

Alchemy 521

Chapter 521: Choose

Ma Rong cried. A lot. Not even Luo Mei had cried for Alex this much. She was a sobbing mess as she hugged Alex and started thanking the gods for his return.

Alex didn't know what to say. However, the warmth he felt from them all was making him slightly happy that he returned, which in turn was making him more guilty about the fact that he left behind Pearl.

Ma Rong's body was quite skinny. It seemed she wasn't taking care of herself properly. It's my fault, Alex thought.

It wasn't really his fault. He did what he could to save them and was taken away by the beasts. There was nothing he could do in that situation.

Now he needed to go save Pearl, and yet once again, there was nothing he could do.

Alex met with the other elders who welcomed him back. His Grandmaster grew emotional when he saw him as well. The second Elder sighed with relief when he saw him as well. Even the third Elder seemed happy to see him, despite not having much connection with him.

Alex saw his Martial uncle as well. He seemed to have returned from his mission in the past 2 months. He said he was successful. Alex couldn't wait to go and visit Wan Li, who they said was being heavily guarded so he didn't escape again.

Ironically, for an alchemist who made many different pills to hide from the ones searching for him, he was found out exactly thanks to the heavy alchemical scent on him.

Zhou Mei, Zhou Mi, Fan Ruogang, Kong Yuhan— some of the only people in the sect he could call his friend— came to meet him as well.

They were all truly happy to see him back. Alex was happy to see them as well. He was particularly happy to see Fan Ruogang, who had her cheerful personality back thanks to having both Wan Li and Alex back in the sect.

They stayed around for a few hours before leaving him alone with his masters.

With Wen Cheng present with them, Alex started telling the both of them what he had been up to for the last 2 months. He told them how the beasts treated him, how he trained, what they were planning to do with Pearl, and how— if they could enter the secret realm— they could go out of the Empire.

Wen Cheng and Ma Rong were surprised to even learn that there was an Empire outside of the Crimson Empire. It was just speculation they had that there was civilization outside of the Crimson Empire, which they never expected to be an Empire that was larger than their own.

Alex took the time to explain to them about the 5 continents as well as he could. That was another thing that surprised them the most.

Learning that they were an isolated bunch with no access to outside resources, in a continent that itself was low on resources, and was thus the weakest one of all, was perhaps the biggest shock they had received their entire life.

"We should tell the emperor about this. He will be happy to learn as well," Wen Cheng said.

"I don't think you have to," Alex said. "They probably already know."

Wen Cheng looked at Alex with a weird face. "How do you know that they know?" he asked.

"The Emperor's grandfather, Fu Qing, the First Emperor, was from the Luminance empire. He was someone that entered the secret realm from the other side, and escaped through this side when everyone else he had come with died."

"I suspect he would at least tell his family about something so important. I also suspect the only reason they never dared to make it public is because of how difficult it would be to go through a secret realm full of beasts," Alex said.

"Hmm, you might be correct. But, there is a chance they really don't know and the first emperor just never bothered to tell them because of how dangerous it is," Wen Cheng said.

"Somehow I doubt that," Ma Rong said from the side. Her tears had dried away completely, and she was no longer red in the face from all the crying. She also no longer choked on her tears while speaking.

"Why do you say that?" Wen Cheng asked.

"Did you know that the Emperor's sister-in-law was sick?" Ma Rong asked. "The city lord's mother, she was brought here in the Scarlet city for me to treat."

"Eh? They brought someone so important here? Why not let her stay in the capital?" Wen Cheng asked.

"That's because they didn't feel the capital safe because of the beast attack. Also, senior Lai— Ah, the Royal alchemist, he couldn't find any treatment for her, so they brought her here to see if I could treat them," Ma Rong said.

"Did you?" Wen Cheng asked curiously.

"Yes, thanks to a pill Alex came up with. He came up with the pill and the Royal Alchemist improved upon it. She was starting to heal before the final Beast invasion, and I heard she left a month ago, fully healed," Ma Rong said.

"Oh, she's healed? That's good for her," Alex said.

"Yes, that is good, but I don't see the point of this information," Wen Cheng said.

"Well, the point is that the reason she was sick was that she ate a Divine Devil fruit, a rather raw one with not enough age to it, and was stuck halfway in Mortal Cleansing."

"That fruit, she had found on one of her expedition to the south, which I highly doubt was just a random expedition. I have been wondering why they would ever go to the south, I suspect this is the reason," Ma Rong said.

"Ah, I see," Wen Cheng said. "Still, just for formality's sake, I will report what I've learned today."

"That should be okay," Ma Rong said.

It was quite late into the night, so Wen Cheng decided it was time that he left.

"When do you plan to come to the sect?" Wen Cheng asked.

"I don't know master," Alex said. "I'm not a disciple of the sect anymore, am I?"

"What do y— Ah, I hadn't thought about that," Wen Cheng said as he fell into thought. "Right, now that you are in the True realm, you are supposed to be graduated from the sect."

"So, I can either leave the sect or stay as an elder, right?" Alex asked.

"That's right, but..." Wen Cheng fell silent.

"I doubt I can be elder in two different sects, can I?" Alex asked. "Besides, I'm too young to be an elder too."

"This..." Ma Rong fell silent too. "You will have to stay an elder here," She said after thinking for a while. "Your alchemy skills are too great to waste your days doing normal elder stuff."

"That's very selfish of you, Ma Rong. Don't forget, our disciple's cultivation talents aren't that weak either. I sometimes even think that it might be better than his alchemy talents," Wen Cheng said.

"I can argue otherwise," Ma Rong said. "But that's not the point right now."

"I can't join both sects as an elder, can I?" he asked.

"No, the amount of information and responsibility an elder holds in a sect is just too big to share between the two sects without any supervision. Even if you don't mean any harm for the two sects, even if the two of us agree, the other elders will stand up against it, so it's just not possible," Ma Rong said.

"What should I do then?" Alex asked.

"We can't tell you that," Wen Cheng said. "You will have to choose this time, and you can not choose both."

"Normal Cultivation, or Alchemy, the choice will be easy for you once you understand what your heart desires, but at the same time, it will be the most important choice you have made in your life until now."

"What you choose will shape your future from here on out," Ma Rong said.

Alex fell silent. He didn't want to choose. As much as he liked Alchemy, he liked the normal cultivation stuff too. He liked the training, learning new skills, breaking through to the other realms.

He liked formations, to make them, to carve them. He wanted to learn about talisman creation and artifact forging too if given the chance.

There were way too many things he wanted to do to be tied down by a single decision he was forced to make right now.

"I... I will have to think about it," Alex said with a solemn face.

Wen Cheng pointed at Alex's chest and said, "Don't choose with your head, choose with your heart. Don't choose what you think is right for you. Choose what you FEEL is right for you."

"Don't worry. Regardless of what you choose, regardless of where you will be, we will always be your master, and you will always be our disciple. Nothing in the world will ever change that," Ma Rong said.

"We just recruited elders a week ago, so the next one is about 3 weeks away. When is yours?" Wen Cheng asked Ma Rong.

"We have one coming up this week. After that, it will be next month," Ma Rong said.

"Ah, yours is closer that. Sigh, I don't want to force you, but if possible, try to choose one of the two sects by the end of this week, okay?" Wen Cheng said.

"I will leave now. Come to the sect whenever you feel like it," Wen Cheng said and waved goodbye.

"Rest, you have a long week ahead of you," Ma Rong said and she walked out as well.

Alex remained in his house, alone with his thoughts, many thoughts, thinking what he should be doing.

The thoughts conflicted with each other, the feelings contradicted each other. Choose with your heart, Wen Cheng had said. But how was he to do that, when his heart wanted different things?

He felt a close connection with the Hong Wu sect, much more than what he felt with the Tiger sect. That in turn made him guilty towards the Tiger sect and made him want to do something right for them as well.

There was also the feeling of guilt he felt towards Pearl as he didn't think about him all the time, which he felt was what he should have been doing.

Too many things. His mind and heart, a jumbled mess of thoughts and feelings. Alex sighed. He really could not choose at all.

He decided to put it all aside for now. The night was late, and he had nothing to do anymore now that he was back.

So, he logged out of the game, got out of the capsule, and jumped into his bed. The thoughts and feelings slowly disappeared as he fell asleep.

Chapter 522: Spirit Reed pill

Alex logged back into the game. He was still unsure of what he was to do, what he was to choose. So, he didn't choose at all, at least not right now.

He walked out of his room and went into the courtyard. He looked at the water and remembered that he hadn't taken a bath in a while.

Cultivators didn't need to eat, drink, or take a bath. However, Alex was a human too in the real world. Sweat and dirt always made him take a bath there. That was the same here as well.

Instinct and habit were hard to change when you continued doing the thing you needed to change.

Alex took off his robes and jumped into the water, going deep underwater. He opened his eyes and sat on the bottom of the pond. He felt at peace.

If I never leave, I will never have to make that choice, Alex thought. He really didn't want to make the choice. It just wasn't fair to him.

But that was life and he understood it. Nothing was fair in life. Sometimes, you just had to push yourself through the unfairness and come out on the other side, hopefully not losing yourself in the process.

Alex walked out of the pond after feeling cleaner than he was and used his aura to dry off the rest of the water.

He redressed and felt something buzzing.

"Hmm."

He felt the storage pouch in his robe and saw that one of them was buzzing. He looked into it and found out that he was being messaged by his master.

Come to my place when you're done cultivating, she said.

Alex chuckled a little. He couldn't cultivate even if he wanted to. "I should ask if she had any good cultivation methods. She uses one too, right?" Alex thought.

He made his way out of his house and went to his master's place. He let go of his spiritual sense and was surprised to find his master in the alchemy room.

He wasn't surprised that she was in the alchemy room, but rather that he was able to find her at all.

"Weird," he thought as he made his way to the alchemy room.

He entered through the doorway and found his master making some pills at the moment. He decided to wait. A few minutes later, Ma Rong was finally done with the pill and removed it from her cauldron.

She placed the pill in a pill tester and waited. 41%.

Alex hadn't seen the ingredients, so he didn't know what pill she had made. But, whatever it was, 41% was a good harmony for a pill.

"What pill was that master?" he asked as he finally went in and sat on the other side of the cauldron.

"It's a Spirit Reed pill," Ma Rong said.

"A Spirit Reed pill? What's does it do?" he asked.

"It helps a True realm cultivator improve their Qi output by a significant amount. With this one being 41%, this should help increase their Qi output by... something like 10% I guess," she said.

"Woah, if people can increase the amount of Qi they can produce at once, then they would be quite strong for a limited time, won't they?" Alex asked.

"That's the point of the pill," Ma Rong said.

Alex nodded. His own mortal cleansing worked somehow like that. It made the movement of the Qi in his body faster and thus he could bring more of them out at once.

That was one of the reasons why he could fight people with higher cultivation realm compared to him. It was just one of the reasons, but a reason nonetheless.

Suddenly Alex realized something. "Wait, Master did you get a handle on your constitution already?" Alex asked. The fact that she could create a true pill at such a high harmony, when the last time he saw her, she was much worse at even creating Common pills.

This meant that between the time he had gone and come back, she had already fixed, or at the very least improved her situation.

"Yes, I have got a hold of my constitution," Ma Rong said with a smile. "It took a bit of effort, but it wasn't in vain."

"Great!" Alex exclaimed. He was truly happy for his master. "How did you achieve that? As far as I know, your Yin energy was truly very strong. Even stronger than my yang energy."

"I did what I thought was right. Since my Yin was going out of control, I used the Yang to help me suppress it," she said.

"You used... yang to suppress it?" Alex said with a confused face. "How does that work? I took away all the Yang stones, so where did you get the Yang from?"

"Did you forget that the whole of the Forbidden Fields is covered in Yang energy? I went there every morning to calm my Yin energy so that I could learn to control it using external force," she said.

"What?" Alex's face grew pale. "Master, that's so dangerous. What if something like last time happened and you fell unconscious for days?"

"I... I worried about that too, but I had to do what I did. That was the only way to control my constitution. Fortunately, it worked," she said.

"Thank god, it did. What would we do if you fainted again," Alex said worriedly. "Just seeing you unconscious last time was so worrying. Please don't do something so reckless again."

Ma Rong smiled when she heard that. To hear her own disciple be worried about her, She felt accomplished as a master.

"Alright, stop talking about that. That's not what I called you here for," Ma Rong said.

"Right, what did you call me here for?" Alex asked.

"I want to see how you've improved. I know I have already taught you the most I can, but there may still be something left to teach, depending on how you do today," she said.

"Alright," Alex said. "What do you want me to make?"

Ma Rong thought for a moment and brought out a pill recipe. Alex took the recipe and read it.

In an instant, the knowledge was imprinted onto his mind, and with the slightest recall, he could tell the recipe by heart and instinct.

"You want me to make the Spirit Reed pill?" He asked. He cocked his head as he read through the ingredients and cross-referenced them with what he had.

"Take your time, learn the recipe and see how you handle it," she said.

"It's fine," Alex said. "But I'm missing the False Indigo flower petals, Feather Reed grassroots, and Crested Iris's leaves."

"Oh, don't worry about the ingredients, I have 3 sets," she said and brought one of the sets.

Alex took the set and looked at it. As he did, information such as name, age, and energy constitution flowed out of his mind. It was honestly surreal how the information he had never learned before kept popping up in his head.

Ma Rong took away her cauldron and Alex put his cauldron upon the fire. After a significant time had passed, he started making the pill.

He started with the Snapdragon tendrils and worked with them in the cauldron. Once the powder was formed and the Earth energy released, he put in the second ingredient, the Crested Iris's leaves.

Yarrow seeds, Jade Horse's tail hair, Flame lizard's teeth, Feather Reed grassroots, Verbena thorns, False Indigo flower petals, and finally Million Gold leaves.

Alex put in the ingredients in that order and followed the recipe he had just learned the best he could. He made some mistakes here and there, he could tell what they were.

However, he was confident that the mistakes weren't big enough to have much impact on the pill that was created.

What worried Alex the most however was that his Qi wasn't strong enough to completely handle these energies.

He was still only in the 1st True disciple realm. While his Qi might be equivalent to someone in the 4th True disciple realm, that was still not strong enough to fully handle the pill's energy, or at least handle it enough to completely guide it into the pill he was going to form soon.

He did his best and thankfully, the pill-splitting Qi did not escape out of him. He struggled and guided the energy back into his newly formed powder sphere and waited for as much of it to seep into it.

It was the same all the time. The True pill's energy refused to go in without much 'persuasion'.

The pill finally formed and Alex picked it out. Ma Rong presented him with the pill tester to put the pill in it.

Alex didn't need it, but he still put it in there for her sake. He waited for the pill tester to reveal the result.

31%

Ma Rong's eyes went wide in shock. She was so stunned that she nearly dropped the pill tester. Alex caught her trembling hands before she could do any damage.

"Master?" Alex called her.

"31%... how did you?" she asked. "Have you learned this recipe before? Have you made this pill before?" she was started to get suspicious.

"No, Master. It's thanks to my eidetic memory, that's all," Alex tried to lie.

Ma Rong didn't buy it at all. After all, she had the same thing too, and she couldn't make such great pills on the first try. However, there just wasn't any other explanation.

In the end, she had to accept that her disciple was gifted in ways she was not and that he made the pill on his first try.

This was very scary for her. Soon, she thought, he wouldn't even need her anymore.

Chapter 523: Winter Moon Cultivation Method

"Master, is everything okay?" Alex asked after seeing Ma Rong not speak for a while as she stared at the pill in her hand.

"Yeah, yeah. Everything is fine," She said, but her eyes painted a different picture. She kept staring at the pill in her hand and said nothing else.

"31%, that's good right?" Alex asked.

"Yes, it's very good," Ma Rong said. "You don't need any more learning at all after this. You just need to keep practicing making the different pills, and you will get a lot better soon."

Alex nodded, but he didn't believe her. There were many different ways to improve even right now. He could learn how to improve the recipes to make a higher harmony pill. He could learn what the mysterious Structure and Compositions truly were. He could learn, even before trying, what ingredients could mix up to be used in any pill.

He knew he needed a lot more training, perhaps from someone, perhaps just himself, but he knew he needed them.

He didn't tell his master this, however. He didn't want her to think she wasn't teaching him enough.

'Once I find out more about these things, I will let her know about them,' Alex thought.

"You made a few mistakes, right?" Ma Rong asked.

"Huh? Ah, yes. I felt there were a few things I missed here and there because it was my first time," Alex said.

"Hmm, that means you should really be making some better pill. Maybe closer to 35% or more," Ma Rong thought out loud. "Here, take these 2 remaining sets and keep practicing. I will go deal with the sect matters I have neglected for a while."

Alex nodded. He was about to leave when he remembered something. "Ah right, master. I don't have any cultivation method. Do you know what I should do?" he asked.

"You don't have any?" Ma Rong asked, and remembered that he had just entered the True realms.

She fell into thought for a bit, not letting any of her inner voice out. After a while, she finally spoke.

"There are some True realm cultivation methods in the library, but I doubt you would want them," she said. "They are all either Mortal or Earth grade methods and given how fast you cultivate, you would want something better, I'm sure."

Mortal and Earth grade, those truly were terrible in his eyes. If possible he wanted his methods to be at least Heaven grade.

"I have a heaven grade technique I use that my master gifted me when I graduated. Maybe I can gift it to you since you have graduated too," Ma Rong said.

She brought out an old book from her storage bag and handed it to Alex. "Take care of this book, okay? Grandmaster paid a lot for this book," she said.

Alex took the book and looked at it. The book was old, decrepit, and the outer cover was torn at places. He flipped the book and fortunately the inside of the book was fine.

"Winter Moon Cultivation method?" Alex read the title. "I will check it out later. Thank you, master."

Alex left her place. He went back to his house and sat down for half an hour to make the Spirit Weed Pills once again.

He made 3 different pills this time. 2 were split up, 1 was full. The harmony came out to be 22% and 23% for the 2 pills, which told Alex that he had a lot more potential in the pill which he could refine once he had better cultivation.

The 2nd pill was 36%, which also let him know that he really needed a higher density Qi to work with the True pills.

"Fortunately, I have a cultivation method now," Alex thought and brought out the new book.

He had no intention of destroying the book as it was a gift from his master, so he started reading it, rather than using the game's system.

The cultivation method, despite looking very difficult and cryptic was actually pretty simple. All it did was mention a route in his meridians through which he was to circulate his Qi every time he cultivated.

That would help the surrounding Qi to converge onto him and increase his cultivation slowly.

Alex kept on reading and understanding more and more about the technique. He felt like he could start cultivating now without just meditating and waiting for it to automatically start.

Now that he knew what to do, he was confident that he could start it whenever he wanted. That made him a little happy.

He kept on reading and everything else about the book was normal. However, when he reached the end, he read something that troubled him a bit.

"Best used by a person with high affinity to Yin?" Alex was surprised to read. His master was a person with a high affinity to Yin. It was very high.

'Was that why grandmaster paid a lot to buy this book? Because master had good affinity with Yin?' he thought. He felt like he could understand his grandmaster's thought process.

"Master had a Yin constitution from the start, so he must've gone far and wide to find this method for her since it matched her perfectly," Alex thought. "But... will this work for me?"

High affinity to Yin was not exactly how he would describe himself. Having a body that was focused on Yang, he was sure that he couldn't really learn the method.

"But it says affinity to Yin, not Yin focused body. I do have a Yin spiritual root, which does make me have an affinity to Yin. I wouldn't be able to properly learn the Flickering Shadows technique if not for that."

"So... it should work?" Alex wasn't sure, but he was hopeful. He continued reading the method and right after he finished, he got a notification.

«Congratulations on learning 'Winter Moon Cultivation Method'»

"Aw, yes!" he exclaimed. His hope didn't betray him. "Great! This works," he said with a wide smile. Somehow, he had learned a Yin affinity cultivation method.

"Alright, I should have trained enough back in the secret realm to breakthrough right now, right?" Alex thought.

He brought out a healing true pill and ate it without hesitation. He had no wounds, so the pill instead turned fully into Qi, giving him the required amount to break through to the next realm.

Alex opened up the status page and without any sort of hesitation, hit the breakthrough button.

The Qi that was inside him started moving around his meridians. Surprisingly, the route they took was the same as his new cultivation method.

Alex waited for it to quickly complete moving completely, however, the Qi wasn't moving quickly at all. In fact, it was struggling to move through his body.

"What's going o—"

Before he could finish his sentence, the Qi in his meridians all vanished as they left his meridians and his body, giving him a feeling of backlash from the sudden release of Qi.

Had it been more Qi, Alex surely would have suffered some damage to the meridians. Had his meridians not been through body cultivation, he could've suffered some damage too.

Fortunately, none of that happened, but what did happen was worrying. He didn't feel his strength increase at all.

He had failed to break through at all.

Chapter 524: Problems

"Did I just fail?" Alex asked himself with slight confusion. This had never happened before.

"What's going on?" he wondered. The problem was obviously the new cultivation method, but why did it have a problem? It wasn't that it didn't suit him, right? He clearly learned it.

"Wait, does just learning it not mean that it suits me?" he wondered. He decided to check the status page.

[Player Name: Yu Ming

Cultivation: True Disciple Realm (1,000,000 True Qi : 53%)

Body: Sun God's Divine Yang Body

Talent: God

Spiritual Roots: 5 elements Yin-Yang roots

Cultivation Method: Winter Moon Cultivation Method

True Qi: 1,345,224

]

There was the problem. 53%. He only had a 53% chance to break through, and he had failed this time. He hadn't checked it before he pressed the button, but the chance was probably the same that time as well.

"Sigh, so this isn't really a good cultivation method for me, is it?" he thought. With only half a chance to breakthrough each time, his rate of cultivation would be pretty much halved.

He was pretty sure that he had lost a significant amount of Qi during the previous breakthrough, perhaps all of the 1 million True Qi as the status said was required to breakthrough.

"What do I do now?" Alex thought. He clearly needed to break through as he had already set his mind.

"Sigh, surely I won't fail twice," he thought and pressed the breakthrough button once more.

The Qi inside of him started moving through the same route once more. They moved around the meridians and when they reached the starting point, Alex felt a small 'boom' go off inside of him.

He had successfully broken through. "Phew! Thank god," he thought. He didn't have to waste more pills just to break through as he was dreading.

"Oh right, is the percentage the same or did it go higher?" Alex wondered and opened his status again. His heart sank when he saw it.

52%.

It didn't remain the same or go higher as he expected, instead, the percentage had gone down. 'Is it going to go down every single breakthrough?' he thought.

At a 1% reduction per breakthrough, he was going to lose about 45% of success chance throughout the entirety of True Realms. That would be horrible.

Having only a 7% chance to break through to the Saint realm, where one single mistake could put you on a Qi deviation and ruin your entire cultivation... Alex needed to get rid of this method soon.

However, it was a gift from his master, a graduation gift not to mention. He felt guilty at the thought of changing it.

"It's fine," he thought to himself. "I can keep using it for a little longer. At least the True disciple realm. I can change it after that."

It wasn't like he could change to any random cultivation method either since most mortal and earth grade cultivation methods would also have the same horrible chance at breakthrough.

His only hope was to find some random heaven or higher grade cultivation rank in an auction.

"Oh right, it's been 6 months since the Pink Cloud Auction halls bi-annual auction. Surely they will have something good like that, right? I will wait until then," Alex thought.

He still remembered the auction where he sold his pills and got his first big money. It was the same auction where he learned about beast handling, about Heaven's Impact skill, about the Yin Gathering tree.

"Hopefully I will find something good in that auction," Alex thought.

Once he was done, he stood up and left his house. He walked down the mountain and went to check the right alchemy garden where the Yin Gathering tree was planted on.

He greeted the elders he knew there and was allowed entry to the garden based on not his identity, but the authority he had from the time when he became Ma Rong's disciple.

He walked up the mountain, looking at the different plants that weren't destroyed at all. He had picked up all the alchemy ingredients 2 months ago, leaving only the immature ones, and somehow they were still growing.

'So the tree will take a while to grow, huh?' he thought if it even grew at all. After all, the Yin gathering tree was a hard tree to grow. It was a tree that rarely grew fruits and the fruits rarely had seeds in them.

It wasn't just anywhere that the tree could grow either, it needed an appropriate environment with plenty of Yin Qi to grow. Which, to be fair, he had provided with the Umbra flower he buried along with the seed.

When Alex reached the top of the mountain, he saw a small budding tree about half a meter in height. It had really small leaves and only a few branches. This was definitely the Yin Gathering tree, however...

"Oh no!" Alex said as he saw how malnourished the tree looked. The branches looked weak and dangled downwards, the leaves were started to grow yellow, even the newly grown ones. It looked like it could fall at any moment.

The tree wasn't growing as well as he had hoped it would. "What's going on?" he wondered. He got close to check it.

"Eh? Yu Ming?" A voice called him from the side.

Alex looked to the side to see his master flying down from above. "Master? What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I came for this little guy," she said, pointing at the small tree.

"It looks quite bad," Alex said.

"It is," Ma Rong said. "We didn't think much about what we were doing, and now this little guy is suffering the consequences." Ma Rong landed next to the plant and slowly touched it.

"What do you mean?" Alex asked. He couldn't understand what he was supposed to think about. They had a seed, he had an extreme Yin flower, so he planted it.

Was there really anything else left to consider?

"A Yin Gathering Tree requires a Yin environment to grow," Ma Rong said. "This place isn't one."

"What do—" Alex stopped and looked to the north. "The Forbidden Fields?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes," Ma Rong said. "It has been getting larger and larger for a while. Its influence has already crossed the river and come way over on this side."

"What? Such drastic changes took place in the Forbidden Fields? How? When?" Alex asked in surprise.

"I don't know when exactly it started, but it was after you went in there last time. I remember a wave of energy coming from the north at that moment. It must've knocked away most of the Yin energy in the surrounding."

"If not for the Umbra flower, and me coming here to pour in my Yin Qi every day, I doubt this little guy could even grow up at all. Even this almost dead-looking plant is already a miracle," Ma Rong said.

She touched the ground around the stem of the plant and closed her eyes. Slowly, Alex could see the white mist escaping from all over her body, but mostly from her hands that were touching the ground.

The fear that Alex had already forgotten about reappeared when he saw his master use her body constitution. He still didn't know why it was happening, all he knew was that he was instinctively scared.

Ma Rong finished putting her Yin on the ground and got up. Just as fast as she released her Yin Qi, she constrained it as well.

"So the Yang from the Forbidden Fields is leaking here as well?" Alex asked. "That's... that's dangerous. That means pretty soon no one will be able to cultivate here, will they?"

"I'm afraid so. If the Forbidden Field's suppression reaches here as well, soon Scarlet City would cease to exist. Even if it did, it would be a place only mortals would live in. That is assuming it's not overrun by the beasts in the Forbidden Fields," Ma Rong said.

"Do you have any solution to this problem?" Alex asked.

"None as of yet," Ma Rong said. "I'm planning to inform the Emperor about it soon and see what they offer. "Worst case scenario... we might have to leave this place and relocate to someplace else."

"That's terrible," Alex said, however, he had no idea what could possibly be done as well. 'Hopefully, the storm from last time doesn't come again,' he thought.

Ma Rong left soon after and went to deal with the different things. Alex left too and went to check on the next alchemy garden.

Before he even entered the other Alchemy garden, he could already see the thick fog from outside.

Going in only made him happier. The formation was working just as it was supposed to. The multicolored Qi that the fog was made up of was helping the ingredients grow at a much faster rate, as well as allowing for the high tier of ingredients to grow as well.

"This is pretty good," Alex thought. Soon, he was sure that even saint-rank ingredients would take root here and grow properly.

"Who knows, maybe this will help cultivate a Saint realm cultivator as well," Alex thought optimistically. Although his optimism immediately washed away, like cotton candy in water, when he realized that this place would probably not last very long now given what was happening to the Forbidden Fields.

"Sigh, I hope everything turns out fine somehow," he thought. This was in regards to all the problems going on around him lately.

Pearl, his cultivation method, the choice between the Hong Wu sect and Tiger sect, and now this problem with the Forbidden Fields.

Nothing seemed to be going properly for Alex right now.

He shook his head and let the bad thoughts disappear. Then, he walked away from the alchemy garden and went to the Core disciples mountain.

Chapter 525: Visits

Alex's mood got a little better once he met up with Kong Yuhan and the rest. Talking with his friends made him forget about the problems, at least for now.

Kong Yuhan seemed to be doing good right now. He had gotten together with Zhou Mi and was quite far ahead into his cultivation base as well.

He was in the 8th Meridian Tempering realm right now. 6-7 months ago when Alex had met him for the first time, he was 9th Organ tempering realm.

'He must've focused on Alchemy more than cultivation,' Alex thought. After a bit of conversation with them, he went on to the house at the peak of the Core disciples mountain. He had never been here before, but he had heard a lot about it.

Alex saw 2 green-robed elders standing guard in front of the house. Both of those elders seemed fearsome too as Alex could tell just how strong they were.

'They are truly worried that he will leave again, huh?' Alex thought as he greeted the elders.

"Can I go meet him inside?" Alex asked.

The elders seemed to have no problem with this. Apparently, they seemed to be used to this even. Alex thanked the elders and walked in.

Surprisingly, the house was in a much better condition than Alex would've expected it to be. The tables, beds, chairs— They were all clean and properly maintained.

'How did they keep an empty ho— ah, it must've been her,' Alex thought. Fan Ruogang, she must've taken care of the place in his absence, Alex thought.

The door opened ahead of Alex and a young man walked out. Behind him, Alex could see fire coming out of a pit in the room. 'He must've been making some pills,' Alex thought.

"Hello, brother Wan. How are y—" Alex's eyes turned wide as it took a moment for his brain to process what he was feeling.

"Brother Wan, you... how are you in True Master realm?" Alex asked in surprise. The aura the youth was giving was not that of a mere Self-tempering realm cultivator, but rather a True realm expert.

"Oh, brother Yu Ming, I heard you had returned. Good for you," he said in the most unenthusiastic way possible. Then his face changed, as a wave of seething anger appeared on it.

"You must've let them know about me, right? Why did you do it? I was so close to finding my parent's murderers," Wan Li said.

"Brother Wan," Alex wanted to say something, but he felt like he could understand him just a little. Alex wanted to get back to secret realms to stop them from basically sending Pearl to a death sentence as well.

He didn't know what he would do if he truly did die. He had come to love his little buddy a lot.

However, he still understood why this was bad. Revenge, Alex thought, was not really fine, but understandable given what a person was going through.

But revenge in this condition when victory was basically impossible, Wan Li was just throwing his life away.

"Brother Wan, I won't tell you what to do or not to do. I just want to ask you, do you think your parents would be happy with what you're doing? Do you think they would feel proud of watching you give up what they loved the most?"

"I can't really give you much advice but... just take care of yourself okay? Your parents would want you to be happy," Alex said.

Wan Li looked angry, but there were tears forming in his eyes. Alex understood that Wan Li had already thought of this stuff.

'The pain he feels must be terrible. I pray no one else has to feel it,' Alex thought. Seeing that Wan Li didn't really want to talk with him, Alex left the place.

He went to the Elder's Hall and met up with his Grandmaster and Martial uncle. From there he learned how they had been dealing with the sect matter the last 2 months.

With Alex taken away by the beasts, Ma Rong had been depressed to the point that nothing in the sect was getting done. Fortunately, the grand elder and Second elder helped a lot.

After talking with them, Alex met up with his master and let her know that he was going to the Tiger sect.

He wanted to spend some time there as well before he made any choice.

"I really want you to choose to stay with us, but I won't force you. Do what you want," Ma Rong said.

Alex nodded and left. He went out of the sect and walked around the city before making his way to the Tiger sect.

His senior brother was still the guard's leader so he talked with him for a bit, explaining what he had been doing and the choice that he was going to have to make.

After talking for a while, he went up the mountain.

It was mid-day, so a lot of disciples were out in the sect, simply walking around. Alex walked amidst them, looking at the easy-going life.

He took out his badge to check what his rank was now, but it seemed that they had truly considered him dead as he had fallen to the lowest rank possible.

Alex chuckled a little and shook his head before he continued walking.

He made his way to the top and walked towards his sister's house. He wondered if she knew about the choice he had to make. He wondered if she even knew what his cultivation base was.

Just as he walked towards her house, the doors to another house opened and a person walked out.

"Brother Yuhan, how're you doing?" Alex asked when he saw Du Yuhan walk out of his house. Du Yuhan stared at him with a confused and surprised face for a while before speaking.

"Wow! They didn't lie, huh? You really did come back from the dead twice," Du Yuhan said.

"Back from the dead huh? I guess you could call it that. Although, I was nowhere near as much in danger either of the time," Alex said.

"Either way, it's good to have you back. You're going to take your 3rd rank back now, right?" Du Yuhan asked.

"Uh, I'm afraid I cannot," Alex said and pulsed his aura a bit before hiding it once more.

Du Yuhan's eyes went wide when he felt what he did.

"True realm?" he asked, to which Alex nodded.

"Dear God, that is so fast. You were barely at the beginning phase of the Mind Tempering realm just 2 months ago. How are you progressing so fast?" he asked.

"I can't really explain it right now. Maybe later on," Alex said. "I'll see you around, brother Du."

Alex left and went to his sister's house. He knocked on the door and waited. The door opened to reveal that it was Meng Yun.

"Oh, hello sister Meng, how are you?" Alex asked.

"Oh, it's you. Welcome back. I heard you came back yesterday. Are you okay?" she asked worriedly.

"Oh, I'm fine. Nothing to worry about," Alex said. He walked in and went to the living room to meet with Luo Mei.

He found his sister cultivating normally, and she opened her eyes when she heard her come in.

"You're back already?" she said with a confused face.

"Haha, why? Do you not want me to?" Alex asked with a chuckle.

"No, I thought you would stay there for 2 weeks before you returned," Luo Mei said.

"Oh," Alex's smile disappeared. "So, master didn't tell you huh?"

Luo Mei's face changed. "Tell me what?"

"I have unofficially graduated from the sect," Alex said as he sent out his True realm aura. Luo Mei's eyes went wide when she felt that.

"You reached the True realm? What? How? Why?" she was having a hard time comprehending it.

"I reached it a bit more than a week ago," Alex said. "Since I'm in the True realms, it means I've graduated, and am no longer a disciple of the sect."

"Oh, so you are going to become an elder faster than me huh? I'm kind of jealous. I still have 2 more realms to go through," Luo Mei said.

Alex's face changed. "That's something I wanted to talk to you about, sister," he said. "I... I don't know if I will be an elder."

"Huh? Then what? You can't stay a disciple, you know," she said.

"I know. What I meant is... I will have to either choose between becoming an elder here or becoming an elder in the Hong Wu sect. I talked with both masters and they want me to make a choice by the end of the week," Alex said. "I was hoping you could help me with it a bit."

"What? Of course, you have to choose Tiger sect then," Luo Mei said without even thinking.

Alex laughed a little. There was no point in asking for help in a choice from someone that was biased to one of the choices.

He really had to come up with it on his own.

"Let's forget about that for now. I will think about it more later on," Alex said. Then he looked around the room and didn't notice someone.

"Where is sister Xing?" he asked. He had seen her yesterday.

"Oh, she left for her sect this morning. She had been staying here for way too long and needed to return back desperately, so I sent her today," Luo Mei said.

"Is that so?" Alex said. "I needed to thank her for the formation blueprint she fixed. I guess I will do so later."

Chapter 526: Interrupted Cultivation

Alex stayed with his sister until evening and explained everything he had been through to her. Once it was time for his master's tasks to be done, he left his sister's home to go to his master's manor.

Alex looked at the sky as he walked. It was an open sky and the moon, as well as the stars, were shining brilliantly, some more than others.

The days were supposed to be cold. They were cold everywhere else but here. 'Is that because of the yang in the area as well?' he thought.

He remembered that it never rained, the clouds that covered the sun never stayed in the sky for long, and it didn't get cold, even in winter. Alex couldn't think of the cause to be anything else than the Yang leaking in the Forbidden Fields.

'That means it must've been leaking for a while now, and only recently did it accelerate. I wonder what is happening there,' he thought.

Alex reached his master's manor and waited a few minutes for him to return.

"Oh, you're here. Did you make a choice already?" Wen Cheng asked as soon as he walked in and saw Alex sitting on a chair.

"No Master, I will still need some time," Alex said. He didn't want to be reminded of the choice he had to make.

"Alright, take your time. But I would be really happy if you chose the Tiger sect. You have a lot of potential to be wasted hiding in a room making pills," Wen Cheng said.

Alex sighed internally. None of the people around him could hide their biases. He wasn't going to listen to any of them, so it didn't really matter.

"I wanted to ask, master. What is going to happen now? There should be official graduation or something like that right?" Alex asked.

"Oh yes, there will be one. As for when it will be... umm... I think it will be fine to do it once you make your choice. By then, whether you choose the Tiger sect or the Hong Wu sect, you can graduate without worry," Wen Cheng said.

"I see, that would be great then," Alex said. "By the way, I heard that Sister was just 2 realms away from promoting to the True realms as well. Do you have any plans for after she breaks through?"

"Sigh, I have no plan. If anything, I think I will just have to give up on being the sect leader now. I've been one for 5 years straight now, and that should be enough," Wen Cheng said.

"Who do you think will be the sect leader next then?" Alex asked.

"I don't know. It probably won't be the First elder, since little Yuhan should also be breaking through soon. The Second elder might become one, but he won't be able to stay as one for very long either," Wen Cheng said.

"So, in the end, I think it will be the Third Elder. Disciple Bing Li should be the prime disciple after a while," Wen Cheng said. "She's young and her cultivation is low, so she should be able to hold the spot for a long time."

"I see," Alex said. "I assume Trevor already left the sect?"

"He didn't stick around a day after entering the True realm," Wen Cheng chuckled. "He had so much hope, but that disciple of his didn't really seem to care about his master's reputation."

"After the humiliation he suffered, he probably didn't want to stay in the sect," Alex said. Wen Cheng agreed. They stayed around to talk for a little longer before Alex decided it was time to leave.

He returned back from his master's place and went over to his sister's place.

Luo Mei didn't want him to go stay in the outer sect houses, so she left him to stay there.

They talked for some more and returned to their respective room late at night.

Alex walked into his room and sat down on the bed. There was no pill to make, no formations to be made, and no training to be done. So, he planned on logging out.

But then he remembered that he did already have a new cultivation method today. It didn't work as well as his previous one so he was sure to change it, but using it for just a few more days was fine.

"Let's start," he thought. He sat cross-legged on the bed and closed his eyes to put all of his focus on his meridians. There were Qi in the meridians already, and he slowly gathered the Qi at one specific location.

Once enough Qi had gathered there, he started moving the Qi through the predetermined route in his meridian.

He breathed in and out as the Qi started moving. Just as it did, something happened inside of him that he could feel for the first time.

It was a feeling of freedom he hadn't felt before. It was like finally breathing through a clogged-up nose after a long time.

The feeling was amazing, but it lasted just a split second. Or rather, he lasted just a split second. Before he could even feel it anymore, he slowly fell asleep. Once again, even at the True realm, he couldn't stay awake when cultivating.

Suddenly, Alex opened his eyes as a violent thrumming went on in his body. He felt cold, unnaturally cold from the inside out. Wisps of bluish-white Qi released from all over his body, not unlike his master.

He was hurting. 'What's happening?' he thought. After the months of body cultivation, this much pain was something he could easily handle. However, the fact that he was hurt made him worry.

In just a few seconds, the bluish-white Qi stopped releasing from his body as he felt the heat returning back to his body. This was a truly weird experience for him.

"What was that?" he wondered. He glanced around him and saw that the lantern was still burning.

"What's the time?" he thought and looked to the top right corner of his vision.

10:43

It had only been merely half an hour or so since he started cultivating. He felt quite surprised.

'I have never woken up this early before. Is my new cultivation method being a problem?' Alex wondered.

He decided to try once more. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and let the Qi gather in one spot.

He let the breath he held go and started moving the Qi. Once more, he felt that amazing feeling, and just as last time, he fell asleep.

The violent thrumming returned as Alex was forced out of his sleep. Once again, bluish-white wisps of Qi were being expelled from all over his body like steam coming off of someone after a warm shower on a cold day.

The wisps disappeared once again after a few seconds, but the experience was weird. Alex was ready for what was going to happen this time, so the moment he was out, he paid attention to what was happening to his body this time.

The cold, the heat, and the repelling, he felt it all. Alex realized that what was coming out of his body was Yin Qi.

Somehow, due to the cultivation method, during his cultivation, the Qi in his body was slowly changed to Yin Qi. Due to him having a Yin Elemental Spiritual root, he was perfectly capable of changing normal Qi to Yin Qi.

However, just because he was capable of changing it didn't mean that his body was okay with it. Being a Yang affinity body, the Yin Qi was definitely not welcomed in his body.

So, after a while when the Qi was fully transformed to Yin Qi after numerous circulation in the Meridian, his body forced it out. Which, in turn, made him jump out of his sleeping state since the cultivation was abruptly stopped.

'Dammit, so I can't even cultivate with this method?' Alex was starting to really not like this technique. It didn't matter that his master had given it to him as a gift. He was definitely going to change it the next chance he got.

"Fine, I will log out for now," he thought. Just as he was about to, he felt his badge vibrate in his storage bag.

"Hmm? Did someone challenge me in the middle of the night?" Alex thought and opened his badge only to read one sentence written on the badge.

"Scarlet City is under attack. Stay in your room and do not leave."

Chapter 527: Another Invasion

"What the hell?" Alex thought. He thought he read it wrong for a second and reread it, but it said the same thing as the first time.

Scarlet City was under attack and the disciples were to stay inside.

Alex's heart started beating fast. 'Did the beasts come back?' he feared. He took a deep breath to calm himself and see if there was the feeling he got when the beasts were agitated.

There wasn't any.

If the beasts were back, they were either not here for him, or he couldn't feel the feeling anymore now that he wasn't with Pearl.

Alex feared it was the latter. That was the only option he could come up with.

Alex swiftly walked out of the room. Luo Mei left at the same time as well. "Yu Ming, what's going on?" she asked.

"I don't know, Sister, but I think the beasts are back," Alex said.

"What? Why would they make us stay back then? They will need our help, let's go," Luo Mei said and went towards the front door.

Alex got a weird feeling when he heard that. Yes, it was weird that they didn't want the help of the disciples to fight off the beasts when in the previous days, they used all the help they could get.

Was he wrong about the situation then?

"Sister, stop!" Alex said.

"What? Why?" Luo Mei asked with a confused face. She was already at the door and had opened it already. "They need our urgent help."

"Maybe they don't want our help," Alex said as he walked towards her. "Look" he pointed to the words on the badge, "they specifically asked for the disciples to stay in their room. This must mean that the beasts that are attacking the Scarlet City must be way stronger than any of the disciples."

"But..."

"You must trust them, sister. Don't leave the house," Alex said as he pulled her inside.

Luo Mei sighed. "Okay, I guess you're right." She walked away from the door. Alex let her walk inside and grabbed the door.

Instead of walking in, however, he walked out. Luo Mei noticed him walking out and was taken aback. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"I'm going to check what is happening out there," Alex said.

"What? You just said we needed to stay inside," Luo Mei said.

"No, I said the disciples needed to stay inside," Alex said. He tossed her the badge he was holding and smiled. "Unfortunately, I'm not a disciple anymore."

"Don't go! It really could be dangerous," Luo Mei said.

"Don't worry sister," Alex said as he lost all of his auras and slowly faded into the darkness until nothing of him was visible anymore. "I will be fine."

Luo Mei had to use her spiritual sense to even locate Alex in front of her. She wanted to tell him that it was dangerous again, but... she couldn't argue that Alex would be very safe as long as he was careful.

"Alright, but if it's too dangerous, return immediately. The elders must be fighting outside the wall, so approach there slowly," Luo Mei said.

Alex nodded and closed the door. He immediately ran away from the house and started going uphill towards his master's manor.

His objective wasn't to find his master or look for something in the manor. It was just that the manor was at the peak of the mountain, and Alex could see where outside the wall the beasts were attacking.

He had activated his movement technique and could barely feel the air hitting his face. There was absolutely no air resistance and he was moving at almost supersonic speed.

The houses became a blur as in just a single moment he reached the manor. He ran behind the house to the open yard and from there looked out towards the wall.

With the southern forest being there, there should've been some people watching around, some guards keeping security, or just maybe some noise.

However, it was all silent. Alex looked down at the crater beneath him and saw the many lights that were still on. However, he couldn't see a single soul.

The entire sect crater was empty. Something was weird. Alex had never known for the sect crater to be empty. Even at night, there would be some disciples walking to and from the training hall or the library.

However, this was all silent. If there was a fight outside the wall, there should have been people gathered here to help with the beast attack.

That was when Alex heard something. A loud rumbling came from somewhere far away. Alex could tell the location of the sound— it was behind him.

He turned around and walked to the front of the manor. That was when he saw it.

Beyond the small patches of trees and walls of the sect, in the different locations of the city, Alex could see bright locations in the night as well as a lot of loud coherent noises.

Alex focused and listened to the sound carefully. Crackling of fire cries, shouts of people, weapons clashing, and a general sound of destruction.

The attack he had assumed was happening outside was instead already in the city. Alex feared the worst was currently happening— The beasts had invaded the city.

Without a single thought, Alex immediately flew from the mountain and went straight towards the invasion. He was still hiding in his concealment, so he wasn't really worried about anyone seeing him, but he still sent out his spiritual sense just so he could avoid any stray attacks coming his way.

The closer Alex got towards the front of the sect, the more he realized how bad the situation was.

There were fires breaking out everywhere, many people were terrified, and there were even fights playing out in the sky.

Alex was horrified because of what he was probably going to witness. Scenes of human flesh strewn around as beasts munched on them, that was his prime expectation, something he wasn't looking forward to.

Still, he had to check and see if he could help.

He soon reached outside the wall and looked around. He could see many people, running around haphazardly, with blinding fires behind them.

Alex looked around, but he didn't see what he was expecting. There was a lot of terror and destruction, but... not a lot of deaths.

There were barely any human bodies that were clearly dead.

However, what surprised Alex the most about the situation was...

"Where are the beasts?" he looked around in confusion. The many buildings and houses were on fire, people were fighting, but there were no beasts.

All the clashes and the clankings of weapons... it was all coming from the people, with not a single beast involved.

That was when Alex realized he had made a grave mistake in his assumption. This wasn't a beast attack.

This was a human attack.

The city wasn't under attack from strong beasts, but rather fellow cultivators themselves.

"What's going on?" Alex spoke solemnly. He could see the humans attacking each other, some of the soldiers belonged to the City Lord, some of them from the tiger sect, and some, most likely the attackers, were people he didn't recognize.

Still, he didn't see a reason for them to attack other humans. The war in this empire was over nearly a millennia ago. The empire was at peace and people were living freely.

So... why was there an attack happening on the city right now? Who would be so bad as to attack other human beings?

Just as the questions formed in his brain, Alex got an answer. Coincidentally, he saw one of the attackers nearby attacking one of the city guards.

The attacker was wearing a black robe from top to bottom, fully tight fitted to their body, and their hair long enough to reach their back.

"Black Venom bandit group," Alex said quietly. He finally understood clearly what was happening. The city was under attack from the bandits.

This was weird and stupid, but it was happening so Alex couldn't deny it.

Usually, a city would have stronger fighters and guards than just a normal merchant group, so Alex was a little confused as to what was happening.

If anything, with the bandits daring to leave the forest, their light should've been snuffed by now.

Alex didn't know exactly how strong the Black Venom bandit group was, but he had met their leader who was presumably the strongest, and even she was merely at the True Lord realm.

With his master and many others being at a higher realm than her, Alex couldn't understand why they would dare attack the city on their own. This was beyond stupid.

Granted that since the bandits were all in the True realms, only the elders would be able to fight against them, but even then it was surely a failure without how many True realm experts the two sects plus the city lord had.

Just as Alex was thinking that he noticed something. An elder from the Tiger sect was currently fighting against another man in the sky. From what Alex could see, the man was wearing a bluish-gray robe and was fighting on equal footing with the elder.

That made Alex pause for a second. "Wait a minute... that guy is not from the Black venom group," Alex thought. Suddenly, he realized something and turned around to look at the rest of the people fighting.

It wasn't just black robes he saw that were fighting. Alex could see many different people from presumably many different factions.

That was when his confusion turned into fear as he realized what was happening.

Multiple people, presumably bandit groups, had joined together to attack the city.

Chapter 528: A Significantly Insignificant Battle

Multiple bandits, many people who Alex had never met, seen, or even heard of. Given the bandits' guts to dare attack a city, it was obvious that they were at least certain of their victory on some level.

Alex just wasn't sure how confident they were of their victory. "What even is the point of attacking a city? That's just asking the empire to fight back," Alex thought.

He looked down and saw a fight breaking out. A man in an orange-colored robe was starting to attack an elder of the Tiger sect.

Alex saw that the elder for the Tiger sect was a younger man, who by his age, Alex guessed must've become an elder just a year or two ago.

He was merely at the 2nd realm of True Disciple realm, so he was considered weak. His opponent on the other hand was someone in the 5th realm of the True Disciple realm.

If they fought right now, the Tiger sect elder would lose for sure. Alex knew that the bandit knew that, and even the elder himself knew that.

* * * * *

The elder was terrified of being confronted by the bandit. The spear he held showed obvious signs of shaking. Still, he stood his ground as behind him there were a few mortals that he was saving from the wreckage of their houses.

The bandit looked at the elder and the spear he held. The spear was of some quality from the way the blade shined in the firelight.

"Stay away from me," the elder shouted.

The bandit gave a sinister smile and said, "that's quite a nice spear you have there. I bet it costs a lot."

"Wh-What?" the elder was taken aback.

"That spear... I want it," the bandit said as he slowly made his way towards the elder.

The elder took a step back in fear and looked around, but there was no help for him. He heard the whimpers of a child behind him, who was being practically suffocated by their parents in an attempt to stop them from making any noise that would attract the attention of the attackers.

The elder could only see one way out.

"I-if I give you my spear, will you leave?" he asked.

The bandit stopped. He wasn't expecting the elder to say that, but given how scared he was, the bandit decided to give it a thought.

"Sure. Give me the spear, and I will leave right now," he said. The bandit lowered the sword he was holding a little to appear less threatening.

The elder mulled over his decision for a while, but this was the only direction he could see for himself right now.

"Here!" the elder threw the spear at the bandit's feet. "Now leave."

The bandit bent down and grabbed the spear. He picked it up and looked at the slightly rugged texture on the handle, the pristine blade with barely any scratches on it. The craftsmanship of the spear was on another level.

"Not bad," he said as his eyes revealed that despite being a bandit, it wasn't every day that he got to see something like this every day.

"Such a good spear. You must be pretty rich to afford something like this," the bandit said as he played with the spear. He swung it, spun it on his hands, checked its balance, and finally stopped when he was in a stance to begin fighting.

And then his eyes turned sinister again as he said, "Makes me wonder what else you might have on you."

"What?" the elder looked at the bandit with a pale face full of fear.

"I think you have stuff on you that is better than this spear, and I want it. Oh, I want it so fucking bad," the bandit said and immediately dashed forward.

The elder wasn't ready for this change of pace at all. He knew most bandits were trash, but he was hoping for this one to leave him alone after getting the spear.

Unfortunately, he put his hopes on a trash bandit, and that was going to be the reason for his death. The bandit had arrived right next to him with the spear, and at the next moment, he was going to—

Suddenly, a flash of golden light shined as it arched right in front of him between him and the bandit. When the light disappeared, he saw a torrent of blood flow in front of him.

The elder sucked in a deep breath as he heard the spear drop right in front of him, along with a pair of hands that were still grabbing it.

The bandit that was attacking the elder now stood still and looked at the spear and the arm on the floor. It took a moment for it to click before he looked at his own arms and realized they were not there.

That was when the pain arrived.

"AHHHHH!" the bandit shouted as he looked at his amputated limbs of his.

The elder looked in shock. He didn't know what happened, or how the bandit lost his arms, but regardless, he was presented with an opportunity... and he took it.

The elder immediately pried his spear off of the cut arms and thrust it into the skull of the bandit who, for some reason, had his eyes turned white and his whole body limped to the floor.

The spear pierced the skull and came out on the other side. The elder pulled the spear back out and made a downward thrust to pierce the heart of the bandit just to make sure he was dead.

The elder fell on his butt as the realization of the fact that he was just moments away from death dawned on him. His body trembled with the thought that he could've died just now, but didn't.

He then remembered why he was fighting for and immediately stood up and controlled his fear before confronting the family he was protecting behind him.

"Are you guys, okay?" he asked, trying to sound as calm as he could while failing miserably.

"Come, I will take you someplace safe."

Chapter 529: Another Killing

Alex looked back at the elder who ran away with the family. He then looked at the corpse on the ground that belonged to the bandit.

He was dead.

Alex wasn't fond of killing people, especially the people that were from this world. He had never intentionally killed anyone from this world after all.

The last person he had killed was a player who would be alive on the other side, so he hadn't really thought much about killing at the time.

But someone from this world... taking away their life— Alex was still hesitant about it. That was why he subconsciously went for the hands and not the head of the bandit.

He didn't feel bad about the dead bandit. He deserved what he got. What Alex did feel bad about was that even after all this time, he still didn't have the courage to do it himself.

He wasn't a pacifist who refused to kill. He was just someone who feared the permanence of death he would put someone else under by killing them.

'Now is not the time to worry about this. I will kill if I need to,' he told himself. He looked at the corpse one last time and threw a massive fireball at it, burning it. Then, he flew up.

He was still invisible and being concealed all the way through, no one would really see him at all. So, he could help all he wanted without worry.

Alex sent out his spiritual sense to look for people to help. Immediately, multiple pieces of information about people attacking each other entered his mind. There was too much information coming to him from all directions, and the chaos was hard to understand.

It took him a moment to realize what was happening. He found someone who looked like they needed a lot of help and went there.

Two bandits, both in the True Master realm were fighting against a city guard in the sky. Beneath them was a house burning and the smokes rose up between the fighters.

The guard held a sword in his hand and was cautiously looking at the two bandits, while the bandits held onto a massive shield and a bow.

The guard himself was at True Master realm as well, and maybe even as strong as the bandits if he were fighting them individually.

However, together the bandits were a problem for him. The guard could run away at any time as he had no one to protect at the moment. However, what sort of guard would he be if he ran away from mere bandits.

His pride made him stay there. He charged up an attack and sent it flying towards the bandit with the bow and arrow. The green slash flew through the sky and threatened to cut down the bandit.

However, at the last moment, the other bandit stepped in with the massive shield and blocked the attack without a problem.

"Tsk!" the guard said. There were no trees around him and they were flying in the air, so half of his skills related to woods and trees were practically useless up in the air.

Still, he fought how he could. He charged up another attack and sent it flying out once again.

The bandits were ready for the attack once more with the shield, but just then, Alex arrived at the scene.

He was still invisible and concealed when he appeared, and immediately looked at the bandit with the shield.

His spiritual sea churned as a massive amount of the spiritual energy in his changed into the shape of an invisible fist and flew towards the bandit.

The moment the spiritual fist hit the bandit, his vision went black, and lost all control of his body. He could no longer keep himself afloat and started falling downward.

As he did, the other bandit was left exposed.

"Huh?"

The green slashed slammed onto him, destroying the bow and arrow, and going further to cut into the bandit's body. He had dropped all of his guards with his friend blocking the attacks for him, so when the attack landed, it did the most damage it could.

Blood gushed out of the bandit's chest and felt it hard to breathe. He heard something from in front of him and looked to find a sword right in front of him.

In the next moment, the sword cut his neck and his head fell, along with the rest of the body.

Alex wanted to help the guard a bit, and leave, but when he saw what his help had resulted in it, he was forced to stay.

The bandit that he had used Heaven's impact on, had fallen onto the burning wooden building below them and was still unconscious when he started burning as well.

Alex saw the fire raging harder. He could see the bandit's clothes burn away and his skin start to blacken as the surface charred. Even so, he wasn't waking up.

Alex's mental prowess was so strong that normal cultivators couldn't stop him. They needed either skills or artifacts that stopped mental attacks, neither of which the bandit had.

So, he burned. Alex started feeling horrified. Seeing the slow killing of a bandit wasn't exactly the thing he had hoped to see when he made up his resolutions to kill bandits. He hadn't even intended to kill this one.

And yet, the bandit was dying in such a horrible way. The bandit was nearly halfway burned to death when he started screaming.

The bandit had returned back to consciousness and was crying out in pain. The fire had already destroyed most of him, and he was no longer thinking straight to do what he could do to save himself.

Alex knew the feeling. He had lost his wits many times when the pain was too much to handle. He could only start thinking of something properly when the pain was enough to handle

Alex could hear the torture and pain through the bandit's voice. Did a bandit deserve this pain? Probably. But Alex felt that not even a bandit deserved to die like this.

He walked forward, as quickly as he could, put away the fire around him, and raised his sword. He instinctively looked away when he saw the burnt body of the bandit but forced himself to look back.

Then, he left the sword swing. He didn't attack the torso or the limbs. He went directly for the neck.

The cries of pain stopped as the head rolled a little to the side, the eyelids already burnt to char, but the hollow eyes still looking outwards.

The rest of the body was in no safe condition either. There were ruptures all over the skin, blood flew out of them relentlessly causing the rest of the body to not char all over, and only at a certain parts.

Alex nearly threw up when he saw that. He controlled himself and stood up to walk away. The bandit was dead and he had killed him. However, he couldn't focus on that or give it any attention.

Surprisingly, despite worrying so much, he didn't feel bad after killing someone. Perhaps it was because the person was a bandit, or perhaps because he felt what he was doing was helping rather than hurting.

Or maybe he was just used to killing people after having already killed 3 before now. Nevertheless, he didn't feel any remorse over the death of the bandit.

'Am I growing numb to deaths?' he thought. That must've been the reason, Alex thought.

He left the location, leaving the guard high above confused as to why the bandit that suspiciously fell was now beheaded.

He didn't understand what had happened, but he took the opportunity to go help the others, just as Alex did.

Alex went around the field helping others. Fortunately, there was no longer a situation where he had to kill anyone.

While concealed, all he had to do was use Heaven's Impact, and that would change the trajectory of the battle very quickly. With one side unconscious, it was obvious the other one was going to win.

Heaven's impact didn't do as much damage to True Realm cultivators as it did to Self-tempering realm cultivators before they went through the Mind Tempering realm.

When impacted, they would only lose consciousness for maybe a minute at most. At a higher level, it had a lower impact on the opponent's mind.

Still, a minute of free attacks was enough to change the tide of battles, and that was exactly what Alex was doing right now.

Chapter 530: The Sect Targeted

Sparks flew in the air.

Two swords clashed against each other in mid-air, away from most of the other fights.

Wen Cheng looked at a middle-aged man of similar height to him, wearing a brown robe. The man had streaks of silver hair on his head that made him stand out quite a lot amidst the other bandits.

Wen Cheng didn't know the man, but he was familiar with the title. He was one of the most ruthless bandits in the east.

The Silver Bandit.

Despite his streaks of silver hair, he didn't have any natural gray hairs at all, as he was still a youth in terms of a cultivator's age. The silver hairs were something he apparently dyed on himself.

Every time he killed someone, he would dye a small patch of his hair. Judging by the amount of silver hair on his head, he had killed hundreds.

Wen Cheng could feel the True King realm cultivation base of the enemy, the same cultivation base as him.

It was going to be difficult. He dashed forward once again and slashed at the Silver bandit.

The silver bandit returned the blow back with his own sword and the sparks flew in the air once again.

Wen Cheng was very concerned about this fight. Fighting against someone so similar in strength to him, there was a definite chance that he could suffer some damage, if not lose.

He had to be extra careful.

'What the hell is going on?' he thought. 'Why are the bandits here?'

He tried making sense of the situation, but this was one of those times when the more you thought the more confusing things became.

He had sent someone to let the Hong Wu sect know of the invasion, but he wasn't sure if they knew about it or not. The messenger he sent could very well be in the midst of a fight just like him.

'Not the time to think,' Wen Cheng told himself and got back to fighting. Red Qi flowed into his sword which he slashed towards the Silver bandit.

The bandit too charged his sword with brown light and slashed towards Wen Cheng.

The two energy clashed in the middle, making a deafening blast between them.

Wen Cheng took the moment to look around him and saw that he was being pushed back towards the sect.

"No, it will be dangerous if the disciples get caught up in the battles," he thought and went on the offensive.

He got close to the bandit and started fighting again. With his Elusive Heavenly sword, he could attack while constantly dodging the attacks of the bandit.

Still, it was hard to consistently dodge someone that was so strong, so he had to back away a few times. Right now, he just wanted to force the bandit to back away as well.

After a minute or so of fighting, the bandit was getting pushed back thanks to Wen Cheng's relentless attack.

The bandit looked around and realized so as well. Then, once again he started attacking Wen Cheng more and more to force himself back.

Wen Cheng's eyes widened when he realized what his foe was doing. 'Shit! Is he intentionally pushing me towards the sect? Is their target the Tiger sect?' he thought.

He sent out the third strike of the Elusive Heavenly sword, which was a bright green slash that went flying towards the enemy.

The slash was much stronger than anything Alex could ever muster up even if he had the same strength as Wen Cheng due to Wen Cheng's superior Wood spiritual root.

At the same time, he took out a talisman and sent a message onto it.

"Everyone, beware! The assailant's target might be the sect. Protect the sect at any cost," he sent the message.

Everyone from elders to disciples received the message. Alex did too.

Alex opened his badge and got confused when he saw that message. 'Why would bandits care about the Tiger sect? Is there something there that they want?' he wondered.

He had been helping the other people all this time and had managed to turn the situation around to favor the guards and the elders.

Now that he was needed less around this place, he decided to go back to the sect to see if it was safe there.

He flew towards the sect and reached the gate. He was about to fly in when he saw some people on the ground.

He flew down and saw that there were elders on the ground. 'Are they dead?' Alex feared and quickly rushed to them.

However, when he reached there, he saw that they were actually just knocked out, at least that was what he thought when he saw the weird smile on their face as they lay there unconscious.

"Elder?" he called out to them but they didn't hear him. He shook them up a little and they finally opened their eyes.

"Wh-what happened?" one of the elders asked.

Alex was fully visible by now, so they looked at him to ask.

"I don't know, Elder. You should tell me instead. The entire city is under attack, what are you guys doing here?" he asked.

"I— I don't know," the elder said. "I remember... I just remember feeling happy, happiness like never before, and the next thing I know, I'm here on the floor."

"Happiness?" Alex asked with a confused look.

"Oh no, someone was here," the elder finally remembered. "We need to go save the disciples. Someone infiltrated the sect."

Alex's heart skipped a beat. He immediately turned around and flew off, no longer caring for the elders as they could take care of themselves.

When he reached the outer sect disciple's houses, he could see a few of them destroyed, along with corpses of those disciples buried in the rubble.

There were at least a dozen such houses destroyed, and he could hear another one being destroyed as well.

Alex turned around and saw a figure in black destroying the houses. When he saw the face, he realized who it was.

"Black Venom!"

Seeing the female bandit called Black Venom killing his fellow disciples, especially ones that could not fight back, Alex's anger reached sky-high.

He lost all sense of reasoning and his will to kill flared up like never before. He immediately went invisible and rushed at her with his sword in hand.

Golden light flared from his sword, along with a pure white outline around it. That was something he was unable to hide at all.

Black Venom was about to destroy another house when she saw something glint from the side of her eyes.

Just as she turned around, the sword came to strike at her neck. With her impressive reflex, Black Venom managed to put up her hands just in time to block the sword.

Still, she felt herself being pushed back a step. Her long sleeves now had cut in them, revealing a bronze-colored bracer on them.

The light had died after she was attacked, so she couldn't see who had attacked her and that only made her more vigilant.

She turned around, her amber eyes glowing in the dark, as she used an eyes skill to look for hidden auras but she couldn't see anything.

Unable to find anyone, she was forced to speak.

"Who is there?"

A beautiful melody escaped her mouth as she asked that question. The melody sounded like she had the voice of gods, and anyone who heard it was blessed by them.

Ecstasy was all Alex could feel as he heard her beautiful voice. A smile rose on his face as he slowly drifted onto the ground and lay there in happiness.

He had never felt happiness like this before.

Alex's two skills he was using right now were the Invisibility skill and the concealment skill. The concealment skill was an immortal grade technique that didn't require him to do anything for it to work.

Rather, he had to do something to stop it from constantly working, which was how he kept it most of the time.

On the other hand, he had to consciously keep up the invisibility technique. If he ever lost control of himself, the invisibility would also go away.

Which was exactly what happened when he lost himself to euphoria after listening to Black Venom's heavenly voice.

He fell on the ground, with a smile on his face, and his whole body perfectly visible to Black Venom.

Black Venom was initially surprised to see that someone was in fact hiding that even her eye technique couldn't locate.

However, when she saw the person, her vision turned dark as her facial expression changed to one of anger.

She remembered Alex from back then and had been searching for him for a very long time.

"So this is where you were hiding huh? You bastard," she said. "Good! I'm glad I get to kill you by myself."

She took out a weapon from her storage bag, a sickle, and walked towards Alex as fast as she could.

"Now you die," she said and got ready to strike at him. Just then, Alex's face changed from one of ecstasy to one of dread.

His body had once more gotten rid of whatever was causing him to lose consciousness, and he opened his eyes just in time to see the attack coming.

Without even thinking, he suddenly used Heavenly Impact on her. Alex then used that moment to slip away from under her and ran to the side.

Now, it was Black Venom who was on the ground, and he was the one who could attack her while she was down.