

Alchemy 551

Chapter 551: Broken Sword

Alex felt a chill go down his spine. He looked at the sword on his right arm that had barely gone past the skin. The wound wasn't anywhere close to being worrisome. The poison, however...

"Tsk!" the old man said when he saw the cut. For some reason, his face was frowning with annoyance.

Alex hit the sword again to push it off his arm and immediately went on the offensive. He knew now that he was struck with the poison sword, he didn't have much longer.

So, even if it was the last thing he would do in this world, he would kill this man. A slash, a stab, a swing— Alex used whatever he could to make the old man stay on guard so that he couldn't leave his range of spiritual sense.

The old man was trying to hit him back, but Alex was just overwhelming him. He needed to find a moment to run away.

The chance came when Alex swung his sword right at his chest. The old man brought forth his sword to block the strike, however, he underestimated Alex's strength at this moment.

Alex had used every part of his strength, including his Qi into this strike and struck at the old man's chest. Their sword made a massive clang sound as the old man was hit in the chest.

Despite using his own sword to block, the force behind Alex had still managed to hit his chest. The old man used this momentum to leave Alex's range of senses, but the damage he took wasn't a tiny amount.

He coughed up visible blood onto the ground and had a hard time breathing for a moment. When he saw Alex coming towards him, he forgot about everything and ran away.

Alex saw the disorderly footprints in the sand and realized that the old man had ran away once again.

He started chasing after the old man, but his movement technique was not something he could hope to catch up to immediately. He needed to chase for a bit until the Qi in the area was more suppressed, and the old man's speed was slowed down.

Along the way, Alex kept checking his wound for it to turn purple and red veins to start. However, even after a while, nothing happened.

"What?" he thought. "Am I not poisoned?" he was sure that he was poisoned. After all the sword had poisoned his master and many of the beasts along the way.

'Could it be I am immune to the poison?' he thought. But that too felt impossible as his master who had a better constitution than him also had been poisoned.

Then the only possible answer was that... he hadn't been poisoned. 'Does the sword no longer have any poison on it... or,' his eyes shined with understanding.

The poison was just on the tip of the sword, not the sides. 'Was that why the old man frowned? Because he knew he didn't get me?' Alex thought.

The old man had always tried to stab him ever since he started fighting. Not a single time did he go for a swing until the last time when he managed to hit him.

"Now that I think about it, master's cut arm didn't have the purple area either, only the stab wound did," Alex thought. He was now fully sure that his assumption was accurate.

He ran for close to 3 hours before reaching the old man again.

"Goddammit! Stop following me. Because of you, I will be too late to get it," the old man cried out.

"The only thing you'll be getting is this sword through your head," Alex shouted at the old man. The old man went invisible once more and they started fighting.

Alex made sure to never get hit by the old man's sword tip and fought the best he could. However, the fight kept getting dragged out due to the old man running away once again.

Alex chased and fought for nearly the whole day and half of the night once more. The night wasn't as dark as he would wish it to be.

The light coming from the north made him believe there was a new sun in the northern horizon.

He reached the old man once again, however this time it was going to go differently. He had a plan to win.

The old man's fury was quite high at the moment. There was barely a day remaining before the treasure would go past its maturation point and lose its quality, and from his understanding, there was still about 3 hours' worth of journey left. But with Alex's interference, the time kept on increasing.

"Fine, I won't leave before I kill you then," the old man cried and started fighting again.

The two of them were already familiar with their fighting style, so the battle fell into a stalemate once more. Alex was doing fine at the start but as the Qi suppression kept on lifting, the old man got his strength back.

The old man was happy to see that his attacks were having an effect on Alex and kept hitting him with more. He also stopped relying on his sword and used ranged attacks to hurt Alex.

Fortunately, the increase in Qi meant Alex could too use his spiritual sense to a higher range and easily dodged the attacks. He ran towards where the attacks originated and found the old man flying in the air.

He closed his eyes and threw his sword at the old man. The old man was surprised at first and moved aside to dodge the word. However, just as the sword passed him, Alex appeared out of nowhere next to the sword and grabbed it with his only hand.

He then put out his other hand which was only up to the elbow. However, from the elbow emerged an illusory hand made with metal Qi.

He used that arm to hit the old man in the stomach. The old man felt the claw like hand try to rip his stomach and flew backwards. Alex fell to the ground and turned to look towards the old man's direction with a snarl on his face.

He let go of his metal Qi and the hand disappeared. When it did, the things that were in his hands fell to the ground. When the old man saw what Alex had, his eyes went wide.

"You!" he shouted when he saw his storage bags on the ground. Alex took the storage bag and kept it in his own robe before getting ready to fight once more.

Since his cultivation base had returned by quite a fair amount, he too could now fight just like the old man. Alex immediately went invisible and started flying.

His bone tempering realm cultivation base would surely struggle against the man's True disciple realm cultivation base, but Alex was sure he could do it.

The old man tried to run when he saw this, but Alex wouldn't let him. He kept bombarding the old man with all the attacks he could.

He sent slashes filled with Sword Intent to increase their effectiveness. Then, he got close and went into a sword fight.

The two sword clashed again and again. Slowly, both of their sword started showing signs of damage, but Alex didn't care. He kept hitting the man, the fury he had forgotten for the past few hours returning to him.

The old man blocked as well as he could, but the maniac like fighting Alex was putting up was barely giving him any chance to retaliate.

As the old man's strength increased, so did Alex's. Again and again, Alex hit the old man's sword, putting both their swords on the verge of destruction.

Finally, Alex swung one last time, as hard as he could, and shattered the old man's sword. The old man looked in fear when that happened.

He immediately let go his sword handle and used his hands to send a yang slash towards Alex. Alex blocked with his sword, but his sword was barely durable as well. When the slash hit his sword, the sword broke in two.

Alex watched as the top half of his sword flew right past him in slowed time. His eyes moved to look at it, and so did his left arm.

His Qi left his body at the last moment and caught the piece of metal, before pulling it back towards him and driving it down at the old man.

The sword entered the old man's abdomen, right around the area where he had stabbed his master. However, it wasn't deep enough.

Just then, Alex let go of his sword and used his golden fist to punch at the sword. The sword drove through the man's stomach and came out of the other side.

The old man gasped in horror as he felt his abdomen get stabbed. At the same time, he lost his ability to fly or remain invisible.

The old man fell to the sands below him. He tried to move, but Alex jumped on top of him with his sword in his hand. The old man spurt out some blood from his mouth from the strike.

He tried to send out an attack, but his body held no strength at all. He had lost all of his Qi.

"Wh-What's happening?" he shouted.

"I told you old man. You die today," Alex said. He looked at the panicked old man. He had for some reason lost his cultivation base.

Alex looked at where he had stabbed him in surprise. 'That's the place where all Qi goes to. Is it responsible for his cultivation base as well?' he thought as he saw blood pouring out from the old man's naval region.

The old man tried to scramble away, but but Alex's rage wouldn't let him. Alex pulled up his half broken sword to strike at him. In a last ditch effort, he moved his arms around on the ground to save himself.

Just as Alex was about to swing down on him, The old punched Alex using his right arm. Alex was faster than the old man and stabbed him through the abdomen again.

The old man's hand continued the punch, but Alex casually put out his left arm to stop it.

He had no hand of course, but he used his Qi to stop the old man's attack. However, at the same time, Alex felt something else prick his right leg.

When he turned around, he saw the old man's left arm next to his leg. The old man's hands opened to show a purple wound in it, next to which was a broken piece of the sword.

Suddenly, a bunch of notifications appeared in front of him. He was poisoned.

Chapter 552: The Source

<Toxic substance detected>

<Sun God's Divine Yang body is attempting to disintegrate the toxin>

<Disintegration unsuccessful>

<Trying again>

Alex looked at the notification in front of him with a shock on his face. He had thought he won, but it seemed to be at the cost of his own life now.

"Shit!" he cried out. His anger reached sky-high as he pulled the broken sword out of the old man's body and immediately cut off his left arm all the way up in the shoulder. He wanted to stop the old man's poison from reaching his body so soon.

"Don't you dare think you'll be dying so easily," Alex said. He pulled out a healing pill and ate it to heal himself as much as he could and looked down towards the old man.

That was when he noticed the many broken pieces of metal all around him. The old man had fallen on top of his own broken sword and somehow managed to find the tip that held the poison. Likely due to it cutting himself and poisoning him.

The old man was bleeding out of his abdomen as well as the giant gaping wound on his left shoulder.

"J-Just kill... me," the old man spoke in between spurts of blood escaping from his mouth.

"Your death won't be so simple," Alex said. "I promised you will feel the pain my master felt a thousand times over."

"I had to watch my master die, and I cried. Now I will do the same for you and watch you die. Only this time, there will be nothing but a smile on my face as I do so," Alex said. A deep-seated hatred flared from within him, telling him, urging him to torture the man as much as he could.

Alex dropped the sword as it was no longer necessary for the next thing he was going to do.

Alex put up his palm and a small fire appeared on top of it. He pushed it down at the old man's stomach and left arm, and burnt it as badly as he could.

The old man cried miserably, but Alex only smiled when he heard that. "Now that your wound has been cauterized, you won't die of blood loss," he said.

He then turned the flame into a sharp, arrow-head-like shape. "Let's begin." He brought the flame close to the old man's eyes.

"D—"

Before he could even say anything, Alex put the flame into the old man's eyes and burned it from the inside.

"ARGHH!" the old man cried out loud.

"Shut up!" Alex said. "We're only beginning." He brought out the flame, the old man's wound never bleeding due to it being cauterized on the way out.

He then put the flame onto the other eye of the old man and burned it as well. Both of those times, he made sure not to touch the nerves so that the old man could feel it.

"My master lost her eyesight first," Alex said, remembering Ma Rong's question of if he was there.

"After that, she lost her hearing."

The old man understood what was coming. He tried to cry to stop Alex, but Alex never did. He burned both of the old man's ears.

"Then, she lost her sense of touch," Alex said and stood up before he started burning the old man's body. He made sure that the fire had as low of a temperature as possible so that the old man would suffer much longer.

"She couldn't speak after that," Alex said and got rid of his fire before turning his hands into a golden claw. He grabbed the old man's neck and ripped out his vocal cords.

The old man could no longer cry out and started gasping for air. Alex moved to the side as he watched the old man burn and choke on his own blood.

For nearly 10 minutes he struggled to find a way to live before his lungs were filled with blood and he could no longer keep breathing.

The old man drowned in his own blood, feeling the hot flames on his skin the entire time as he died.

Alex breathed heavily, huffing very quickly as the anger in his heart slowly started calming down.

"Did you see that, master? I killed him. I hope this helps you find peace," Alex said. He walked up to the old man and used his broken sword to stab him through the head one last time to fully make sure he was dead.

He then increased the flame's temperature and watched the old man burn to cinders.

Now that his strong emotions of rage and motivation were gone, the other emotions in him finally started taking over him.

The yang source was still calling for him, and Alex wanted to go find what that is. Now that he was poisoned, he at least wanted to see what it was that drove this man to kill so many people just to get to it.

The Qi in the area was considerably stronger than previously, so Alex brought out his boat and flew away on it.

He had lost many things in the past few days. His arm, his master, and now he lost the sword that had been with him since the very first day.

Still, he had one more thing he was going to lose today. That was himself. With how hard his body was trying to get rid of the poison and still failing, Alex was sure he would die very soon.

He would likely never be able to return back to the game ever again, back to this world. That was why he wanted to see it. He wanted to see what was so attractive to the old man, and to him for the last time before he disappeared from this world.

The boat kept on flying, while Alex saw the red veins creep upon his body. It wasn't as fast as with his master, however, and Alex couldn't figure out why.

He had a few hypotheses. The first was that the poison didn't work very well against people with Yang-type energy and was slow to take effect.

That seemed plausible in his eyes. Another was that it just took a slower time to take effect on body cultivators.

Another reason could also be that his master didn't have any Qi at the time to fight off her poison, while he currently had some.

He noted the speed at which the red veins grew and made an estimate that the poison would kill him in about 3 hours. He hoped that was enough to reach the source.

Alex flew for an hour before he started noticing the symptoms of the poison. His body started going into a fever to fight the poison. He felt hot, despite the winter dawn.

He couldn't handle the heat, even as a cultivator, and started taking off his robes. He took the outer robes off, then the inner.

A little later, he also dropped the lower pants as well, until he was fully naked. Even then he felt it burning.

He knew the burning was good, it was his body fighting the poison, but the discomfort of it all made him annoyed.

By the next hour, however, Alex had stopped feeling hot, and instead, he stopped feeling most things his body was starting to go numb as the red veins crept up close to his neck.

Alex sighed and shook his head. 'Just a little more,' he thought. The boat slowed down considerably on the last foot of the journey, so Alex jumped off of it.

He left the boat where it was as it wouldn't be necessary for him anymore. He left his possessions there as well, wishing the best of luck to the next person that found him, hoping it would help on their cultivation journey. That was all Alex could do at the moment.

He looked up ahead and saw a massive dune he would have to climb. After that, he could feel the source of the Yang being just behind this dune.

He slowly climbed up the dune. The sand threatened to slide down, but Alex used what little Qi he could use to keep the sand in place as he walked up.

He looked the east along the way and saw the sun just about to come up over the horizon, and looked at the top of the dune, seeing another sun about to rise up the horizon as well.

He sensed the red veins crawling up his neck as well. Very soon, he would lose vision for sure. 'Not so fast,' he thought and sped up his climb.

He reached the top of the dune and look beyond it. Down below, A bright white light shined with the shine of a burning sun. The light made him feel like he was looking directly into one.

He took a step forward while blocking his eyes and suddenly, slipped. He rolled from the top of the dune all the way to the bottom.

He didn't feel it anything at all thought. He rolled for nearly a minute before he reached the ground.

He felt disoriented and even a little nauseous from all the rolls. "Argh!" he shook his head as he stood up. He was starting to hear some sounds that he had never heard before.

His heart skipped a beat when he realized what he was. He looked in front of him and saw the source of the bright light. However, it was just too bright to understand what it was.

Alex put his hand in front of his eyes, and he could somehow see the veins light up in his palm.

He squinted his eyes as well as he could and watched not the source, but rather what was beyond it.

Dark, blue, and murky waters. Splashes that came up the shore. Unending to the furthest horizon he could see.

"The ocean!" he said softly. That was something he had wanted to see all this time, and right before he was about to die, he got to see it.

The ocean was huge, and it covered his entire vision. He turned his head from left to the right, and besides the light and the shore, he could see nothing but the ocean.

He felt a bit of melancholy as he realized that he would likely never get to see this sight again.

Tears started rolling down his cheeks. He too didn't want to die. But he couldn't stop the inevitable at all.

He watched the ocean through his blurry vision. It looked so beautiful. He wanted to see so much more of this world, but he wouldn't be able to. Just as he thought that the image in front of him was gone.

He lost vision in his eyes and could only hear the splashes of the giant body of water. Before he knew it, even that was gone.

Alex could neither see nor hear anything. He soon realized that he had fully lost his sense of touch as well.

All of his senses were gone. If not for his body cultivation, he would've likely lost all ability to move as well.

He felt pain and regret in his heart. Pain that he was going to die, and regret that he didn't make more of his time.

However, those weren't the only feelings in him at the moment. There was also the intense attraction he was feeling towards the source.

Since there was no point at all, Alex let go of all restraints and started walking towards the source.

The source got closer and closer. He assumed he was burning at the moment, but he felt nothing.

When he felt he reached the location of the source, he put his hands forth. Even though he couldn't feel it, he felt the source appear on his palm.

Alex felt the intense urge to eat the thing. Since he had already let go of all restraints, he decided to not restrain himself on this one either.

He opened his mouth as wide as he could and put the source inside of it.

Immediately, everything went dark and Alex opened his eyes. He had logged out.

Chapter 553: The End

Alex opened his eyes inside his capsule. He could see some lights around him, he could hear himself moving, feel the softness beneath him.

'I logged out?' he thought with a solemn expression on his face. The memory of the sea was still clear in his mind. 'Did I die?'

He tried to log back in. Instead of going back to his body in the game, or the other world as he had come to believe, he got a single message in his ears.

Alex sighed. "I really did die, huh?" he said softly. He didn't want to make any such decisions at the moment, so he declined the capsule's offer.

He opened the lid and walked out.

Suddenly, he felt a wave of nausea and hunger hit him as he nearly stumbled onto the ground.

His stomach cried really loudly. "What's—" he remembered that he hadn't eaten anything in nearly 3 days now due to the events of the game.

He remembered feeling really happy when he got to take his revenge, but now he didn't know how to feel anymore.

Revenge wasn't going to bring his master back. It even made him die in the process. Because of his impulsive action, he was now unable to go save Pearl as well.

Alex sighed once again. He had let revenge destroy who he was and what he had left. He shook his head and forgot about it for now.

He got up and left to eat. He didn't even bother going to the bathroom as he was too hungry to do that.

He ate as he had never before, surprising all 3 of the girls who had come down to eat as well.

"Slow down, or you will choke," Hannah told him.

Alex nodded, but didn't speak and continued eating. Once done, he left the kitchen and went back to his room.

He went back into his room and went to take a shower. He thought about what he would do next in the shower.

He knew he was going to get a bad body like everyone else, so he didn't really look forward to going into the game. Even if he did, he likely wouldn't spend such a long time in there.

He had surely lost his alchemy skills so there was no way he could remain an alchemist either. Without his body, he didn't see himself getting strong quickly as well.

The only reason he even wanted to go back was to rescue Pearl, but would he even be able to? Pearl was no longer bonded with him now that he was dead as well.

"Will I even spawn in the Western Continent? People usually don't spawn there, right?" Alex thought.

He started worrying a little more. Still, he needed to take the chance. For Pearl.

Once he got out of the bathroom, he immediately went back to the capsule. He opened the lid, got in, and logged in.

He waited for the capsule to ask the question again... but it never came.

"Huh?" he wondered. "Why is nothing happening?" He tried to log in once more, but again, there was nothing but silence.

'The hell?' he thought. "No way that question from before was a one-time thing, right? Just because I rejected it once, that shouldn't mean I don't get to enter at all."

Alex started to get worried. Did he lose his one chance to 'reincarnate' in the game?

Suddenly, he heard a knock on the door. He walked out of the capsule and opened the door.

Outside the door, was a confused Hannah. Before he could even say anything, she quickly shoved him aside and jumped into his capsule.

'What the hell?' Alex thought. 'What is she doing?'

He waited for a minute or so, and Hannah walked out of the capsule. The confusion was ever so high in her eyes.

"Did your capsule break before today?" she asked.

"What? No, I logged out this morning after I died in the game," Alex said. "After that, I haven't been able to log in."

She then opened her phone she had brought along and went on to check the news.

"Hey guys, is your capsule working?" Sarah shouted through the house.

Alex and Hannah walked outside to find a confused Sarah in the living room with her laptop in her hand.

"It's not just us," Hannah said while looking at something on her screen. "The entire world is suffering this. Everyone was simultaneously logged out while we were eating, it seems."

"What's going on? Is this a maintenance break? Is there anything on the internet about this?" Sarah asked.

"No, but people are asking questions," Hannah said.

"Let's wait for it to get fixed then," Alex said.

And so they waited for an hour. Then two hours. 4. 8. A day. 2 days. 5 days. 10 days.

However, there was no information about the game. Deva Corp had a fire lit under them from all the harassment they suffered from the players.

However, even though they owned the game, they weren't the ones who were responsible for maintaining it. But, they didn't know who was, and could never get into contact with the developer.

After many days, people simply lost all hope. They started a lawsuit against the Deva corp. Their stocks dropped from sky high, all the way to the ground.

The people understood that they could no longer go back to the game, so people started going on with their life.

Alex had already sold his stock of Deva corp when he had come to understand that the reincarnation aspect of the game would one day ruin it for everyone. And while he was wrong about the reason, he had luckily sold it while it was at its peak.

With the game not existing anymore, and him having no way to sustain himself, Alex decided to go back to University. He took classes that would help him in business this time so that he could help his father back home.

They changed apartments too as this one was too costly to sustain and got themselves a more affordable one.

Alex's relationship with Emily steadily progressed as well. As for Hannah, it didn't seem like she could find someone to love anything soon.

After a few months, she left Oakleaf city and went back to her hometown to help her father with their business.

Alex studied in the university for a bit longer before returning back home to improve his father's agriculture.

He helped him gather new workers and added facilities to house them. His father insisted on doing everything alone, but Alex didn't let him.

He then expanded his farm by a lot and started working on it himself. His business knowledge, as well as his father's agricultural knowledge, helped them create one of the biggest and most well-known farms in the entire city of Mapleleaf.

A year or so later, at the age of 25, Alex married Emily. Their wedding wasn't very big, but both of their family were happy with a small wedding.

A year or two later, Hannah also got married to a man she had fallen in love with at work.

They hadn't forgotten about the game. Eternal Cultivation may have been short-lived, but it had made a very large impact on their lives.

Alex still remembered his master who had died. He prayed his other master who lived was well now. He remembered his senior sister, senior brother, his friends, and he missed them all.

Most of all, however, he missed Pearl. If he had any regrets regarding the game, it was that he couldn't save him. All he could do was pray that Pearl passed the ritual without dying.

Hannah still loved her husband from the game, and would sometimes tell Alex how much she missed him. However, she didn't let that ruin her current relationship with her husband.

The world remembered the game, they remembered it very well. But they had also moved on from it.

A few years later, Alex had a child with Emily. A daughter. He named her Maron, after his late master, Ma Rong.

That was the only child he had, and he loved her dearly.

Life went on, and many years passed. Alex was now in his 40s. He had retired now and lived happily on his farm with his wife.

And he wouldn't want it to be any other way.

[The End of Volume 1: Inside the Game]

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--Extra from Alex's Life--

A certain day.

Alex couldn't sleep at all during the night with the back pain that kept him awake. While he was awake, he heard a loud bang coming from somewhere behind his house.

He walked out in the midsummer night, with a flashlight in his hands.

The sound had come from the forest behind his house. There were no workers at the moment due to the summer festival they had gone to set up close to the city.

"What's going on?" he asked himself. He walked into the woods without any fear. There were no beasts in there after all. The only thing he needed to worry about was falling off of the edge.

However, he didn't need to worry about that as they were very far away from where he was.

He walked slowly as his old bones hurt a lot during the night. He walked about 5 minutes into the forest when he noticed something.

There was some sound coming from up ahead. 'I hope it's not dangerous,' he thought.

If there was danger ahead of him, he wouldn't be able to run away. Still, it was too late to turn around as he saw what had made the noise in the forest.

His eyes narrowed when he saw the source of the sound.

Chapter 554: Finally Free

Sounds of water splashing close by rang all around.

"Urgh..." Alex cried out as he slowly came to consciousness. He struggled to push himself against the crusty, hot ground to stand up. His left arm never touched the ground.

'Right, I don't have it anymore,' he thought. He slowly stood up to feel the cold wind blow past him. He saw vague light in front of him, but nothing else.

He used his spiritual sense to look around him. He was on top of hard ground, close to where the water entered his spiritual range.

He saw his own body. Fully black from burning from whatever the source was. Fortunately, it hadn't gone past his skin.

He had a memory of being poisoned, but the red veins he remembered were not on him anymore.

He stood there for a moment before he realized, he wasn't cultivating at all. "Huh?" he wondered.

He checked with his spiritual sense and he really wasn't cultivating at all.

"How... am I here when he's not cultivating?" Alex thought for a moment before he thought of an answer.

He wanted to believe it was true, but... the hope it gave was too much for him if it were not.

He took a single step forward. He moved... and nothing happened. He stepped again. Nothing happened once more.

"Is this true?" he wanted to cry, but no tears came out of his eyes. Even his eyelids were fully burnt from the heat of the source.

He slowly reached to his crusty eyelids and peeled them open to see in front of him.

There it was, with all of its greatness, and all of its terror. The ocean.

He remembered seeing this scenery with a lot of light around it, however, this was the first time he actually experienced it himself.

He felt the Qi in the air. There was not a single hint of Yang energy in it.

He looked around. He moved around. It was true. Somehow... it was true.

Finally, tears started flooding down his face.

"I'm Free! I'm finally free!" he cried out. It had been ages since he could control his own body.

He wiped the tears off, ignoring the pain he felt when he did so. In fact, the pain made him feel happy. Finally, he could do something on his own after so many months.

The winter air was cold, but the sun in the sky helped him feel the warmth.

Alex loved it all.

He took a deep breath. The smell of salt was in the air all around him. He slowly walked ahead and jumped into the ocean.

"Hahaha-hahaha!" he started laughing while tears streamed down his face again. The cold ocean water made him feel alive. Finally, after so many months.

"So he's really gone? Forever?" he wondered.

After a few minutes, he stood up and walked away from the ocean. Just as he was leaving, he saw something out of the corner of his eyes.

To the side, he had missed something by being too tunnel-visioned on his freedom. He had missed a giant tree about 10 meters tall, with a yellow trunk, yellow branches, and yellow leaves.

He slowly walked up to it, he felt like it belonged to him for some reason. He placed his hands on the trunk and closed his eyes.

He could tell, the tree had lost all of its yang energy and it had died.

"So, was this... the treasure?" he wondered. A memory came to him, something he hadn't experienced himself, but the other guy did.

It was the memory of reading a book, a record of the Tiger sect.

The words flowed through his mouth as he looked around him. "Where the fiery earth embraces the yin like water," he looked at the tree next to him and continued, "A golden wood of Yang emerges."

He looked at the rock-hard ground that was likely molten before from the heat. The Fiery Earth.

He looked at the ocean whose coldness knew no bounds. The Yin-like Water.

Finally, he turned back to the tree once more. Golden Wood of Yang.

"So this is the place that record was talking about, huh?" he wondered.

This was the birthplace of the Tiger sect. Their Sacred land.

He looked up at the tree and saw something missing on one of the branches. "I see," Alex said. "So the source... it was your fruit, wasn't it? No wonder that old man was so scared about you losing your maturity."

Alex felt like the tree had a soul, so he kept talking to it. "You're dying, aren't you? I can't save you."

The tree suddenly moved. The branches dropped to the ground, tearing up the land beneath them before the branches brought out something.

"A seed?" Alex asked in surprise. "Is this your seed?" he asked.

The tree moved in acknowledgment.

"Do you want me to sow it somewhere?" he asked.

The tree moved once again.

Alex looked at the yellow seed about the size of his thumb and said, "You were the reason I got my life back. I will do everything in my power, to get one for your child as well."

The tree moved again, and as a gesture of thank, 3 leaves fell from the very top of the tree.

Alex grabbed the leaves and looked at the shiny, golden leaves. "You don't have to thank m—"

Before he could even finish speaking, the tree lit up all over, and as if winds could carry light, the motes of light slowly flew away, before the entire tree vanished from his sight.

"Thank you," Alex said and bowed towards the tree. He looked towards the ocean again and smiled. He smiled because he was happy he lived. He smiled because he was free.

Then, he turned around and left. He flew up the massive dune of sand and slowly floated down on the other side.

He saw a sand-covered boat just sitting there. He walked up to it and looked at his items.

Were they even his items? He never did anything to get them. It was the other guy who got them after all.

He took... his... storage bag and pulled out a few pills. He needed quite a few healing pills to bring him back to looking like normal.

That meant healing the innards, healing the skin, and even growing out the hair all over his body.

When his body did heal, Alex used his spiritual sense to check if there was something wrong with it still.

He checked his whole body, and finally moved on to his face. At first, he saw nothing wrong, but when he realized what he was looking at, his eyes went wide.

"My... My face! It's back?" he shouted out loud. Alex's face looked exactly the same as his real face back in his homeworld.

His... Alex wasn't sure if he could call that world his at the moment. From what he understood, he was just a clone, trapped in his own body, while the real soul drove it.

Now that the real soul had gone, he could finally surface and use it as his own.

'Am I really a clone?' he wondered. The last thing he remembered doing by himself was putting on that helmet for the first time, getting ready to log in.

That was the last time he ever did anything by himself. Ever since then... he was suppressed in his own body.

"No," Alex thought. That was not the only time he did something on his own.

He remembered the other time, when his real soul fought with Zexi, while he watched from beneath the water in his spiritual sea.

He was in a stasis, unable to do anything. However, when his other soul had lost all control, at the last moment, he had gotten his control back and had then killed Zexi.

Alex looked down at the boat and with a wave of a hand cleared the sand. There were his dirty clothes and his other storage bags.

He recalled another memory, not his but the other soul's memory.

The other soul had left all of his possessions here, wishing luck to the next person who found it. He had hoped this would help them on their cultivation journey.

Alex looked at them and said in a soft voice, "Thank you for giving me all of this. I promise I will put them to good use."

Alex quickly put on a new set of robes. The robe was neither green nor yellow, but rather a neutral gray color.

He then stored the golden leaves and seed into a storage bag, before putting all of the storage bags into his robes and got on the boat to fly back towards the Hong Wu sect.

'How many days has it been since the attack? How many days was I out?' he wondered.

The sun was in the sky, but that gave no information of how many days had passed.

"Will I ever be able to go back home?" he wondered. He also wondered if that other world was his home.

The speed at which he had flown was very fast now that the suppression in the desert no longer existed.

Within a matter of hours, Alex could see the giant cliffs of the Hong Wu sect.

He didn't know how to feel about the sect yet, as it was never his sect, but the other guys. However, the memory of the other Alex told him just how much he cared about it.

Just before he reached the sect, however, he saw something shine next to the river.

He slowed down to check what it was. When he did finally see it, his eyes went wide.

He immediately took back the boat and jumped down to the object. It was half-buried in the sand around the grasses, but the half that did stand up made it very clear what it was.

The short blue handle, the light blue cross guard, the thin blade with the blue hue.

That was his master's sword. He slowly pulled it out and looked at it, half of it bloody from the old man's stab wound.

The memories this sword evoked, they weren't something he wanted to feel at the moment, but he couldn't help it.

Tears streamed down his face as he remembered Ma Rong, his master, and her promise.

He walked up to the river and washed away the blood from her sword. He couldn't let the filth's wound desecrate it like that.

He looked at the sword again. His master's sword. Not the other guy's master. HIS master.

This evoked another memory of his. This one, however, didn't belong to the other guy. This was a memory of his own.

The memory he had from the time he talked to Ma Rong.

Chapter 555: Master

Many months ago, back on the ship to the Cardinal City.

"You see... I still fall asleep when I cultivate and... I don't know when I stop doing it," Alex said to Ma Rong.

"What? You haven't fixed that yet?" Ma Rong asked.

"I don't know how to master. I keep falling asleep. At first, I thought that was normal, but it seems that it is not. I don't know what to do," Alex said.

"You should have let me know that way earlier," Ma Rong said. "Alright, Cultivate right now and I'll try to see what the problem is."

Alex had closed his eyes to cultivate and started breathing slowly. The Qi in his body started moving to the rhythm of his breathes and soon, and slowly Alex started falling asleep.

As one Alex fell asleep, the other one finally came to the control of the body once again.

'He started cultivating?' Alex thought as he assumed control of his body once again. He circulated the Qi around his body to cultivate.

That was what he did. The other guy would always think cultivation was something that happened on its own. But he was wrong. It was him doing all the work while the other guy fell asleep.

He had always hated the other him. The him that got to do what he wanted, the him that was always free. The him that got to go back to the other side.

However, despite hating him, he never did a single thing that would harm him. For he knew that the other him was not responsible for whatever he was going through.

They both shared the same memory before they came to the game, the same experience. It was only after jumping into the game that they separated.

And while the other him got to experience both worlds, he was stuck on this side, fated to forever hide beneath him.

Alex sighed on the inside. He continued cultivating as that was the only time he wasn't suppressed and could actually think for himself.

If he stopped cultivating, he would immediately go back to being suppressed, so he had no choice.

"Does he have school tomorrow? What time does he need to wake up at?" Alex wondered and looked through the memory he had that he never experienced.

This was what he always did. He looked through the other Alex's memory and cultivated until it was time for him to leave, be it if it was for his classes, or just to have breakfast.

There were times when he just wanted to keep on cultivating forever, so that the other Alex could never assume control, but he never did any of that.

After all, the other him was the only way he could know how his parents were doing on the other side.

'Hmm? Oh, he got on a ship to the capital for competition?' Alex thought while he looked at the memories. He saw the top 3 disciples of the Hong Wu sect.

He saw the 2nd and 3rd elder and saw an old man who the other guy's master said was a fraud.

Following that, he finally recalled the memories of when he was to wake up. He was to do so when Ma Rong told him to.

'Does that mean...!' Alex was about to send out his spiritual sense when he noticed Ma Rong's spiritual sense on his own body.

Ma Rong could see that Alex had indeed fallen asleep, but she couldn't figure out what was wrong with him.

So, she had decided to check if he wasn't cultivating properly by some chance. She used her spiritual sense on him, but she couldn't find any problems at all.

She was very confused as to what she should do now.

"Yu Ming! Yu Ming!" she started calling him out. However, she got no answer.

"Yu Ming!" she called out again, but she still got no answer.

"Yu Ming!" the last time, she called him directly with a spiritual sense. "Wake up."

Alex could hear it all, but he didn't know what to do. She kept on calling for the other guy. So... should he just stop cultivating?

He couldn't see what was happening outside, so he sent out his own spiritual sense.

"Ah, so you are awake. Why didn't you say so?" Ma Rong asked the moment she sensed the spiritual sense.

Alex panicked a little and nearly stopped cultivating. However, when he stopped to think about it, he realized that maybe... just maybe, she could help him.

So, once again, he sent out his spiritual sense towards her, and this time he actually spoke to her.

"H-Hello!" he said.

"Ah, you are awake. How did it go? Did you learn how to not fall asleep?" Ma Rong asked.

Alex didn't know how to ask for help. What was he to say? How should he form the questions?

"Yu Ming?" Ma Rong asked when he didn't reply.

"Um... I'm not Yu Ming," Alex replied. "Your disciple is still asleep."

Ma Rong's face narrowed in confusion. "What are you saying, Yu Ming?" she asked.

"My name is not Yu Ming. My name is Alex," Alex replied a little scaredly.

Ma Rong's eyes went wide. "Did you take over my disciple's body?" she immediately got angry.

"No! No! No!" Alex was still replying with his spiritual sense. "He took over mine."

Ma Rong's serious face showed confusion again. "What do you mean... he took over?" she asked.

"I mean... I'm not sure, but I think he took over mine. I have been stuck in this body for nearly a month and a half now. The only time I gain control is when he cultivates," Alex said.

Ma Rong got even more confused. Alex thought for a moment and decided to tell her everything from the very start.

He told her about his life, where he came from, the other world, how this was a game to them, however since the start he had been suppressed in this body.

Ma Rong's shock was great and understandable.

"Are you saying that... you are not from this world, but another?" Ma Rong asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "I don't know how any of this works, but... yes, I, we are from another world."

"Hmm..." Ma Rong thought. The shock had been truly great for her and needed some time to process.

"So... you are a clone of his?" Ma Rong asked.

"Um, I think so," Alex said. "I think our souls were sent here to find a random dead body and take over it."

"I may have just been a contingency plan in case something happened to his soul," Alex said.

"No, that's not possible," Ma Rong said.

"Huh?" Alex asked.

"There are two methods of making clones," Ma Rong said. "First is using a dead body and putting in a bit of your soul to control it. Making clones that way takes weeks since the soul will need time to integrate with the dead body."

"You said you appeared in a forest right? If it were just you, it would be possible, but you said there are millions of people just like you here, right?" Ma Rong asked.

Alex nodded. "Yes, you won't find so many dead bodies just lying around, especially ones that have no damage to them."

"Then?" Alex asked.

"Then, the body you have now was created somehow, and you were the soul grown along with it," Ma Rong said as his eyes went wide in just the thought of what she was saying.

"To think someone is out there that can clone bodies in an instant, that too of such high caliber. I couldn't even begin to imagine the resources that would be needed for your body alone, let alone the other millions of people."

Ma Rong's breath got heavy. She understood the gravity of the situation. The only ones who could possibly do these sorts of things were definitely immortals.

"Does... does that mean... this body is mine?" Alex asked.

"Yes, that... that should be your body which is being controlled by your original soul," Ma Rong said.

Alex felt stunned. He didn't know what to say. Slowly, as he processed the information, a question appeared in his mind.

"Does... does that mean that I will never get to go back home? That... I do not belong there anymore?" he asked. He felt like crying, but he couldn't. Any unnecessary movement could stop him from cultivating, sending him back to the dark corner in his mind.

Ma Rong stayed quiet for a while and watched the sun come up the horizon. She sighed, and finally said, "yes. Yes, I believe you are stuck here forever."

A few elders appeared from the side. "Sect leader, we've arrived," they said.

Ma Rong looked out of the boat and saw the capital. "Let the 2nd elder take control for now. Tell him to take you all to the hotel. I will leave later."

"Yes," the elder said and left.

Alex's emotions could be vaguely seen on his face. Pain, despair, agony, sadness. He was feeling a multitude of emotions at once.

"That means I will never get to see my mother again? Never get to meet my father? I had only just left the countryside for the first time. Will I never get to see the city like I wanted to?" he asked himself.

Ma Rong quietly listened to his complaints while everyone else left the boat.

She looked around and saw that no one was onboard anymore. "We should leave soon too," Ma Rong said. "Can you..." She felt guilty asking him to surrender control of his own body to the other soul.

"Do I have to? Do I have to give control of my body, even after knowing it's my own body? Why should I? Why doesn't he leave instead?" Alex's voice started getting louder in her mind. She could hear the anguish in his voice as well.

"Why does he get to have everything while I stay trapped in my own body? Why do I have to suffer through all of this?" Alex cried out.

"Am I not worthy of a life just because I'm a clone? Do I not deserve freedom?" he asked.

Ma Rong started tearing up when she heard him. "You do, you deserve it," she said.

"Then why? Why don't i—"

"I will help you. I will help you find a way to get back your freedom," Ma Rong said.

Alex stopped shouting and asked, "You will?"

"Yes," Ma Rong said with tears in her eyes.

"I... I can have my freedom back?" he asked. "Please don't give me false hope."

"No, it's not false. I promise, I will do everything I can to find a way to help you," Ma Rong said.

"Even if that means getting rid of his soul?" Alex asked.

"No, I will find a way so that neither of you gets hurt, and both of you get to live your life just as you want," Ma Rong said. "Trust your master."

"Mas..ter," Alex said slowly. "I can call you, master?"

"Of course," Ma Rong said as she wiped her tears. "I am your master, and you are my disciple."

Alex started crying on the inside. "Thank you, master. Thank you" he cried. At the same time, Ma Rong started crying again.

"Now, can you please let him come out? We need to leave," Ma Rong said.

"Yes," Alex said. "Thank you."

Slowly, his cultivation cycle slowed down, and he felt the suppression come back to push him back to the depth once again.

The other Alex came out and saw Ma Rong, with tears in her eyes, and asked, "What's wrong, Master? Why are you crying?"

* * * *

Alex looked at his Master's sword as tears flowed down his face again. He had just recalled his memories of the first time he talked to his master.

He then remembered the last memory he had of his master, her dying in his arm, regretting that she never got to keep her promise.

He brought the sword to his chest and hugged it as he cried, "You didn't fail master. You did it. You kept your promise."

"Thank's to you, I'm finally free."

Chapter 556: Returning to the Sect

Alex stood up and dusted off the sand from his pants. He had washed his face with the river water and no longer did he have the tear on his face.

He suddenly sensed someone moving behind him as he sensed their Qi in the air. He spread out his spiritual sense and saw 2 elders walking towards him.

"My head suddenly hurts," one elder said.

"Yeah, mine too," the other one replied.

They had noticed Alex from far away already, so the moment they appeared, they put their swords towards him as if he were a bad guy here.

"Who are you?!" they shouted at him.

Alex looked at himself. He no longer looked like 'Yu Ming' at all, so it was obvious they wouldn't recognize him.

"Senior, I am Yu Ming." Alex said. "I have changed my appearance, but it is me."

The two of the elders looked at him with confusion in their face for a moment, before the confusion turned into anger and disdain.

"How dare you lie to us using the late Sect leader's dead disciple's name?" they shouted at him and got ready to attack.

"Eh?" Alex was surprised.

'They think he's dead? Well, they're not wrong in a sense,' Alex thought. Suddenly, he lost all aura of his, and similarly, even his image disappeared.

"Huh? Where did he go?" the elders shouted.

Alex didn't want to do this, but he didn't know how he could explain to them that it was indeed him, and not some random person faking being him.

He left the elders concerned and in full combat mode, and he back towards the sect.

With all of the suppression gone from the Forbidden Fields, one could easily fly in and out of it.

It had now changed to perhaps one of the better places in the sect. Maybe someday the elders would establish some other things here.

He would love to see a combat section established here. Not that he was sure he would be here to see that happen.

He flew up the mountain and landed in front of his master's house. It seemed to have been repaired by now, although he could see that the repair was pretty new.

'How long was I really out?' he wondered again.

The other guy had learned a lot from this place, so Alex felt that he owed this place at least a bow.

Once done, he left and went to his own house and walked in for a bit. He knew each and every corner of this house.

After all, there wasn't many things he could do while cultivating aside from sending out his spiritual sense to check this place.

He smiled a little as he looked through all of the place and walked out.

He walked down the mountain, now fully visible, and was starting to attract glances from everyone.

He smiled towards everyone and made his way to the Elder's hall. As soon as he reached the place, he sent out his spiritual sense to find someone that he could talk to.

The Grand Elder was in room along with the First elder and his Martial uncle, talking about something.

"Grandmaster, are you free to speak right now?" he asked him through the spiritual sense.

The old man's eyes went wide and he suddenly turned.

"Yu Ming?" he called.

"Yes, Grandmaster," Alex replied through his spiritual sense.

"What's wrong, master?" Lang Shun asked.

"Y-Yu Ming, he's back," the Grand Elder said.

Alex walked into the hall and opened the door to the room.

The moment they saw him, instead of elation, they felt confusion. "Who... who are you?" they asked.

Alex chuckled a little. "Grandmaster, Martial Uncle, it's me," Alex said. Despite his face being different, his voice was the same, so they easily recognized him.

"Yu Ming? You're alive?" they asked in surprise.

"Yes, Grandmaster," Alex said. "I'm... I'm sorry for my reckless and impulsive action. I must've worried you all."

"Worried us? Hell, we thought you died," Lang Shun shouted.

"Eh? Died? Uh, I was close to it for sure, but as you can see, I'm not dead," Alex said.

"How did you survive? Where did you even go? We scoured the desert after you left, but we never found you," the Grand Elder said.

"Um, did you go towards the ocean?" Alex asked.

"Ocean? That's so far north. There is no way we could go there with all the suppression on our cultivation base," the Grand Elder said. "Did you really go there?"

"Yes, I did," Alex said with a solemn face. "And I killed master's killer too."

All 3 of their eyes went wide. "You killed sister's killer? Are you sure?" Lang Shun asked.

"Yes, Martial uncle," Alex said. "He's dead. I killed him with my own hands."

Lang Shun immediately walked upto him and embraced him. "Good! Good!" he said as tears spilled down his face.

The Grand Elder's eyes were tearing as well. Alex simply smiled with a sad face.

"How did you kill him? He should have been stronger than you, right?" Lang Shun asked.

"He was, but the suppression helped me. With my physical strength, under the right circumstances, beating him was easy," Alex said.

"Oh right," Alex remembered his burning question. "How many days was I gone for?"

"Do you not know?" the Grand Elder asked.

"No, I was unconscious after the battle," Alex said.

"Sigh, it's been 7 days since the invasion," Lang Shun said. "I'm surprised you survived in the desert with so many beasts for 7 days."

"There weren't any beasts there. They were probably hiding due to the intense suppression that happened out of nowhere. Also, you guys should know, the Qi has returned to the desert. The Yang Qi is fully gone now," Alex said.

"What?" all 3 of them shouted in the room, including the rarely speaking first elder.

"Right, did master wake up?" Alex asked. It felt a little weird calling Wen Cheng, master, but when Alex thought about it, all the combat knowledge he had in his mind came from him. So it was only right to call him that.

"Sect leader Wen Cheng was fully healed 3 days ago and has went back to the Tiger sect. Although, he does have an arm and a few fingers missing, not unlike you," Lang Shun said.

"Are you alright? Do you want to contact an artifact creator to make a fake arm for you?" the Grand Elder asked.

"Right, you can make a fake puppet arm which wouldn't be weaker than your normal one," the First elder said.

"That's... tempting, but I'll pass. I would rather have my own arm," Alex said.

"How will you do that?" Grand Elder asked curiously.

"Umm, do you guys have master's spiritual bag?" Alex asked.

"Yes," the Grand Elder said.

"Then you will find a bunch of talisman inside them, all recording recipes for different pills, including many True pills and Saint pills. Amongst those saint pill is a pill that can help me regrow my arm," Alex said.

"A Saint pill? That's impossible to make," Lang Shun said.

"Yes," Alex said. "That's why I plan to convert the saint pill to a True pill by using similar ingredients."

"Woah!" Lang Shun said after listening to his idea. "You think it'll work?"

"Yes," Alex said. "Although I do not know how, yet. The Royal Alchemist successfully upgraded my Common rank pill recipe to a True rank pill recipe. Going by that logic, downgrading should be similar as well, right?"

"I wouldn't say it's similar," the Grand Elder said. "Upgrading is easy from Common rank to True rank because the one doing the changes is usually familiar with both the ingredients."

"However, it will be impossible for you to be familiar with a saint rank ingredient. Heck, it's impossible to even find one," the Grand elder said.

"It's alright, Grandmaster. I will do it," Alex said.

"I hope you do, Martial Nephew. I will need such a pill for my leg too," Lang Shun joked.

"Of course, Martial uncle," Alex said with a smile. "By the way, what's the situation of the sect leader status now? Did you already choose one?"

"No," Grand Elder said. "First elder is currently the acting sect leader until we can decide on something else. But... it's likely going to be the 4th Elder."

'4th Elder huh?' Alex thought. A memory of a short and thin man with a relatively thick mustache came to his mind. He had never really interacted with the man, so Alex didn't know much about him.

"Also," Alex spoke up to ask something, but the question stuck on his throat.

"Yes?" the Grand Elder asked.

Alex forced himself to speak and said, "when... can you hold my graduation?"

"Hmm, it will be a week in the earliest," the Grand Elder said.

"I see," Alex said. "I will wait for the day then."

"Have you... made any plans for after your graduations?" the Grand Elder asked.

Alex nodded and said, "I plan to leave the sect."

"What? Wh—" Lang Shun spoke up in surprise, but the Grand Elder stopped him from speaking any further.

"I see," he said. "I hope you've thought of this choice for a bit before you made it."

"Yes, Grandmaster," Alex said.

The Grand Elder nodded. "Very well then. I will have them set your graduation soon."

"Thank you," Alex said. "I will go for now."

"Wait," the Grand Elder said. "Before I forget. There was someone from the City Lord's house here to look for you. We sent them back telling you were dead, but you might want to visit and let them know you are still alive."

"I see. I will do that," Alex said. "Goodbye."

He turned around and left the Elder's hall.

Chapter 557: The City Lord's Task

A girl in her mid-20s appeared on the outskirts of the Scarlet City. She had long flowing dark hair and wore a black robe made up of silk.

She had a frown on her face as if she didn't want to do what she was here to do.

She flew up to the city walls and saw a few soldiers. "Who is in charge of your city?" she asked.

The guards suddenly fell into a lull of sort and answered her without any thoughts.

'A city lord huh? Let's go see him,' the girl thought and flew through the city to the city lord's manor.

When she reached there, she sent out her spiritual sense to find the city lord.

"Come out!" she ordered directly into his mind.

Fu Wen was surprised when he heard the girl's voice in his mind. He immediately knew that it was a Saint realm expert who had arrived.

He walked out of the manor, and directly went outside. When he saw the person that had called him out, his eyes went wide.

'So young!' he thought as he looked at her. however, she was way too strong to trust her looks to be a direct representation of her age. For all he knew, she could be an old grandma.

"How may I help you, miss?" he asked as politely as possible. He really didn't want to anger this expert.

"I need your help with something," she said. "I need you to get your soldiers to gather some people."

"Some... people?" Fu Wen asked curiously. "May I know who I am to gather?"

"Yes," the girl said. "Go and gather the cultivators that will identify themselves as a player."

* * * * *

After leaving the Elder's hall, Alex left for the alchemy garden to the right. The place where his master was buried.

There were elders staying guard there, and surprisingly one of them even recognized him.

When he asked how he recognized him, the elder said, "I remember, that was the face you used for nearly 3 days in the competition back in the capital city."

'That's right,' Alex thought. The other Alex had indeed used his face to hide from Zexi.

After knowing that it was Alex, they let him enter the place without any hesitation.

Alex walked up the mountain to the place where his master was buried.

Her grave was right next to the Yin Gathering tree, which was starting to look a lot healthy now that the Yang energy from the city was gone.

"Hello, Master," Alex said. "We haven't talked in a long while, have we?"

Alex had a sad smile on his face while tears started building up in his eyes. He wiped the tears and continued speaking.

"I hope you are doing well... in your afterlife. You can rest assured about your killer, he's dead already," Alex said. "Although, I'm sure you wouldn't be happy learning that your disciple died in the process."

"It's just happened on its own, and now I'm free."

Alex then took out her sword from his storage bag. "Here," he said as he stabbed the sword next to her headstone.

"They say we can give you some things to make your afterlife easy. I hope this sword is of use to you in the afterlife, just like it was here."

Alex talked to Ma Rong for a while. After that, he decided to leave. Just as he was standing to leave, he heard something rustle a bit further away from him.

When he sent his spiritual sense to the place, he was a little surprised.

"Senior Green," Alex called out the snake that was hiding in the bushes. The green snake slowly appeared out of the bushes and looked at Alex.

After Ma Rong's funeral, the snake had decided to stay closer to her, to protect her and the tree she so very loved.

"Are you looking after Master?" Alex asked. The snake hissed while nodding its head.

"I see. Thank you for doing that," Alex said. "Please continue looking after her, and this tree."

Alex then looked into his storage bag and brought out something. "Here, I hope this helps you in your task," he said and handed the snake a Spirit Cleansing Lily.

The snake took the lily and nodded to Alex in thanks.

Alex thanked the snake once again and left the garden. He walked away from the place and went to visit the core disciple's mountain.

He met up with his friends that had somehow by now learned of his survival.

"I should have known. You are not the type to die," Kong Yuhan had said, giving Alex a little chuckle.

He talked to Zhou Mei and Fan Ruogang. Zhou Mei was in a very depressed state. She was still in denial that her beloved masters had killed each other.

All of a sudden, she felt like she was alone. Her sister and Fan Ruogang were taking care of her, but it would take a little longer for her inner wound to heal.

Alex handed them a Spirit Cleansing Lily as well. He had quite a few, so he wouldn't mind giving them to these people who treated him as a friend.

Even though he never experienced their friendship, the memory and emotions were still with him.

Alex also met Wan Li.

"My condolences for what has happened. It is truly a great loss for the sect to lose not only the two elders but also the sect master," Wan Li said.

Alex nodded but kept a solemn face. It seemed after the invasion, Wan Li had somehow lost all of his aggression. There weren't even guards looking after him now.

"Thank you," Wan Li said all of a sudden.

"Hmm? For what?" Alex asked.

"For capturing Black Venom alive, so I could interrogate her," Wan li said.

"Black Venom?" Alex remembered the memory. "Oh right, What happened to her? Is she imprisoned somewhere?"

Wan Li shook his head. "I killed her," he said.

Alex felt stunned for a moment, but in the next moment, he understood. "Did you at least get the information you needed?"

"Yes, I got what I want," Wan Li said. "It turned out that it was the Victorious Snow merchant group that paid her to kill my parents. My parents were starting to get successful, and it was impeding on their business."

"Victorious Snow..." Alex thought for a moment and a memory surfaced once more. "Ah, that fat guy. Huo Tu's father."

Alex remembered the old man from the first-ever auction he visited.

"Do you plan to take revenge against him as well?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Wan Li said as his face overcame with rage, but he calmed himself a bit. "But I can't do it right now. I will need to be stronger."

Alex nodded. "I heard Huo Zemin's first son is quite capable. Not to mention the mercenaries his money could buy. You really have to be very careful, brother Li," he said.

Alex looked at Wan Li's cultivation base which was close to True Lord now.

"Take care of your cultivation base, brother Li. If you cultivate too fast without consolidating your foundation, you will suffer later on," Alex said.

"I know," Wan Li said. "I'm slowing down now."

"I see," Alex said. "Here." He handed him another Lily and told him what to do. after that, he left.

He gave Wan Li all the advice and help he could. the rest was something Wan Li would have to do on his own.

Alex left the core disciple area and walked out of the sect. He wanted to go directly to the Tiger sect, but since the city lord's manor was on the way, he decided to go there first.

He looked around the city. He hadn't been able to experience it before, but now he did.

Should he be happy about it? He would certainly be happier if he was back at home. However, if he was to remain in this world now, he would certainly make the most of it.

'Hmm, what's up with all of these soldiers running around the city today?' he wondered. They were saying something, but Alex was lost in his own world, so he didn't listen.

He reached the City lord's manor, and let them know of his arrival.

He could hear a bit of commotion not far away from the lord's manor and wondered what it was.

The guards relayed the message to the City Lord and soon the city lord himself came running out.

He looked at the youth in front of him with confusion on his face. He was missing an arm, but his face looked different. "You are not him," he said.

"No, it is me, City lord. I just look different," Alex said. "I heard you wanted to see me."

Fu Wen still didn't trust that it was him, so Alex brought out a pill from his storage bag.

"It's the pill that makes someone sweat a lot," Alex said. "Is this proof enough?"

"Oh, it is you," the city lord finally accepted. "Why did you change your look?"

"I just... felt like it," Alex said.

"Come on in, let's talk inside," Fu Wen said and the two of them went into the manor.

"First of all, let me give you my condolences. Ma Rong's death is a tragedy for the whole empire," Fu Wen said. "It is truly a big loss for all of us."

"Thank you, City Lord," Alex said. He could tell that the City Lord truly felt of his master's death as a loss.

"So, let me get to the point. My uncle came here a week ago looking for you. He heard that you were back from where you were taken and wanted to talk to you," Fu Wen said.

"The Emperor wants to talk to me?" Alex asked. "Is he still around?"

"No," Fu Wen said. "After he learned you most likely died in the desert, he returned back."

"I see. May I know what he wanted to talk about?" Alex asked.

"Well..." Fu Wen hesitated a bit before finally saying, "he has two guests from outside the empire that came through the beast's land."

"Hmm," Alex was surprised. "Humans came out of the beast land? Ah, it must've been one of the ones that entered from the Luminance empire."

"You know about the Luminance empire?" Fu Wen asked in surprise.

"I learned a bit about it from the beasts," Alex said.

"Oh great," Fu Wen said. "The two that came out want to go back, but they're scared. You somehow survived there, so they want you to tell them how to survive in there."

"Oh, they want to get back? Wait, so they know how to enter?" Alex stood up suddenly and asked.

"Uhh... I believe so? They said they escaped on their own," Fu Wen said.

Alex's eyes moved around in surprise and a sense of happiness. He finally found a way to go save Pearl.

"I will do it," he said. "Please inform the Emperor of my survival as well as the fact that I will go to the capital a week or 2."

"Are you sure?" Fu Wen asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "I will graduate from my sects in a few days. After that, I will leave."

"Ok," Fu Wen said with a smile. "I will let my Uncle know."

"How's the city doing?" Alex asked. "I hope it's back to being a bit more normal."

"Yes," Fu Wen said. "We finished the repair a few days ago, so it's as normal as it can be after a bandit attack."

"I see," Alex said. "I saw many soldiers outside. You must've upped the security a lot."

"Hmm? Oh no, those aren't for securities," Fu Wen said. "I am just using my soldiers and guards to gather people for someone."

"Gather people?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Fu Wen said. "Someone came and asked me to help them gather cultivators that would call themselves Players."

Alex's eyes went wide all of a sudden. "Players?"

Chapter 558: You are the Reason

Alex walked out of the City Lord's manor after saying his goodbye. The City Lord told him that he would relay the information to the Emperor about him being alive.

Alex would need to quickly graduate and go to the capital so he could save Pearl. Also, he wanted to meet up with the Royal Alchemist to see if he had any ideas to regrow his arm.

He was looking forward to that, but for now, there was something else that had grabbed his interest.

"Who's gathering players?" he wondered. He had learned that the commotion outside that he heard before getting in was actually the place of gathering.

So, he decided to make his way there before he went to the Tiger sect.

Walking there, Alex saw a lot of people along the way. All of them had the same sad, confused, and somewhat hopeful look on their faces.

'They must really not want to stay here, huh?' he thought. 'Understandable.'

He saw a building next to the group of people where the soldiers were governing the players. One by one, the players would enter the building and walk out less than a minute later.

'What's the purpose here?' Alex wondered. Initially, his thought was that someone had started a therapy group for people that were now likely depressed and anxious.

But... this seemed nothing like it. 'Do they perhaps have some malicious intent?' Alex thought. If they had, Alex decided to help these poor folks a little.

He waited in line as more and more of the players entered and walked out.

He didn't know how long it had been going on, but from what he could tell, there were about 600 players in total in the Scarlet city.

He would've never thought of there being this many.

He looked to the western sky and saw the sun. It would set in merely 2 more hours. 'I hope this hurries up,' he thought.

As he waited for his turn, he spoke with a few of the players that were on the line.

At first, he thought everyone was just a normal person, who was busy playing their game. However, it didn't take him long to realize that just like him, they were the old souls stuck here too.

'Why did I think this only happened to me?' he wondered. He started asking questions.

However, when he continued listening to their anguish, he realized that these people had zero ideas about what was happening.

The last thing they remembered was, just like him, putting on the helmets. Aside from that, there were some thoughts and memories that popped up into their mind of the time when the other soul controlled their body, but aside from that, they remembered nothing.

Alex was really surprised to hear that. He asked if they had ever been conscious after coming to the game world, but it seemed they hadn't.

Some of them did say that they thought they were awake the first couple of days, but it was a memory from so long ago that they couldn't trust themselves with it.

'Wait, was I the only one who remembered it all?' he thought. 'How is that possible?'

He tried thinking of answers to the question and after a while, came up with 2 answers.

Firstly, he had something that they didn't, which was the eidetic memory. Having spiritual sense, he could remember every memory, every detail to perfection.

Even after so much time had passed, he could remember everything since the day he cultivated with a Spirit Cleansing Lily.

Since these people didn't have that luxury, after months on end, they couldn't remember most of the memory they had made.

Another answer was that it was all because he came up to the surface everything the other Alex cultivated. He still had no idea why that was, but from talking to these players, it seemed that it was only him that did that.

'Right,' he thought. 'He was the only anomaly in the other world who would sleep during cultivation. Did that help me somehow?'

Alex guessed that while both of these answers were equally true, the second one held more importance.

'There must be something wrong, or rather right with my body for me to wake up when cultivating, unlike them,' he thought.

He had a Divine Grade body, a God-grade talent, and... a seemingly very powerful spirit roots.

'It could be any of these things,' he said. Finally, a little before the sun was to go down the horizon, his turn came up.

Under the watch of the soldiers, he saw a woman walk away, and he entered the building.

The building seemed to be a sort of warehouse, now that he could see it more clearly from the inside.

The room was open and there was a girl with a notepad in her hand, seemingly writing down something.

"What's your name?" she asked without even looking at him as she clicked the pen and started writing down what he was going to say.

"Alex Benton. I assume you wanted my real-world name," Alex said.

The girl looked at him with narrowed eyes and continued writing. 'She's quite pretty,' Alex thought.

He sent out his spiritual sense to see what he was writing but suddenly felt a backlash when the girl sent her own spiritual sense to attack his.

"Stay in your place," she told him angrily.

Alex felt a little scared of what she had just done. 'How is she so strong?' he wondered. Her age barely made her look a few years older than him, so this came to him as a genuine surprise.

Just when he was thinking that, he noticed something that was so obvious that he couldn't believe he missed it.

He immediately put up his only hand as he pointed at the thing that was on her hand.

"A PEN!" he shouted in surprise. A body made up of plastic, with ink in it that was topped off by a small layer of gel. That was a pen that was impossible to be found in this world.

"You! How do you have that pen?" he asked.

"Hoh! You are the first one to ask me about this pen. The others just asked me about what was going on. It seems you are not as concerned about it," the girl said.

"Now, put your arm down or I will cut that one off as w—" suddenly the smirk in her face disappeared, and her eyes went wide.

"That ring!" she shouted when she saw the golden ring with a ruby in Alex's hand. "Where did you get that ring?"

"This ring?" Alex showed a confused face, but on the inside, he was surprised that she noticed the ring at all.

"I found it in the de—"

His voice stopped as well when he noticed a similar ring on her fingers as well. It wasn't the same design, but it was similar enough that Alex knew for sure that it was a storage ring as well.

"Where did you find it?" the girl asked again.

"Why don't you tell me where you found yours?" Alex asked.

"You don't need to know that," the girl said.

"Then I guess, you don't need to know this as well," Alex said. Despite nearly answering it already, he decided to hold off the information.

"How about this?" Alex said. "If you tell me how you got the pen, I will tell you where I found this as well."

The girl thought for a while and answered, "I got it from where you think I got it from."

Alex's eyes went wide. "From the other world? For our homeworld?" Alex asked.

A curiously little smile came upon the girl's face. "You could say that I guess," she said.

"How did you get it? Where did you get it from?" he asked.

"You don't need to know anything else. Just tell me where you found the ring. I have a few more questions after that and you can leave," the girl said.

Alex really wanted to know about them, but he couldn't force the girl considering how strong she was.

"I found them in the desert north of here," Alex said. He didn't give her any hints as to the fact that he knew what they were.

"Can I see them?" the girl asked.

"No thanks. I would like to keep it myself. It looks pretty on me," he said.

The girl's eyes narrowed. She really wanted to take the ring, but her master would scold her if he learned that she hit him. After all, she was told to be as diplomatic as possible.

"Alright, let's forget about it then," she said. Alex was surprised she didn't insist further given how strong she was.

He kept looking at the pen and notepad, and they were definitely from his home-world. 'How did she get them here?' he wondered.

"Do you know how long you've been here?" she asked.

"About 7 or so months," Alex said.

The girl's eyes changed when she heard that. He was just a month off from the correct answer after all.

"Are you sure?" she asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "I started a month later than everyone else, so it's been 7 months."

"What?" she suddenly exclaimed. "You know that too?"

"Uh, yes," Alex said. "Unlike the ones out there, I was conscious some of the time and have full control over my memories."

"Woah!" the girl said, actually impressed, or at least surprised. "Maybe you are the only one that can help me then."

"I can?" Alex looked at her in surprise. "What do you want the help with?"

"I wonder if you remember anything important happening here 5 days ago," she asked.

"May I ask what it is for?" Alex asked.

"5 days ago, something happened that caused all the players to revert back to their original state. I have come to learn that the cause of that problem was from this area," she said. "So, I'm looking for information on it. if you have any, it's better you give us so we can do something to fix it."

"5 days ago, huh?" Alex said. He wasn't sure if he should be giving out this information, but if it meant learning a way back home, he would be ready to give out every single secret he held.

"Let's see... 7 days ago there was a bandit invasion on this city. Many people died... including people I cared about."

Alex's face turned solemn as he remembered the night once more.

"And? That's it?" she asked with a disappointed look.

"What? No, of course not. Uhh... north of here there was a source of Yang that suppressed cultivation in the entire desert. That night, the Yang energy reached a climax."

"What?" the girl cried out. "Yang?" the girl stood up once again in surprise as her eyes that had gone from being a normal size had widened again.

"Uh... yeah," Alex said, slightly surprised at such a reaction from her.

"Sorry, please continue," the girl sat back down and carefully noted everything, not wasting a single word of his.

"And?" she asked.

"Well, I had a fight with someone who poisoned me. So, in my near-dead state, I went to check what it was."

"When I found it... I ate the source," Alex said.

The girl suddenly stopped writing. "You ate the source?"

"Yes," Alex said.

"Wait, I must have heard it wrong. You said... you ate the yang source?" she asked once again.

"Well... technically the other guy that was in my body did. The real player," Alex said.

The girl's hands started shaking and with a snap, the pen broke in two.

Alex stepped back a few steps when he saw the rage build up in her face.

"YOU IDIOT!" she cried out.

"Wh-what's wrong?" he asked.

"WHAT'S WRONG? What's not wrong?" she exclaimed. "You ate the Yang source!"

"Uhh... so?" he asked, still unable to understand what was happening.

"It was your fault, you idiot," the girl cried out.

"You are the reason the system broke, and now everyone is stuck here!"

Chapter 559: Home World

Alex looked a little stunned. "I was the reason? Wait, what? How can that be?" Alex asked.

"Tell me exactly when you ate the Yang source," the girl demanded. She seemed furious, but it didn't look like she was going to harm him.

"Uhh... it was early in the morning 5 days ago," Alex said.

"It is you, then," the girl said. "You ruined everything!"

"No," Alex said. "Why would I ruin everything by simply eating something? That doesn't make sense. Also, what did you mean by destroying a system? I don't understand."

"Goddammit! This was why I told him not to get mortals to do it," she said in a soft voice.

"How did you even survive eating that Yang source? It was so powerful that it traveled back through your connection and destroyed all of our systems," the girl said.

"I... just did. Wait, did you say YOUR system?" Alex asked, his eyes narrowing in suspicions.

"Yes, our system," the girl said.

Alex had a thought occur in his mind that he wasn't sure if he wanted to be true. Still, he decided to ask.

"Were... were you the one that sent us to this game?" he asked.

"No," the girl said. "That's my master. He's the one responsible for all of the artifacts and formation. My job is just being his voice for the mortals."

"Wait, wait, wait. Artifacts? Formations?" Alex asked in surprise. "You don't mean in our homeworld, do you?"

"Obviously I'm talking about that. What else would I be talking about?" the girl said.

"Huh?" Alex exclaimed in surprise. "But our homeworld is a world without Qi. Even if someone managed to gain the knowledge to make artifacts and formations, there is no way they could run it without Qi."

The girl stared at him for a bit before rolling her eyes and saying, "Your home is not without Qi. It's just lacking Qi."

Alex looked at her without a single change in expression. "That's the same thing I said," he said.

"A little different. Saying your home is without Qi is wrong because that insinuates that it never had Qi. But that is wrong. It used to have Qi long ago, but it no longer does due to a terrible battle," she said. "Since it once had Qi, it's easy to use Qi if you get a hold of it."

Alex looked surprised. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. 'There was Qi in our homeworld previously? So why is it absent now?' he thought.

He then remembered a certain piece of information that was tucked away in his brain.

His eyes went wide as he asked, "does it have anything to do with the apocalypse our homeworld went through 600 years ago?"

"What?" the girl asked. "Of course not. Your home hasn't been without Qi for over a few millennia."

"Oh, so I was wrong," Alex said. "Wait, getting back on topic. So our home-world is still without Qi. So how would artifacts and formations even work?"

The girl looked at him with a face that said that it was obvious. "You can't think of anything?" she asked.

Alex shook his head in response. He couldn't figure out where his home-world would even get Qi from.

"Have you earned money from the game?" the girl suddenly asked.

"Yes, I've earned a few," Alex said, a little proud of himself, even though it wasn't really him that earned it.

"What did you sell to get the money?" she asked.

"That's obviously the—" finally, the realization hit his mind as his eyes went wide.

"The spirit stones," he said. "The spirit stones that we sell are sent to our homeworld?"

Alex's eyes were full of surprise with this thought. He never thought that something as simple as selling spirit stones in the game was what was actually running the system back in his homeworld.

"Yes, we use the spirit stones that you players send back to us. That is the only way to keep the formations running," the girl said.

"Wait, does that mean I could've cultivated back in our homeworld if I ever got spirit stones?" he asked.

"Yes, that's possible," the girl said. "Also, please stop calling it your 'homeworld' that makes it sound so distant. Just call it home."

Alex was confused again. "What do you mean? It is distant."

"I mean, yeah it's far. But it's not that far," she said. "It's just an ocean's flight away."

Alex's heart started beating as he looked at her with more confusion and suspicion. "Umm... what are you trying to say?"

The girl looked at him with a bit of confusion as well. "Oh, right. You don't know," she said. "You home, or as you call it, your homeworld is just a small land hidden inside the Central continent."

"WHAT!" Alex exclaimed with surprise and shock very much apparent in his voice.

"Wait, wait, wait, wait! A-are you s-saying... that the central continent that is said to be devoid of life... is actually our homeworld?" he asked.

"Devoid of life?" the girl's eyes flashed with a shine. "Have you learned something about the Central continent? Not many should know this information."

"I-I learned it from the White Tiger's palace. Apparently, the white tiger died there in a battle some 5000 years ago," Alex said.

"But let's forget about that for now," he said. "Are you sure the central continent is my home?"

Alex was starting to get teary-eyed now. If what she was saying was true then there may actually be a way back home.

"You've been to the White Tiger's palace?" the girl looked at him with surprise. "That is truly surprising."

Alex wasn't listening to her, however. The thoughts in his mind were chaotic at the moment. He was trying to process everything he was hearing.

He quickly wiped off his tears as questions flooded his mind again. "Wait, what about the void around our world? Does the central continent have that void?"

"Void? What void?" the girl asked. "Ah, I remember. That's a lie my master told you to keep you all from killing yourself trying to find out what's outside your small Qi-less safe land. It's actually just an all-destroying chaotic Qi which will turn metals to shred in a matter of seconds."

The girl sighed when she said that. "Sigh, I finally found the culprit and it didn't even seem like he knows what he did."

"I'll go and let my master know what I've learned here today. You go and tell the rest of the people that it's over."

"Wait," Alex said. "What do you mean you're leaving? When do we get to leave?"

"Didn't you hear me?" the girl asked. "The system is broken. We can't take you back even if we wanted to."

Alex's eyes ran around trying to find ways to convince her. "Wait, wait. Your master, he's the one that made the system right?" he asked.

"Yes," the girl said with a suspicious face.

"T-tell him about the teleportation formations that lie in the central continent. It used to exist as a hub to teleport people around the other conti—"

The girl put up her hands to stop him from speaking. "I'm genuinely surprised that you know about the teleportation formation in the central continent."

"However, let me ask you this," the girl said. "What did you think the system you destroyed was?"

Alex's jaws dropped. "No way... you're lying," he said.

"Nope, you destroyed the thousands of years old teleportation formations that we used to send you all throughout the other continents," the girl said.

She brought out a talisman and started using it.

"What's that?" Alex asked.

"A one-time use teleportation talisman. I'm going back to master," she said.

"Take me along!" he asked.

"Can't do. It's a one-man teleportation talisman," the girl said.

"Then give me one of them too," Alex said.

"There were only two with me. I already used one to get here. This is the only one remaining until my master makes some more," The girl said.

"Then how do I get back? How do any of us get back?" he asked. His home... it was so close, and yet, he couldn't reach it at all.

"Hmm," the girl seriously thought about his question. "With the system destroyed, it will take master a while to finish repairing the formations. Just wait until then, and we will get you all back."

"Oh," Alex said. Waiting a little longer... he could do that. After all, he had already waited 7 months.

"Will it be done in a few weeks?" he asked. He was planning on going to save Pearl. So he hoped that it was later than that.

"Week?" the girl nearly scoffed at his question. "It's going to take decades. At minimum 3 decades, and at maximum... never."

"What?" Alex lost all hope he had gained in the past few seconds. "I can't wait for 3 decades."

"Unfortunately, you will have to," the girl said and continued using her talisman. She caught him glancing at her as if he wanted it for himself.

"Don't try to do anything unneces—"

Suddenly, Alex dashed forward at an incredible speed that surprised himself. He put his only arms forward to grab the talisman from her hands.

However, at the last moment, a massive aura erupted from her, pushing him down on the ground.

Alex could feel the floor crack beneath him. He knew the girl was likely in the saint realm, but this was too much. She was likely as strong as the two saint beasts.

'Dammit!' he thought. His one chance at returning back home didn't seem to go as he wanted it to. He tried to fight the aura that was pressing him down.

"You really did it huh? You think you can walk away after you've tried to steal from me?"

The girl had gotten angry.

Chapter 560: Celestial Grade

Pressure crashed on Alex like a rock being tossed over him. He felt his knees buckle as he was pushed to the ground.

He gritted his teeth as he kept his bones from cracking under the pressure.

Suddenly, something warm appeared from deep within him. No, this wasn't warm. This was hot. It was undoubtedly hot.

Once the heat traveled all over his body, the pressure on him subsided by a lot. Alex no longer felt the pressure pushing him to the ground and stood up perfectly fine.

The girl's eyes shined in surprise when she saw him stand up. She noticed something and let go of her aura.

Alex took the chance to attack her again. He rushed towards her, with his arm glowing golden.

"Hey don—" the girl had decided to stop fighting, but Alex attacked her anyway.

Just then, something very fantastical happened. Right when Alex's punch was about to reach her, her body turned illusory, like she was a ghost.

Alex's punch went through her without even touching her. Even the talisman she held in her hand had turned illusory.

"What the hell?" Alex thought in surprise. However, he didn't let the surprise hold him back. He immediately turned around and sent out a palm attack.

A yellow palm flew towards the girl.

"You should know by now your attacks won't harm me," the girl said as the palm reached her. She expected the palm to go past her, but instead of doing that, it actually pushed her back a little bit even in her illusory form.

'What?' her eyes went wide in surprise. 'How did he manage to do anything to me in my Ethereal form?'

Just as she was thinking that another attack landed on her. A mental attack.

Suddenly, she felt her mind burn in slight pain. "Aah!" she cried out, momentarily coming out of her illusory form.

Alex noticed that and smiled. He could steal it now. However, he extremely over-expected how long his Heaven's impact would work on her.

In a fraction of a second, the girl got rid of her headache and sent her her own mental attack at him.

Alex felt a brain-splitting headache and fell to the ground in pain. "AAHHH!" he cried out in pain. This was the first time he had ever suffered mental damage in all of his memory.

The girl looked at him in surprise, maybe even a bit of terror. 'How the hell is he still okay after taking the spiritual attack of a Saint Core cultivator?' she wondered.

She also started wondering as to why his mental attack even burned her. Not only that, the yellow palm, it had done some negligible damage to her too.

'That can only mean that his Yang is just that pure,' she thought. 'Does his body still hold the yang from the source he ate perhaps?'

She remembered how terrible the Yang energy that transferred to her master's mansion was. It was continuously being transferred for nearly 3 days, wrecking everything they had worked hard for the past few decades creating.

Not only that, her master actually wasn't able to stop that Yang at all. It had stopped on its own. All her master could do was try his hardest to free the suppressed soul of the players that were sent to the other world while removing the formations he had set on them.

About a minute later, Alex started recovering. His headache had become a lot more manageable.

The girl looked at her talisman and saw that there was merely half a minute before she disappeared.

'He's recovered already? So fast,' she thought. All the things that had happened with him had surprised her quite a bit.

She suddenly thought of something and asked, "Do you have a unique body?"

"What?" Alex asked, trying to stand up.

"I don't have time. Do you have a unique body? The system must have given it a name right?" she asked.

"Ughh! It was Sun God's Divine Yang body," Alex said. Nobody really knew or had even heard of this body from what Alex remembered.

"I knew it," the girl silently said to herself. "So it's you, huh?"

"What?" Alex looked up at her in confusion only to see her hand in front of him, asking for a shake.

Alex hesitated for a second, but after seeing her not retaliate despite him attacking her, he decided to reciprocate and shook her hands.

"My name is Hao Ya. You can call me sister Hao," the girl said.

"Sister Hao?" Alex asked.

"Yes, and congratulations," she said with a smile on her face as she understood something.

"For what?" Alex asked.

"Your body... it's evolved. That yang source you ate, while it destroyed the system, it also helped you evolve," Hao Ya said.

"My body... evolved?" Alex asked.

Hao Ya sensed the Qi gathering around her, just ready to teleport away.

"Wait around for 3 or 4 decades, please. Just cultivate and wait. You don't need to worry about your family and friends either. You have the other copy in there in your place," She said. A silver glow started appearing around her.

Alex sensed the energy coming off of the silver glow. Surprisingly, it was not energy he knew of.

'It's not one of the 7 elements?' he thought.

"I hope to see you doing well in a few decades, younger brother. Until then, just sit tight and cultivate," she said. The light consumed her and she started disappearing.

Just as she was gone, she said one last thing. "Please don't die. You are one of the only ones we can depend on." And she vanished.

Alex looked at the place where Hao Ya had previously been in with a surprised and confused expression. The information he got in the last half a minute was just too much for him to comprehend at once.

'Wait, what did she mean by depending on me? What am I supposed to do?' Alex thought.

He played back the things that had happened in this place as he walked out of the warehouse. His had been the longest time spent inside, so people started asking questions.

Alex gave them as clear of an answer as he could. He told them that if they stuck around for another 30 or more years, they would get a chance to go back to their home.

People got disappointed and even sad. That was expected. Alex himself felt similar feelings too. But just the information he had gotten about the 5th continent being his home-world, and that his body had evolved was enough to make him feel a little happy.

As for going back home, he just had to wait.

* * * * *

Hao Ya appeared in the mansion of her master. She went back to the courtyard to find him.

"Oh, you're back quite early, Hao Ya," the thin man with a ponytail looked at her as she appeared. He was sitting next to the small lake behind his house.

"Yes, master," she said.

The man looked at his clock and asked, "this was quite early though. I thought you would stay there for a few more days to gather information. Don't tell me you already gathered it."

"I did more than that actually," she said. "I found the culprit behind this."

"Oh," the man looked surprised. "There was a culprit?"

"Yes," she said. "Your guess of it happening on its own was wrong. The culprit, this kid named Alex, had eaten a yang source at the northern shore of the western continent."

"He ate a yang source? Such powerful yang should have incinerated him in an instant."

"That's what I thought too, but he was alive and well, aside from missing an arm. But then, I had this thought and I asked him to confirm this."

The man listened intently.

"The person that ruined all of this was the same person you had put so much of your expectations on," she said.

"I... did?" the man asked.

"It's the player that had the Sun God's Divine Yang body," she said. "And what's more, it's evolved."

"WHAT?" the man suddenly stood up and reached in front of her in an instant.

He grabbed her shoulders and looked at her with only seriousness in his eyes. "Are you sure?" he asked.

"Y-yes, master," she said. "He used a yang attack on me and managed to interact with me even when I was in my ethereal self. Also, his mental attacks have yang affinity to them."

The man sat back down on the ground.

"Oh yeah, there was also this weird thing. He had a storage ring with him, just like this one, but as far as you've told me, there shouldn't be any in the Western Continent, right?" she asked. "What more, he said he found it in the desert."

"A ring?" the man looked confused for a second before his eyes went wide. A memory from so long ago flooded back to his mind.

"THE RING!" he shouted. "The plant! That plant! He found the plant. Oh my god! It all makes sense now. No wonder our formations were destroyed. He found the plant!."

"Master?" Hao Ya looked a little scared seeing her master acting this crazy.

"Haha! I'm not even mad now. If having our systems being ruined means him evolving his body to a Celestial grade, then I'm all up for it," he said. [A/N: Ancient will now be replaced with Celestial]

"Aren't you too happy right now, master? Last time when you learned he had the Sun God's body, you were a little more serious, angry even," she said.

"Ah right, but that was only because I didn't know what sort of person he was. It would be a really bad thing if he wanted to do the wrong thing instead of the right."

"We would have to nip this in the bud if it were that," the man said. "So, how was he? Does he seem nice?"

"Well... he's impulsive, but that's probably because he saw the teleportation talisman in my hand and wanted to come back here. But, I don't think he's really a bad guy. He seemed polite enough, I guess," she said.

"Well, as long as he is not bad, I'm fine with that," the man said. He happily turned towards the lake and said, "you heard that old friend? I might just have done it this time."

The lake's water moved a little as a response.

"Right, what else happened? Tell me from the start," the man asked. Hao Ya recited everything about him, including the fact that he was aware of the game even when he should have been suppressed at the time.

"Hmm, maybe I made some mistake there," he said. "Also, you said he had an arm missing?"

"Yes," Hao Ya said.

"Poor kid," the man shook his head. "You gave him a pill to heal him, right?"

Hao Ya stopped talking as a feeling of embarrassment came over her. She scratched her head a little and said, "Ah... oops."