

Alchemy 541

Chapter 541: Stopping the Formation

"What?" Ma Rong and the Second Elder turned towards Alex when he shouted out that name.

"Song Zun, that's him. That's the original body of Song Zun who was just a clone. He's after the thing in the Forbidden Fields," Alex shouted as the understanding of what was happening came to him.

He gasped as he understood more. "Master, he wants my body to make me his clone. That is the only way he can survive in the Forbidden Fields. That's why he is after me," Alex shouted.

The old man's eyes showed annoyance through the mask. "Tsk, you idiot. Why are you going around giving out information?" he scolded the Third Elder.

The Third Elder's eyes changed from glee to fear. "I'm sorry father," she said.

"Whatever, just kill them so we can be done with. The formation won't last very long," he said.

"Bu-But father, he's my—"

"Screw your husband. If I tell you to kill, you kill," the old man shouted.

"Y-Yes, father," she said and turned towards the Second Elder. "I'm sorry, dear. It seems you lost your chance to leave."

A tear flowed down the Second Elder's face while his face grew resolute. "No, don't be. I was stupid to fall in love with you in the first place."

He held up his sword, pointing directly at her, and said, "I won't make the same mistake again."

Wen Cheng walked up to his side and got into an awkward stance with his sword pointed at her as well.

The Third Elder still looked at the Second Elder and said, "I promise! I will make your death as painless as possible."

"Tsk. So much talki—"

The old man was halfway through speaking when he was attacked by Ma Rong. The cold air reached him before even she did.

The old man immediately employed his movement technique, putting in physical force and Qi into his legs to create one snappy jump that would send him elsewhere in an instant.

He didn't really have control over his body when he did this, but it was the fastest he could be, so he always employed this technique.

Ma Rong saw him run away and went after him. She wouldn't let the old man get close to her disciple at all.

The Second Elder and Wen Cheng started fighting as well against the Third Elder.

Wen Cheng sent a green slash flying towards the Third Elder, who sent a brown slash of her own to block the slash. Her attack turned out to be slightly stronger and went past the green slash to attack Wen Cheng.

The Second Elder appeared in between and hit the slash away with his own sword. He placed his palm against the flat side of his sword and wiped it until his hand ran off the sword.

A burst of blue flame erupted from where he touched, making his sword burn with fire that was truly at a very high temperature.

He dashed forward and swung the sword at his wife. The Third Elder saw the attack coming and brought up an earthen wall in front of her.

The Second Elder easily destroyed the wall, but there was no one on the other side. His wife had already left the place and went to Wen Cheng to kill him first.

Wen Cheng saw her coming and used his Elusive Heavenly sword to dodge the close-ranged attacks. He also retaliated with his own attacks, but due to the lack of grip and strength from his off-hand, they didn't do much.

The Second Elder returned, attacking her from behind, but the Third Elder was too agile. She immediately turned, parrying his sword, and used her feet to produce an earth spike that directly targeted his chest.

The Second Elder managed to block it, but he was pushed away. At the same time, multiple rocks were sent hurling towards Wen Cheng, who barely managed to stop them with his sword.

Right when he blocked the final rock, he realized that the woman was missing. A chill went down his spine when he sensed her behind him with her sword nearly reaching his neck.

He was going to die.

HISS

A snake appeared out of nowhere and attacked her, forcing her to stop her attack and dodge away.

Wen Cheng turned towards her and got into his stance again. 'This woman is dangerous,' he thought. The Second Elder appeared next to him and got into stance as well. He too had realized that his wife had been hiding her skills from him all along.

Little green, Ma Rong's snake, appeared next to them and got ready to fight under the orders of its master.

Immediately, the 3 of them rushed forward, fighting against a sole woman who was finally showing struggle as there were too many fighters against her.

Ma Rong was still chasing after the old man who did nothing but kite her to tire her. She knew that and was letting him do that.

The more he thought he was winning, the better it would be for her when she sneak-attacked him. For now, she had to keep attacking without her attacks doing anything to the old man.

Alex was left alone, doing nothing. The battle around him was way too high level for him. It wasn't like when he fought Black Venom where he was confident that he could dodge her.

These people were a realm higher than her, and the difference was very apparent. If not for his spiritual sense and focus mode, Alex couldn't even keep track of half the attacks that were happening around him.

He understood that he couldn't help them at all right now. The only help he could do was bring someone from outside to aid the others in battle.

However, the barrier was tough and Alex couldn't destroy it all. "Master should be able to shut it off at a moment's notice if she used her Yin Qi to stop the energy of the formation plate," he thought. However, his master was busy.

If she stopped for even a moment, the old man would definitely come for her. Alex went invisible and concealed his aura to disappear. This way, his master could probably stop the formation at once.

However, just as he went invisible, a wave of spiritual energy went past him. 'Dammit!' he thought. The old man had spiritual sense too.

Alex didn't know how or where he acquired the spiritual sense, but he did and that was terrible for him. Now, his master couldn't leave the old man to stop the formation.

"I will have to do it," he thought. He didn't let go of his invisibility or his concealment and ran towards the formation plate before standing in front of it.

"What do I do now?" he thought. As far as he knew, there were 3 normal ways to shut down a formation plate.

First, you could destroy the formation plate, however, that required a lot of strength since the metal was made to withstand the attacks of very high leveled True realm cultivators.

Alex knew without even trying that there was no way he could break the formation. Still, he needed to try it, just to be sure.

Alex took out his sword and brought it up way overhead. The sword started glowing golden with metal Qi with a bright white outline around it thanks to his Sword Intent.

He took a deep breath and brought it down very hard at the formation plate. He expected the sword to hit the formation plate, yet not leave single damage.

However, what happened instead surprised him even more. Before his sword could even touch the formation plate, a barrier appeared around the plate.

His sword rebounded off of the barrier, sending his hurtling back.

"What?" he cried out loud. The formation plate that produced a barrier, had a barrier protecting it as well.

'Shit! That's ingenious,' Alex thought. Usually, a True rank formation could only do 2 or 3 things at once.

Most barrier formations used it to create a barrier, then used the other 1 or 2 base formations to either stop sound and images from leaking outside or put a disorienting formation to mess with their opponent.

However, the old man's formation did none of that. Alex couldn't tell if it had a 3rd function or not, but the 2 function of the True grade formation in front of him was to create a barrier to stop the enemy from leaving and then another barrier to stop them from tampering with the formation plate.

Alex had never even thought of doing something like that before.

"Dammit! This means the other 2 methods won't work either," he thought.

Aside from destroying the plate, the other two methods for stopping a formation were to remove the energy source from the plate.

If Alex had removed the energy source, the formation would end on its own.

The final way was a bit more dangerous. What one could do was tamper with the formation strokes themselves and make it so that the formation no longer did what it was supposed to.

99 times out of 100, the formation would just stop working. However, there was a chance that the formation would end up turning volatile and end up as a make-shift bomb.

Alex wondered what he could do since neither of the 3 methods was doable due to the barrier.

That was when he noticed something. He noticed the number of strokes on the formation plate.

As expected, this formation did 3 things, not 2.

"What's the third effect of this formation?" Alex thought. He needed to find out.

Chapter 542: That Face

There was a third base formation in the formation plate. Meaning, there was one more thing the formation did that hadn't been apparent to anyone yet.

What was it? Was it an illusory formation? Maybe disorienting? It didn't look like the old man was very worried about sound when he started attacking, so it was likely that wasn't it.

Alex looked at the formation diagram and understood that he had never seen that formation before. So there really was nothing in his mind to immediately give him an answer.

The only way to tell what it did was to separate the 3 Base formations in the diagram as well as the extra strokes that connected them.

This was gonna take some time. He didn't know if he had any.

"Please hold on for a little longer," he softly begged his masters and immediately created a fire in mid-air. The fire immediately changed shape as it twisted and elongated to make a circle.

Alex then started putting in the strokes of the formation.

The reason for him creating an image of the formation rather than just looking at the one on the plate was so that he could erase and add the strokes as he likes.

Having a physical, visual diagram he could interact with made it all easier. He could've done it on the ground, but with his grown Flame Mastery Scripture, it was very much easier to just use fire instead.

Very quickly, Alex drew one stroke after another nearly finishing the formation. People had seen him draw the formation on the air, but no one had time to ask him what he was doing.

'A single line through the middle,' Alex thought and put in the final strokes of the formation.

Suddenly, a low humming sound was released from the diagram, as if he had just put the final piece of the puzzle. The hum lasted for maybe a second before it went away.

'What was that?' Alex thought, but he didn't have the time to think about it. He immediately started tinkering with the diagram.

They kept on going on the other side. Ma Rong kept her eyes on Alex at all times, not letting the old man ever get close to him.

The other fight however was at a standstill. Wen Cheng was all bloodied up at the moment. Due to many mistakes he had made during the fight, he had cuts all over his body, making it harder for him to fight.

He could easily tell that they were at a disadvantage against the woman, however, every time she got close to killing him, the Second Elder would interfere and she would get away.

It seemed she was still hesitant about killing him, despite what she proclaimed earlier.

Little green was helpful, perhaps the most of the three, but even the green snake couldn't withstand the strength of the woman. She had always been a fighter it seemed, and she had kept it hidden very well.

Ma Rong's fight against the old man wasn't going much better either. However, since she was stronger, she wasn't bloodied up like Wen Cheng was. It had been nearly 15 minutes since she started fighting, but she wasn't making much progress.

She was still waiting for that one moment when he wasn't attentive. That moment when he wasn't on guard. That one moment where she could hit him.

Suddenly, Alex shouted from behind her.

"Master, you need to defeat him quickly," Alex said. In front of him were 3 different formation diagrams. Of them, two looked identical, while the last one was different.

These first two were the barrier diagram, while the last one was...

"The formation is helping him recover his Qi he lost while fighting. As long as he is in the formation, he likely won't run out of Qi," he said. "You can't keep this chase going forever or you will lose."

The old man heard it and looked towards Alex in surprise. "Tsk, he figured it o—"

That one moment was here.

Ma Rong teleported for the first time since she was seriously fighting the old man. She appeared behind him and slashed her sword at his neck.

Unfortunately, the old man seemed to have more awareness than Ma Rong expected him to. He moved to the right, without employing any movement technique, to escape from the sword.

However, the cold aura slowed him down by a considerable amount. The sword hit the side of the old man's face, putting a crack on the mask he was wearing.

The old man was sent flying and he crashed into the walls of the house as the house came caving in on him.

Ma Rong got ready to attack when she noticed him come out of the rubble.

"Tsk. That was sneaky of you— What? What are you looking at?" the old man asked her daughter who had stopped fighting and was staring at her father. He then saw Wen Cheng, Ma Rong and Alex stare at him with wide eyes.

"Hmm?" he suddenly brought his hands onto his face and realized his mask was missing. He immediately brought out another mask and wore it again.

Alex was so stunned that he didn't even realize the man's mask was down.

"You...." He said. "You are that old man, from that beast attack," he said remembering the night when it rained for the first time in the game.

They had been on their way to the tournament when they stopped to help some people getting attacked by the beasts. After saving them, Ma Rong refused to take them with them saying that he was likely a fraud.

This old man had the same face.

Ma Rong didn't speak at all and instead started wondering just how far back this whole thing went. Still, it was clear to see that she was pretty shocked too.

However, neither of their shocks could match up to the shock Wen Cheng was feeling at the moment.

"Su Chen!" Wen Cheng said with eyes so wide that one could look into his soul to see how unreal the moment was feeling to him.

"Hmm... you actually recognize me, boy? Were you around back then?" the old man asked with a hint of intrigue.

"Yes," Wen Cheng said with a serious voice. "I was there. I was there to see the destruction you brought forth. The cries you evoked. The tears you made them bleed."

"I was there to watch the sect nearly get extinct on that day, the day the sect leader died and the day you were supposed to have died in your exile, Second elder," he said.

Alex's eyes went wide once more when he realized who the old man was. 'That old man that incited the Tiger Sect war back then? Wasn't he supposed to be dead?' he thought.

"Haha, you really were there. Since so many people died, I didn't think many would remember," the old man said. "They were stupid, weren't they? Thinking I would die just because they threw me out while I was wounded. Those cowards couldn't even kill me correctly."

"Wen Cheng, who is he?" Ma Rong asked.

"This is the Tiger sect's second elder, Su Chen, from over 50 years ago. He started a war with the sect leader of that time due to his greed for the sect leader position, leading to infighting that nearly wiped out the entire sect."

"Barely a few elders and disciples remained alive at the time," Wen Cheng said. He had his eyes on the old man the whole time, not taking them off even for a bit.

"How did you survive? You were near death back then," Wen Cheng asked.

"With my expertise and knowledge, it's easy for me to survive," the old man said. "Albeit, I had to destroy my cultivation base at the time and had to remain as a mortal for a few years before my meridians were all set back. However, it helped me rebuild my foundation and made me stronger than I would have been with my previous cultivation method."

"Why are you targeting my disciple now? Are you trying to take revenge for the past?" Wen Cheng asked.

"Tsk, another idiot. Did you not hear the boy say I was here for his body?" the old man asked in an annoyed voice. "I don't really care about the Tiger sect enough at the moment to take a revenge for the past. A single instruction to the bandit leaders was enough for it."

"Then what's your purpose?" Wen Cheng asked. "What do you want with my disciple's body?"

"Same thing I have wanted since I learned about it in the sect records way back then," the old man said. "That stupid Tian Chengong, I told him I was right about it, and that we could not let this new sect take over our ancestral grounds, and yet he never listened to me."

"Look at how they took it for their own, not a hint of the old Tiger sect left in this place," the old man said as he looked around.

"The...old tiger sect?" Wen Cheng and Ma Rong were both surprised. Wen Cheng looked around. "Was Tiger sect previously located in this place?" he asked with a hint of a shock to his voice.

For years, he had taken the incomplete information about the Tiger sect having relocated from someplace else. He went above and beyond trying to find that place, yet he never did. "So the Hong Wu sect took over where the Tiger Sect was previously?"

Chapter 543: Stalling for Time

"My house used to be there, on that mountain, yet it's nothing but fog now. I used to fight against my fellow disciples at the valley down below, yet not a single fighting ground exists there anymore," the old man said with melancholy to his voice.

"I don't blame you though, little girl. The only one I blame is Tian Chengong. We could've stopped you from moving here, but he didn't want to let go of the new location of Tiger sect, all because he found that black stone pretty."

The old man turned to Wen Cheng and spoke, "You see, there is something wrong in your story about the past. You called me a jealous man, a greedy man who wanted all for himself. You said I attacked the sect leader because I wanted his position."

"Truthfully, you would not be wrong. Yes, I did attack Tian Chengong because I wanted his position, but it wasn't because I was drawn to its power. No, I had no other choice at that time since only a Sect leader had enough power to do what I needed to do."

"I had gathered a significant amount of people to come transfer back to this place, but I also didn't want to split the Tiger sect at the time. I insisted Tian Chengong to move the sect back."

"But no," the old man said. "That coward would always use the emperor's orders as a means to persuade the rest to stay where he was. Everyone knew he was just attached to that black stone too much to let go of it. Since it was impossible to move, he didn't want to leave that place."

"That was why I decided to attack him when he returned wounded from the adventure. It was the perfect time for me to get rid of him and take charge of the sect to bring us back here, bring us back to glory, bring us close to the location that helped the Tiger sect reach the height it had back then."

Wen Cheng felt like everything he had known about the past was a lie. It seemed what was written on the records wasn't entirely true and missing a lot of the information.

Only a few high elders from back then had survived and merely 2 of them remained at the current time and were inclosed cultivation for a long time to hopefully extend their life.

The Second Elder was still holding off the third elder, while the rest of them were at standstill. Even Ma Rong wasn't sure what to do right now as whatever the old man was telling her seemed really important.

Tiger sect? In this place? She couldn't wrap her head around it. She had only come to this sect some 30 years ago and by that time the sect had already been established for over 15 years.

Also, the elders of that time mentioned nothing about it.

Wen Cheng was reeling in his shock when he realized something. Something he read in the few remaining records, they mentioned something that he hadn't thought about at the moment.

"The records," he spoke out, his eyes darting everywhere. "The records spoke of the sacred land, the holy land of Tiger sect to be close to the original location. Does that mean...?"

"Hmm? You're close, but a little wrong," the old man said. "While this was the previous location of Tiger sect, this too was a place we had moved to since we couldn't stay in the other place any longer. At least, that's what I read in the records."

"The original place where the Tiger Sect was originated was there," the old man said while pointing behind him.

"The Forbidden Fields?" Alex asked in surprise. He remembered the record he had read in the library. It stated that the sacred land was a place the sect members didn't dare enter.

Wen Cheng, and with his influence, Alex had come to assume that the sacred land was in some ways Holy to them, which was why they wouldn't dare step on it.

However, now that he realized it was the Forbidden Fields, he realized that it wasn't that they wouldn't step in the sacred land, but rather they couldn't. At least, not without losing their cultivation base for the moment and having to fight with dangerous beasts as a mortal.

"Wait," Wen Cheng shouted. "The records mentioned a massive blue landscape where the previous location of Tiger sect was, but... there is no such thing back there."

Alex nodded. If anything, with all the yellow sand, the writer of the record would call it a yellow landscape.

"You stupid idiot, what did I just tell you? We moved from the other place," the old man said. "We came from the north. What do you think you will reach if you went all the way up north?"

Wen Cheng's eyes opened wide as he realized how far the original location of the Tiger sect was located. Up north, over a thousand kilometers away, a location that would take even True realm experts nearly half a day to reach, at the edge of the Crimson Empire, one could see...

"The ocean," Wen Cheng realized. The blue landscape wasn't a large river or a lake as he had previously imagined. It was the ocean.

"What... is there," Wen Cheng asked the old man.

Even through the mask, people could see him smile as he said, "the Sect's Treasure."

"The... sect treasure?" Wen Cheng was both surprised and confused.

"Yes, the sect treasure. The treasure around which the Tiger sect came into existence. It was at its initial phase at the time and would take years to grow according to the records."

"The time has come. The treasure has grown and is a step away from maturing. Any day now, it will mature. Do you want to know what the treasure is?" the old man asked.

"Yes," Wen Cheng nodded his head without even knowing.

"Then hand over that kid to me. With his body, I can traverse the desert, and find the treas—"

The moment the talking turned back around to being about Alex, Ma Rong attacked the old man. The old man had been consciously waiting for one of them to attack the whole time.

He talked all this time so that he could gather up the Qi he had lost. Using the formation, the amount he would get back would be a lot and could last longer in the fight against Ma Rong.

Ma Rong turned to look at Wen Cheng who was still dumbfounded about the whole thing.

"Wen Cheng, stop daydreaming and go help them," she shouted.

The whole time the old man was stalling for time, the second Elder and the third elder were fighting each other.

The Second elder had been protecting Wen Cheng by putting his own life on the line which the Third Elder refused to take.

Even the old man had noticed this and had been annoyed for a while, but he didn't want to bring attention to their fight.

However, now that Ma Rong was attacking him again, he was starting to feel the pressure once more and needed his daughter to help him out a bit.

"Dammit," he cried out. "Kill that bastard and come help me already, or are you useless just like your mother?"

The Third Elder shuddered and her eyes grew cold. "I'm sorry, father. I will deal with this quickly," she said.

She slammed her feet down and a bunch of rock spikes appeared from the ground around her.

The Second Elder used his flaming sword to cut the stones around him, little green just twisted his body to dodge the spikes, and Wen Cheng jumped back entirely to escape it all.

However, right as he was landing, another few rock spikes appeared beneath him and pierced his right leg's calf. Wen Cheng couldn't keep his balance and fell to the ground. With his already numerous cut, he was having a hard time with the battle.

"Master," Alex shouted and brought out a pill to feed him. He was about to walk towards his master when a wall appeared between him and Wen Cheng.

Alex tried to go around it, but Wen Cheng spoke, "stay back, it's dangerous."

Alex wanted to help, but it was indeed too dangerous. He watched the fight and quickly realized how serious the Third Elder was at the moment. Her attacks were no longer holding back and she was using techniques she hadn't shown before.

Just like her father, she too used a movement technique that gave her a burst of speed. Wen Cheng was barely holding on, especially with one of his feet not holding his weight properly.

The Third Elder launched herself towards Wen Cheng to stab him with the sword, but the Second Elder appeared in front of her once more, hoping to stop her like he had been all this time.

He was gravely mistaken. The brown blade pierced through his chest and came out on the other side.

Alex gasped in shock when he realized that the Second elder had been stabbed through the heart.

A single tear escaped the Third Elder's eyes as she said in a small voice, "I'm sorry."

The Second Elder looked at the sword in shock. He couldn't believe that he was actually stabbed. Was he going to die? Is this how he was going to die?

The loss of blood to his brain was slowly making his vision get darker by the second. He only had a few more breaths left.

'I won't go out like this,' he thought. He did his best to pull up his dangling arm and wrapped it around his wife, hugging her as tight as he could, pushing the sword deeper into him until his body was fully touching her.

He rested his head on her shoulders as tears started streaming down his cheeks as well, and said softly, "I'm sorry too."

He used the last of his breaths to scream. "DO IT NOW!"

Little green immediately rushed forward.

"No!" the Third Elder cried out but she couldn't move her husband's arms from herself in time. Or... maybe she could, but she didn't want to. Maybe she thought she deserved what was coming.

The snake wrapped around the both of them, keeping the Third elder steady in one place, giving Wen Cheng the perfect shot.

Wen Cheng stood on his left leg, held the sword with his 3 fingers on the left hand, and used the best technique he had at the moment.

His Sword Intent.

His sword glowed white around the edges, and he used an explosive speed to dash forward. When he reached right next to the two of them, he slashed his sword on the Third Elder targeting her neck.

Chapter 544: Yin and Yang

THUD

The Third Elder's head rolled on the floor. Little green let go of the constriction and the two bodies stuck together also fell on the ground.

The Second Elder's eyes were wide with tears rolling down them. "I... I'm... sorry," he spoke one last time and breathed his last breath.

He was dead.

Wen Cheng slumped on the floor, his body giving upon him. The right calf was hurting him incredibly along with the other cuts in his body.

Alex rushed over and stopped for a second when he saw the Second Elder's blank eyes. He felt a tinge of sadness seeing someone he was quite close to in the sect die like this.

To die by the hands of someone he loved, what greater tragedy could there be in this world?

Alex knelt in front of him and put his hands on his eyes. "Rest in peace, Second Elder," he said and brushed down his eyelids to close his eyes.

Alex then made his way to his master and brought out a pill. Wen Cheng ate the pill and felt the energy in it healing him. In mere moments, all of his wounds had disappeared.

"Thank you," he said and tried to stand up but...

"Woah!" he felt dizzy and fell back down to the ground.

"Don't move too quick, master. You've lost a lot of blood. The pill I gave you only healed you, but it did nothing for your blood. With your lack of blood, you will have blurred vision and dizziness for a while," Alex said.

"Urghh!" Wen Cheng grabbed his head. "Don't you have any pills for giving me blood?"

"Unfortunately not, Master," Alex said. "I will get one for y—"

"Look out!" Wen Cheng shouted and pushed Alex away. A yellow palm hit Wen Cheng directly on his chest, throwing him into the barrier.

Wen Cheng coughed up blood as he hit the floor and stopped moving.

"No!" Alex shouted and looked back to where the attack had come from. It was the old man.

His eyes were red with fury, his body glowing yellow as he used every bit of Yang energy in his body to bypass Ma Rong's attacks to send out his own attack towards them.

"I will kill you bastards!" he shouted.

Ma Rong immediately teleported in front of him and struck at him. The old man swung his sword to get rid of Ma Rong and go after Wen Cheng, but he couldn't.

"Get away from me!" he shouted, but Ma Rong wasn't going to let go of him. She too was angry at the fact that the Second Elder died.

The Second Elder was one of the best elders in the sect. Perhaps even better than her when it came to handling the sect matters.

When she was unconscious due to the Yang energy in her body, or when she was stuck indoors due to her newly awakened constitution. Or even when she stayed in her room neglecting the sect work due to the pain of probably having lost a disciple.

The Second Elder helped her in all of those situations by taking on the workload all on himself, and now he was dead. The person who killed him was also dead, so the only person she could go after was the old man.

Being the person who started it all, and being the person who wanted to kill her disciple, Ma Rong finally started feeling fury like she had never before.

Just like the old man, she too was angry.

Ma Rong and the old man went into what looked to be the final stage of their battle. Both of them were giving their all to end it as quickly as possible.

Alex ran back to his master and saw him on the floor choking on choking on his own blood. Alex immediately pushed him on his side and used his Qi to help him release all the blood in his lungs and esophagus.

'Master has already lost so much blood. If he loses some more, he will probably retain some permanent damage,' Alex thought.

He brought out another pill and slowly pushed it down Wen Cheng's throat. Alex sent his Qi through Wen Cheng's veins and checked if the inside was now fine or not.

It took a while, but he fully checked Wen Cheng all over and sighed in relief that he was okay. The blood loss had made him fall unconscious, but he was breathing fine. He would make it out alive and well.

Alex took out his sword and held it in his right arm, he was going to protect Wen Cheng from any attacks that came his way now.

However, it didn't seem like he would be needing to do that anymore. Ma Rong was continuously getting the upper hand.

For a good chunk of time now, she had been fully expelling Yin from her body to stop the old man, and Alex was worried she wouldn't be able to keep it up for very long.

The old man was fully flaring his Qi too, but he had the formation to support him. Alex was really worried as he watched the two of them fight.

But it seemed that was the right choice as he saw parts of the old man's body having ice on it. Ma Rong's hit was getting in.

"Hang in there a little longer, master," Alex said. It was unclear which master he was talking about, but it was very much likely to be the both of them.

Ma Rong sent out a ball of frozen water at the old man. With his movements delayed, the old man couldn't dodge in time and ended up taking the hit on the left shoulder.

Frost built up at the place where he was hit, but he ignored it. A handful of fire gathered in front of him, which he blew on to create a massive spray of flames that attacked Ma Rong.

Ma Rong swung her blade in front of her and immediately the fire was cut in half, but it wasn't destroyed. She was a little surprised to notice that the fire had Yang energy in it.

The two halves of the fire hit either side of her but did nothing to her. In the chaos, the old man tried to run away, but he couldn't. Ma Rong's spiritual sense was on him the whole time.

She immediately teleported next to him and sent two Yin snakes at him. The old man reacted in time and slashed the two Yin snakes, but a third one, hidden behind the two suddenly appeared in front of him and directly bit him on the shoulders.

"AHH!" he shouted as the right half of his body started freezing over. Finally, he was hit with something he couldn't deflect.

He flared his Yang Qi, but the freezing wouldn't stop. Ma Rong's Yin was of a higher grade than his Yang.

His arm, including his fist which was still wrapped around his sword, also froze, making it impossible for him to do anything with his sword.

He tried to move back, but he realized that his back was up against the house rubbles again. He could feel the stiffness in his legs as well. He could no longer move very well either.

"No," the old man said. "This can't be it! I can't die like this!"

"You deserve this death," Ma Rong shouted and dashed towards the old man. The old man tried to run, but he was unable to.

"NO!" he cried out.

'No, I can't die like this. I still have yet to find the treasure,' he thought.

Suddenly, he heard something crack behind him. The crack was loud and following it, he felt a massive amount of energy passing past him.

It was Yang energy.

Ma Rong's sword that was coming straight for his heart deviated just slightly enough that it missed his heart and instead stabbed just a few centimeters above it.

Due to how thin Ma Rong's sword was, he was fine.

The frost in his arms and body started to melt away. The Yin Qi that Ma Rong's sword had, that would've otherwise frozen his heart and killed him, never actually came. He had lived.

His eyes went wide at the thing he had just experienced. He was happy at first, but after he understood what had happened, his eyes changed. It wasn't just a surprise in his eyes anymore, but rather fear too.

'No! It's too early,' he thought. 'I am not ready yet. I can't turn that kid into my clone in just mere 3 days.'

The treasure he had been so looking forward to had matured, and it would only remain that way for 3 more days before getting ruined forever.

He forgot all the pain he was feeling and angrily looked at Ma Rong only to be surprised at what he was seeing.

Ma Rong had no Yin Qi coming out of her. In fact, she had no aura. The old man tried to flare his cultivation base when he realized that he was being suppressed by the Yang energy.

He couldn't use his cultivation base at the moment. However, he didn't need to.

He suddenly swung his sword in front of him, cutting off Ma Rong's right hand which was still holding the sword that was deep inside of him.

Ma Rong was surprised, but she couldn't do anything. She couldn't even move. The Yang energy was especially suppressing her in more ways than just her cultivation base.

The old man took the opportunity and jumped towards her, sword at the ready, and directly stabbed through her stomach.

Chapter 545: Poison

Alex watched as Ma Rong got the upper hand. The old man's right arm was frozen and she was getting ready to stab him.

"Yes!" he said softly to himself.

'Finally, tonight's tragedy is over,' he thought.

Suddenly, he saw the massive barrier behind them crack open and fade as a giant wave of yellow energy flew their way.

Alex put his hands up to stop the light from hitting his eyes. While his hands were up, he heard a thud coming from in front of him.

He lowered his hands and...

"Eh?" the scene wasn't what he had expected. His master had been ready to kill him and yet..."Eh?" he watched blood flow down the missing arm, and a sword stabbed through the abdomen. Only, the victim was his master.

"Eh?"

He couldn't understand what had happened just now. His master was totally winning the battler. She had even stabbed the bastard through the heart. But then... why was she on the ground and that bastard standing.

The old man looked at his chest, then at his sword that was in Ma Rong, and pulled it out as fast as he could. He then looked towards Alex for a moment and started running up the mountain with his master's blade still stuck in his chest.

Why? Alex didn't understand again.

Finally, the urgency of the situation went through to him and he realized what had happened.

"Master!" he cried out and immediately ran forward. She was missing an arm just like his other master, but that was fine.

As for the stab wound in her abdomen, she could be fully healed with just a pill. There was nothing to worry about.

However, just as he was running, he realized something he hadn't realized due to the shock.

He had no cultivation base at the moment.

"What?" he cried out in surprise, but he made his way to his master regardless.

Ma Rong had gone into shock from the missing arm and getting stabbed in the abdomen. Her eyes darted around not understanding what was happening.

He grabbed Ma Rong's head and placed it on his lap to let her breathe easier. "Wait for a second master, I will get you a healing pill," Alex said. He brought out his storage bag with the pills in it, but then remembered that he had no Qi right now.

'No...' he thought. He quickly tried to use his spiritual energy, but he couldn't use that either.

"NO!" he shouted. He looked down at Ma Rong and the blood she was losing. He quickly tore off his already torn robe and wrapped it around her cut arm.

He then started wrapping the rest of the cloth around her abdomen. He picked her up a little and passed the cloth underneath, and that was when he noticed something.

The cut... the skin around the cut was starting to turn purple with red veins popping up in it. Alex didn't even have to guess to know what that was.

"Poison!" he thought.

His emotions were turning chaotic, his thinking all over the place.

"What do I do?" He was starting to panic. "Who can save her?"

Who could save someone that was poisoned by a cultivator's sword? His first instinct was to go to a doctor. However, did this city even have doctors? Alex didn't know.

'Maybe not all the place is Qi-less. Maybe I can use it elsewhere,' Alex thought and tried to carry her, but Ma Rong groaned in pain.

"Hang on, master. I will save you," he said and picked her up with his one arm before running out of the place. He ran past the two corpses and the unconscious master before leaving the sect master's front yard.

He then ran past his house and went down. However, before he could make it very far down, Ma Rong shouted once more.

"Master, hang on. Just a little I—"

Alex looked down to console her only to see her entire body starting to become the same as the cut which was still bleeding.

The red veins were starting to show. "No no no no no no no... master? Master! Can you hear me?" he asked.

Ma Rong slowly opened her weak eyes and looked at Alex. "Is that you... Alex?" she asked.

"Y-Yes master, it's me, Alex. Hang on," he said and started running down but Ma Rong cried once again.

Alex was starting to get scared as well. No matter how far away he went, he couldn't feel the Qi at all.

"Al... Alex... put me down," Ma Rong said.

"No, master. Just a little longer—"

"It's likely a saint rank poison," Ma Rong said weakly.

"What?" Alex's eyes went wide. "Wha-what do you mean it's a saint rank poison?"

"No-normal poisons don't work on my body. Th-there is no antidote to the poison in the sect," Ma Rong said with bated breath.

"I can tell. My body is trying its best... but it can't stop it," she said weakly.

Alex's face turned fully pale. "No way, that can't be true," Alex said.

"Alex?" Ma Rong called him again.

"Yes?" Alex asked with tears in his eyes.

"Where are you?" she asked.

"Master? Master, I'm right in front of—" Alex stopped speaking. The red veins had made it up her body and reached her eyes. She could no longer see.

"Where are you Alex?" she asked.

"Master, I'm here. I'm right here," he said as he put her down and held her left hand with his right hand.

"Alex? Where's do you go? Why aren't you speaking?" she asked.

"Master, I'm speaking. I'm right here," he said as he squeezed her hands. However, it didn't look like she could feel it. The red veins had also reached her ears, making her unable to listen to anything anymore.

"Is anyone still here?" she asked. "Master? Shun'er? I... I think I'm dying. Am I dying? I don't want to die."

Ma Rong moved her right arm, trying to get a hold of something, anything— completely unaware that she had lost it.

"I don't know if you're listening or not right now. I don't even know if I'm talking or not. But, if I am... I'm sorry," Ma Rong said. Tears streamed down her eyes with a mixture of blood in them.

"I'm sorry I couldn't keep my promise, Alex," she said. "I'm sorry I couldn't keep my promise. I promised you, I promised that I would... ack...ack..."

The veins stopped her from speaking as well. "Master? MASTER! Please speak! Master!" Alex started crying. Ma Rong didn't respond at all as her breathing started to get heavier.

"No, no," he cried, tears streaming down his face. He picked her up once again and ran down the mountain.

She was starting to cough up blood by the time he reached the sect valley. "Help! Please help!" he shouted as he made his way through the valley to the Elder hall, crying all the way through.

The already tragic atmosphere got more tragic when they saw the deathly state of their sect leader.

The elders were already out after Qi was missing.

"Grand Elder! Martial Uncle! Anyone— Please help master," Alex shouted in front of the Elder's Hall.

"Little Ma?" the Grand Elder walked up to Alex with a pale face.

"Sister!" Lang Shun jumped with some other elder as a support due to his missing leg.

"Wh-What happened?" they asked as Alex laid Ma Rong down on the ground.

The elders started gathering around Ma Rong. Soon the disciples came to see what was happening when they saw Ma Rong.

Her body hadn't turned purple, but the red veins had crept all over her body. Tears were still streaming down her eyes, but at this point, they were so bloody that it was impossible to tell if it was even tear anymore.

Despite the redness, one could see how pale her skin had gotten already from the lack of blood. She had been bleeding this whole time.

Grand Elder cried as he struck the ground, angry at his helplessness. Lang Shun was angry too, but only towards the person who did this to his sister.

Alex cried at his helplessness as well. 'It should've been me,' he thought.

Ma Rong struggled with the poison for some more time while the people gathered around helplessly.

Only after minutes did she stop struggling.

That was when Ma Rong, the sect leader of the Hong Wu Sect, one of the most proficient Alchemy experts of the Crimson Empire, master of Alex, in the midst of all of her loved ones, passed away.

Chapter 546: Funeral

Alex couldn't accept that his master was dead. He just couldn't. He believed it all to be a dream, but the reality was often disappointing.

He cried along with the other elders for some time after she passed away.

Afterward, he explained what had happened. He told everyone how the attack on the city was a distraction for the old man to enter the sect and look for him.

If not for him being in the Tiger sect instead of here, he would've likely died at the start of the night.

The elders went up the mountain and saw the bloody scene of the stabbed Second elder and the beheaded Third elder, lying dead on the floor together.

The tragedy felt unending for them.

Wen Cheng too was quite bloody, but he would survive. The elders immediately got to treating him under Alex's request.

Alex had stopped crying by now, but then the tears started falling once more when he heard someone else crying.

Zhou Mei was down on the ground, next to both of her master's dead bodies. Alex had only lost a single master tonight, but she had lost two.

Even more so, she had been with her masters for a long time longer than Alex had. Surely, she was in much more pain than he was. Still, he couldn't imagine anyone feeling as much pain as he was.

Was it even possible to feel this much pain?

He would rather go through Body cultivation all over again, have his skin burned alive by the formation, or eat a thousand yang jades and feel his stomach burn to cinders than feel what he was feeling at the moment.

The elders ran up the mountain to check for the old man, but apparently, he wasn't there any longer.

'He must've gone to the Forbidden Fields,' Alex thought. After all, that was what he had been saying the whole time.

"Dammit! I could've got him if I had run after him!" Alex said as he slammed his own thighs. The regret was starting to get to him.

"Don't beat yourself up for what happened, Nephew. None of this was your fault, and you did the best you could," Lang Shun said with red eyes. "Be thankful that your master at least got to see you during the last few moments."

"If you had run after him, sister would've likely been alone during the last moments, with no one else by her side," he said.

Alex couldn't help but start crying when he heard that.

The elders started preparations for the funeral. It wasn't just Ma Rong or the Second elder who had died tonight. There were other elders too that had perished in the fight against the bandits.

They needed a funeral as well. Just as they were planning for the funeral, Alex made a request to them.

....

An hour passed since Ma Rong's death and finally, people could feel a hint of Qi in the air again.

Alex tried to use his spiritual sense and saw that he could spread it up to about 5 meters now. If only he could do that an hour earlier. Would that have helped his master in any way?

The yang in the air was subsiding, and Alex could feel the chill return back to the air.

He was standing on top of the alchemy mountain where the Yin gathering Tree was planted. Next to him were a few other elders, all of whom had come for his Master's funeral.

He had requested that she be buried here, given how much she cared for the plant. Surprisingly, none of the elders protested, as it seemed that they knew it too.

They dug a hole next to the decrepit tree. Alex and Lang Shun helped carry her corpse into the hole.

Once that was done, everyone started walking forward, throwing something of theirs into the grave.

"What is everyone doing?" Alex asked.

"They say after someone dies, they go to the afterlife. We are sending her anything that could be of help to her there to live a happy life after death," Grand Elder said with tears streaming down his eyes.

Alex felt sad. There was nothing of value he could give her.

The Grand Elder noticed this and added, "You don't really have to put in anything. I'm sure just seeing you stand here is already making her afterlife easier."

Everyone put in something, most of them putting in some spirit stones. When it was time for Alex, he took out a single pill.

He looked at the pill for a moment and tossed it down below.

"What is that?" Lang Shun asked.

"It's a pill I made," Alex said. "I never got to tell master how much progress I had made for the last 2 months. I hope she learns about it in the afterlife and knows that she does not have to worry about me."

"What pill was that? I didn't recognize it," Lang Shun asked.

"It's a common ranked pill, but it's one I came up with on my own," Alex said.

"I see," Lang Shun said. "Sister will be happy certainly. I remember when she said that just a few months after reaching the True realms, you will beat me in Alchemy."

Lang Shun chuckled when he remembered that day as tears pooled up in his eyes again. He wiped the tears and said, "I hope to see you reach that level someday."

The elders started pouring the dirt back onto the grave and filling it. Once they were done, they said a small prayer and moved on to the other funerals.

The rest of the funerals were taking place somewhere else. They went behind the elder residence area and to a graveyard that Alex didn't know about previously.

There weren't many gravestones in the place anyway. With only having been formed 50 or so years ago, the Hong Wu sect didn't really have many deaths that required burying here.

They buried the Second Elder and also the third Elder. Despite being a traitor, she was also an elder and had helped them quite a lot.

Alex once more saw Zhou Mei crying with her sister and Fan Ruogang consoling her. Kong Yuhan walked up to him and gave him his condolences.

The other elders were buried as well and the same ritual of passing something along took place once more.

Alex dropped his other best common pill he had been holding onto the second elder's grave. If not for him, he would have likely lost his life as well as his other master in the mountain tonight.

He thanked him for everything he did and walked away.

By the time the funeral was over, the Qi had returned a great amount. By that time, Alex could feel himself having a cultivation base equivalent to that of a Muscle Tempering realm.

While the suppression was still there, it wasn't as bad as the ones in the Forbidden Fields.

He wondered why the yang in the air was going away, and where.

After everything was done, the Grand Elder told everyone, including Alex to go and get some rest. It had been a truly long and tragic night, and people needed their rest.

Chapter 547: Promise

Alex went to check up on Wen Cheng. After seeing him breathing a bit more easily, he sighed in relief. 'A few days to recover,' he assessed.

He walked out of the Elder's hall and looked at the surrounding. The sect valley that would always be cheerful, even at nighttime with disciples running all around, trying to perform alchemy was totally empty tonight.

The bright streets of the valley looked gloomy from the lack of any human in it.

Alex looked up at the sky, stars gleaming in the nighttime, some brighter than others. The moon seemed a little paler tonight as if the moon itself grieved over the tragedy it witness from the sky.

So many things had happened today and yet... it has still only been 5 hours at most. The time wasn't even 4 am in the night.

Everyone was ordered to go back to their homes to rest, so Alex returned too. He went back to his home and went into a room.

His cultivation base was close to the Bone Tempering realm by now. The yang energy was slowly dissipating from the surrounding. It would still take until morning if not more for it to completely disappear.

Alex decided not to dwell on it anymore and logged out. He opened the capsule and walked out. In the middle of the night, the world was silent.

He got onto his bed, but he couldn't sleep. His eyes were wide open as the feeling started to overwhelm him.

He didn't feel hungry. He didn't feel sleepy. He didn't feel tired. The only thing he could feel was pain. A deep pain that was etched into his soul itself.

The grief, the pain of the loss— it had followed him across bodies, across worlds.

Once again, Alex cried. This body hadn't cried prior to this, so when he cried, the tears flooded his face. Snot dripped down his nose, but he couldn't care any less.

He cried like he had never before. It was close to 4 am in the morning and the rooms had good noise cancellation, so nobody could hear him cry.

Alex wanted to rest, but the tears wouldn't let him. He didn't even feel like he could cry himself to sleep.

No one was there to console him for his loss. Alex felt alone in this place. So, he got back onto the capsule and logged into the game once again.

The grief once more transcended space and came over in his new body, but he had already cried enough and there were no more tears.

He was told to rest, but he didn't think that was possible for him at the moment. He walked out of the room and left the house.

He went up the mountain and walked over to his master's house.

The front yard was fully destroyed, the house turned to rubble. Alex walked past the large patch of blood that was the result of the Third Elder's death.

He then walked up to the other smaller patch of blood that belonged to his master.

He touched the blood on the ground that felt like his tear ducts, completely dry. Even as he looked at the blood on the ground, he didn't feel like crying. He was emotionally exhausted from crying already, numb to the pain.

He felt sad, but that was it.

He then looked ahead of him, a little further away from where the blood was. That was the place where the bastard had fallen over to the ground.

He looked at the ground, and it was clean. Not a single hint of blood was on the ground at all.

Alex was confused at first, but then he remembered what had happened. Due to his master freezing him with all of the attacks, the bastard had never really suffered any wound that made him bleed.

Even the one wound in his chest where the sword had stabbed, the bastard hadn't taken the sword out and was thus not bleeding.

The lack of any emotion other than sadness was slowly changing.

"My master bled so much, and yet he doesn't even bleed a single drop of blood?" the emotion in his heart grew stronger.

"My master was poisoned, and yet he walks away so easily," the emotion continued to grow stronger.

"My master died, and yet he lives." His emotions reached a crescendo.

Rage.

The rage of a thousand suns burned in him when he thought of the unfairness. That bastard lived while his master died.

He gritted his teeth as his eyes narrowed with hatred like never before. His face was a tempest of fury.

He looked up towards the top of the mountain where the bastard had gone towards and left there himself.

Alex understood clearly, more than anyone where the bastard had gone to. So, he decided to go there as well.

He would go there and find that bastard. Then, he would enact his revenge by delivering pain unto him a thousand times more than what his master suffered.

He promised that in his heart.

Alex started walking. He walked up the mountain until he reached the peak. There were 2 elders standing guard there, but he didn't care to stop when they told him to.

They barely had any strength to stop him anyway. He looked down from the massive cliff and jumped.

* * * * *

A figure appeared outside the city walls. As he got closer to the city, he felt his cultivation base disappearing.

At first, he was incredibly scared. However, after realizing that he was just being suppressed, he sighed in relief.

Still, his cultivation base was in the upper True realms, so he could easily fly over the walls.

The guards were in a terrified state, so when they saw someone fly over, they immediately got to arm. However, in their current state, they couldn't fight the person at all.

The figure looked at the destruction around the city and frowned. He flew down to one of the guards and spoke, "You! What happened here?"

The guard was fearfully putting his spears towards the man, but when he realized who the person was, he immediately put his spear down and bowed.

"Greetings, your majesty!" he shouted. The other soldiers and guards heard him and immediately stood up to bow towards him.

The new figure who had come to the city was the emperor.

"What's going on here?" the Emperor asked again.

"Your Majesty, we-we suffered a bandit attack," the guard said.

"Multiple bandit groups had joined together and attacked the city, Your Majesty," another soldier said. "But we fought them off."

"Where's the city lord?" the Emperor asked.

"He is in his manor, your majesty," the guards said.

"Alright, keep up the good work," the Emperor said and went towards the city lord's manor.

He entered the manor and had the city lord explain to him in detail.

"I see," the emperor said after understanding the current situation. "And what is this suppressing aura around here?"

"That I am baffled by myself, Uncle," the city lord said. "Fortunately, it's slowly dissipating. Anyway, what are you doing here?"

"Sigh, I came here because I heard that kid was back from the beasts' territory. There are some people that want to meet him."

Chapter 548: Pursuit

Alex ran across the tall grasses that were filled with sand. He held the sword in his right hand, ready to fight any beasts that came his way.

The Forbidden Fields had so much sand now that it wouldn't have been a mistake to stop calling it a field now.

Alex walked over dried grass near the river and easily ran through the river with how shallow the water was.

The sands were a little harder to run through. There wasn't enough solid land under his feet to run, so he decided to use his boat artifact to fly through the desert.

This wouldn't have been possible previously, but now that the Qi had somehow returned to the desert as well, Alex thought it was possible.

His cultivation base was still heavily suppressed at around Muscle Tempering realm, so he wasn't really sure if the boat would fly, but he had to try it.

He couldn't keep running through the entire desert when he knew how far away the ocean was.

It would take him days to reach there and by that time, that bastard would've already taken whatever it was and run away.

He couldn't let that happen. He needed to find him and kill him.

He jumped on top of the boat and put some True spirit stones in it before flying off. The speed wasn't very fast, unfortunately, but it was still better than simply running.

The sun came up pretty soon and the heat was along with it. At the same time, Alex felt the suppression around him growing as well.

He was now back to being at the early stages of the Skin Tempering realm. The boat had also slowed down to barely moving.

"Dammit!" he cried out and jumped off of it and took back his ship before running. He would have to run now that the suppression was high again.

Along the way, he saw something and stopped. It was a big snake, simply laying there doing nothing. Ning got his sword ready and charged to attack it.

However, when he got close, he realized that it wasn't moving at all. It wasn't even breathing. The snake was dead.

Alex looked at the snake, but he couldn't see any signs as to why it had died. He got close to it, the snake's head almost as large as him.

He nudged the snake with his sword, but after seeing it not moving, he proceeded to check the snake's body.

He flipped the snake around and saw a wet spot in the sands. Ning got close to it and saw a small cut in the snake.

He realized something and quickly ran up to the snake's head again and pulled its eyelids apart.

He startled himself when he saw the red, veiny eyes of the snake. It had been poisoned by the same poison as his master.

Ning gritted his teeth in anger when he realized that his master's murderer was close by.

By now, the feeling of the thing with extreme yang was already pulling him towards a certain place far away.

He didn't even have to look to know what direction he needed to be moving. His body was doing it all on its own.

He started running again. With his body cultivation, he could run for days and not be tired at all.

The speed at which he ran was obviously slower than his boat previously, but with the suppression, he was being the most efficient he could be.

'Fuck!' he thought. 'That bastard must have a flying artifact as well. One that is faster than my even.'

Alex kept running and encountered a number of beasts along the way. Some tried to fight him, but they were too weak and easily died to his attacks.

Others were already dead and were simply a trail leading him towards the bastard that had a headstart of a few hours.

Alex kept running for hours, but he never seemed to be able to find the old man. Just then, he noticed something about himself again.

His cultivation base had returned to about Bone Tempering realm. He hadn't noticed it before due to being way too focused on simply running and fighting, but now that he noticed it, he was confused.

'What's going on? How do I have this high cultivation base in the middle of the desert? Having a cultivation base itself was weird, but I thought it would be in a radius of that extreme yang. But somehow I am getting stronger the closer I am to the source?' Alex thought. Just the prospect of it didn't make sense to Alex.

"No something else must be happening," he thought. He remembered back to when the yang energy had come in and broke the barrier. After that, no one could use their cultivation bases anymore.

However, an hour or 2 later, their cultivation bases were returning to them. Alex remembered, he already had Bone Tempering realm back in the sect. He had only lost it when he entered the Forbidden Fields.

'The yang energy in the sect dissipated, and we got out cultivation partly back. The yang energy in here is somehow also dissipating and I am gaining my cultivation back again, is that it?' he thought.

If that were true, where did the yang energy go to? It wouldn't have simply disappeared into the sky. Alex couldn't understand why at one place it was dissipating faster than another.

Was it because it was closer to the source that it was dissipating slower? That too couldn't be right. He had been running towards the source this whole time, and he remembered it dissipating slower previously than it was now, even when he was getting closer.

"Unless... it's not dissipating," Alex thought. He immediately closed his eyes and sent out his spiritual sense into the surrounding. He focused on the energy in the air and could feel the Yang energy that was suppressing him even now.

He could've perhaps used his cultivation base if it were Qi, but since it was only energy, he couldn't do anything.

Just then, he noticed something unusual. The Yang energy in the area was all moving in the same direction.

Alex opened his eyes in surprise and looked in the direction they were moving towards.

The source of the Extreme Yang.

"I see," Alex thought. "So I was wrong in assuming that the Yang is dissipating from the area. It is not. Instead, it is moving back towards the source."

Alex couldn't imagine why that was the case, but it was. Whatever the source was, it was attracting the Yang energy it had spread around all this time.

"The old man spoke something about the sect treasure, right? The Tiger sect's treasure. So, is the source the Tiger sect's treasure?" he thought.

He stopped caring about those things and brought out his boat once again. Since the suppression had disappeared quite a bit, the boat was now faster than ever in this place and he flew off.

He saw many beasts along the way, some still fidgeting from being stabbed with the poison sword.

Alex understood when he looked at them. The old man was getting close, and so was the time of his revenge.

Chapter 549: Confrontation

Alex started to struggle the closer he got to the old man. The intense feeling of 'want' and 'need' he was feeling was enough to drive him crazy.

However, the feeling of needing to kill, to get his revenge— that overshadowed everything else in his heart.

He could finally empathize with Wan Li. He now understood what it felt like to lose someone, to want to take revenge when someone killed your loved one.

He looked up straight ahead and accelerated his ship as much as he could.

The sun had just gone down and the night was approaching. And yet, somehow, far away in the north, Alex could see a bright light hidden behind the high sand dunes.

'Is that the source?' Alex wondered. His body at the very least thought it was. He was looking at the light when he noticed something.

A small black figure in the distance crossed over the dune that was blocking the light and went downwards.

Alex's rage came back flooding all over again. He had finally found him.

Alex dropped from his boat as the speed was really low at the moment. With how much suppression was around him, it was better to just run.

Which he did. He ran for nearly 15 minutes before he reached the dune he had seen from the distance and looked down.

The light far away was still blocked by many other dunes, however, it also lit up the desert enough for Ning to see down.

That bastard was currently running in the sand due to the suppression as well. He held a sword in his hand, ready to fight the beasts. However, there were none.

Alex had noticed that too. The more he went to the source, the less the beasts became. By now, it was rare to even find a beast.

Alex ran down the dune to follow after the old man. Considering the suppression he was facing, the old man shouldn't be doing very well either.

Since Alex was starting to reach Muscle Tempering, he assumed the old man to be around Organ or maybe Meridian tempering realm. If that was true, Alex could easily kill him with his superior body cultivation.

The old man was running slower than Alex, so in the next 20 minutes, Alex finally reached close enough so that he could barely hear the old man's footsteps in the sand.

In the next 10 minutes, he got close enough that even the old man could hear him, despite the low cultivation base he had.

The old man turned around, expecting a beast he would have to fight. However, when he saw Alex, he was shocked.

"You followed me?" he asked as his eyes narrowed in suspicion. Then, he saw the anger in Alex's face and suddenly started laughing.

"Hahaha! That bitch died, didn't she? Great!" the old man exclaimed. "Good riddance."

Alex continued running towards him, his face unchanging.

"Hmph! You must be here for revenge. Let me do you a favor and send you along with your master. That will be my gift to you," the old man said and got ready to fight with his sword as well.

Alex looked at him and noticed not a single hint of wounds. Even the stab in his chest was healed, and his master's sword gone.

He then looked at the old man's sword. Despite being in a fit of fury, he hadn't lost enough of himself yet to not be careful of the sword.

That was the sword that was laced with the poison that killed his master. If even his master's superior body couldn't erase the poison, then there was no doubt that he himself would lose to it.

The other poisons his body had managed to cure were usually normal poisons and toxins that were relatively low in grade. However, if the poison that man had was indeed Saint grade, or god forbid, a higher one— there was no doubt he would die.

The first thing he needed to do in this fight was figure out what the old man's current cultivation base was.

With his own 5th Mind Tempering realm body cultivation, he needed to be careful if the old man had a higher or lower cultivation base.

Even if it was lower, having access to abilities he didn't at the moment would make the battle much more difficult than normal.

He could guess based on the difference in their cultivation base what the old man's cultivation base probably was, but he didn't want to trust his instincts right now.

The old man held too many secrets that were enough to make even the emperor jealous. Immortal ranked concealment art, Invisibility technique, and Saint grade poison were a few of the things he had.

Alex wondered what else he could be hiding if any.

Alex dashed forward at the old man, his only hand holding his sword. The old man saw him coming and got ready. He immediately went to the side and sent a flying yellow slash towards Alex.

Alex put up a barrier in front of him, but with his cultivation base, it was way too weak to do anything.

The attack easily destroyed the barrier and came towards him. The attack was slower than when the old man had fought his master, so Alex could easily dodge it. Still, Alex didn't move and let the attack hit him.

Alex was sent flying a few meters and landed on the hot hand. He slowly stood up and dusted himself off.

"Somewhere in the upper Mind Tempering realms, huh? This shouldn't take very long then," Alex said.

The old man freaked out when he saw Alex perfectly fine. 'How is he fine? His body should be close to a mortal's in comparison to me,' the old man thought.

Suddenly, his eyes went wide as he realized something. "You brat. How did you cultivate your body to that level? Did the beasts help you or something?" he asked.

Alex didn't reply. Now that he knew he didn't have any dangers from the old man, aside from the sword of his, he was ready to fight seriously.

He immediately dashed forward and swung at the old man. The old man struck back with his sword too and felt Alex's force in his attack.

Although it was strong, it wasn't something he couldn't handle at all. Realizing this, the old man struck back as well.

He pushed back Alex's sword and went for a straight thrust. Alex parried the blade and swung it at the old man's neck.

The old man suddenly employed a movement skill to walk out of Alex's sword range.

However, Alex dashed at the same moment and reached the old man. He slashed at the old man again, who barely brought back his sword to protect himself at the last moment.

However, that didn't help him a lot. Alex's sword, which was glowing slightly white, managed to hit the old man on his left arm. However, the old man was sent flying before Alex could properly hit him.

The old man slammed into the sand, sending them flying in the air. He stood up and looked at Alex with a hint of anger on his face.

"You are quite strong even with just a single-arm, huh?" he said. He held his left arm as it was bleeding profusely. He brought out a bottle and poured out something slimy before applying it on his arm.

'A medicinal paste?' Alex thought. Alex had heard about them but had never seen them. In other parts of the world, people used these pastes in place of pills since they were much cheaper.

'How does he know how to make one?' Alex wondered.

The old man tightened his fist as his wound burned in pain. The paste was working. Then, he looked at Alex.

"Hmph! You really are quite talented. Not only do you cultivate very fast, but you also have body cultivation. And I heard you are quite talented in alchemy too. Combined with the Sword Intent you showed just now, you really can't be underestimated, huh?" the old man said with a snarl on his face.

Alex didn't care enough to listen to him and started preparing to go on the offensive again.

Just then, the old man said, "You must be a player as well then."

Alex stopped. "How do you—"

"Know about players? Hehe, I've tortured a few to learn how you all cultivate so fast. To think it was so easy as just chucking in a few pills, or using spirit stones all the time. How wasteful."

"Not only wasteful of resources but of your own cultivation as well. Destroying your chance at reaching the heavens just for a few moments of glory. So stupid," the old man said.

"Not only that, but you all are also stupid enough to believe this world is fake as well," the old man said.

"Are you sure you want your last words to be those?" Alex asked, preparing to attack.

"Hmph! Do you think you can kill me, boy? Let's see how you handle it when I actually try a little," the old man said.

Suddenly, he went invisible. Alex looked around, but he had no aura either. 'Shit!' Alex thought. He had momentarily forgotten about his hiding skills.

Alex sent out his spiritual sense around him, even pushing it to its limit, but the furthest he could sense was 15 meters.

Under a normal situation, Alex wouldn't mind having 15 meters worth of sense. However, against the old man with his incredibly quick movement speed, and a sword that was sure to kill him if it ever hit him, Alex started to fear a little.

Chapter 550: Visionless Fight

Alex tried to use the invisibility skill himself to hide just like that old man did, but due to his low cultivation base, he couldn't successfully employ it.

The light that cover him would break open at places randomly, allowing others to see him through invisibility.

'What do I do?' he thought. He needed a bit higher cultivation base to properly go invisible.

The old man was invisible, but it was impossible for his movements to do the same as well. No matter how good he was, his footsteps would leave a mark on the dune.

Alex looked at the sand around him to look for the old man. Just then, he saw a bunch of indentations on the sand. The old man was moving.

Alex waited for a bit and sensed the old man entering his spiritual sense range. He immediately slashed at the incoming old man and blocked his thrust attack.

Alex used the momentum to back off and looked at the sand again. Suddenly, something hit Alex from the front and sent him flying.

Alex immediately stood up, the attack doing almost negligible damage to him. The old man came with a straight thrust once more and Alex blocked him just in time. He had managed to see the footsteps in the sand in time.

"Tsk!" Alex could hear the old man getting annoyed by him blocking his attacks.

"Congratulations! You can see my footsteps and predict my attack. Let's increase the difficulty then, shall we?" the old man shouted from in front of Alex.

He saw the old man's footsteps in the sand and got ready to block once more, however, no attack or the old man came towards him.

Instead, they started moving around him. The old man sped up quicker and quicker, and soon the sand started flying all around him.

"Shit!" Alex cried out. He had realized what was happening. The old man, in his plan to make his footsteps invisible, had started throwing the sand in the air.

That way, no matter where he looked, Alex had no way of seeing the old man... or so the old man thought.

Realizing that he couldn't rely on his vision or sound or touch for that matter, he understood that the only thing he could rely on was his spiritual sense.

However, given how fast the old man was, he couldn't reliably depend on his mere 15 meters spiritual sense to tell him when the old man would arrive next to him.

So, the next thing he needed to do was give himself more time to react to the old man entering his spiritual sense's range.

Alex smirked. He had the perfect way to do that.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Suddenly, time slowed down, and all of his senses were amplified.

The sound of the sand blowing around him got louder. He could hear the old man's footsteps cooking up a storm around him.

He could feel the dryness of his mouth, his chapped lips. He could feel the hot air hitting his face, slightly cooling him by taking away his sweat.

He could feel the minute grains on sands hitting his skin. They hit his hands, his face, and his legs.

He could smell the scent of hot sand, as well as some iron in the air from the crusted blood on his own lower pants.

He could feel the weight of his sword, slightly imbalanced on his single hand when it was meant to be held with two.

Finally, he could sense the slowness of everything around him. He could feel the sand flying through the air, and in then, the old man running at him with the sword at the ready.

Alex's own movements were incredibly slow, however, that was enough to do what he needed to do.

Alex struck away from the sword thrust and used the same momentum to hit his neck. The sword barely managed to graze the old man, but that was enough to make him bleed.

The old man jumped backward and looked at the close-eyed Alex in fear. 'How the hell is he seeing me? How the hell is he fighting back?' the old man wondered.

Alex hadn't used Focus mode in a long time. Once he stopped controlling the Focus mode like he had come to do by muscle memory, he once again realized just how effective it was.

Focus mode was something only players could use, so the old man had no idea how Alex was doing any of it.

Alex nodded to himself when he realized that it was just as effective as he wanted it to be and smiled. The fight would be a lot easier now.

The old man kicked up a dust storm once more and ran around Alex to juke him. Then, he thrust his sword from behind Alex.

Alex could feel the sword coming towards him in slowed downtime and moved just out of the way of the attack. Then, he slashed at the old man's legs.

The attack reached deep and he felt like he struck the bones. However, he couldn't go beyond that.

"ARGH!" the old man cried out in pain. Alex pulled his sword back and struck at the old man again, but the old man ran away.

Alex waited for the old man to come to him once again, so he could attack him. 'Just a little more and I can go invisible too,' Alex thought.

With the Yang energy around him slowly disappearing, he would soon be able to properly use his technique. That way, even though the old man would get stronger as well, he wouldn't have to worry about him.

Alex waited for a bit longer, but he didn't hear the old man moving at all. The sand in the air was also starting to settle down.

When all the sand fell to the ground, Alex realized— the old man wasn't there anymore. 'Fuck! Did he run away?' Alex thought.

He looked around him and saw no indentation in the sand anymore. 'I was so close,' Alex thought and ran behind him.

The old man was likely to stay invisible the entire time, so he remained careful as well. He kept his eyes open for any change in the sands in front of him or any incoming attack.

Alex felt his cultivation base lowering once more as he got closer to the source. He would have loved it if he had no cultivation base at all and the old man had barely any. That way, defeating the old man would be pretty easy.

However, that was just a hopeful thought. Given how strong Alex was, it was likely that the old man wasn't going to go somewhere where his cultivation base dropped below the threshold of a Mind Tempering realm, so Alex had to be extra careful when his own cultivation base dropped to the lower realm of Muscle tempering realm.

Very soon, Alex saw the footsteps again. The old man had indeed not made it very far, be it intentionally or not. He was still invisible, but his footsteps movement showed Alex that he was moving.

'Wait!' Alex thought. There was something wrong with those footsteps. By now, the old man should have heard and even seen Alex running up to him, but not once did the footsteps slow down to turn and see, or speed up to run faster.

Also, the indentation they made on the sand was too uniform. There was no sand spilling over the foot as it was happening to his own foot.

'It's a trap!' Alex thought and immediately got ready for an attack. He closed his eyes to solely rely on his spiritual sense to see.

Just as he was thinking, he felt a movement over him. Not front, or back, up above. The old man had been flying this whole time.

The sword entered his spiritual sense, followed by the old man's hand, head, and the rest of the body. His neck and foot would be gone by now, likely healed by the same paste as earlier.

Alex rolled to the side and dashed to go on the offensive. The old man saw him coming and sent out a palm strike at him. The attack did no damage, but it halted his movement for just a bit. The old man took the moment to get out of his spiritual range.

The old man knew Alex was using his spiritual sense, he could sense it too. However, his spiritual sense barely went anywhere past 8 meters, so he was inwardly surprised at how large Alex's spiritual sense was.

He remembered back in the mountain where the brat had sensed him so high up in the sky, despite having never put out any aura at the time.

The old man hadn't thought about it at the moment, but that had been quite weird at the time too. He shook his head to forget about it for now and proceeded to attack once more.

He just needed to stab him once and this miracle poison of his that he had stolen from the sect treasury when he started a coup 50 years ago would certainly kill the brat.

He waited around for a bit for more of his Qi to return to him, and when it did, the old man dashed forward at a speed that was his fastest yet to kill Alex.

Alex noticed the old man come into his spiritual sense range, but his speed was too fast. He hit the sword to parry it, however, at the last moment, the old man used the momentum of the parry to spin around and hit Alex on his right shoulder.

Alex felt pain in his right arm as he saw the poison sword cut into it.