask this. How do you think True spirit veins are formed?" she asked.

Alex fell into thought. "Uhh... they don't form naturally?" he asked.

"They do, but they are also a matured form of Common Spirit veins. Without a common spirit vein, you wouldn't have a True spirit vein," Yao Jia said.

"Wait, so both spirit stone cave and a higher rank spirit vein are formed from the same spirit vein? How does that work?" he asked.

"When you have a spirit vein, it tried to absorb the energy from the surrounding. If left alone and it successfully gathers as much energy as it wants from the surrounding, it evolves to a higher rank Spirit vein."

"But, if it is left alone, but cannot gather the required energy, the spirit vein slowly dies, and the crystal breaks apart to become the spirit stones. So, you can either have a lower rank spirit stone cave, or a higher rank spirit vein."

"If you want a higher rank spirit stone cave, that will take a very, very long time since it will have to fail as ascending to a higher grade," Yao Jia explained.

"Ah, I see," Alex said. "Are there any True rank spirit stone caves in here?" he asked.

"Um, I think there are a few. But they're quite far away from here. Even father would take an hour or so," she said.

"Can we go there someday?" Alex asked. "I have a boat artifact that can help us travel fast. If it takes your father an hour, we can do it in about 3 to 4 hours with my boat."

"Hmm, I will ask him if he allows it," she said.

"Thanks."

They went on with the rest of the time doing the same thing over and over again, collecting as many spirit stones as possible for Alex.

Finally, once they were done, they left the cave, with it almost barren now. "What will you do with so many spirit stones," she asked.

"Uhh... cultivate," Alex said.

They walked back towards the palace and in just a short few minutes returned. They walked past the gate and entered the garden.

The amount of sunlight that struck them in just that moment was more than their entire journey through the forest.

Yao Jia sent the other beasts on their way and turned around towards Alex. "That should have satisfied you for a few days right?" she asked.

"Ah yes, thank you," Alex said.

"Good. Now please make some more pills so that I can breakthrough faster as well," She said.

"Haha, I will try. I have a recipe for a p—"

Suddenly, a bright light followed by a loud 'hmm' appeared from far away. Alex shielded his eyes and looked in the direction the sound had come from.

But to his surprise, it felt like it was everywhere in front of him. "What's going on?" he asked.

When the light finally went away, he turned around to ask Yao Jia, but her face was in the most utter shock he had seen yet.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Intruders," she said. "Someone opened the formation and entered the secret realm. From the sound of it, there were many that entered."

"What? Someone got into the secret realm?" Alex asked in surprise.

"I'm sorry. I will talk to you later. I need to inform the elder," She said and immediately left the garden.

Alex stood where he did and looked towards the direction the light had appeared from and thought, "Who came to the secret realm?"

Chapter 510: Meeting Senior Chen

Alex woke up in the morning from his cultivation and logged out to get some food. When he returned, he immediately went out to the garden with Pearl.

After yesterday's sudden departure, he hadn't seen Yao Jia yet and was wondering what was up with the intruders that had come to the secret realm.

"Ah, there you are. I was searching for you everywhere," he said when he found her tending to the flowers in the garden.

"Oh, you came out early. Do you want to start training this soon?" Yao Jia asked while looking towards the sun that had barely come up past the horizon.

"Sorry, no. I'm not here for training. We can do that later. I'm here to ask what you learned about the intruders. Are they bad people? Should we be worried? What's going on?" he asked.

"Oh, you were worried about that? There's nothing to be concerned about. I went to report to my father and uncle but turned out they already knew about it. They got reports from the other part of the kingdom that at the various entrances, humans had entered," she said.

"Humans? The intruders are human?" Alex asked. Suddenly his eyes widened with fright and asked, "It can't be those people from the other continent right?"

"Oh no, these are just some kids from the Luminance Empire. Father said that they did the same thing some 1000 years ago too," she said.

"Oh, so we don't have to worry about it, it seems. What's going to happen to them?" he asked.

"Nothing. At least, nothing if they don't make any trouble. I hear that almost all of the humans from last time died because they offended beasts in the kingdom they shouldn't have. Hopefully, they are smart enough not to this time," she said.

"All of them died? Isn't that too cruel?" Alex asked.

"Not if what you did is try to steal some beast's children, or destroy their home by attacking them. Also, not all of them died. One of them managed to escape out to the north I heard," she said.

"I see," Alex said. Suddenly, he felt like he had heard something similar before. He tried to rack his brain and immediately realized what it was.

"OH!" he exclaimed. "1200 years ago, the founding emperor of the Crimson Empire, Fu Qing came from the southern forest. We knew he came from the south but never knew how. So this was how, huh?"

"Oh did something like that happen? Good for him," Yao Jia said.

"Anyway, there won't be any Saint realm expert amongst the humans, right? You did say that saint realm experts were denied entry except under special cases," Alex said.

"Yes. Those who entered are all in the True realms," Yao Jia said. "Do you want to go help them perhaps?"

"No," Alex said. "I don't really feel any closeness towards strangers. I see no reason why I would help them unless I was feeling generous."

"You are not that different from a beast in that regard then," Yao Jia said. "Alright, I will go tend to the garden for a while. We can train later."

Alex nodded and Yao Jia left the area. He sat down on the grass and felt the sun hit his face as it proceeded to get higher and higher into the sky.

He felt at peace with his current state of being. But then, he started thinking about his sect and friends once more.

'I wonder how master is doing. Is her constitution still harming her alchemy ability?' he wondered. 'Is sister doing well? I hope master hasn't lost his spot as master yet.'

'Since I will be entering the True realms soon, I can't even help him keep his spot,' he thought. He chuckled a little when he thought about his other friends.

'Is Kong Yuhan still trying to get together with Zhou Mei's sister, or are they together by now? I hope she doesn't mind them being together. Is Fanfan doing well? She wasn't as cheerful after Wan Li left. I hope she's doing better now.'

'I hope Wan Li is doing better too. Hopefully, Martial uncle and 3rd elder found him by now and brought him back to the sect already,' he thought.

The morning slowly passed as Alex's homesickness slowly came and went away. Once the sun was higher in the sky, he went looking for Yao Jia and trained for a little longer.

And then, his usual schedule started once more. He rested in the sun for a while and went to his alchemy room to make some pills. He made as many as he could, and sold just a few to the beasts while keeping the rest for himself.

He did so for a few days when he finally got to hear a piece of incredibly good news.

"Senior Chen has accepted your request. You can come with me right now to ask what you want to him," Yao Jia said.

"REALLY?!" he asked in surprise. "That's amazing. Let's go."

Alex was forced to leave Pearl behind since he was going out of the palace, but he didn't mind it at all.

"I'll be back in an hour or two, okay buddy?" he said and left with Yao Jia. They walked out of the palace and Yao Jia took him through the forest to an area with a lot of zebras.

It was a small open area with a meadow in the middle, but the trees still put a shade in the place. Some of the zebras were resting while the younger ones were running around in the field.

Surprisingly, on the other side of the field, there were houses made up of wood and leaves that had zebras going in and out of.

"Let's go," Yao Jia said and walked through the field to reach the biggest house amongst them.

The zebras looked at Alex as he walked in between them, just behind Yao Jia.

"Senior Chen, we are here," she shouted from the outside. "Careful, there should be a lot of formation around this area."

"Oh, I'll keep that in mind," Alex said.

They waited for a bit, but no answer came from inside. Yao Jia was about to call him again when a zebra came from the side.

"Calling him won't work, you know. There is a sound barrier set up around this place. You will have to knock on the door to let him know you're here," the zebra said.

Alex was a little surprised to hear the zebra speak. There hadn't been any beasts out of the palace that had spoken in a human tongue yet.

"Oh, okay," Yao Jia said and walked up to the door to knock on it. She waited for a few minutes and the door finally opened.

An old, wrinkly-skinned zebra walked out on all fours with a sour look on his face. He looked at Yao Jia and then at Alex and asked, "Is he the one that requested the meeting?"

"Yes," Yao Jia said. "He said he has some questions about formations that he wants you to clear him on."

"Goddammit. Ruining my free time just to ask a bunch of questions anyone could probably answer. If it weren't lady Ren's request, I would've killed him right now," the zebra grumbled.

"I'm sorry for intruding upon your rest, senior Chen, but I really needed to know the answers to these questions," he said.

"The questions better be worth my time. Ask, what is it?" the zebra said.

'He isn't even going to let us in first?' Alex thought as he brought out the talisman with the formation on it.

"Can you tell me how I can set up this formation on the ground so that it starts on its own?" he asked as he handed the zebra the talisman.

The zebra took the talisman and started reading it with an annoyed face. However, just as suddenly, his annoyed face changed to that of incredibly surprised.

"How did you find this?" the zebra asked with wide eyes.

"From an enemy of mine," Alex said. "That person used it to improve his physical durability. Can you teach me how I can do that too?"

"You got this from a human? What cultivation base is he in?" the Zebra asked.

"Uh, I don't remember. Something like Meridian Tempering realm, maybe. But that shouldn't matter since he used this formation to strengthen himself in a place devoid of any Qi," Alex said.

"A self tempering realm human? That can't be true," the Zebra said. "How the hell would a self tempering realm human get his hands on an Immortal rank formation blueprint?"

Alex's eyes shined. 'I was right then,' he thought. Given the number of strokes, he had already guessed that, but still hearing the confirmation from someone who really knew about formations made it happy.

"I don't know how he got it, senior. Can you tell me what the formation does and how I can use it? Preferably with it activating on its own since that is what he did," Alex said.

"This formation..." the Zebra looked through the Blueprint and said, "from what I can see, this is a formation that is meant to temper just one aspect of the body. The intensity of the tempering depends on the ingredients and amount, I suppose."

"As for what part it tempers, let me see," the Zebra looked through the formation and tried to find his answers.

"Ah, here it is. This formation can help you temper the skin, and skin alone. Depending on what you use as the energy source, you can get your skin to be very durable after using this formation."